

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 27 February 2008

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D.J. Guise)** took the chair at 12 noon, and read prayers.

## **SIR CHARLES COURT**

### *Condolence Motion*

**MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee — Premier)** [12.01 pm] — without notice: I move —

That this house records its sincere regret at the death of former Western Australian Premier Sir Charles Court, places on record its appreciation for his long and esteemed public service and tenders its deep sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Sir Charles Court was born in Crawley, Sussex, England, in 1911 and came to Australia with his parents when he was just six weeks old. He came from humble, hardworking origins. That work ethic stayed with him all of his life. As a young boy he attended Perth Boys School, leaving school after passing his intermediate certificate. He had developed a keen interest in music and became a talented cornet player, winning at the age of 18 the Australian Champion of Champions Award. He studied accounting at night school while working as a newspaper delivery boy and joined a firm of auditors in 1927. He began his own accounting business in 1933, and later became a foundation partner with Hendry Rae and Court, a prominent, well-known company. He left the practice from 1940 to 1946 to serve in the Australian Army, in which he had a distinguished career, being promoted from a private to lieutenant colonel while serving in the South West Pacific during World War II.

He joined the Liberal Party in 1946 and won the seat of Nedlands in 1953 when he was one of two Liberal Party candidates to contest the seat. In his maiden speech—which is very interesting reading—delivered in this place on 20 August 1953, the new member for Nedlands was humble in assessing the challenges of his new role. He said —

I realise I have much to learn in connection with matters political and am very conscious of my immaturity in that direction. It has been made very apparent to me . . . in the last few months that no matter how far one may have progressed in his professional or civil vocation he is a mere child when it comes to his initiation into the political affairs of a State.

Sir Charles went on to serve a long apprenticeship under Sir David Brand, and had been a member of Parliament for more than 20 years before he became Premier in 1974. Sir Charles' maiden speech also gave three early signals of the directions he would take during his 29 years of service to the Parliament. First, he identified the ongoing challenges in federal-state relations caused by one level of government having the greater responsibility for raising revenue, with the other level of government being responsible for delivering services. Secondly, he opposed a timid policy of development, telling the Parliament in that first speech that he was always prepared to accept a calculated risk if it would result in genuine progress. Thirdly, he called on the more populous eastern states to think in terms of all of Australia and the national interest when it came to development. Each of these beliefs would characterise his many years of public service.

Sir Charles was appointed Minister for Industrial Development, Railways and the North-West in 1959 by the then Premier, Sir David Brand. During his time, he oversaw the development of the Ord River scheme and the continued development of the Kwinana industrial strip. Sir Charles was instrumental in convincing the commonwealth government to lift its ban on iron ore exports and worked hard to develop trading relationships with Japanese importers that came to underpin the development of the iron ore industry in the Pilbara. Sir Charles became Leader of the Liberal Party in 1972 and became Western Australia's twenty-first Premier following the defeat of the Tonkin government in 1974. He remained Premier until his retirement in January 1982.

As Premier, Sir Charles continued the industrial development initiatives of the Brand and then Tonkin governments, while expanding his own vision for further development of the state's rich resource and energy sector, particularly, as we all know, the development of the north west. Many believe that Sir Charles' most lasting achievement was his role in the establishment of the North West Shelf gas project, which saw the eventual development of a liquefied natural gas export industry, as well as securing a second major energy source for Western Australian industry and households. In keeping with the belief as expressed in his maiden speech that risk-taking was acceptable to achieve genuine development, Sir Charles chose to underwrite the North West Shelf project through a take-or-pay contract with the state-owned utility, State Energy Commission of WA. This decision had its detractors. The growth it facilitated in downstream processing industries, as well as the jobs created through the export income earned, have played an enormous role in creating the modern Western Australian economy that we are all benefiting from today. Also consistent with the beliefs expressed in

his maiden speech, Sir Charles fought hard to secure a royalty flow to Western Australia from the North West Shelf gas project, giving the state government an additional income stream to use to deliver the services that all Western Australians wanted and needed. We cannot overemphasise the significance of this great achievement.

While Premier, Sir Charles also recognised in many ways the importance of the arts, culture and education. He ensured that His Majesty's Theatre remained a Western Australian icon, and was a key driver in the development of the Perth Cultural Centre precinct and the Art Gallery of Western Australia, among innumerable other achievements.

Sir Charles resigned as Premier in 1982 after 29 years in Parliament. According to my notes, in his new year's message that followed the announcement of his retirement in December 1981, Sir Charles reflected —

Few regions of the world have the prospects that lie ahead of our state.

Despite a dampened world economic environment and restrictions at home and abroad, we have persevered and have put together a major development programme.

This programme will gather momentum in the coming year and will continue for many years into the future, endowing our State with a quality of life that economic development can make possible.

These are words that could well apply now, and the hard work, energy and vision of Sir Charles during his 29 years in public office played an immense role in creating both the quality of life we now enjoy and the opportunities we have for the future.

In addition to his many public achievements, Sir Charles married Rita, his first wife, in 1936 and together they raised five sons—Victor, Barry, Ken and Richard, who are in the Speaker's gallery today, and I welcome them, and Geoffrey, who lives in Melbourne. From those sons he had 16 grandchildren and, at last count, 19 great-grandchildren. I hope that count is accurate. Richard, of course, succeeded his father as the member for Nedlands and became Western Australia's twenty-sixth Premier in 1993. Following Lady Rita's death in 1992, Sir Charles married his second wife, Lady Judith, in 1996. Sir Charles is survived by Lady Judith.

Sir Charles was honoured and decorated many times for services to his country, including a military division of the Order of the British Empire in 1946 for service in World War II in the Bougainville and Papua New Guinea theatres; a Knight Bachelor in 1972; a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George, a KCMG, in 1979; and a Knight of the Order of Australia in 1982.

Sir Charles will be remembered as a tireless, hard working and visionary champion of Western Australia and Australia. He fought fiercely to establish, build and promote the Western Australian economy both within Australia and in the international community. There is absolutely no doubt that his relentless pursuit of industrial development underpinned the strength of the modern Western Australian economy from which we all benefit today. In fact, I believe—I note that John Howard has said something similar—that no person in public life has had as much of an influence on the development of Western Australia, and indeed of Australia, in the past 50 or 60 years.

Of course, Sir Charles said and did things during his career that many people disagreed with. That is the nature of political life, particularly for a man of conviction. While he humbly declared himself a mere child in the political affairs of the state when he first entered this place, there is no doubt that he left this life a giant. Sir Charles' life and service to the state of Western Australia should be marked with a permanent memorial. I believe that a statue of Sir Charles in Perth would be an appropriate memorial of the former Premier. I have consulted with Richard Court, as the representative of the Court family, and he is supportive of such a memorial. I am grateful for that. A location has yet to be determined, but both Richard and I believe that somewhere along St Georges Terrace, possibly in the proposed resources precinct being planned for the west end of the city, would be an appropriate setting. Richard and I visited that location this morning. I nominated the Florence Hummerston Reserve on the corner of St Georges Terrace and Spring Street, because that location is symbolically important given Sir Charles' role in the development of the North West Shelf, as it is diagonally opposite the Woodside building. We will work with the Court family and the City of Perth to determine the best site for the memorial. The state government will shortly seek tenders from Western Australian artists to create the tribute. Richard Court will represent his family on a panel that will select the successful artist. A statue will be a fitting memorial to Sir Charles Court's extraordinary life.

On behalf of the state government and the people of Western Australia, I pay tribute to a great life, an extraordinary life, and extend my sympathies to Lady Judith and Sir Charles' sons, grandchildren and great grandchildren. I commend the motion to the house.

**MR T. BUSWELL (Vasse — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.14 pm]: I am both humbled and honoured to be given the opportunity to speak in support of this condolence motion on behalf of the opposition. The opposition supports the government's plan to construct a memorial to Sir Charles Court in consultation with the Court family. It is a fitting tribute to a giant of a man in the history of Western Australia.

In my view, and in the view of many people, Sir Charles Court was the outstanding Premier of the twentieth century. He ranks alongside Sir John Forrest as a great builder of our state and the nation. It is to him more than any other individual that we owe our current prosperity and lifestyle. However, that was only part of his achievement. The late John Wheeldon, a former political opponent, aptly described him as a man of conspicuous character. Sir Charles Court not only advocated but also lived by the values of service to the community, the state and the nation.

Many stories can be repeated about Sir Charles' early life, but one characteristic fact is that at only 21, having worked previously as an office boy and articled clerk, he had the confidence and courage to begin his own accountancy practice in March 1933, which was during the depths of the Depression. He founded the firm Hendry Rae and Court in 1938. Whatever he did was done superbly and vigorously, such as notably winning the champion of champions brass solo at Tanunda in South Australia when he was only 18.

When he enlisted as a soldier in 1940, he made sure that he was not pigeonholed as a bandsman and sought overseas service, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel and being responsible for, among other things, disarming the 27 000-strong Japanese forces in Bougainville after the surrender in 1945. This required not only leadership, but also, equally, diplomatic skill and judgement. We should also remember and acknowledge that Sir Charles had an ability to put aside the hatred of war and recognise the humanity of the defeated Japanese, which would make future trading relations in the 1960s between our state and Japan much easier.

Sir Charles Court returned to civilian life determined to make a difference to Australia's post-war direction. He joined the new Liberal Party and involved himself in campaigning that resulted in Liberal governments being elected in Western Australia in 1947 and nationally in 1949. At that stage, he was not interested in a parliamentary seat, although he was overwhelmingly elected as the auditor of the Claremont town council in 1947, as his accountancy firm had become increasingly successful and respected. He was eventually persuaded to seek Liberal endorsement for the seat of Nedlands in 1952 in an attempt to regain it from its Independent Liberal member, the late David Grayden, who had won the seat in 1950. Sir Charles Court had to campaign in difficult circumstances, with the Liberal Party organisation unwisely endorsing a second Liberal candidate and with much of the parliamentary party prepared to accept the Independent member back into the fold. Sir Charles ultimately won the seat of Nedlands in 1953. He beat five other candidates, four of whom were designated as endorsed or unendorsed Liberals. His majority of 837 votes after preferences, nearly 55 per cent of the vote, was a tribute to his hard work and high standing in the community. In a contest with the former member three years later he was re-elected with 73 per cent of the vote. Sir Charles held the seat of Nedlands for 29 years and fought a further eight elections, in which he never drew less than two-thirds of the primary vote, except once when he was elected unopposed.

In the days before electorate officers and beyond, Sir Charles' home phone number was available to all in his electorate. The voting results say a lot about his attention to his constituents' concerns and problems. In 1957 Charles Court was elected unopposed as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party when Sir David Brand replaced Sir Ross McLarty as the Leader of the Opposition. For 15 years he served a record term as deputy leader in a strong complimentary partnership with Sir David. They fought and won four successive elections. From 1959 until 1971, Sir Charles held the portfolios of industrial development and the north west, together with transport and railways until 1965 and 1967 respectively. It is difficult to overstate his achievements in those years, which saw the creation of our current iron ore industry, which required massive overseas investment and the building of infrastructure so often seen by developers in the Pilbara. It was an achievement for not only Western Australia, but also the nation. It is an achievement that has underpinned our prosperity and living standards. Thanks to Sir Charles Court's vision, the Ord River irrigation scheme commenced and heavy industry expanded in Kwinana.

At a seminar in 2004, Professor Geoffrey Bolton pointed out that in contrast to some pro-development entrepreneurs and Premiers of earlier times, Sir Charles Court could always back his vision with hard figures. Thanks to his discipline as an accountant, overseas developers were always convinced that the sums added up and that they were not dealing with an overoptimistic booster. In last year's tributes to Sir Charles, it was stated that he delivered economic growth whilst avoiding the evils of crony capitalism. Sir Charles later said of these times, "I was never overawed by the big things we were negotiating, the big firms we were dealing with. To me they were just an extension of little things I'd seen in great detail and dealt with with some success." As we also learnt at Sir Charles' memorial service, during these years, despite the long and intensely productive hours he devoted to his portfolios, he would leave Parliament each evening to return home to dinner, where politics would be laid aside and full attention given to his family of five boys.

When the Brand government was defeated in 1971, Charles Court resisted any temptation to resume what would have been a successful business career, and was unanimously elected leader of the Liberal Party when Sir David Brand stepped down in June 1972—almost to the day that he received his knighthood. He was a vigorous opposition leader who rallied a defeated party by focusing on the difficulties of the state government at the 1972 federal election in Western Australia, where the Liberal vote went against the national tide. Thanks to a hard-fought win at the 1974 election, the coalition was back in office after only one term in opposition. Among the

Liberal Party's wins in 1974 were the seats of Gascoyne and Pilbara, and an absolute majority in the Legislative Council was achieved for the first time in generations. These gains were held at the two subsequent elections, with a then record share of seats and votes for the coalition at the 1977 election. In 1980 Sir Charles won a third term, with the loss of only one Legislative Assembly seat. He was the most electorally successful conservative leader, and the only such long-term leader of the twentieth century not to suffer an election defeat. Strong challenges had to be faced down, with a temporary rupture of the coalition in 1975, and confrontations with centralising federal governments. As Premier, Sir Charles Court continued to deliver strong resource-based development in a more uncertain economic and political climate than that of the 1960s, with the foundations laid both for the North West Shelf gas project and for the retention of royalties for the state of Western Australia. His eight years as Premier also saw the expansion of social infrastructure, with the founding of Murdoch University, with its superb veterinary school, the refurbishment of His Majesty's Theatre and the building of the new Art Gallery of Western Australia.

After his retirement in 1982, Sir Charles spent 25 years in energetic and selfless retirement. He declined offers of senior directorships so that he could contribute his experienced advice to any company that might continue the building of Western Australia. His son Ken spoke at his memorial service of his continued involvement in the promotion of international trade through the Australia-Taiwan Business Council. His record of awards and life memberships speaks for itself, but Sir Charles never contented himself simply with receiving honours, no matter that they were so well-deserved. He kept pushing himself to remain an active contributor to all those organisations that honoured him. It could be said that, over these years, Sir Charles not so much outlived his political opponents as outlived the partisan rancour that accompanies active politics. He enjoyed a great and deserved respect from across the political spectrum. He was made a life member of the Western Australian division of the Liberal Party in 1988, and 10 years later, at the Liberal Party national convention, he was given the outstanding service award, reserved for iconic national figures. A new generation of Liberals was to remember him not just for his magnificent service in office, but also as an inspirational speaker and as the quintessential loyal party member who, aged 89, was out campaigning in shopping centres in the seat of Nedlands in the difficult 2001 state election. Those attending his ninety-fifth birthday celebrations in 2006 were treated to not only a strong and informative speech, but also the spectacle of him once more conducting a band.

Sir Charles was a life member of the Returned and Services League from 1981, the Musicians' Union from 1953, and the Calabrese Association. To give just one example of the extent and nature of his community involvement, at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society in 2000, as its patron, he delivered a speech of firm practical advice and some fresh evaluation of Sullivan's music. When he asked in 2006 to be relieved of this role, he was begged to remain as patron emeritus.

Sir Charles Court was above all a man of deep religious faith with absolute commitment to his family. It was very much in character that, the day after he was elected Premier in 1974, he chopped firewood for his 87-year-old mother. Sir Charles Court was also a man with a tremendous sense of what was right and proper. I am reminded that last year, on the passing of Dick Old—who was in and out of coalition with Sir Charles in this house—Sir Charles, from his sickbed, asked his son Richard to contact me as a local member of Parliament and pass on his request in his unique, firm way that I attend the funeral of the late Dick Old on his behalf and pass on his respects to his family. He was, as I said, a man with a tremendous sense of what is proper and right.

Often it seems that the children, and especially the sons, of great men fall far short of the father's talent and character—some would argue that Sir Winston Churchill's son, Randolph, was a case in point—but Sir Charles had every reason to be proud of his five sons and their families. Not only Richard, who followed his father as member for Nedlands and later as Premier, but Victor, Barry, Ken and Geoffrey are all notable achievers who spoke with great dignity at his memorial service. To Lady Court and to Sir Charles' sons, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, we extend our sympathy and our thanks.

**MR B.J. GRYLLS (Merredin — Leader of the National Party)** [12.27 pm]: On behalf of the Nationals, I support the remarks of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. I pay tribute to Sir Charles Court's passion for regional Western Australia and to his vision, which today, 25 years after his retirement from this place, enables Western Australia to enjoy unprecedented wealth and opportunity. As Minister for Industrial Development, Railways and the North-West in the Brand government, he laid the foundation for today's mining boom. He recognised early on the great potential of the Pilbara, and took a number of landmark steps to ensure that it became the engine room of our economy. He opened up the region for exploration, lobbied Canberra to lift the ban on iron ore exports, and had the foresight to develop markets in Asia. It undoubtedly fulfils Sir Charles' vision that Western Australia is now the economic powerhouse of the nation.

Every member of Parliament enters this place hoping to make a difference. Sir Charles made more than a difference. He is remembered along with Sir John Forrest as one of our two greatest political leaders. More than that, he was a great family man, which could not be evidenced more than by the touching tributes paid to him by his grandchildren at the memorial service that so many of us attended. All of us, no matter which side of the chamber we sit on, hope that we can bring to the Parliament a small part of what Sir Charles brought to it and so

make Western Australia a greater place than it was when we took office. The Nationals pay tribute to Sir Charles and we offer our sincere sympathy to his family.

**MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont — Deputy Premier)** [12.28 pm]: In 1974, when Sir Charles Court became Premier, I was a young political activist fiercely opposed to many of his positions. In fact, I marched to the steps of this building in protest against his proposed Fuel, Energy and Power Resources Act 1972. Later, as energy minister, I was forced to contemplate the remote chance that that legislation might have to be invoked in certain circumstances. However, today is a time to put aside the commitment we all bring to the conduct of political affairs and to recognise without partisanship the contribution to our state of Sir Charles Court. There can be no question that Western Australia owes Sir Charles a debt of gratitude. Much of the resources boom we enjoy today was founded on his vision, ingenuity, shrewdness and persistence. In my role as Minister for State Development, I will confine my comments about him today largely to the field of resources development, particularly in the north of the state.

In measuring Sir Charles Court's contribution, it is important to view him in the context of his times. When he set out on his crusade to develop the state's natural resources, Western Australia was known beyond its borders only as a gold producer. Even the gold industry was near death after being squeezed for decades between rising costs and a fixed price. For generations, people had known about the mountain ranges in the Pilbara that went rusty when it rained. It was obvious that they consisted of iron ore of exceptional richness. However, there were no towns, railways, roads, ports or populations to enable the iron ore to be mined, and neither was there a market. It was Charles Court's special gift to perceive how a market might be created. Japan and Germany had been devastated by war. They would need vast amounts of steel to rebuild their cities, infrastructure and their economies. If they, especially Japan, could be persuaded to develop their steel industries in a particular way and to commit themselves, in a binding manner, to purchase Pilbara iron ore, it might just be possible to get developments off the ground. He saw how two simple innovations—the long-term contract and the legislated state agreement, both at that time unknown in the minerals trade—could become the key to unlocking the Pilbara's future. With long-term sales contracts as security, mining companies could approach the world's financial markets for the money to build mines, towns, railways, ports and roads. With state agreements setting out the rights and obligations of the developers in the state, financiers would have the comfort of seeing projects that were backed by the force of law. At some stage, we might judge that the era of state agreements is over, but they were appropriate and crucial at that time. Charles Court trod a frequent path to Tokyo and the investment capitals of London and New York, gradually winning converts and contacts. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

In just a few years this state rocketed from being a backwater to one of the world's most important suppliers of key minerals, because nickel, bauxite and mineral sands developments on a global scale followed hard on the heels of iron ore. Gas was not far behind them.

Charles Court was sometimes accused of being in the pocket of multinational companies, but he went to extraordinary lengths to get Australian companies into controlling positions in the resources industries. He manoeuvred with skill and persistence, even, as some of us put it, with polite brutality, to get companies such as BHP and CRA, as they were named then, and Woodside into the leadership positions that they hold today. He was determined to ensure a powerful voice for Australia's interests in decision making within the great business ventures of which they were part. We should bear in mind that what we take for granted today was a leap into the unknown in those days. When the great Pilbara developments were getting underway, there was not a chemist shop north of Carnarvon and there was not a hairdresser between Geraldton and Broome and then not another one until Darwin. The sealed road north from Perth ended at Northampton. After that the road was a dust track between the wrecks of a multitude of cars and trucks. Port Hedland was a ramshackle sheep port with a rickety wooden jetty. Dampier, now one of the world's busiest ports in terms of tonnage, did not exist, nor did Karratha, Wickham, Newman, Tom Price, Paraburdoo or Pannawonica, now home to tens of thousands of our citizens. Mount Nameless had not at that time been given its name.

Today, one of the busiest industries in the Pilbara and the Kimberley is tourism. The caravan convoys of grey nomads and the thousands of others who multiply the population of the north west between May and November each year do so on magnificent highways made possible by the mineral and energy developments. They pour hundreds of millions of dollars annually into local economies, sustaining jobs and thus communities. For all of that, we should, and we do, give generous credit to Sir Charles. One of his favourite sayings was, "You can't help anyone else if you've got the seat out of your own trousers." As he did not come from a wealthy family, he understood the value of a thriving economy to the entire community.

In his latter years, Charles Court was once asked what he regarded as his most important achievement. I am advised that, without hesitation, he answered, "Welshpool." When his astonished questioner asked why, he said it was because of the hundreds of businesses that have been established there to service the mining and energy industries, many of them by former tradesmen in those industries who had spotted a niche for their own abilities and energy. He understood that the real pay-off in terms of employment from the mining boom was not in the

mines, for modern mining is machine rather than labour intensive. The bulk of jobs were in places like Welshpool, Kewdale and Belmont, which I am proud to represent, with their street after street of repair and maintenance shops, their equipment and parts yards, their suites of professional services and the delis, lunch bars and other support facilities that mushroomed around them.

Whether it is what he would have preferred, it is the development of northern WA for which Sir Charles Court will be most remembered, and properly so. When he started out, the vast area north of Geraldton was a very different region in scale and importance to the nation. Now it is a region of great and growing importance to Australia's and the world's economic progress. Two generations of Japanese and South Koreans have grown up in rising affluence, in significant part, because of the economic growth built on the bounty of WA's north. A generation of Chinese people is now following the same path to a better future. It is a remarkable legacy that Sir Charles Court has left behind him; it is the legacy that this government is building on.

Charles Court was a strong defender of Australia's status as a federation and of Western Australia's position in that Federation. Even far into his retirement he assisted me by making a submission to Ross Garnaut's 2002 inquiry into federal-state financial arrangements. He was determined, as all of us still are, that Western Australia should retain a fairer share of the rewards of the economic development that he promoted.

Earlier, I briefly mentioned Sir Charles' family background. That background contained a strong Labor Party element. It is intriguing to think that if he had followed that political path instead of the one he chose, he would be today one of the Labor Party's most honoured heroes. In the final analysis, however, which party he joined matters far less than what he did for his community.

With my personal condolences to his family, I commend this motion to the house.

**DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [12.37 pm]: It is a great honour for me to take this opportunity to make a brief contribution to this condolence motion honouring Sir Charles Court. I would like to, perhaps in a lighter way, talk about some of the things that he achieved. In fact, my presence in this Parliament as a Liberal member is owed totally to Sir Charles Court. My grandmother tells the story that my grandfather was the secretary of the police union in Fremantle, but retired from the police force to become a butcher in Derby. At the time the Labor Party first won that seat, the Labor Party asked my grandfather to run as a candidate, as my grandmother tells the story, and he declined and said, "I'm sorry, I'm a Liberal supporter." That raised the question—how could he be a Liberal supporter when he was a member of the police union? In the same way that Sir Charles was patriarch of his family, my grandmother was matriarch of her family. When she said we were Liberal, we were Liberal. The reason we were Liberal is that as a 16-year-old she attended regular Friday night musical evenings that Sir Charles also attended. Even in the days leading up to his death, Sir Charles remembered well my grandmother and those circumstances. That tells members something that is already well known; that is, his prodigious memory of people and places he visited. He remembered not only the big issues in which he was involved, but also the little things. So many times in the community I have met individuals who have said Sir Charles was known to them as the patron of their community group. As he aged, he attended the functions held by those organisations and talked to people. He remembered their names, circumstances and issues from so many years before. He was an amazing man.

The music that Sir Charles was involved in at a young stage of his life became his passion throughout his life. He was such a strong supporter, not only of the development of this state, which we have already heard, but also of the arts, culture and music.

The great support he gave to organisations involved in those activities was an enormous credit to him. We saw the great performances that were put on in his honour at his memorial service at the university. It amazed me to hear from Sir Charles' sons at that memorial that he had in fact organised his own service. I think it was Richard who said that the family was told, "There will be a state service, and of course this is what you must do, these are the people you must invite and this is the music I want to hear." I have to say that it got me planning for my own service in the future so that I am just as well organised as was Sir Charles Court!

We in this state owe a great debt to Sir Charles, particularly for what he did in developing the north west. I refer to not only the developments that have stood us in such good stead ever since, but also the royalty deals he negotiated. When Richard Court was the Premier of this state, the government met some criticism about the money it spent, the money it did not spend and at times its inability to support certain programs. We must acknowledge that things were tough during those times. Western Australia had just been through the South East Asian financial meltdown, which had a significant effect on the income of this state and its ability to fund much needed community programs. It was the strength of the economy that had been driven by Sir Charles in developing the North West Shelf that allowed us not only to survive, but also to progress so very well. At that stage the unemployment rate in Western Australia was the lowest of any state of Australia. We were therefore able to get through those difficult times. I believe that the legacy Sir Charles left to us with the royalty stream has resulted in the great boom that Western Australia—and Australia—is experiencing today; it all goes back to the legacy of Sir Charles Court.

It is interesting to note that I had a meeting this morning with a government official and because I was early I got to use Sir Charles' famous quote. How early was I? I was 10 minutes early. As Sir Charles always said, "If you are not 10 minutes early, you are late."

I say to Sir Charles' family—his wife, his children and his grandchildren—that I know how proud you must all be of his wonderful achievements. Australia—Western Australia in particular—is equally proud.

**MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine)** [12.42 pm]: I rise to say a few words about the passing of Sir Charles. In doing so, on behalf of my wife and my two children—I will make that clear in a moment—I express my deepest sympathy to the Court family and to Lady Judith.

Regardless of one's political persuasions, certain individuals pass through the parliamentary system who I believe epitomise the standards that the community expects and that the parliamentary system demands. I believe Sir Charles was such an individual. I know that he was a fierce political campaigner. I did not always agree with him. One area of disagreement, I recall, was as a young police officer arguing with him over the Noonkanbah incident, when a convoy was taken there, but that is another story.

We have heard much today about Sir Charles' big achievements, but I want to relate one small incident that occurred when I was a young police officer that I believe highlights his statesmanship. Even though he served at the highest level, he was still able to identify with the ordinary person in the street, as the member for Dawesville touched on—a mark, as I said, of a true statesman. My first association with Sir Charles Court was when I was a young detective and part of a team that was tasked with investigating the attempted bombing of the former Department of Labour and National Service, an incident that has been mentioned on a few occasions in this house. It occurred during the contentious days of the Vietnam War and was the first major terrorist incident that had ever occurred in our city; it shocked the city greatly. A well-constructed bomb was found and disarmed, thankfully, before it exploded, and subsequently two offenders were arrested and convicted in relation to that device. The device was very similar to those used in the Bali bombings. Subsequent to the conviction of the offenders, supporters of the bombers commenced a terror campaign against my wife and my two children. The campaign was well publicised, and even to this day it has affected both Susan and my kids; it comes back from time to time. They had to move out of their family home. I suppose it is ironic that some of the supporters of that campaign are now perhaps more well known in the community. Sir Charles, as I recall at that time, was either Leader of the Opposition and about to become Premier or was already Premier of the state. I was a lowly detective in my office in James Street and I answered a call on my phone. The caller said, "Sir Charles Court here." I said, "Yeah, sure." I looked around the office to see who was pulling my leg and the voice said, "Sir Charles Court here. I want you to come up to Parliament House for lunch with me." I then started to realise that it was not a joke and it actually was Sir Charles Court. Even in those days his stature in this state was enormous. "By the way", he said, "you had better go upstairs and tell Weddie and Leachie that you're coming up to Parliament House, otherwise you'll be in strife." I went up to the commissioner's office, who I think at that time was Athol Wedd. His offsider was Owen Leach, who later went on to become one of the best commissioners the state has ever had. They had obviously received the same call, because after a stern lecture from both of them on how I should conduct myself and how to know my place when I went to Parliament House, I was dispatched, I think with Athol Wedd's driver, to Parliament House. In those days one was very aware of protocols. I was met on the steps of Parliament House by the late Andrew Mensaros, who took me for the very first time into the members' dining hall of Parliament House, a place I have since come to know very well. Shortly afterwards, we were joined by Sir Charles Court for lunch. Members can imagine the trepidation I felt. I was waiting to hear the usual comment—there is a term for it but I will not say it! He did not want to know about the case; he was obviously well briefed on it. Instead, he wanted to know about my wife and my children and how the events that were happening to them were affecting them. He showed a deep and a genuine concern. He also thanked me for the service that he felt I had done for the state in bringing people to justice. He then amazingly proceeded to offer my wife, my kids and me a holiday anywhere outside of the metropolitan area so I could take them away from the campaign that was being waged against them—not against me, but against Susan, Tim and Joanne. I was amazed that this man, who was then at the pinnacle of his success, would go to such lengths; firstly, to support me as a young police officer and to recognise the role of coppers in the community, and secondly and more importantly, to show his recognition of the family and children of a police officer. He pointed out to me the amount of support that he felt they needed, which was an obvious reflection of the great love he had for his own family. I have never forgotten that. It set him aside as a politician and a statesman. I look around now at the current crop of political leaders and at myself and often wonder what their or my reaction would have been at that time.

Over the years our paths crossed regularly. I have been around government for 43 years of service now, both through the pathway of my police career and through my parliamentary role. I constantly came across Sir Charles in the various roles he undertook, particularly after he retired. I was involved with him very largely in the organisations that supported pensioners and older persons in aged care etc—the Pensioners League as it was then called. His enthusiasm and absolute capacity for work in the organisations that I was involved with is

legendary. Even in the last few years of his life he was always forthcoming with advice. I must say that he was one of the first people to phone and congratulate me when I was elected to this house. Even though in the previous seven years we were always of different political persuasions, he always pointed out to me that he was proud to see that I had moved on in service to serve the state. He always thought, and I think Richard heard, that I should have been on the other side. Every time we met him he was impeccable in the way he acknowledged my wife and my children and remembered that incident. It was amazing to me that a man of his stature, who had done so much for the state and who had worked at such high levels, should do that. As I do, I believe that he remembered that time when he made a very lowly detective constable and his family feel so truly valued. That is a lesson for all leaders and all people who aspire to be leaders.

We sat with him one day at one of those famous, interminable Chinese-Taiwanese dinners when he won the raffle. It was not because he was sitting with us! He won an enormous Chinese urn. I would be interested to know whether the Court family still has it. He was absolutely horrified, but being the true gentleman that he was, he accepted it in the spirit in which it was given, except he got Susan and me to carry it out for him because at the time he was not quite strong enough. I can always remember him muttering that he hoped we would drop it on the way out. I am not sure if it ever went to his home, because it was the most hideous thing, but he accepted it.

One of the last long conversations I had with Sir Charles was shortly after I resigned from my ministry in this place. He was very complimentary about what he thought were the standards I had applied when resigning at that time. He was never backward at giving advice. He expressed to me his views at that time at what he saw as the importance in political life of loyalty to one's own party, of integrity and of setting the standards of morality that the community expects.

Again I express, if I may, my deepest condolences to Lady Judith Court, to Victor, Barry, Ken and Richard who are here today, and in fact the entire Court family. In doing so, may I finish with a quote from John Wesley, which I think really essentially sums up my view, my family's view and the community's view of Sir Charles —

Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.

Vale, Sir Charles Court.

**MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe)** [12.54 pm]: First, from Lyn and myself, may I extend my condolences to Lady Court and to each of Sir Charles' sons, Ken, Victor, Barry, Geoff and Richard. Sir Charles Court excelled in all that he did: he excelled as a father; he excelled in music, business and military service; and he excelled, perhaps most of all, as a member of Parliament, as a senior minister and as a Premier. Sir Charles, as members are aware, was a member of this house for 29 years. If one talks to members who served with him, he dominated this chamber in a way that perhaps no other politician ever has. He rightly stands alongside John Forrest as one of the two great Premiers of Western Australia. They rightly stand beside James Stirling and John Curtin as the four great public figures in this state's history.

I got to know Sir Charles Court before I knew Richard, which was during my time at the Chamber of Commerce, when I worked closely with Ken Court and got to know Sir Charles on a number of Chamber of Commerce and related issues.

As it turned out, I subsequently became Minister for Resource Development, and during the eight years in which I held that portfolio, essentially Sir Charles' portfolio for which he is most famous, there were many conferences on mining, resources and oil and gas, as there are today. More times than not, if I was speaking at those conferences, when I got to the podium and looked over its edge, sitting in front of me would be Sir Charles Court. I was never quite sure whether that was encouragement or intimidation, but I was always very conscious of Sir Charles Court sitting in front of me, watching and listening to everything I said, sometimes shaking his head and sometimes nodding.

Sir Charles Court made an enormous contribution to Western Australia and to this country. That has been spoken about already. The development of the Pilbara iron ore industry from the mid 1960s, which I believe was Sir Charles' greatest achievement for economic development, was extraordinary for the scale of the development, as the Deputy Premier outlined; the fact that there was virtually nothing in the Pilbara before and it was a change that transformed not only the Pilbara but also Western Australia. Western Australia had not been important since the 1890s during the gold rush. In the 1960s Western Australia again became important, not only nationally but also internationally. It was because of the development of the Pilbara iron ore industry. It was also extraordinary in the sense that the development of the iron ore industry was related to the reconstruction of Japan and the take-

or-pay commitments of Japanese steel mills to buy iron ore and the investment of the Japanese trading houses in the major new iron ore projects. Remember, and I am sure that many of us do, just 20 years earlier Australia and Japan had been at war. Just 20 years earlier Darwin and northern towns in Western Australia had been bombed. I can remember as a young high school student at the time the sensitivity in the community because we were now embracing a new economic, trade and cultural relationship with Japan. Sir Charles Court managed that sensitivity. I can remember my parents being very concerned about it. My father had served in the war. He did not have a sense of warmth towards the Japanese in the mid-1960s, yet he was convinced by the way Sir Charles Court presented it as an opportunity for the future and became a supporter, as did thousands of other ex-servicemen. That was an extraordinary achievement in itself. The development of the Pilbara changed the state and changed the nation.

The other great economic achievement was, of course, the North West Shelf project, which to this day stands as Australia's greatest ever and most significant single industrial development. It was a mind-boggling project for the technology and the knowledge of the day. The gas was in deep water, well out from the coast, with no obvious market. It was always a difficult project for those who invested directly in it. Technically it was difficult, politically it was difficult and financially it was a real challenge. Sir Charles Court displayed what, frankly, we could do with more of today: some genuine big thinking, some leadership and courage. There were two risk aspects to that project. The first was the construction of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline, which even then had a capital cost of over \$1 billion. It was an extraordinary undertaking for a still fairly small and fairly weak Western Australian economy. The second, and perhaps less understood, was the take-or-pay commitment to purchase gas, to take 414 terajoules of gas, whether or not it could be on-sold, and a commitment to pay whether it could be used or not. When I was minister responsible for iron ore, and particularly the North West Shelf project, with the two great achievements of Sir Charles Court, I sold the pipeline and I broke the take-or-pay contracts into smaller contracts. Perhaps that explains why Sir Charles Court sometimes gave me that strange, quizzical look when he saw me. He may not have appreciated it! However, the development had moved on, and I am sure that he recognised that that was the nature of the development; that it would mature and change. I think he would be aghast if he were here today in this chamber where he spent 29 years if he saw how meekly Western Australia is handing over control of the development of the north of this state and its great resources and mining and gas industries effectively to Canberra and to others. He would not appreciate that. I think he would be on his feet in this chamber ranting and raving articulately about the future of the state and the need to think big and take responsibility for our own destiny.

Sir Charles Court was a great man in all that he did. As I said at the beginning, he excelled in everything he did. In every sense he was a great Western Australian and a great Australian.

**MS A.J.G. MacTIERNAN (Armadale — Minister for Planning and Infrastructure)** [1.00 pm]: I want to add a small contribution and recognise the role that Sir Charles Court has played in Western Australia's history. Excellent presentations have been given in this place today setting out the extraordinary life of this man. I particularly note the comments of the Deputy Premier, who made us realise what this state was like in the 1950s and the degree and nature of the changes that took place over the following 10 years. It was not until I was in my current job that I had any appreciation of how hard it was to get the federal government to give attention to the needs and potentialities of Western Australia. That is a major hurdle that I have experienced during my time in government. I can only imagine how much more difficult it would have been in the 1950s when Western Australia was very much the Cinderella state.

We need to pay testament to the contribution that Sir Charles made, with a number of other people, to get the federal government of the day to stand up and take notice and to be prepared to see the great potentialities of the state. I only became aware of the level of disinterest from the federal government when researching some history as background to an address I was giving to a conference. We always thought that the federal government did not realise that there was iron ore in Western Australia. In fact, the federal government was well aware that there was iron ore in Western Australia. In the mid to late 1930s, when the Japanese wanted to acquire an interest in an iron ore mine in Western Australia, the then federal government found itself in a very difficult position. We were not at war with Japan but there was clearly concern within the community about trading with Japan because of what was going on in China. The chief geologist set down the reports of iron ore in Western Australia. The figures of known iron ore in Western Australia were revised down so that it could be said, "Sorry, we can't allow exports here because we will not have enough to cope for our own needs." That is a fair enough position to take. It is extraordinary that after the end of the war, it took 14 to 15 years to reverse that position. We need to understand the scope and scale of that task that required Western Australians to see the potential of WA and to get the federal government to reverse the ban on iron ore, which had been keeping Western Australia as a disadvantaged state. I want to put on record my great appreciation for the role that Sir Charles played in taking on that task and achieving the outcome that has been set out here today that has underpinned the great growth in Western Australia.

To Richard, Barry and the rest of the family, my condolence on your loss. You must be very proud of your father and what he has done.

**MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood)** [1.04 pm]: I rise to join my colleagues, the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in eulogising Sir Charles Court. Sir Charles Court was a great Western Australian. We all recognise that. The people of Western Australia owe him a debt of gratitude for his significant contribution to the state. I had my own personal connections with Sir Charles Court. He launched my first campaign in Manjimup in 1985. It was a very strong Labor seat. Sir Charles came down and spoke for an hour. We could have heard a pin drop. I went on to become a member of Parliament at the next election. Over the years I got to know him well. I always received his advice with gratitude. He told me stories about his time as deputy to Sir David Brand. In 1959 he wrote the whole Liberal policy with the blessing of Sir David. As Minister for Industrial Development, Railways and the North-West, we all know the major events he presided over and the discussions and negotiations that took place around that time.

I agree with my colleagues that there is no doubt that he and Sir John Forrest were significant contributors to the future of Western Australia. We owe them a debt of gratitude for the lifestyle that we live today, which is the result of their great vision and energy. Sir Charles was a character. He was a tall man and he had great presence, piercing eyes and a great vitality. When one met him, one was left with no doubt what the meeting was about. In more recent times when I was the newly appointed Leader of the Opposition, I received a letter from Sir Charles offering his assistance. Knowing what a stickler he was for protocol, I wrote back to him the same day. We met within a week or so. He told me a number of things. Firstly, he said we always had to treat those dastardly people from the eastern states with great caution. Obviously, he was a great state rights man, as I am. We had a great deal in common. When dealing with these industrial giants—miners and so on—he said that we had one opportunity when miners applied for a mineral exploration and mining lease. He said that there was a time to negotiate and that if we were not successful in that very small window of time, once they got their mining lease, they would treat the government with disdain. He left me in no uncertain terms about what we should be doing. As was mentioned, the north west of Western Australia was virtually a desert. He negotiated with those mining companies. The new towns that appeared dotted around the north west of our state were due to his intuition and vision for the state.

Sir Charles Court regaled me with stories. One went back to the surrender at Bougainville, when a very small group of Australian soldiers took the surrender of a large number of Japanese. During a critical stage in the negotiation for north west iron ore in particular, when matters were becoming complicated, Sir Charles was at home very early one morning when he heard a knock on the door. The person who was knocking on the door was the same fellow he had received the surrender from. I understand that from that time on, negotiations improved.

As far as other issues are concerned, the Edgleys were going to sell His Majesty's Theatre because it was deteriorating and they wanted to realise the asset. Sir Charles Court saved His Majesty's Theatre. He also built the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

I agree with the sentiment that something of significance should be built to commemorate Sir Charles Court's contribution to the state. It goes without saying that a statue should be erected. There could be a resources development memory to Sir Charles Court, such as a resources hub, or it could be something to do with His Majesty's, music and the performing arts, which were his great passion. I was very fortunate in my initial meeting with him to talk about all the things that related to federal and state relations, because I had the same portfolio as he did, and resources development. About three-quarters of the way through our meeting, he started going over some issues a couple of times. He said to me, "I hope you don't think I'm repeating these things because I'm old. I'm repeating them so that they actually sink in." At the end of the meeting, I said that I was really appreciative of his coming to talk to me and giving me his advice, and that I would like to catch up with him a couple of times in the year if he could do that. He said, "I'm available every month if you need me." That was the kind of person that Sir Charles was.

Sir Charles had an early career in accounting. Going way back, he was involved in the Kauri Timber Company. He touched everybody's lives in almost every facet of life, including the ethnic communities, where he was a cavaliero of the Italian community. If Sir Charles was at a function, or even if Richard was there when he became Premier, the whispers could be heard around the room that it was Sir Charles or it was Richard. To some extent, Richard had one up on Sir Charles, in that he was the Premier of the state for a couple of weeks longer than his father. I think Sir Charles would have been very proud of that achievement. The Court family are a very proud Western Australian family, and the people of WA owe them much.

It has been a privilege to make a contribution to the condolence for Sir Charles Court. I knew him well. He made a great contribution to this state, and his whole family can be very proud of his achievements.

**MRS C.A. MARTIN (Kimberley)** [1.10 pm]: I add my support to the motion, and I will contribute a few comments. The first of those is to extend my deepest, deepest sympathy to the Court family.

The loss of a patriarch is a profound thing. It reshuffles families. In the case of Sir Charles Court, it has reshuffled a lot of other things which are about being Western Australian. A lot of Western Australians benefit from Sir Charles' legacy. I also acknowledge the loss of Sir Charles Court to the Liberal Party.

His legacy will remain, though. His sons have actually stepped up to the plate and taken their place in public life and made their contributions, and continue to do so. I must say that Sir Charles Court did a brilliant job as a father, because they are brilliant people, and I have worked with some of them. The oil industry, the petroleum industry, the gas industry, the iron ore industry, and other industries have sprouted from their work. They are all about his vision. The only other government that has provided something close to that magnitude, of course, is the Labor government. It is really important that that work be continued.

Sir Charles Court said two things to me when he offered me some advice at one stage. He said, “Don’t let this system change you.” I do not think I have changed much—it is inevitable though! The other things he said to me was, “Don’t give up on the Ord”, which I thought was really good advice.

I first heard Sir Charles Court’s name when I was 19. I was lying on a road during the Noonkanbah dispute. It was the Great Northern Highway, about 12 kilometres south of the Shay Gap turn-off. I think a copper was picking me up by the hair and chucking me in a paddy wagon! I must say that when I first heard his name, I thought he might have horns, but that certainly was not the case. The Noonkanbah dispute had two profound results in my life: the first was that it made me an Aboriginal activist, which was a pretty good result, and also, of course, it gave me the desire to speak out about things that I thought were wrong. I thank Sir Charles Court for that, even though it was inadvertent. The second result, of course, is the Kimberley Land Council, which was formed as a direct result of the Noonkanbah dispute. Inadvertently, two of the most profound impacts on my life came from the actions of this man.

The one project that Sir Charles Court started that must be finished is the Ord irrigation scheme—not just because it is in my electorate, not just because it started and we should finish it, but because it is the right thing to do. It is an opportunity that this man saw many years ago. His vision was formed well before its time. I did not agree with what he said about Cape Croydon—I do not think nuclear devices should be used to make a deep hole for a deep water port. However, as to the beneficiaries of this man’s vision, everyone above the 26<sup>th</sup> parallel can take their hats off to him. Most people who live in the north west have benefited from his legacy.

Western Australia has a dynasty of brilliant men who have contributed and will continue to contribute to this community—they are on the other side of the political fence, which is a bit of a worry, but they are there, and there must be diversity in a society like ours. I commend those men and I commend Sir Charles Court for his vision. It has been a privilege to speak on this condolence motion. On behalf of the people of the north west, I extend our deepest sympathies to his family.

**MS S.E. WALKER (Nedlands)** [1.15 pm]: Much has been said of Sir Charles’ distinguished political achievements, but I will say something about him as a human being and his personal life, because it will add a new dimension to who he was. I will say something about his first wife of 56 years, Lady Rita Court, whom I knew through my membership, when I was about 30 years old, of the Dalkeith women’s section of the Liberal Party.

Additionally, Sir Charles Court was my local member, firstly, in 1973 when I was 22 and lived at 33 Davies Road, Dalkeith; secondly, in 1978, when I lived at 27 Hillway, Nedlands; and thirdly, when I lived at 50 Alexander Road, Dalkeith. I distinctly remember one sunny afternoon, when I was about 30 years of age, walking down from my home, a few houses to the Blair Room at St Lawrence’s Church in Dalkeith, and into the most formidable group of women anyone would ever be likely to come across. They were formidable because they had a very high intellect and were very competent and confident. One of those was Lady Court. I remember her for three reasons. Firstly—and I say this in the nicest way, because I want to come to her qualities, which have always been outstanding to me. It did not matter who was president, because she ran the show. She could because she was the wife of the Premier, but she did not have to. My memories of her are that she was always organising functions for Sir Charles when he was then Premier, and selling raffle tickets.

I will talk about her, because for many years her great work for the Liberal Party—and for Sir Charles—has never been mentioned. One of his greatest achievements was that he was very happily married to Lady Rita for 56 years. In his autobiography, *Charles Court: the early years: An Autobiography*, he states that his wedding day was one of momentous joy for him. I hope his sons, who are sitting at the back, do not mind me talking about their mother, whose qualities they know very well. I will put on record that to the women in Dalkeith, she was very much part of Sir Charles’ time as a local member. She was not dissimilar, of course, to Marjorie Rocher, who enthusiastically encouraged women like me to further their education and enter politics.

Before I come to what Sir Charles said about his wife, which really has not had much public airing, I will describe how I viewed her as a person. She was a handsome woman. She was kind, approachable, totally unassuming, very diplomatic, charming, and had a very wise countenance. I thought her contribution would go unnoticed because she died in 1992, until a couple of years ago when I read the dedication by Sir Charles in his autobiography. The dedication made me view him in a very different way. The eulogies today have all been about his achievements economically and for the state, but I would like to read what Sir Charles said about his wife, because it is absolutely true. The dedication states —

There is only one person to whom this book could be dedicated and that is my late wife, Rita.

Only our immediate family knows the contribution she made to my life and to my career during the whole of the fifty-six years we were happily married, up to the time of her death on 18 October 1992.

The dedication then goes on to list the many careers he had. The dedication further states —

... her quiet, wise and unquestioning loyalty was a source of constant inspiration. It was by far the greatest strength I had during the whole of that time.

...

I have never known anyone ...

and this is so true —

... to have such a far-reaching influence, but appear to do so little about it in an assertive way. She accomplished the greatest asset that any person in public life can have, namely, serenity at home.

Sir Charles' dedication goes on to state that his book, *Charles Court: the early years: an autobiography*, is a very simple book about his life until his entry into Parliament, and states that if anyone looks through the papers at the Batty Library and writes a book about his years in Parliament —

... any successes that may then become apparent should also be dedicated to Rita, without whom little would have been achieved.

I say that not to detract from his achievements, but to say that it is absolutely true—his boys would know that it is absolutely true. His boys also know that in his book, *Charles Court: the early years: an autobiography*, if one reads it closely, there is a very candid overview of her attributes. I am just very proud and privileged to reach back in time, if we like, to 1981 when I first met Lady Court. Over the years, I thought she was a wonderful woman and had never received that recognition. I was thrilled to read that dedication in Sir Charles' book.

I would like to extend my sincerest condolences to his children, Lady Judy and all their extended family.

**MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon)** [1.20 pm]: The first time I had any close contact with Sir Charles Court was as an insurance agent some time in the seventies. I want to refer to this occasion because it epitomises what is happening now. It took place in an auditorium in Western Australia with some 500 people there, and the room was pitch black. I walked the guest speaker of the day, Sir Charles Court, in a single spotlight to the theme from *Star Wars*. It was a remarkable event and I was just taken by this theatre created by the insurance industry. Then Sir Charles took the stage. He was unaffected by that event. I would have found it overwhelming to have that sort of focus, but away he went and spoke brilliantly, as those of us who knew him know he could.

I am very impressed about the way the people of Western Australia and to some degree the way the people of Australia generally have reacted to his death. I think it is of great credit to Western Australians, members opposite and a whole raft of people who had clashes with Sir Charles during his life to recognise what a brilliant person he was and the contribution he, as one individual, made to us all. There is not a single Western Australian who should not be grateful for the service of Sir Charles Court—that is, service in the real meaning of the word.

In our lives, very few people of consequence drift past us. When we think about it, we could go through a state like Western Australia and see many remarkable people but not people of real consequence. I support the Premier and the plans for the statue. Personally, I think that is the best outcome. I will never argue about where the statue should be or what it should look like or any of those matters, but I believe that a statue in terms of our culture and history is the appropriate response. I look forward to seeing what Richard and others come up with in that context.

Only a few days ago, I was in Beverley, which was celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of its water supply by Sir John Forrest. I was unthinking enough to say two great Western Australians were involved—Sir John Forrest, who has been mentioned several times today, and C.Y. O'Connor. Several people came out of the audience to say, "What about Sir Charles Court?" I immediately recognised that oversight. I am an amateur historian; I love history. There is always that question: how soon after a person's life does he become an icon, a giant? I am happy to stand behind the Premier's description of Sir Charles Court as a giant. It is appropriate.

Sir Charles Court and Lady Rita Court attended a meeting that I had called in Northam as the chairman of the local chamber of commerce. The member for Cottesloe was the director of the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the time, and we were trying to do wonderful things in the community. Sir Charles Court came to Northam on what can be described only as a stinking hot February night, before air conditioning was common in our public buildings, and spent the night with us. I will tell Richard what his mother asked me: "How do you live in this climate? It's terrible." I said that being a young father, I had bought my children a trampoline and I would take a sheet and a blanket and sleep on the trampoline on the lawn. I will not tell Richard now what she asked me about what I did on the trampoline, but I will tell him later. His mother was a remarkable person. I loved that night, and I will remember it forever. Richard's father was a great gentleman.

Personally, I always appreciated that whenever I saw Sir Charles Court, he was as direct and open with me as he was with everyone, as people in this place said today. There was never an occasion when I came across him, either at a function or privately, when he did not recognise me and greet me with that humble nature that he had, even though he was that driving personality that people have talked about. I strongly support the motion.

I apologise to the house that I was not here yesterday for the condolence motion for Trevor Sprigg. I would like to have been here, but there was a large health meeting in Merredin that I felt I had to attend on behalf of my constituency. I extend my condolences to the Sprigg family and apologise for not being here at yesterday's event.

I also extend my condolences to the Court family in celebration of their father—what a great man he was.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I ask members to rise and support this motion by observing a minute's silence.

Question passed, members standing.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, members.

[Applause.]

### PAPERS TABLED

Papers were tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

### DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES — TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST WORK CAMP

*Statement by Minister for Corrective Services*

**MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen — Minister for Corrective Services)** [1.29 pm]: I am happy to report that the Department of Corrective Services recently celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the first work camp to open in Western Australia. This represents an important milestone in corrective services. Since the first camp for low-risk, minimum-security prisoners opened in Walpole in 1998, hundreds of prisoners have worked at camps across the state contributing over 488 000 hours of work to regional communities valued at over \$8 million. There are seven work camps operating today throughout the state from Walpole to Wyndham.

All work camps are involved in a range of community work projects that not only add value to infrastructure, improve community assets and protect the environment, but also provide adult offenders with valuable life and job-related skills.

The first work camp was established in 1998 at Walpole, when volunteers were needed for the realignment of part of the Bibbulmun Track between Walpole and Albany. Since then, Walpole work camp has become an integral part of the local community. Work camps are also in operation at Bungarun, outside Derby, and Kellerberrin, Pardelup, Millstream, Mt Morgans and Wyndham. They have brought enduring benefits to regional communities by contributing to local economies and providing labour for projects that may not otherwise be feasible.

In the past 10 years, dozens of projects involving work camp prisoners have included the construction of an eight-kilometre BMX and mountain bike track in Northcliffe by prisoners from Walpole; ongoing assistance to park rangers at Millstream with controlled burns, fencing, airstrip repairs and maintenance, and the construction of park facilities; brick paving and the installation of limestone garden beds at Kellerberrin District High School; regular visiting and charity work at Numbala Nunga Nursing Home for the terminally ill in Bungarun; in Pardelup, ongoing assistance to Home and Community Care Services with yard maintenance and the delivery of wood to the elderly; brick paving of the foreshore area of the Wyndham port; and general maintenance to the grounds, paving and landscaping of Laverton District Hospital by prisoners from Mt Morgans.

In addition to the benefit to local communities, prisoners also benefit by getting involved in meaningful community work. This means that they are not only repaying their debt to society, but they are also much better equipped to find and keep a job and live a law-abiding life when they are released.

Work camps are, therefore, an integral part of the future of corrective services in Western Australia and I encourage more communities to partner with us. To commemorate this event a publication has been released, and I now table copy.

[See paper 3644.]

### LEAD TESTING — ESPERANCE

*Statement by Minister for Planning and Infrastructure*

**MS A.J.G. MacTIERNAN (Armadale — Minister for Planning and Infrastructure)** [1.32 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker, I am able to release the latest results of the lead testing conducted in Esperance. These results show a continued improvement in blood lead levels, although we acknowledge that further work is to be done. Thirty-four children whose initial blood lead levels were five micrograms or above due to contamination by lead from

the port were retested in February and all were found to have blood lead levels below five micrograms, except for two children who had a blood lead level of five micrograms. The Department of Health is case-managing another two children with elevated blood levels; however, the majority of their blood lead content is from a source other than the Magellan Metals mine.

Later today I will table a University of Western Australia review on the testing of rainwater tanks that shows an 88 per cent drop in water tank nickel readings and a 60 per cent decrease in lead readings. There are a number of possible explanations for the recontamination of rainwater tanks, including the possibility of remobilisation of lead dust residues and the inadequate cleaning of tanks or roofs. The state government will continue to offer rainwater tank testing to residents in areas most affected by lead contamination. Householders with water tanks showing Magellan lead levels above drinking water guidelines can ask for their tanks and their roofs to be cleaned or for reverse osmosis devices to be provided.

During December 2007, dust monitoring by nine gauges covering Esperance township and the port returned the lowest levels for lead and nickel. The lead reading levels were significantly lower than those recorded in October and November 2007, suggesting that the latest port clean-up has been effective. Further action to be undertaken by the government will include the appropriate cleaning of playground equipment in the most affected areas to ensure children are not put at risk; a Department of Environment and Conservation monitoring program to measure dust levels in the town during the next 12 months; and testing trees and other vegetation around the town. The Department of Environment and Conservation has also engaged consultants to carry out an assessment of all ongoing health and ecological risks. There will be continued cleaning and decontamination of the port. I undertake to provide a further report in the next three months on the blood results, air monitoring and further rainwater tests.

[See paper 3645.]

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS REVIEW

### *Statement by Minister for the Environment*

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for the Environment)** [1.35 pm]: I inform the house of an important element in the Carpenter government's environmental regulatory reform program; namely, a review of the environmental impact assessment process by the Environmental Protection Authority. The environmental impact assessment process ensures that the protection of our environment is taken into consideration at an early stage of development proposals. The current resources boom has brought with it unprecedented demand for project approvals. It has become increasingly obvious that if we are to avoid backlogs, we must slash red tape and streamline the approvals process; however, this must be done without compromising the quality of the environment and protection of Western Australia's unique natural assets. Our system is widely regarded as among the best and most progressive in the nation, but that does not mean we should rest on our laurels. Our economy and our population are burgeoning and there is frenetic activity in the mining and the oil and gas industries that will only increase in the short term. Furthermore, growing complexity in the scope, range and technical aspects of development projects will further prolong the approvals process.

We need to take the environmental approvals process to a new level if we are to capitalise on the resources boom and ensure we continue to deliver environmental and social dividends for all Western Australians. The review of the environmental approvals process will identify ways to streamline the process and remove duplication; provide opportunities to better integrate environmental approvals with other approval processes; and identify innovations to better link developments to regional and sustainable environmental objectives. We need to look at how we can improve the process to ensure better results for the environment, industry, the economy and the community as a whole.

The review must not compromise the core values and principles that underpin the EIA process; namely, transparency, evidence-based decision making, predictability, proportionality and accountability, and, importantly, the public involvement that provides opportunities for public submissions and appeal rights on determinations. This is not about cutting corners; it is about improving the way we operate. We want to keep striking the fine balance between protecting our environment and promoting sustainable industry, and we want to maintain Western Australia's reputation as a great place to live and a great place to do business.

A reference group will be established with representatives from industry, government, academia, environmental groups and environmental consultancies under the chairmanship of the chair of the Environmental Protection Authority. As the review unfolds, this will ensure that a balanced approach is taken, that there will be opportunities for input and that proposed improvements will be examined in partnership with the community. It is anticipated that the review will be completed within six months.

Other policy setting reviews already underway or proposed include the marine impacts of dredging, resourcing and funding models, environmental management plans and a common-user environmental database. The findings will be incorporated into the main review so that early action can be taken on agreed priorities.

**SMALL COUNTRY TOWN SEWERAGE PROGRAM***Statement by Minister for Water Resources*

**MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta — Minister for Water Resources)** [1.39 pm]: Considerable effort has been undertaken in Australia over the past 30 years to investigate low-cost sewerage options for small towns and isolated localities. The small country town sewerage program originally targeted 20 small towns with a population of less than 500 that were not eligible for the infill sewerage program. Initially, the Water Corporation was given responsibility for a pilot program comprising five of these towns. If this initial pilot program was successful, the remaining 15 towns were to be seweraged.

Following an extensive review of the opportunities to innovate in this program, it was found that there was very little opportunity to improve on the efficiencies that had already been achieved with the infill sewerage program. Nevertheless, the government committed to proceed with the first two of these schemes and then to determine the opportunities from there. These two pilot schemes—Kulin and Tambellup—have been completed, each at a cost of approximately \$4 million. This works out to an average cost of around \$25 000 per serviced lot in these small country towns.

This order of expense is beyond the capacity to pay of many people living in these small towns and is certainly unrealistic when one considers the current value of many of the lots. The government has therefore determined that, with current standards, it is uneconomic for this program to continue in its present form. We are therefore exploring alternative approaches to enable these towns to be serviced. An investigation is also being undertaken into alternative waste water options for Hopetoun. This work may assist in reducing costs and thereby identifying new opportunities for the servicing of small country towns. It may also assist in reviewing the draft country sewerage policy, with a view to making it more economical for lots to be developed with on-site treatment. I have also asked the Water Corporation to explore with the Department of Environment and Conservation the appropriateness of the current constraints on environmental discharge of treated waste water in these small country towns. It is my understanding that these constraints may not necessarily reflect the needs or requirements of these locations, adding unnecessarily to the cost of providing waste water services.

The existing small country town sewerage program has been proved uneconomic. However, this government will continue to work towards finding ways to provide these services to small towns in an economic and sustainable fashion, without compromising the health of their communities or the protection of the natural environments in which they are located.

I table a copy of the Water Corporation's report for the benefit of members.

[See paper 3646.]

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION —  
THIRTY-FIRST REPORT — “INQUIRY INTO LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS TO THE  
CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION ACT 2003”**

*Government Response — Statement by Minister for Police and Emergency Services*

**MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta — Minister for Police and Emergency Services)** [1.41 pm]: I refer members to the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission's thirty-first report, “Inquiry into Legislative Amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003—The Role of the Corruption and Crime Commission in Investigating Serious and Organised Crime in Western Australia”, tabled in the Legislative Council on 9 November 2007 and in the Legislative Assembly on 15 November 2007. Both the Attorney General and I, as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, are required to respond to that report. In accordance with standing order 277(1) of the Legislative Assembly, I table for the chair of the committee the Attorney General's letter, which sets out the government's response. As members are aware, Ms Gail Archer has been appointed to conduct a review of the operation and effectiveness of the Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003. The recommendations of the joint standing committee will be considered in conjunction with the recommendations in that review. The government will consider legislative amendments following the thirty-first report and the review by Ms Archer.

[See paper 3647.]

**ACTS AMENDMENT (ASSAULTS ON POLICE OFFICERS) BILL 2008***Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr R.F. Johnson**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the member.

**LOGUE BROOK DAM***Notice of Motion*

By leave, **Mr M.J. Cowper** gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

That this House —

- (1) refers to the Economics and Industry Standing Committee for its inquiry into the decision by the Minister for Water Resources to close the Logue Brook Dam to public access from May 2008 and to investigate and make recommendations on —
  - (a) the necessity of using the dam for potable water supplies;
  - (b) whether dual use of the dam for potable water supplies and recreation could be safely achieved and, if so, what options are available;
  - (c) the suitability of Lake Kepwari as an alternative recreation facility;
  - (d) whether sufficient funds have been allocated to develop alternative recreation facilities in the south west of Western Australia; and
  - (e) any other related matters,
 and report to the Legislative Assembly by 30 August 2008; and
- (2) calls on the government not to remove the public access to Logue Brook Dam until after the committee reports to the house.

### PREMIER'S STATEMENT

#### *Consideration*

Resumed from 26 February on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

**MR T. BUSWELL (Vasse — Leader of the Opposition)** [1.44 pm]: Before I contribute to this debate, I make a couple of comments about an incident that occurred earlier today involving the Premier. I understand that someone approached the Premier rather vigorously on the steps of Parliament House as he was addressing the taxidriviers. I believe the person involved was not a taxidriver. I place on public record that that sort of action is something that I am sure every member of this house finds completely and absolutely inappropriate and unacceptable. The Premier and I may have our points of difference, and we certainly have strong views about each other that are often expressed in this chamber, but that sort of behaviour is unacceptable and I am glad that he was not hurt in any way, shape or form.

It is worthwhile making the observation that there is little doubt that Western Australia is enjoying what has often been described as a once in a generation—occasionally described as a once in a century—period of economic growth and wealth creation. The level of economic growth, export growth and population growth that the state is currently enjoying is quite simply astounding. In the context of this economic growth and wealth creation, I find it particularly interesting—indeed, concerning—that when one travels into the suburban areas of Perth or the regional areas of Western Australia, one discovers that the vast majority of the people in this state are not enjoying any positive impact as a result of this economic boom. In many ways, people argue that this tsunami of economic good times is washing right over them and their families. People talk about the boom and the surplus, but, because of the government's inability to effectively manage the current economic good times, ordinary Western Australians are being denied an opportunity to participate in the prosperity this wonderful state is generating. The other message they leave one with is that they are concerned that the government is mismanaging the economic good times and that not enough is being done to lock in the growth and prosperity that Western Australia is enjoying. In other words, not enough is being done to use the current economic good times to secure the long-term prosperity of the people of Western Australia.

Earlier today during the condolence motion for Sir Charles Court, it was interesting to hear members talk about Sir Charles and that other great former Premier of this state, Sir John Forrest. When one talks about the achievements of those two people, one is talking about two Premiers who were actively involved in the leadership of this state during times of economic opportunity, and they had one thing in common: a vision for the long-term future of the state that they governed. In many ways, those surges in economic activity were coupled with Premiers who had vision for the state, and Western Australians, over many successive generations, benefited from that. Few people in this chamber would argue that the work Sir John Forrest did in the 1890s and the early part of the twentieth century, along with the later work of Sir Charles Court, played a major role in securing economic prosperity for the future generations of Western Australia. Similarly, anyone who sat in this chamber yesterday and heard the Premier's Statement could have drawn only two conclusions. The first is that the Premier and his government have no real appreciation of the depth of feeling in households across Western Australia, and the depth of frustration people feel when they see this wonderful economic opportunity being frittered away. Households across the state are continually being told by the Premier, the Treasurer and large sections of the Western Australian financial press that we are enjoying a boom the likes of which we have never before seen, yet the people of Western Australia have enjoyed no positive impact as a result. The second

conclusion that can be drawn is that this government is tired; it has run out of energy and enthusiasm and is a government that has no plan for the long-term future of this state. The government has run out of ideas. It is not positioning Western Australia to grow into the future because it has no plan for the state.

It is useful to stop and consider the nature of the economic drivers that underpin the growth of the Western Australian economy. It is true—the Premier noted it yesterday—that last year economic growth in Western Australia was about 6.3 per cent. This year it is forecast to be about seven per cent, as measured by real gross state product. That is a very good level of economic performance by anybody's measure. When we dig down and look at the factors that have driven economic growth in this state, we find that they are almost completely isolated from the performance of this government. For the past couple of years, economic growth in Western Australia has principally been driven by private business investment, as private business rushes to put in place the capacity required in the resources and energy sector in particular to meet the evident increases in demand that will come from China and, to a lesser degree, India and Japan. For the past couple of years, economic growth in this state has been underpinned by private sector investment. Economic growth in the next couple of years will be underpinned by export growth as we go from a capacity-building phase in Western Australia to a phase in which our export volumes will increase dramatically. That will be reflected in the impact of exports on Western Australian economic growth over the next couple of years.

Again, there are two very important points to note about the level of economic growth in Western Australia. First, it is driven almost exclusively by the activities of the private sector, despite the natural tendency and capacity of this government to inhibit that process. Secondly, the growth is, in many ways, a direct legacy of Sir Charles Court, whose achievements were more than adequately outlined today, and his son Richard Court, who was in the Speaker's gallery earlier. Let us not forget that in public policy across Australia in the 1990s we were being told to jump on the bandwagon of this new thing called the new economy. Everybody said that we should forget the old economy and jump on to the new economy. Richard Court and his government went overseas. They negotiated new deals for the export of Western Australian resources and energy products—the old economy. They backed this state to grow into the future by building on its strengths, and they are to be applauded for it. This state reaps the benefits of that decision every day. Historically, when this state has enjoyed periods of economic prosperity, as we are currently enjoying, it was accompanied by governance and by Premiers who had a vision for the long-term vision of this state. That is clearly not the case now. After seven sorry years in government, and after two years under this Premier, the government is tired and is bereft of energy, enthusiasm and ideas, but it is trying to take the credit for the hard work that has been done by those who came before them in this place and the hard work being done by Western Australian families and businesses.

I mentioned earlier that many people in this state feel that the boom has completely washed over them. They feel that they are being denied the opportunity to participate in prosperity. That denial of participation is manifest in a number of core areas of government service failure, and I will touch on a couple of them.

The education system in this state is confusing. Parents have declining confidence in the education system. The employees in that system, the teachers of Western Australia, are almost ready to give up on it. The unfortunate reality of the declining confidence in the education system in this state is that the people of Western Australia are voting with their feet and are leaving the public education system. That is a great shame. It is a great indictment on this government's failure to deliver on education. I will not talk about the specifics of the teachers' issues that are currently confronting the government, but there is no doubt that in the past few years the Department of Education and Training has gone through a process of increased bureaucratisation. There is less focus on looking after teachers in the classroom. There is less focus on rebuilding and revitalising our educational infrastructure. There is less focus on addressing the concerns that confront teachers every day of their teaching career. I had an interesting experience just before Christmas when the local branch of the State School Teachers' Union of WA held a meeting in my office. The members expressed to me their long-held, deep frustration at the inability of the government to provide them with the tools and resources they need to do their job properly; that is, simply to teach the young children of this state and to allow them to access a standard of education that will enable them to achieve to their utmost capacity. It is a fundamental issue, and people are voting with their feet.

I move on to the state's failing health system, which, by the part-time Minister for Health's own admission, is failing. I was intrigued to hear his well-publicised comments following the departure of Dr Fong and the appointment of Dr Peter Flett to head up the health system. The Minister for Health said words to this effect: "Now that Neale Fong, the person whom I entrusted to embed reform in the Western Australian health system, has gone, we are going to focus on delivering three outcomes in the Western Australian public health system. We are going to focus on fixing hospitals, we are going to fix waiting times in emergency departments and overcrowding, and we are going to look after patients in the Western Australian public health system." What an amazing admission from a government that has had charge of that health system for seven years! After seven years it has finally decided to fix hospitals, address the issues in emergency departments and look after patients. It was absolutely staggering. Perhaps the government's only claim to fame for health, which we dispute, is that it has cut the elective surgery waiting list. We know that it has been cut because people have been culled from the

list. It is simple. We have seen the letters that are written to people the length and breadth of this state. The letters tell them to fill in a form and send it back or it will be assumed that they want to be taken off the elective surgery list. That is a shambolic attempt to use smoke and mirrors and trickery to give the perception that the government is addressing a real issue in the state's health system. It is very interesting to look at the health system in this state. Ninety-two per cent of the public of Western Australia do not feel that the health system is any better than it was in 2001. In a report released last year on reducing adverse events in public hospitals, the Auditor General identified that 50 per cent of adverse events are entirely preventable. Staff are leaving our public hospitals in record numbers. We know that there are challenges confronting the delivery of twenty-first century health care, including an ageing population, obesity and mental health issues. I will give people one tip—we will not shut Royal Perth Hospital, as this government is planning to do.

There is also an interesting situation arising in Western Australia whereby people are continually told that they have never had it so good economically, yet the people of this state have never felt less safe in their homes and communities. This feeling is real, it is palpable and it is being constantly reinforced every day across this state. I will not revisit the crime statistics produced by the Office of Crime Prevention last year, but they clearly showed that in 2006 the number of offences in most major crime categories in Western Australia had increased. Of course, the minister claimed that they had decreased, but the fact is that they had increased. What do we see in our communities? We see mob brawls, gangs of young teenagers roaming our streets, graffiti and hooning dominating life in our suburbs, the unfortunate effects of drugs on young Western Australians, and the regular and disgraceful bashing of police officers in this state. We will outline and deliver a new approach to policing, starting with the introduction of a bill in this house today by my colleague the member for Hillarys that will seek to introduce minimum mandatory sentencing for people who seriously assault police officers.

There is also a major concern in Western Australia that the legacy of the boom is a Western Australia in which young people can no longer afford to rent or buy a house.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 416.]

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### ASSAULTS AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS — PUNISHMENT

**7. Mr T. BUSWELL to the Premier:**

- (1) Does the Premier recall stating in March 2006 that an alternative sentencing option may be preferable to a prison sentence for a person who seriously assaults a police officer?
- (2) Is the Premier aware that, according to estimates by the Western Australian Police Union, around 3 600 police officers have been attacked in the two years since he made that statement?
- (3) Will the Premier now accept that his government's lack of action on this issue has seriously undermined morale in the ranks of our police force?
- (4) What does the Premier have to say to the mother of Constable Matthew Butcher, who asked this morning, in reference to the opposition's plan to introduce minimum mandatory sentencing for those who bash police officers, what it will take before such a bill is passed by the politicians?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

- (1)-(4) In relation to the mother of Matthew Butcher, I extend the state's deepest sympathy and support for the situation in which she finds herself. It was an incredibly tragic incident. I appreciate the anguish that she must be feeling—I think any normal person would.

In relation to the broader issue, yesterday or last night legislation that will significantly increase the penalties for those who assault police officers and other public officers passed through the Parliament of Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** We have been waiting for that legislation to be passed for a very long time—nearly 18 months. The legislation was introduced into the lower house and, after reaching the upper house, it found itself in no-man's-land. What we need to do now is to allow that legislation to play its part in delivering a very strong message to the community, the magistrates and the judiciary that we expect assaults of that nature to be dealt with severely. I support that position. I understand that the Commissioner of Police has said that he supports the legislation that has just passed through Parliament. We should see whether that legislation has the impact which we desire and which the people who support tougher penalties against people who assault police officers and other public officers desire.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The effect of that legislation must now be observed. If we determine at an appropriate time in the future that the response and reaction has not been adequate, we will have another look at the legislation. This is a great example, I think, of why the Parliament of Western Australia should act more efficiently. There was absolutely no excuse for that legislation to have languished for so long in the upper house. We have passed legislation that will significantly increase the penalty for people who assault police officers and other public officers—legislation that is supported by the Commissioner of Police. We will observe the effect of that legislation and in that observation we will determine whether any other action is required. Until then, I am grateful that at last that legislation has been passed. I note that only once I criticised —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. I caution the member for Hillarys. Statements such as the one he directed at the Premier suggesting a more sinister notion are very close to being out of order. I warn him against making that type of comment.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I withdraw the word “criticised” and say that the legislation passed only after I prompted the upper house into action. There are difficulties and problems with mandatory sentencing in general, because it removes the discretion of the judicial officers who have the expertise, knowledge and all the facts at their disposal when dealing with cases. Before we launch into a regime of mandatory sentencing for assaults on public officers, people should think very carefully about what that might mean broadly and in individual circumstances. For example, just today I was involved in an incident with a protester outside Parliament. That incident could be categorised as an assault on me. I spoke to the person afterwards when he was in the police lockup van, which was parked over the road. I asked him why he felt so worked up that he should feel the need to attack me. By the time I spoke to him, which was some 10 or 15 minutes after the incident, he was full of remorse. I was not injured or harmed. I think it would have been unfortunate if that incident had immediately resulted in a prison sentence. I would have thought that of all members in the Western Australian Parliament who should be sensitive to the possibility of mandatory sentencing for an assault, the newly elected Leader of the Opposition would be that person.

**Mr T. Buswell:** Do you know the difference between that and a serious assault?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Yes. I consider what the Leader of the Opposition did to be a serious assault. It is absolutely amazing that the Leader of the Opposition does not. That is a typical response from a person who has no concept of what people are complaining about when they say that this place is a boys’ club. The Leader of the Opposition has no idea. There was a further demonstration of that yesterday when the member for Cottesloe leapt to his feet and complained that I was talking about a matter that was not a significant policy issue. That is a clear demonstration of why there is not one single woman sitting on the Liberal Party benches. The one woman left in the Liberal Party is not sitting in Parliament today because of the Leader of the Opposition’s inability to understand the seriousness of these sorts of matters. Of all the members of the Western Australian Parliament who should think twice about the concept of mandatory sentencing for assault, the Leader of the Opposition is that person. I suggest that he undergo some training on these issues, because he needs it.

#### ASSAULTS AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS — PUNISHMENT

##### 8. **Mr T. BUSWELL to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Under the current regime, how many times has the 10-year maximum penalty been applied to people convicted of assaulting a police officer?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

That is a question requiring some detail, and I am quite prepared to take it on notice.

#### PERTH-BUNBURY — FAST TRAIN SERVICE

##### 9. **Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Premier:**

Can the Premier advise the house of the state government’s latest initiative in building Western Australia?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for the question. It is an initiative that will eventually impact extremely positively upon his electorate. Yesterday, I talked about the capital works and infrastructure program that is being undertaken in Western Australia now, and about once-in-a-century projects. Several of them are happening in the space of a single decade at this time. This government is building Western Australia. The week before last, I announced that the state government would undertake a feasibility study into the provision of a fast train service between Perth and Bunbury. I was inspired to do that by the remarkably successful outcome of the

government's project to build the rail line from Perth to Mandurah, which can only be described as a brilliant, visionary infrastructure project that all other states now wish they either had done or could do. That project has made us the envy of the nation, and I congratulate the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure for her vision, and her courage under fire from those ignorant enough to consistently denigrate the project. Where are they now? They are probably catching the train.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** It is quite remarkable that members of the opposition still criticise the project. It is quite unbelievable. I think I just picked up, by way of interjection, members opposite saying that they had started the project.

**Dr K.D. Hames** interjected.

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

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** As I recall, the intention of the previous government was to build a railway line from Rockingham—at some stage, potentially, from Mandurah—not to Perth at all, but to Kenwick. That project would never have delivered anything to all those commuters who now catch the train from places like Bullcreek and Murdoch. It would have made Western Australia not the envy of the nation, but the laughing stock of the nation.

**Mr J.H.D. Day** interjected.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** What did the Romans ever do for us? What did they do?

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** That was Geoff Gallop's line. Be original.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** It was not, actually; it was a line taken from a film. It was not a Geoff Gallop line; it was a line taken from a film, as the member for Cottesloe might know.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I find it difficult to defend the Liberal Party when people tell me that it is a rabble. These sorts of experiences do not do me much good in trying to mount that defence.

The Perth-Mandurah rail line was an absolutely outstanding success that continues every day of the week. Building on that, we believe that it would be appropriate to look at the feasibility of taking a fast train service all the way to Bunbury, not via Mandurah, but via the new transport corridor of the Perth-Bunbury highway.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call to order the members for Roe and Murray.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** That is what we will do. The information we have to hand at the moment leads us to believe that the project could transport people from the new underground Esplanade station in the heart of Perth to the heart of Bunbury in 90 minutes or less, at 160 kilometres an hour. I am certain that this development will take place, but it is necessary with a once-in-a-century project like this to make sure that it is done right, and to collate all the information before launching into the work, and that is what will happen. I went to Bunbury a week or so ago and we looked at the potential route of the rail line and the site for the station with the mayor, David Smith.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call to order the member for Roe and the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** I would describe the reaction from the people of Bunbury to the proposal as incredibly enthusiastic, and so it should be. I am grateful for the support that the member for Collie-Wellington has given during discussions about the benefit this project would deliver, and I anticipate that that benefit will be delivered.

#### OFFICE OF SHARED SERVICES

#### 10. **Dr S.C. THOMAS to the Premier:**

I refer to the comments of the Premier, as reported in *The West Australian* on 2 January, about the Office of Shared Services, when he stated —

“If we'd known it was going to be so costly and so lengthy, this process has been going on for several years now, different judgements may have been made.

“We are confident now that with Treasury overseeing the project the projections they are making will be accurate for us.”

- (1) Will the Premier now admit that this project is a waste of \$450 million—almost enough taxpayers' money to fund the rebuilding of Princess Margaret Hospital for Children?
- (2) If the Premier does not accept this, why will he not release the entire business case review of this project instead of his highly edited and uninformative summary?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

(1)-(2) Yes, I said that, and I stand by it, of course.

**Dr S.C. Thomas:** Do you think you might have done it differently?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Of course we might have done it differently. That is pretty obvious. We were working on the best advice at the time, and working in what we considered to be the best interests of the state, and we still are. I do not think anyone would have to be very clever to understand that we would have preferred if the costs had been less. We anticipated the cost would be less, and we wish the costs had been less.

**Dr S.C. Thomas:** Give us some detail.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** The member is very inexperienced in the Parliament, as is his leader. He will find, as he moves closer to the leader's chair, that the light shines more brightly on him. He needs to mature a bit and behave himself, and stop acting like an errant schoolboy. In relation to the release of the full document, of course commercial sensitivities are involved, but I might just reflect upon our efforts to try to obtain similar commercially sensitive information from the other side of the Parliament about the sale of Westrail freight under the previous government.

**Mr T. Buswell:** We are talking taxpayers' dollars.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** It was hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars, and years later we are still being blocked. I am anticipating that the Leader of the Opposition will remove that objection so that we can get full access to that material. Is that so?

**Mr T. Buswell:** If the Premier releases the documents we are talking about, we will think about it.

#### OFFICE OF SHARED SERVICES

**11. Dr S.C. THOMAS to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. What is the Premier trying to hide in the business case of the Office of Shared Services?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

Absolutely nothing.

#### FUNDING COMMITMENTS — REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**12. Mrs C.A. MARTIN to the Treasurer:**

This Treasurer is a good Treasurer. Can he outline the government's infrastructure funding commitments to regional Western Australia?

**Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:**

I thank the member for her comment. I usually enjoy a modest surge in popularity just before the budget decisions are made. After that, I am back to my normal status in politics.

I affirm that regional Western Australia is a very important part of the state's economy and the nation's economy. It is the economic powerhouse of the state and the nation. The reason that we have committed a record \$25 billion to the capital works program is that we want to keep regional economic growth going. We want to keep regional Western Australia's contribution to the state and the nation going.

Yesterday, the member for Wagin told the house that the National Party's policy was to put away 25 per cent of the royalties into a regional infrastructure fund for the regions. We support infrastructure in the regions. We do not agree with the National Party's policy, because it would be selling the regions short. In the 2007-08 financial year, the state is expected to receive about \$2.4 billion in royalty revenues. If 25 per cent of those revenues were dedicated to regional infrastructure, it would amount to \$0.6 billion. Our actual allocation to infrastructure for the regions is about \$1.6 billion, almost three times what the National Party wants. We do not support the National Party promise and we do not think that it is providing enough compared with what we are contributing.

The National Party is not the only party in financial disarray. We have an inexperienced and immature opposition that does not understand what we need to do to have financial discipline. The Leader of the Opposition is not mature enough to get some financial discipline into his shadow cabinet. The new shadow Treasurer has gone strangely quiet after telling us that public sector workers would get nothing from him. His

last public announcement was a week ago and he was still on the same theme. My notes indicate that he said that we —

. . . must not allow WA to be the economic spoiler that drives inflation and interest rates up.

His colleague the shadow education minister was at it again on Monday telling 6PR that all that needs to be done is to throw some cash at the problem. My notes indicate that he said the following about the teachers' dispute —

The situation can be resolved today quite frankly, the Minister can offer a substantial, across the board salary increase to all teachers.

We still have this issue whereby the shadow Treasurer says to not give them anything and the shadow education minister says to give them a substantial pay increase. We have an immature and inexperienced Leader of the Opposition who cannot resolve this conflict by getting some financial discipline —

**Dr S.C. Thomas:** Give us a quote.

**Mr E.S. RIPPER:** I have already given a quote that reads that we —

. . . must not allow WA to be the economic spoiler that drives inflation and interest rates up.

Earlier the shadow Treasurer was painting himself as the champion of financial discipline by saying he would not back wage increases, while his colleagues go out to different audiences and say, "Put them up substantially."

The question to the house is: why has the Leader of the Opposition not got the maturity to get this matter resolved by getting some financial discipline into the shadow cabinet?

#### TEACHERS' STRIKE

#### 13. **Mr J.H.D. DAY to the Minister for Education and Training:**

I refer to the fact that teachers will be striking for half a day tomorrow.

- (1) Will the minister concede that this issue has been abysmally managed by him and his government, resulting in significant uncertainty and inconvenience to students and parents?
- (2) Why has the department done a backflip on the minister's original directive that parents should send their children to school, now leaving it to individual principals to decide whether to close schools?
- (3) Will the minister guarantee that all children who go to school tomorrow will be properly supervised?

#### **Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

- (1)-(3) I thank the member for Darling Range for the question, which involves a very serious matter. We took the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia to the Industrial Relations Commission earlier in the week. The Industrial Relations Commission provided an order yesterday morning in which the commissioner directed that no strike action be taken. She also directed that the union comply with that and direct its members to comply with that. The department then made time available yesterday for the union executive to meet in order to issue those directives. The union decided not to meet yesterday; it decided that it would meet this morning. It came out at 12.30 this afternoon and said that it will ignore the direction of the Industrial Relations Commission and hold its strike tomorrow in any event, despite the Industrial Relations Commission's order. I am very disappointed in the State School Teachers' Union's executive for providing that directive to the workforce. The State School Teachers' Union's executive should have complied with what the Industrial Relations Commission directed.

We have been through a process with the State School Teachers' Union's executive to try to reach an agreement on this matter. We want to pay teachers well. It is a little known fact that under an offer that we put to the State School Teachers' Union, an ordinary classroom teacher would be paid \$84 300 a year. In tougher-to-staff schools in the country or in parts of the metropolitan area, additional allowances up to \$20 000 would be available. Under that offer, teachers would be amongst the very best paid in the country—that is, in most cases, because obviously various locations and levels need to be considered. We are prepared to continue negotiations with the teachers' union; however, its industrial action does not make it easy.

We are now directing principals to decide what should happen in individual schools. In some schools very few staff will go on strike and in others a lot of staff will go on strike. We are leaving it to individual schools to decide that and we have faith in the principals that they will be able to decide that matter as appropriate.

I want to raise one thing; that is, the shadow Minister for Education and Training has been encouraging the school teachers' union to take this strike action. I will read from the transcript of what he said on Monday —

Our teachers are an inherently conservative group and they don't take industrial action unless they deem it absolutely necessary, and I feel that they've reached that precipice.

The Liberal Party has been encouraging the teachers' union to take strike action tomorrow and members opposite should be ashamed of themselves.

#### TEACHERS' STRIKE

##### 14. **Mr J.H.D. DAY to the Minister for Education and Training:**

I have a supplementary question. I repeat what I asked previously: will the minister guarantee that all children who go to school tomorrow will be properly supervised?

##### **Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

We will leave that to the principals.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time and the member for Cottesloe to order for the first time.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We will leave it to principals around the state to determine what happens at their schools. The directive that we have issued to principals is that they should use safety as their guiding factor in determining whether their schools will open tomorrow. That is fair and reasonable. This strike action tomorrow is not of the state government's making; it is because the union executive has ignored an order by the Industrial Relations Commission that it should comply with. If opposition members should be looking at anyone, it is themselves for encouraging the union to take that action.

#### TAXIDRIVERS' STRIKE

##### 15. **Mr M.P. WHITELY to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:**

Can the minister advise the house of the causes and consequences of taxidriviers taking strike action?

##### **Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question and I acknowledge the incident involving the Premier this morning; that is, the courage and incredible bravery that he showed in the face of the hostility of some taxidriviers and obviously their friends. What is so interesting about this is that perhaps one could say that all the people at the front of Parliament House were not taxi operators, which does not surprise us, because there has not been a great deal of disruption to the industry, from the reports we have received. We calculate that there were probably about 150 cabs at the front of this place. We have a fleet of in excess of 1 600; therefore, probably around seven per cent to eight per cent of the fleet were out there today. That is less than one per cent of the 2 500 taxidriviers in this state. The action was caused by a decision that the government made to allow peak-period operators to come in on a trial basis to help clear the backlog that was occurring between 5.00 and 9.00 am on weekdays. There was overwhelming anecdotal evidence—but not simply anecdotal evidence—supported by the data that we were getting from taxi dispatch services that hundreds of people were being left unable to get a cab to the airport in the morning and unable to get to early morning meetings. It has become quite clear to us that the enormous economic growth that has occurred in Western Australia due to enormous activity in the mining area has changed substantially the notion of "peak time". The new peak time for taxi services occurs between 5.00 and 9.00 am. We had available to us a means for dealing with it, which was to allow peak-period operators to come in and help clear that work. I have to say that it has been a success. The hotel industry, tourism operators, airports and taxi dispatch services have all said, in the four weeks since we introduced this measure, that there has been a very noticeable decline in the number of complaints and a clearance of those jobs. We believe, therefore, that it was the right thing to do.

Of course, we are always mindful of ensuring that taxidriviers have a good income, which is why Western Australia is the only state in Australia that has undertaken the massive reforms that it has undertaken. We have lowered the cost structure for taxi operators, which has resulted in taxidriviers not being held to ransom by buying investors but, rather, having access to cheap plates. However, we do say that the taxi industry cannot ignore customers. It has been the practice in the past that customers have come second. The industry cannot do that. We say that it is not in the industry's best interests to do so. If the industry will not allow us the flexibility to respond to the reasonable demands of the travelling public, the pressure for deregulation will be on, which will be to the industry's very grave disadvantage. Taxidriviers, as always, have raised a number of other complaints. I have met with them in the past two weeks, gone through those complaints in great detail and have undertaken to take steps to help them with their concerns. However, the government is very focused. The taxi industry must be out in the community addressing the needs of the travelling public, and we urge all those people in the rest of the taxi industry to keep up the very good work.

## HALLS CREEK DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL — DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY FACILITIES

**16. Mr B.J. GRYLLS to the Minister for Education and Training:**

I refer to Coroner Alastair Hope's damning report, which cites the need for more training for Aboriginal youth.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the design and technology facility at Halls Creek District High School is an uninsulated tin shed where temperatures in the high 40 degrees are regularly recorded?
- (2) Is it acceptable that students are expected to learn trade skills under such appalling conditions?
- (3) Will the minister immediately authorise funding for that building to be air-conditioned?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Merredin for the question.

- (1)-(3) I have read the relevant parts of the coroner's report on the education portfolio and I want to say this about what he had to say. I have been to many Indigenous communities and other towns that are predominantly Indigenous towns in the Kimberley and the Pilbara. My impression, after visiting the schools and TAFE colleges in those locations, is that the education department staff, the teachers, the education assistants and the Aboriginal Islander education officers in those schools do a fantastic job. I do not want any of them to think that the job they do is somehow being denigrated in the coroner's report. I challenge any member who wants to do something interesting to visit one of the schools in those communities to see the effort to which teachers and other staff in those schools go to educate children in those locations. The results are coming through. It is a long-term process to get Indigenous education standards, achievements and results to the same level as the non-Indigenous community. It is a long-term process and it will not happen overnight. However, the resources that are going into those communities are extraordinary, as members will see when they visit schools in those communities.

I will refer to a few matters—the new school at Fitzroy Crossing, the improvements to TAFE in Broome, the additional resources at Kununurra District High School and the Clontarf academies. There are now eight Clontarf academies around the state. There is one for girls, which is a basketball academy. In the schools themselves there are breakfast clubs and pick-ups for students who might otherwise not be able to get to school. All these things are going on. There are far higher levels than ever before of Aboriginal students completing year 12, far higher levels of Aboriginal students now completing apprenticeships and traineeships, and far higher levels of Aboriginal students going on to university and completing university degrees. Those facts and the people responsible for all their work must be acknowledged.

I am unaware of the issue relating to the shed at Halls Creek, but if the member provides me with details, I will examine them.

## SCHOOLS — CAPITALS WORKS PROGRAM

**17. Dr J.M. EDWARDS to the Minister for Education and Training:**

At the start of the 2008 school year, a number of schools opened for the first time. How do these new schools fit into the overall capital works plan for giving Western Australian students state-of-the-art facilities in which to learn?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Maylands for the question.

At the start of the school year we opened 11 new schools around Western Australia, in the city and in the country. That is the most number of new schools since 1978. I will refer to the schools that opened their doors at the start of the school year: Bletchley Park Primary School in the Southern River electorate; Ellen Stirling Primary School in Ellenbrook; Hocking Primary School; South Halls Head Primary School in the member for Dawesville's electorate; Waikiki Primary School; Bullsbrook District High School; Cape Naturaliste College in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate; Gilmore College in Kwinana; Wiluna Remote Community School; Atwell College; and Mount Barker Senior High School in the member for Stirling's electorate. That totals 11 new schools as part of a \$1.41 billion capital works program that the state government is running. That is three times the amount of money being spent on capital works compared with the capital works program of the last Liberal-National Party government. That is the most number of new schools since 1978.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Members opposite complain about the government building new schools and improving schools around the state. However, by any measure, members who visit the new schools built by this state government will see that they are among the very best in the country and the very best in the world. Members should go and look at one. We have built one each in the electorates of the Leader of the Opposition and the

Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Members should go and look at them and see that the very best technologies, the very best classrooms and among the very best teachers in the world are on offer there.

#### PRISONER TRANSFER FLEET — REPLACEMENT

##### **18. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I refer to the tragic death of Ian Ward and the repeated breakdowns of the government fleet of prison vehicles.

- (1) When was the minister or her department first informed of problems resulting from the age of the prisoner transfer fleet?
- (2) Why, with a \$2 billion surplus, has the ageing prisoner transport fleet not been replaced?
- (3) Why did it take the death of Mr Ward for the minister to finally act on this issue?

##### **Ms M.M. QUIRK replied:**

I thank the member for Hillarys for his question.

- (1)-(3) In answer to when the department and when my predecessor were first informed, I can indicate to the member for Hillarys that plans were made by the Department of Corrective Services from 2004 and onwards to replace the fleet. That has been occurring gradually and is outlined in the report I tabled yesterday.

Several members interjected.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** The prisoner transport movements annually for the year are about 26 000 to and from court and about 1 000 a year from police lockups, so those vehicles make over 30 000 movements a year. A handful of breakdowns are too many; however, we are talking about a great number of journeys under challenging conditions. I disagree vehemently with the member that it took the tragic death of Mr Ward to galvanise us into action. I said that a replacement schedule had already been underway for some time and budgeted for and that we are in the process of replacing the ageing fleet. In addition to that, I had already commissioned a report by KPMG, which is currently in draft and will be finalised shortly, but it was certainly well underway before the incident at Kalgoorlie.

#### MAJOR ROAD PROJECTS — REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

##### **19. Mr S.R. HILL to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:**

Can the minister advise the house of the progress of major road projects in regional Western Australia?

##### **Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question. I understand that he is a man with a great interest in roads and he gets lots of them in his electorate, as, Mr Speaker, of course you do also. We hear a lot from opposition members, who have recently been jumping up and down saying that the government is not building any country roads. I can only presume that the only forays of opposition members into the country are to their holiday houses in Bunker Bay, because they appear to be totally unaware of all the magnificent projects that are going on around the state. Indeed, in December, during the parliamentary break, I was very pleased to open the port access road, Gubinge Road, which is a project —

Several members interjected.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN:** Mr Speaker, can you protect me from these boys? I am not saying that they are in a club. I am sure that they do not get on well enough to be in any club.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I know you are very interested in the roads that we are building.

We have opened Gubinge Road in Broome. The member for Kimberley assisted me in December when we also opened another extremely important project, which was the finalisation of the sealing of the Beagle Bay-Cape Leveque road, which has long been the aspiration of that community and has finally been achieved.

**Mr J.H.D. Day:** Fifty kays!

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Darling Range is on very thin ice talking about my road! I warn him against it.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN:** We are spending about \$130 million on stage 2 of the Karratha-Tom Price road. Bearing in mind that for eight years the coalition government did nothing, we have already completed stage 1 at a cost of \$26 million and now we are on to stage 2. This is a very hard road project. I am very proud of the way in which Main Roads and the alliance team are proceeding with it. It will be completed this year. The Mt Barker bypass is an important project and it will be completed in 2008. Stage 1 of Indian Ocean Drive is about to be

completed, and stage 2 is about to begin commencement. Of course, members of the opposition do not go to Karratha. I was looking at the duplication of the Dampier Highway last week, which is well underway. Of course, the Bunbury highway is proceeding very well and is a tremendous project. We have a whole raft of other projects underway, such as the southern transport corridor stage 2, which is currently out for tender.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Hillarys to order and I call the member for Roe to order for the third time.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN:** I think it is a case of road envy, Mr Speaker!

We are spending around 64 per cent of the state's road funding on regional roads, which compares very favourably with the 51 per cent that those opposite spent during their last term in government.

#### AUTISM ASSESSMENTS

#### 20. Mr G.M. CASTRILLI to the Minister for Disability Services:

Given the importance of the early identification of autism in children —

- (1) Why is it that families in the metropolitan region have to wait an average of seven months for a so-called early intervention autism assessment?
- (2) Why is it that families in the metropolitan region have to wait an average of a year and a half for a school-age autism assessment?
- (3) Given the anxiety that these unacceptable waiting times cause for parents, what action will the minister now be taking to speed up assessment times?

#### Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury, not only for the question but for lobbying on behalf of some of the families in that region. I am grateful to him for that.

- (1)-(3) Early in December or January I was in Bunbury talking with families who have children with autism and explaining to them that the efforts we have put into improving the services for families with children with autism were significant. I indicated that waiting times were not acceptable to me and that they had slipped. As a consequence of that, the Disability Services Commission has made a concerted effort to recruit staff into the area so that the services to regional Western Australia can be improved. One of the acknowledged issues was vacancies among therapists. The waiting time was also acknowledged as not being acceptable. We have now built up the full complement of staff in therapy services. I was able to indicate to those families that the waiting times ought to be reduced.

#### PREMIER'S STATEMENT

##### *Consideration*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR T. BUSWELL (Vasse — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.48 pm]: Before I sat down I was highlighting some of the failings in the delivery of basic services by this government into the households of Western Australia. The fourth point that I intend to touch on is a very significant and serious point. It is the fact that one of the legacies of this government's inability to manage the economic conditions that are currently being enjoyed in Western Australia is that young Western Australians can no longer afford, in most instances, to buy a home and that, increasingly, young Western Australians can no longer afford to rent a home. The net result of that, through a trickle-down effect, is that more and more Western Australians —

##### *Point of Order*

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The opposition listened with respect and dignity to the Premier when he gave his speech. Now that the Leader of the Opposition is giving his speech in reply, I can hear five conversations in this chamber.

**Mr A.J. Carpenter:** They are all on your side of the chamber.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** They are not. There are three or four on the government side.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Dawesville, it is not appropriate to conduct a conversation when making a point of order. The point of order is accepted, although there is no standing order involved. It is simply good manners that people should listen to the contribution. If conversations occurring in the chamber are such that they interfere with either the hearing or delivery of speeches, those conversations should be taken elsewhere. That applies to both sides of Parliament.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The issue with housing affordability is manifest from both a social perspective and an economic perspective. From the social perspective the sad fact is that in Western Australia this government has snuffed out one of the longest held aspirations of young people in our communities; that is, the aspiration to own their own home. From the economic perspective there is a significant issue. Western Australia is confronted with perhaps the largest labour shortage in its history. Recent reports from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia show that Western Australia's workforce demand, as measured by full-time equivalent workers, will grow by 400 000 workers, yet the state is on track to attract 250 000 workers. That is an average 15 000 FTE worker shortfall per annum for the next 10 years. That means that a significant labour crisis is facing the future of this state. One of the fundamental problems is that even if we can attract people to live and work in Western Australia, they cannot afford to stay here. They cannot afford to populate this state. That is an issue in the metropolitan area but more particularly in rural and regional Western Australia, especially in those industries that traditionally pay lower wages and are towards the bottom end of the skill and/or salary spectrums. This state has a fundamental challenge to address the labour shortage issue because it is the most significant issue that will prevent the private sector in this state from leveraging off the opportunities currently presented by the economic good times that the state is enjoying to grow and prosper.

I will give a brief background on housing affordability because in a very short period under the careful guidance of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the capacity of young Western Australians to buy a house effectively evaporated. Between the December quarter of 2004 and the December quarter of 2006, the median house price in this state jumped from somewhere in the vicinity of \$260 000 to somewhere in the vicinity of \$460 000.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** Who made the money?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The minister was asleep at the wheel. The fundamental indicator of her failing is that two weeks ago she came out and said, "Network City—my great dream and vision for the future of this state is over." She tossed it out and all the claptrap that goes with it. She abandoned the targets of Network City. She has chucked out urban infill. The minister was on a philosophical bender of manic and historic proportions in this state. Her focus was urban infill and a weird theory that people should walk or cycle to work. That theory led to the fact that the land supply in this state evaporated in 2005. We know it, her colleagues know it and everybody in the industry knows it. It was her and her alone. She can sit up and boast about an overpriced train line to Mandurah, but her legacy to future generations of Western Australians is the fact that they cannot afford a home. She was asleep at the wheel. She is on this philosophical bender that has even put some of her earlier benders in the shade. We all know it. She would not let anyone release any land because she wanted people to live where they could walk or ride their pushbikes to work. Well should she leave this chamber in shame. I am worked up about this. It is a fundamentally important issue to the long-term social and economic fabric of this state. It is exactly what happened. Land supply evaporated in Western Australia during 2005 and prices went through the roof. Why did land supply evaporate? Because the approvals process became so bogged down —

**Mr G. Snook:** Constipated.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I thank the member for Moore. The approvals process was constipated by the minister. She does not usually have that effect on people—normally quite the opposite. She constipated the state's approvals process and the industry could not deliver land to the market. She would come into this place holding up big maps all coloured in green and say, "That is all land zoned for urban development", but there were no blocks available for anyone to build a house on. She came along and said, "I'm going to set a target for land release. I'm going to release 20 000 blocks." She did not come within cooe of that figure. It was hopeless. It is a disgraceful abrogation of her responsibility as a minister. Future generations of this state will pay dearly for many years to come, even in far-flung corners of the state such as Karratha, Carnarvon, Exmouth, Jurien Bay, Esperance, Kalgoorlie, Busselton, Bunbury and Mandurah. It affects everybody the length and breadth of this state.

Yesterday the Premier came into this place and gave a dour, boring, uninspiring and unimaginative speech. He said, "We're going to solve housing affordability by thinking outside the box." Not many government members would have heard him say that because most were asleep. The government created the problem. It has no capacity to solve the problem because it has not recognised the basic flaws in public policy in this state that delivered the problem. There is no commitment to free up the capacity of the property sector to bring land to the market. There is no commitment to review the taxes and charges that are levied on the property sector, which are inevitably passed on to land buyers. There is no commitment to review the role of LandCorp, one of the Treasurer's favourite cash cows, and there is no commitment to enhance the role of community housing here in Western Australia.

We have a unique situation in this state whereby the people are continually told in an almost Orwellian way that they have never had it so good. Yes, from a series of aggregate macro-economic measures, Western Australians have never had it so good. When we sit around the dinner tables in the households of Western Australia, we

discover that we have an education system that parents do not have confidence in, a health system that consequently fails and community members who have never felt less safe in their homes, going about business in the communities they live in in a state where young Western Australians can no longer afford to buy a house. Those are the facts of the matter. What do Western Australians have? They have a tired, worn-out government that has no innovative plan to address any of these issues. The government has fallen back on its tired old track record and expects to inspire the people in the households of this state who are building aspirations that the government is stopping them from achieving. The government has run out of energy and enthusiasm. I think the Treasurer knows it. By the nature of the delivery of the Premier's presentation yesterday and the response from the backbench, I suspect that the government knows it.

There is one other issue that bores away into people in this state; that is, the Treasurer and the massive \$2 billion surplus that he constantly churns out. He attempts to hold up that surplus as a symbol of his magnificence, but it sits around his neck and drags him down slowly. The people of Western Australia know that the \$2 billion surplus is built on the back of levels of state taxation in Western Australia that no people at a state level in Australia have ever been subject to.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Second lowest in the country.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** No. Let us have a look. I do not have a certain document here but when there is a more opportune moment, we will read what the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has to say about the Treasurer's inaccurate claims, his attempt to spin his way out of the fat Bishen Bedi style. He was a very good spinner—a far better spinner than the Treasurer is a Treasurer. The Treasurer is taxing the hard-working people of this state to the hilt.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I have told the member for Peel that he did not have the oxygen mix right on one of those deep dives. I appreciate his service but I know that the IQ test is not part of the ALP preselection process. There are plenty of examples but he is not one of those, incidentally. He should just adjust the mix.

In 2001 the total tax revenue was \$2.9 billion. The forecast for this year is \$6.4 billion; in other words, a \$3.5 billion increase in tax take under the Treasurer's watch. That is only a minor increase of 120 per cent, Treasurer. As I said earlier, by every meaningful measure of taxation competitiveness, Western Australia has gone backwards. Back then, the government changed the measures because it was getting embarrassed, and WA has still gone backwards. It is a source of immense frustration to the people of this state that the government taxes them so heavily. Nowhere more is that self-evident than in stamp duty on conveyancing, Treasurer —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** So you'll be voting for our duties bill, will you?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I believe the opposition will be supporting the government's duties bill. It might even encourage the Treasurer to go further. In 2000 the government collected around \$550 million in stamp duty. What was the figure last year, Treasurer—\$2 billion? That is a huge increase. The unfortunate thing is that when the rate of growth of median house prices in WA is mapped, the rate of growth of stamp duty on the same house has well and truly exceeded the rate of growth of the house price. In other words, the government used bracket creep to suck every last dollar out of the people of this state.

I have been totally thrown by the arrival of the member for Mindarie with his living doll. Well done to him. He is a proud father and we are all very pleased for him.

I will touch on one point. Yesterday the Treasurer said, "We built the railway and it was debt-free." I do not know; what was did it cost—\$1.2 billion? The Treasurer said, "We built the railway debt-free." The facts are that in that year Western Australian households were forced to borrow at least \$1 billion on top of what they would otherwise have borrowed to buy their homes to pay the government its stamp duty bill. In other words, although the government can argue, based on book entries, that that project is debt-free, the people carrying the debt for the government are the households of Western Australia.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** So you assume that everyone borrows to pay their stamp duty —

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I know that a lot of people borrow. The Treasurer can tell me what the figures are!

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** — including the businesses!

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** It is a fact that of \$2 billion worth of stamp duty, 60 per cent is on residential property. The government is forcing households into debt to fund either its blow-out in recurrent spending, or projects like that. The Treasurer says in this place that the railway project is debt-free, but the opposition knows that the people who are suffering are the householders of this state whom the Treasurer personally forced into higher levels of debt.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** If you are right, you would have to abolish stamp duty for householders, to abolish that, wouldn't you?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The government would have to be fair about it! It is the “F” word, Treasurer—fair. F-A-I-R.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I borrowed the money for my stamp duty and it goes on the mortgage.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Let me reflect. Seven years in government, and WA is today enjoying an economic boom and a record surplus, which is not driven by the government’s capacities; it is driven by the hard work of Western Australian families and businesses. This state has a government that is tired and devoid of energy. It is devoid of enthusiasm and devoid of a meaningful plan for the long-term future of Western Australia. The government can bandy the nice words around—what are they, “Building WA”—but it has no plan for the long-term future of Western Australia. It is denying the people of this state an opportunity to participate in the prosperity that the great state of Western Australia is currently generating.

The people of Western Australia, Treasurer, are asking for a dividend from this economic prosperity. I say that they are not just asking, I say that they are demanding a dividend from this economic prosperity. It is not a big ask. The people of WA are asking for schools in which they have confidence that their children will get the education that enables them to achieve that which their capacities will allow. The people of WA are asking for a dividend of a health system that can be relied on in a time of crisis. They are asking for a dividend of communities where they, their families and their property are safe; and they are asking, as a dividend, for an opportunity for young Western Australians to, at some stage, be able to once again afford to buy a home. The people of Western Australia, Treasurer, deserve a dividend and a plan for the future. The Treasurer and the Premier—the whole ministry—are failing to deliver on that. There is no dividend and no plan for the future.

I do not want to spend too long outlining what a plan for the future should look like. The opposition will be doing that in due course as we move through this year. Three outcomes must be achieved from a policy perspective in developing that plan for the future. An economic framework must be put in place within which the twenty-first century Western Australian economy will grow. Secondly, the need for fundamental reform in the way governance is conducted in Western Australia must be embraced. There was a time, when I was growing up and I suspect Sir Charles Court was the Premier of Western Australia, when on the bottom of vehicle number plates it said “Welcome to Western Australia. The state of excitement”—or it may have just read, “WA. The state of excitement”. The problem that has happened in this state, especially under this government’s guidance, is “The state of excitement” has dropped off the number plates, and it must be stuck back on. As part of that framework, the economic and social infrastructure building blocks that this state needs to move forward into the twenty-first century must be put in place.

Very quickly, I will talk about the twenty-first century economic framework. I am talking about a taxation system that is competitive; I am talking about a labour market in which the skills are available for Western Australian business and the labour is available for Western Australian business. I am talking about meaningful public sector reform that focuses on efficiency over the numerical increases in full-time equivalents that the Treasurer has been so fond of supporting, because he has no idea about efficiency in public sector reform in this state.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** So you now support our procurement reforms, do you?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Treasurer, I have always supported your procurement reforms. I have told the Treasurer that many times in this house. I do not support his failed Office of Shared Services reform. I do not support —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** What is your plan there?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** My plan is to chuck it out, Treasurer! If the Treasurer were serious and he believed in the Office of Shared Services, he would bring that business case in here, which does not contain anything that is commercially in confidence —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** How do you know that?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** — he would put it on that table —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** How do you know that?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** It will not! It should not! It could not! It is an analysis of a project. It is a financial analysis of a project. I have never seen it!

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** With important contracts connected to it.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Whoopee do! The Treasurer’s ample political backside is connected to it, which the Treasurer is prepared to waste \$450 million of taxpayer money to protect. It is only a children’s hospital, Treasurer. The choice is simple: a failed computer system that is shrouded in secrecy, controversy and failure or a children’s hospital? Which one would the Treasurer plump for? I do not know, but I have an idea! \$450 million! A project that was supposed to cost \$90 million and be finished in two years! It is now three years down the track and it has only blown out to \$450 million. The government has done a great job! It does not have the courage to let the opposition, and anybody else, analyse the financial modelling that it has done to make the

decision. I know exactly why that is; it is because if the opposition had a look at it, I think it would find the modelling flawed because, first, it is based on a flow of benefits that will never materialise —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Why do you say that?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Because they have not so far and because every single person —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** They have not so far, but they will!

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** — the opposition speaks to in the public sector says to it that it is a crock! That is what they say: it is an absolute load of bunkum! That is what they tell us —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** So you have not spoken to the Under Treasurer then?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I have had a briefing from the Under Treasurer —

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** He doesn't tell you it's flawed, does he?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The Treasurer rang him and asked why I was there! Remember that? I saw one of the Treasurer's minions in the lift, I did not even get through half the briefing and he was on the blower, "What's he doing down there? What's he doing down there? Oi, oi, oi!" That is what the Treasurer was doing, was he not, keeping an eye on things?

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Not me!

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I have had a briefing from him, and I do not think the Treasurer has discounted the benefit flow. In fact, I know he has not, because I have asked him. It is outrageous! Secondly, he has not included all the costs. The Auditor General identified millions and millions of dollars of costs that were being borne in the agencies that the Treasurer would not have included. Thirdly, I would like to see the risk matrix that has been used to overlay the future benefit costs because I reckon the whole thing is a load of rubbish. The Treasurer asked me what I would do with the Office of Shared Services now; I would toss it out!

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** So you would be going contrary to the professional advice of the public service then?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I want to see it! Bring it in!

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** You have seen it. The public service has recommended that it continue. Treasury has recommended that it continue.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** That is rubbish. The information the Treasurer provided was nothing short of a complete and absolute cover-up. This is a \$450 million financial scandal that the Treasurer is prepared to pour more and more money into for only one reason: to cover his more than ample political backside. That is it, pure and simple. The Treasurer should not get me going about the Office of Shared Services, because I am interested in it. There are not many people in the house who are interested in it.

**Dr S.C. Thomas:** I am.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The shadow Treasurer is becoming inspired by it! The Treasurer must carry out public sector reform.

The last thing I will talk about with regard to the policy framework that the government needs to embrace is a can-do approach to governance. There is too much red tape and regulation in this state. The government needs to reform the approvals processes in this state. It needs to understand that despite the massive amounts of private sector investment that has occurred in Western Australia in recent years, we must remain internationally competitive because private capital will find an easier home in which to do business if we make life too hard for it to deal with. The Treasurer should start with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the Minister for Energy, of Resources, and of Industry and Enterprise—the one who looks after parts of the Department of Industry and Resources; the one who has absolutely no idea; the sheet metal worker; the gas merchant; the one who paid for the west wing of the big new building down in the member for Cottesloe's electorate. He has no appreciation of the value of that industry and the need to make sure we provide a competitive environment for international capital in order to attract the next wave of investment, which future generations of Western Australians will rely on. The Treasurer cannot sit there and bask in the glow of the wave of investment the state is currently attracting. He needs to make sure that the wave that should follow is on the horizon, heading our way and ready to break.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** It is \$164.7 billion, according to Access Economics. That is the way that Access sees it.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** How far is that through the approvals process? I will conclude now.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** "World class", says Don Voelte with regard to Pluto; world class approvals.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** The one project that is unaccountable in Western Australia is Pluto; there is no scrutiny by this Parliament. No wonder he thinks it's world class. He saw you for a sucker and he took you for a ride.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** So the Leader of the Opposition wants a faster approvals process and the former leader wants more red tape?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The Treasurer has completely missed the point.

We have in Western Australia a state economy that is enjoying an exceptional period of economic growth. To apply a historical perspective to the current situation, this is a state in which previous periods of exceptional economic growth have been accompanied by governments that had solid plans for the future, designed to lock in growth and prosperity. The examples of Sir John Forrest and Sir Charles Court loom large on the horizon. Unfortunately, that is clearly not the case in Western Australia today. Today we have a tired, haggard government with little enthusiasm or energy. We have a tired government with no plan for the future, and its failings will deny the people of Western Australia a dividend from this economic growth and an opportunity to participate in the once-in-a-generation prosperity Western Australia currently enjoys.

**DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.13 pm]: I will dedicate my response to the Premier's Statement to Aboriginal issues, particularly in the Kimberley and with particular regard to two reports that have recently been released. The first is the regular quarterly report to the Premier from Lieutenant General John Sanderson in his capacity as special adviser on Indigenous affairs, a report that the opposition has finally persuaded the government to table. The second is the more recently released report from State Coroner Mr Alastair Hope. This will be quite difficult to do because I have a large number of quotes from those two documents. I will try to paint a picture of the despair and hopelessness that is felt in Aboriginal communities, as outlined by both of these well-respected gentlemen. I will then put to the government a plan for the better future management of Aboriginal communities, particularly in the Kimberley region.

I quote from a letter sent by Lieutenant General Sanderson to the Premier dated 19 June 2007 —

Attached is a ten page report on my activities and observations for the period from 1 March to 31 May 2007.

I quote from page 6 of that document —

Even though it is widely acknowledged that the Government's 2001 Statement of Commitment was a good expression of intent, the reality is that contemporary post ATSIC programs appear fractured, random and lacking in continuity, with intentions confused and transitory. High levels of turbulence in ministerial and executive appointments —

Referring, of course, to the multiple Ministers for Indigenous Affairs that have appeared on the government side —

have contributed to this perception. The growing complexity emerging from this confusion is captured in the following selection of facts:

- The number of sex offence charges heard by the District Court in Kununurra increased by nearly 300 percent in the past 12 months
- The Indigenous adult prison population in WA has increased to 42 percent of the total
- Indigenous juvenile detention population is 80 percent of WA total
- Juveniles in detention not convicted of an offence — approx 90 at any one time
- 75 percent of adult Indigenous offenders in prison in June 2004 were repeat offenders
- In 2003, Indigenous people were eight times more likely to be victims of a violent offence
- The percentage of Aboriginal primary school students achieving national benchmarks in reading, writing and spelling up to Year 9 is approximately half that for non-Indigenous students. The numbers in higher education declined by nearly 30 percent between 2002 and 2004
- Indigenous Home Ownership is approximately 19 percent compared to 74 percent for the general population
- 43 percent of Indigenous people had a gross income of less than \$200 per week.
- Indigenous suicide rates are approximately double those for non-Indigenous people.
- 35 percent of Indigenous children were assessed as being of high or moderate risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties
- Overcrowding in discrete WA Aboriginal communities (approx 17,000 persons) is nearly 40% with average population density ratios of between 8 and 50 persons per dwelling

- The life expectancy of Indigenous people is approximately 70 percent of that of non-Indigenous people

These sort of facts have widespread currency, but, what is little appreciated is that they reflect a deteriorating situation.

This is the latest in a series of reports by the Premier's special adviser on Indigenous affairs.

There is a deteriorating situation in Aboriginal communities, and I think the deterioration is reflected in the report by the State Coroner, Alastair Hope, who investigated 22 Aboriginal deaths in the Fitzroy Crossing region. Sadly, all of the deceased registered extremely high alcohol levels. Only two, who drowned, did not have their alcohol levels tested. I will go through some of the points detailed by the coroner about the living standards in those remote Aboriginal communities. I quote from page 12 of the coroner's report —

The conditions in which many Aboriginal people live, particularly in remote communities, varies considerably, but many communities are almost engulfed in rubbish. Litter in these communities is everywhere. Empty beer cans, plastic bags and other rubbish is piled up or blows in the wind.

Houses are small and dirty with little or no furniture and the kitchens often contain little or no food.

People sleep on filthy foam mattresses on floors or outside on metal frames with sagging, filthy mattresses. Stray dogs who have attached themselves to the communities as well as dogs owned by residents scavenge amongst the rubbish, many of these are obviously diseased.

In the wet season temperatures are crushingly high; while the inquest sat at Fitzroy Crossing or visited the communities on every day the maximum temperature was in excess of 40°C.

In these communities there is nothing to do for most of the inhabitants for most of the time.

Alcohol and drugs provide an escape.

The report goes on to state at page 13 —

There is little refinement about the drinking, it is usually of full strength beer or cask chardonnay. In some communities these drinks are mixed together (ie. beer and chardonnay in one container) and are consumed warm.

...

The plight of the little children is especially pathetic. Many have been born to alcoholic parents and have failed to thrive as a result of being undernourished. For many the future appears bleak. Unless some major changes occur most will fail to obtain a basic education. They live in an environment where they can expect to be the victims of violence and possibly also sexual abuse.

It goes on to state —

Housing is of a low standard and there is often gross overcrowding (there are sometimes over 20 persons in a three bedroom house).

Finally, it refers to education and states —

Sadly the level of education attained by Aboriginal students in the Kimberley generally and the Fitzroy Valley in particular is pathetically low.

How does that comment compare with the statement made today by the Minister for Education and Training about the high standards of education for Aboriginal students? I acknowledge and support his statement.

**Mr A.D. McRae** interjected.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** No; debate on the Premier's Statement does not normally attract interjections. The Minister for Education and Training gave credit to the workers in those communities. I support and acknowledge the hard work that they are doing, but the coroner has said that the level of education of Aboriginals in the Kimberley generally is pathetically low. It is clear from this information that the majority of Aboriginal children in the community do not attain a standard of education that will provide them with basic skills sufficient to obtain meaningful employment.

What do we do about that? What steps do we need to take? What steps does the government need to take to try to address this extremely parlous state of affairs in Aboriginal communities? Do we need more reports? What else needs to be done? The coroner's report also states —

While the plight of Aboriginal people in Western Australia has been the subject of many . . . investigations and reports, the coronial perspective places a somewhat different emphasis on investigation to that of any prior investigations. It is also self-evident from the continuing appalling

death rates of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley that the problems which are causing these deaths have not been adequately addressed in spite of these investigations and reports.

The coroner's report goes on to refer to funding for those Aboriginal communities. It states —

It has been reported that the state is providing \$1.2 billion each year for services and programs targeted to indigenous people in Western Australia and that the Commonwealth is providing additional funding . . .

There can be no doubt that the system which has applied \$1.2 billion or thereabouts each year for services and programs targeted to indigenous people in Western Australia and which has achieved the results in respect of living conditions described earlier in these reasons must be seriously flawed.

It goes on to state —

According to the Casey Report there are 22 government agencies under 16 Ministers who receive the \$1.2 billion allocated annually in funding.

. . . Lieutenant General John Sanderson, the Special Adviser on Indigenous Affairs, who stated in a brief forwarded to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs prior to a meeting held on 13 February 2007, that of the \$1.2 billion, \$450 million was spent on police, courts and corrective services and another \$350 million was spent on primary health care services. Most of the funding, therefore, was applied to "keeping the lid on social dysfunction".

In addition, \$7.7 million was spent on cross government policy coordination, which in itself was non-productive.

. . . a relatively small fraction of the \$1.2 billion was directed towards addressing the underlying problems responsible for high crime rates and poor health.

That paints a very sad and sorry story about the funding that is trying to get through to Aboriginal communities. Whose role and responsibility is it to do something about this situation? The coroner's report goes on to state —

It was clear from the evidence at the inquest that the Department of Indigenous Affairs does not take a lead role in coordinating a response to issues faced by Aboriginal people.

The report contains an exchange between the coroner and Mr Darren Corr from the Department of Indigenous Affairs. The coroner is reported to have said —

I must say I'm still quite concerned about government response to these issues because your coordinating role seems to be wholly reactive or almost wholly reactive?

The representative from the department conceded that that comment was right. The report also states —

In the Premier's speech to Parliament on 30 August 2007 he announced that a Cabinet Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs would be established replacing the Cabinet Standing Committee on social policy. The Committee is to be chaired by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs . . .

Six years after getting into office, the government was trying to organise a committee to take a coordinating role in Aboriginal issues and to coordinate government policy and the provision of services. However, on the next page the report states —

At the time of Mr Corr giving evidence, on 13 November 2007, the Cabinet Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs had met only once.

That shows that the government has no idea what to do and no idea about how to do it. Something needs to change in this mix. I acknowledge that the government has acted with the best intentions in trying to improve conditions in Aboriginal communities, as did I and the Liberal government in our eight years in office. I have said in this house that I believe that I failed to improve the living standards in Aboriginal communities. That is not to say that I regard myself as a failure as minister. I worked hard and did the best I could, and I think we achieved a number of successes in Aboriginal communities. Certainly, when I go to Aboriginal communities, it appears that I am reasonably well regarded by most Aboriginal people I meet, yet I say that I failed because when I look back and ask myself whether conditions in Aboriginal communities were better at the end of our term of government compared with the conditions at the start of our term, I would have to say that they probably were not better. Sadly, the Premier chooses to attack me for making that statement. The reality is that the reports of Lieutenant General Sanderson and Alastair Hope indicate that things are going from bad to worse to worse. People are saying that things have never been worse in Aboriginal communities than they are at present. Something needs to change. This government needs to stop berating me for the job I did as minister, because, frankly, I think I did a damn sight better job as minister than the Premier did when he was minister. The first thing he did when he became Minister for Indigenous Affairs was close all the small Department of Indigenous Affairs offices in the communities, which I had given the task of advocating for Aboriginal people. That is exactly what is stated as a need in the Sanderson and Hope reports.

I refer to an estimates hearing in May 2002 when we asked the Premier how many DIA offices had been closed. He said that it came under Mr Hayden Lowe, who was the chief executive officer, using the disability model. As we know, Mr Lowe came from the Disability Services Commission. It is true that the disability model was an internationally recognised system for assisting people who are disadvantaged to have a voice in their communities. However, he did not understand that. He listened to certain factional groups and he shut them down. We asked what offices were shut down and the chief executive at the time, Mr Curry, told us that the offices that had been closed were in Mandurah, Fremantle, Onslow, Roebourne, Mirrabooka, Fitzroy Crossing, Narrogin, Katanning and Carnarvon. The office of the south metropolitan south west region had also been closed. The total number of regions went from seven to six. He emasculated the Department of Indigenous Affairs, which left it in a position that has been criticised by the State Coroner as totally ineffective and not looking after the interests of Aboriginal people. Is this issue all about governments and what governments need to do? Obviously, it is not. It is also about what Aboriginal people need to do to help themselves get out of a terrible situation. I will refer to what the coroner said is required in the Aboriginal responsibility. The coroner's report reads —

It is important that as effective changes to living conditions are made and government provides practical assistance to the Aboriginal people of the Kimberley, those people play a positive role and increasingly embrace and support the changes so that they can be successful.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The report continues —

For significant improvements to be achieved Aboriginal people will have to assume greater responsibility for their own welfare over time, particularly in areas such as —

adequately maintaining public housing provided;  
encouraging children to go to school;  
taking advantage of training and employment opportunities; *and*  
improving hygiene in their own communities.

It is great that the coroner has recognised the very important need of the mutual cooperation and contribution by Aboriginal people in their own communities.

Having painted a bleak picture of dire straits in Western Australian Aboriginal communities—they have never been in a worse condition—and after going through the reports of both Lieutenant General Sanderson and the coroner, Alastair Hope, I turn to recommendation 1 of Alastair Hope's report. In detailing recommendation 1, I will outline the opposition's plan. We believe it is a positive contribution to assist the government in what we think needs to be done to address the issues raised in the Sanderson report and in the coroner's report. Recommendation 1 reads —

**I recommend that the State and Commonwealth governments identify an individual or organisation to lead the efforts to close the gap between the well-being of indigenous and non-indigenous people. That individual or organisation should be given the power and resources to make decisions, region by region, throughout the Kimberley and to coordinate the response to the disaster of aboriginal health, suicide rates and living conditions.**

I will suggest to the house the person whom I believe has the intelligence, integrity, background and respect of the commonwealth and state governments to be that individual; namely, Lieutenant General John Sanderson. The government should appoint him as chairman of an implementation committee. That implementation committee should be given the task of coordinating a response to the Hope report and, indeed, coordinating a response to Lieutenant General John Sanderson's recommendation for a regional Aboriginal body in the Kimberley, a proposal that was rejected by the Premier. The Premier should change his mind and embrace that recommendation and appoint Lieutenant General John Sanderson to implement these recommendations and his own for a regional body. If a committee is formed, it should be headed by Lieutenant General Sanderson and it should comprise eminent people. I refer to people such as Fiona Stanley, a person who not only has the interest and the understanding, but also the compassion and knowledge of Aboriginal communities to be a great assistance and support for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region. The committee should also contain an experienced Aboriginal elder. I put forward the name Ernie Bridge, because he has the respect of both sides of Parliament. As a former minister in a Labor government and a formidable representative of the Kimberley, his appointment to the committee would be ideal. Obviously, the committee should comprise other people, but the three names I have mentioned would be the core championing and managing the cause of Aboriginal people. The committee should be above the Department of Indigenous Affairs. A recommendation was made in the Casey report to split DIA into two components. One component would deal with matters of heritage and culture and the other would serve as a coordinating body for Aboriginal communities. The second component should be the

secretariat for the committee that I have recommended. It would provide the background, support, information and regional offices that feed information. I think the committee should be given the responsibility for channelling both state and federal funding into the remote communities to address all the issues that need to be addressed. One of the key things that needs to be done when implementing these recommendations is to not do it over the top of Aboriginal people; rather, it should be done with the 100 per cent support and involvement of Aboriginal people. Over and over again it has been demonstrated that governments cannot impose their will on Aboriginal people. That just does not work. Aboriginal people have their own desire to proceed. They have indicated very clearly to Lieutenant General Sanderson their desire to improve their living conditions and the standards of their communities. I believe that Lieutenant General Sanderson and a committee that comprises people such as Fiona Stanley and Ernie Bridge will have the respect, capacity and understanding to take Aboriginal people on the path on which we all want to travel.

Another issue is government departments and the money that they spend on Aboriginal communities. As Mr Hope and Lieutenant General Sanderson both pointed out, that money is spent in a totally uncoordinated way. I believe that there should be a requirement on all government departments providing services to Aboriginal people, particularly in remote communities and especially in the Kimberley, to feed all of their funding programs—at least the knowledge and detail of all their funding programs—through the committee. That will enable it to have feedback and strong input about what programs need to be put in place to better coordinate government services and actions.

I have put forward a draft policy for Indigenous people in Western Australia. I have been working on that with people in Aboriginal communities. I am pleased to say that it has received strong support. I intend to put forward a package that contains many of the initiatives that we have talked about in our policy document, which in many ways goes towards addressing a large number of the severe concerns expressed by Mr Hope in his document. In his recent response to the problems in Aboriginal communities, Kevin Rudd established a bipartisan committee, which is co-chaired by Mr Rudd and the Leader of the Opposition, to work together to try to address problems in Indigenous communities. It is time that our Premier stopped reacting so badly to the opposition's criticism of his role when he was the Minister for Indigenous Affairs. Rather, he should embrace the fact that the opposition is more than willing to work with the government to address the problems in Indigenous communities. He should not regard my suggestion as an opposition suggestion. Rather, he should regard it as a suggestion from those who have had experience in this area and who have an idea that I believe will work. I believe many Aboriginal people believe that it will work. I feel very strongly that, if the Premier were to offer Lieutenant General Sanderson the role of running that implementation task force, he would welcome the opportunity. People like Fiona Stanley and Ernie Bridge would likewise welcome the great responsibility of implementing the recommendations of those reports.

Members on both sides of this house have worked for many years thinking that they are doing the right thing, but without a great deal of success. Many say that we must recognise the problems of the past before we can proceed in Indigenous affairs. Others say we should forget about the past; we must be thinking about the future. They do not recognise the severe harm that was done to Aboriginal people in the past. We must accept that the conditions of today have been shaped by the problems of the past, and we must recognise them and then move forward—both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people—if we are to have any hope of shaping a better future for Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

**MR B.J. GRYLLES (Merredin — Leader of the National Party)** [3.42 pm]: I welcome the opportunity to represent my electorate in reply to the Premier's Statement. I will begin with a quote, and I invite members present to think about who said it —

... a large part of this continent is increasingly neglected and, for a significant number of our rural people, governance is weak and intangible ... Even the major regional centres of the mineral boom are becoming dysfunctional as a result of the economic distortion brought about by too few resources being invested in social infrastructure.

These are not the comments of a politician lambasting the other side of Parliament. These are the comments of Lieutenant General John Sanderson, who is regarded as a pre-eminent Western Australian for his role as Governor, his previous role in the military, and his present role in looking at Indigenous issues right across Western Australia. He is an eminent Western Australian, starting to look at what is happening in regional Western Australia and saying that the alarm bells are starting to ring. Lieutenant General Sanderson goes on to describe the alienation being felt in inland centres, with a population —

... huddled around the estuarine regions of ... the South West like aliens ready to jump off to some faraway planet when the land turns against us.

When Lieutenant General Sanderson's comments are placed against those of the Premier in his address to the opening of Parliament yesterday, it does not seem that many of the people to whom Lieutenant General Sanderson is speaking in regional Western Australia are embracing the Premier's \$25 billion capital works

program as having a whole heap of influence on their lives in the form of social and hard infrastructure in their communities. I will continue with another quote, this time not from Lieutenant General Sanderson —

It's impossible to spend time in any of the remote towns without realising that the people have a sense of estrangement, abandonment and a feeling that they're regarded as irrelevant or worthless over metropolitan economies . . . We govern metropolitan Australia really well. For most metropolitan Australians, things work; for most rural remote people, things don't.

Is that another quote by a politician, trying to get one up on members opposite? No, that quote is from Fred Chaney, addressing the Chamber of Minerals and Energy last year. "Estrangement, abandonment and a feeling that they are regarded as irrelevant or worthless over metropolitan communities" seems to contrast very distinctly with the comments made by the Premier yesterday that Western Australians have never had it so good—a \$25 billion capital infrastructure program rolling out across the state, for the benefit of all. Unfortunately, not all rural and remote Western Australians think like that. Most rural and remote Western Australians will not get too many opportunities to travel on the new train to Mandurah. They will not get too many opportunities to visit the proposed new museum the Premier has talked about. Most rural and remote Western Australians will not get too many opportunities to visit the proposed new precinct on the foreshore. The closest most rural and remote Western Australians will get to the proposed new sports stadium will be watching it on GWN television.

That is the feeling of rural and remote Western Australians as we watch the government roll out its plan to rebuild Perth, and the south west coastal strip to which the population of Western Australia clings, as Lieutenant General John Sanderson says, "like aliens ready to jump off to some faraway planet when the land turns against us." The land is starting to turn against the government. It is starting to say that it put the Labor Party into government with a vision for not only Perth and the coastal strip to Mandurah, Bunbury, Busselton and Margaret River, but for all Western Australians. When Geoff Gallop won the election in 2001, he could never have predicted the economic prosperity that would dawn on Western Australia as result of the boom in iron ore, natural gas and the other minerals that are so plentiful in Western Australia. It is a good time to be in government. The finances of the state and the budget surplus are strong. It is a unique opportunity for all Western Australians to benefit from these unprecedented economic times.

I draw the attention of members to Kalgoorlie, Western Australia's greatest inland town. Kalgoorlie clearly shows the benefit of the gold rush. The infrastructure, the architecture, the cultural features and the feeling of ownership by the people of Kalgoorlie is strong and is based on what their town is. It is a great testament to the mining boom at the turn of the twentieth century, when gold brought so many people to Western Australia. What is the legacy of the present boom? Do we see the architecture or the cultural features of Kalgoorlie in Karratha, the hub of the current boom? Do we see these things in Port Hedland, Tom Price or Newman? These towns are at the epicentre of the economic boom, not only for Western Australia but for the whole of Australia. Do we see, in those towns, any benefit from this economic boom? Do we see any benefit for those towns from the \$25 billion capital infrastructure projects spoken about by the Premier? Do we see those towns being turned around in that vast program? We do not, and no-one would argue with that. The members for Central Kimberley-Pilbara and North West Coastal—the two local members for that region—have argued that a few roads have gone in and the hospitals have been upgraded now and then, but what about the legacy? Roads, hospitals, schools and sewerage systems are all things that everyone takes for granted. Everyone in Western Australia should be able to take those things for granted. We are talking about those extra things that make a town a destination, that make a town a place in which people want to live, and where university graduates can carry out their nursing or medical training. That happens in Kalgoorlie, where there is a fantastic medical program running. All the rural doctors love their time there. It has to do with more than just that basic infrastructure.

That is the challenge for this government in this day and age—how to make sure that this economic boom does not concentrate only on the Perth-Mandurah-Bunbury strip. We do not deny that the plans to rebuild Perth and that coastal strip are great projects. They cannot be argued with. We ask: Should those projects take place to the detriment to every other region across Western Australia; how come we do not have a plan to grow the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the Gascoyne, the Kalgoorlie goldfields region, or the wheatbelt, where I am a member; and where is the plan for those areas to show a real benefit from the economic boom time we are going through now, so that maybe in 100 years' time, people will talk about the gold rush at the turn of the twentieth century and the iron ore and gas rush at the turn of this century? Maybe we need to wait a hundred more years for that next outcome. That is really disappointing for me as a member of Parliament representing regional Western Australia and as someone who takes a keen interest in seeing it grow, because I do not see that plan at all.

In questions without notice today the member for Kimberley posed a question to the Treasurer about the Nationals' royalties for regions plan. It is a plan that the National Party has put forward in which one in four of the royalty dollars that are flowing into consolidated revenue coffers would be quarantined for regional infrastructure projects. That would amount to 25 per cent share of the royalties, which correctly put to the

Treasurer today, would amount to a sum of between \$600 million and \$700 million a year. I suggest that with the new negotiations for the iron ore price, in the out years those royalty flows will be even larger.

The member for Kimberley and Treasurer ridiculed the plan as somehow reducing expenditure in regional Western Australia. The only reason that they ridiculed the plan is that it is not their plan. Their plan is to continue to patch up the infrastructure by building a new hospital here and there. We welcome the new hospitals in Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and across the region, but it is not about giving a lasting legacy to those communities. It is about constructing a new building where an old building was located. Regional Western Australia needs more than that if it is to prosper and attract people from the coastal strip to grow the economy in the regions and to provide more opportunities to allow people to raise their families and retire in a regional town.

It is a travesty for WA that people retire to coastal areas between Perth and Busselton. That should not be occurring. People should be retiring to Broome, Karratha and even Halls Creek—perish the thought that people would want to retire to Halls Creek. However, it is a very important town in regional WA and it, like other towns, deserves service delivery as well as infrastructure delivery to make it a place where people want to live, educate their children, access medical treatment, retire and book their plot in the local cemetery. Unfortunately, across WA we do not have that plan. Karrakatta Cemetery will have to be tiered to fit everyone in. That is not good for regional Western Australia.

The Nationals' plan to quarantine 25 per cent of the royalties is a funding plan that is over and above existing expenditure. This government already has in its budget funding for projects that run over four or five years. The Nationals' fund is quarantined over and above that. What the member for Kimberley was chortling about was actually arguing against the allocation of an additional \$600 million to \$700 million a year into a fund for regional infrastructure. The member for Kimberley is currently not in this house, but she is arguing against a fund for important regional infrastructure that will have in it an additional \$600 million or \$700 million a year. It is not just about rebuilding a hospital or a road or putting new gutters on a school. It is about arts, culture and sport—all the things that make up our social fabric. Regional Western Australia is missing out on those things. They are the things that, at a time of unprecedented economic growth, should be funded. They are not being funded and the member for Kimberley is arguing against a proposal to provide that funding. It does not make any sense to me. My view of the world as the member for Merredin is not too different from the view of the world of the member for Kimberley, other Labor members and Liberal members. We are country MPs, and we are passionate about our areas and we want to see them grow. We want the basic infrastructure in place and we want our communities to grow in population and economic activity. We want employment opportunities for people in our electorates. All this would improve the wellbeing of people in our communities.

Why is the member for Kimberley arguing against my plan to quarantine the royalties? I can understand why a metropolitan member of Parliament would argue against that. If \$600 million or \$700 million were taken out of the system each year and quarantined for regional projects, it might take a little longer to get the foreshore development done, we may not be able to pay cash for the proposed Fiona Stanley Hospital, we may not be able to pay cash for the proposed sports stadium, and it may take a few extra years to build the proposed museum precinct.

I am the member for Merredin, a representative of regional Western Australia, and I want the people whom I represent to have access to those facilities and services. It is not something they should visit every couple of years when they come to Perth. That is not good enough. We do not need a system in which country people have to come to Perth if they want an education, to visit a doctor, to see a cultural attraction or to attend a special event. Western Australia is a unique situation.

If we look to Queensland, in which decentralisation has occurred, we see that there are major towns with a population of 100 000 dotted throughout both inland and coastal areas, and it is a completely different scenario from what is the case in this state. Towns in Queensland have hospitals that can carry out operations and universities. Children are able to attend primary school, high school and university in their own town. It happens in Queensland because the much-maligned government of Joh Bjelke-Petersen drove decentralisation and made sure that it happened. It provided the funding for decentralisation and now Queensland has an even spread of population along the coast and inland that provides a functional regional economy.

Western Australia is developing a fly in, fly out regional economy. People fly in, fly out to work, fly in, fly out to access medical treatment, fly in, fly out to be educated and fly in, fly out to retire. That should be completely unacceptable to every regional member of this Parliament.

The reason I have referred to quarantining 25 per cent of the royalties is that I do not expect metropolitan members of Parliament to prioritise country projects above their own. They were elected to this Parliament to represent their region, and I expect them to do that.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** How many regional members live in the country?

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** What does that mean?

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** Would you go back and live in the country if we allocated that money to the regions and improved living conditions? Would country members live in their electorates if the government made it worthwhile and built up those communities?

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** Is the member for South Perth's criticism that some country members of Parliament also keep a house in the metropolitan area?

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** No. Some of those members live in the metropolitan area and not in their electorates.

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** Maybe if the member were a country member of Parliament, he would understand the challenges of being one and getting to and from the city. I would much rather live in South Perth and drive to Parliament and deal with the issues that I need to attend to. I am pretty lucky. I live in the wheatbelt half the time and the metropolitan area half the time. I am sure members of Parliament who have airline transport to their electorates manage to do it better. If the member's criticism is directed at me for having a property in Perth, I accept it, and I am sure he will raise the issue again. Being a country member of Parliament is different from being a metropolitan member of Parliament.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** It is one of the great myths of this Parliament. Frankly, country members could do a lot more for their electorates.

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** I well and truly agree with the member for Cottesloe.

I come back to what I was saying: we need to quarantine royalties. That will provide the opportunity for metropolitan members of Parliament to look at major regional projects and prioritise them and see them come to fruition. The reason I raise that is Ord stage 2. Last year it was a program of national significance. The drought affecting the Murray-Darling basin caused all Australia to talk about it. Australians were asking whether we should look to the north west of Western Australia to expand the food bowl.

The Labor Party is in government. The Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley has put many submissions to the government.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** Those submissions asked the government to look at the hard infrastructure for the expansion of Ord stage 2 and the extension of the main channel that carries the water and the road and power infrastructure. At a cost of \$100 million, that infrastructure could be put in place and the 15 000-hectare expansion of the Ord could take place. I am not sure how the member for Kimberley feels about that. I assume that all members are aware of it. However, there has been no lobbying for this proposal by members in this place. I put it to government members that because the expansion of Ord stage 2 has no immediate benefit to their electorate, it does not get past first base. Did the member for Kingsley raise it?

**Mrs J. Hughes:** Perhaps not in the house but I am sure it has been well and truly discussed. I am sure it is on the agenda.

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** I am sure it has been discussed. I have no problem with it being discussed. I am just trying to come up with a way, without it being discussed, for it to happen. As I said, there is the \$1.6 billion railway to Mandurah, the proposed \$1.8 billion Fiona Stanley Hospital in the southern suburbs and a proposed new \$1 billion-plus stadium proposed for Subiaco. An amount of \$100 million would get Ord stage 2 going. I have just listed about \$4 billion-worth of projects. Ord stage 2 would be up and running for \$100 million, which would provide economic development for the Kimberley region, job opportunities that would flow from that, and an economic expansion of the region; yet we are still talking about it. If we do not get it right, we will still be talking about it for many years to come. The Nationals' royalties for regions fund, as I see it, would give city members of Parliament an opportunity to come together to consider the major regional projects that need funding, knowing that a barrel of money in the silo needs to be allocated, which would give a clear direction on making it happen. The fund might not be for Ord stage 2; it might be for continuing the undergrounding power project in the Pilbara; it might be for infrastructure for Oakajee; it might be for an extension of the Dampier to Bunbury gas pipeline to Albany; or it might be a desalination plant to provide the Esperance and goldfields communities with a reliable source of water and to take pressure off the Mundaring system.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** Just thinking about that, if you are talking about Ord stage 2, wouldn't it be more sensible to look at the Kimberley more broadly? We could try to combine Broome and Ord in the east Kimberley in terms of the industrial area, as no doubt we will have to inevitably so that we can get a more regional Kimberley plan?

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** I think that work has been done. I am saying that at some stage someone will have to come up with a way of getting that through the caucus room that the member for Victoria Park sits in so that we can get the investment of \$100 million from government. The expansion of the Kimberley would cost much more than the \$100 million for Ord stage 2, which would entail the use of another 15 000 hectares, a bit of channelling and a bit of road and power infrastructure. It is minor in the scheme of things.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** At the end of it all, that will be spent change; that is all.

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** I would like a process that allowed that to happen. However, all I see is dribs and drabs of more reports and consultants that look at Ord stage 2, at undergrounding the power and at a desalination plant in Esperance; yet none of those projects gets off the ground while it appears to be very simple to announce a \$1 billion project for metropolitan Perth. That is the sort of thing that alienates country people. That is the reason Lieutenant General John Sanderson and Fred Chaney make the comments they make about what they hear and feel from people in the regions when they travel there. There just does not appear to be a plan to allow regional Western Australia to share in the current economic strong times.

I move now in the few minutes I have left, because it is appropriate, to talk about the biofuel industry and the use of grain produced by farmers in Western Australia for the biofuel industry. I have been increasingly concerned in the past six to nine months that antibiofuel lobby groups have become stronger and stronger. They continue to make the point that the biofuel industry will destroy the world's food market. The front page of today's *The West Australian* refers to the United Nations, World Vision Australia chief Tim Costello and others making the same point. I have to say that regional Western Australian farmers who are focused on cereal growing are facing a unique time. At last the prices of grain have reached a level that gives some sustainability to their programs and provides them with the ability to reinvest in their businesses and futures. The wheat price rising to about \$400 a tonne proves several factors. Increasing demand from China, India and other markets, increasing demand from the biofuel industry and a couple of bad seasons across the world's grain-growing areas have led to a dramatic escalation in the price of grain. An increase in the price of grain is a very important thing to anyone who comes from a region where the economy is based on the grain industry. I find it quite challenging that academics and lobby groups are now asking farmers not to sell their grain to the biofuel industry and to quarantine their grain for sale to the food market so that the price can return to about \$200 a tonne to make it more affordable for people to buy bread, Weeties and other products on the supermarket shelves. Unfortunately, though, \$200 a tonne does not provide farm businesses growing wheat with long-term sustainability. It is interesting to note the notion that an increase in wheat price will create a food shortage and will cause food prices to rise, which is unacceptable to the economy. However, what about rises in the price of iron ore and natural gas? What have they done? They have increased the cost of construction and increased the costs to industry, but no-one is saying that we should stop that artificially. Negative gearing on investment properties and the tax status of the family home have driven up property prices, as the Leader of the Opposition said, to unaffordable prices for many Western Australians. No-one is arguing for those measures to be taken away because of the damage it is doing to the housing industry. I therefore find it hard to understand that eminent people in the community are now arguing that farmers alone, the producers of crops, should bear the burden of providing cheap food for the world. I would have thought that that was a job for government. If governments want cheap food for the world, they should be buying the wheat at the prevailing price, subsidising it and selling it at a cheaper price to food producers. That will not happen; it is not even on the government's radar. The lobby groups are saying that the solution is to prevent farmers from concentrating on biofuels. Farmers are not concentrating on biofuels; farmers are concentrating on selling their grains for the best possible price that they can get, and I support them 100 per cent. If a biofuel manufacturer is offering a higher price than a flour mill, the farmers should be selling to the biofuel manufacturer. Biofuel is about much more than just greenhouse gas emissions. Biofuel is about energy security and about making sure that we are not dependent on the Middle East for our energy requirements. It is about making sure that if peak oil is to become a reality, the economy, which is heavily dependent on energy, will not be affected negatively. That is what the biofuel industry is about. That is why George W. Bush in his State of the Union address has driven the American economy to embrace biofuels at a higher level. That is why the European Union has driven biofuels to a much greater percentage of its fuel. Compared with Europe and America, biofuels have not yet taken off in Australia or Western Australia. About 20 service stations in Western Australia sell biofuel. It is available at Gull stations, is called biodiesel and comes from a green bowser. I advertise it on my parliamentary vehicle, as it runs on biodiesel. However, biofuel is certainly not a mainstream fuel in Western Australia yet. I assure members that I ran my Toyota Prado on biodiesel from the day I got it. It has had biodiesel in nine out of 10 fill-ups. Sometimes when I am in the country I cannot get biodiesel, but I am happy to say that Corrigin, my home town, has biodiesel on pump. All Western Australians should be embracing biofuel and looking at its role in the future, not only for reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also for energy security. We certainly should be rejecting the notion that biofuels are a bad thing.

One reason that biofuels are often attacked is because of the amount of clearing of rainforests in Indonesia and Malaysia, the major biofuel nations that grow palm oil for biofuel production. I agree that is a real problem. If we start clearing rainforests to grow palm oil, we will be on the wrong end of the community debate and that will be very hard to sustain. That is why the Nationals are calling on the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food, through the Frank Wise Institute of Tropical Agricultural Research in Kununurra, to put in place a trial of palm oil species in the north. The Nationals have spoken to the department recently about a trial in the climate zones near Kalumburu and Kununurra and further south around Halls Creek. We also suggested to the Frank Wise Institute that it should examine areas of the Kimberley that may be suitable for planting palm oil groves, which would allow Western Australia to move towards a level of self-sufficiency in its fuel mix and would allow every bowser with diesel on tap to contain a blend of biofuel. It would be a great step forward for

biodiesel production if WA had its own palm oil industry. I also look forward to the time that a new ethanol plant is built in Kwinana and is supplying unleaded petrol with a 10 per cent blend of ethanol, which many people use and which will directly benefit my electorate of Merredin and all cereal-growing areas of Western Australia.

Please do not let us get to the stage at which we decide that we will regulate food prices by stopping biofuel production in Western Australia and in Australia through government policy. I say that because I am very sure from the research I have done that the Americans and the Europeans will not be moving away from their biofuel production. That will continue to drive the price of the grains that are used in that production. As I said, if we want land care to take place in the regions, and if we want regional development to take place, we will need strong farms and strong farmers. The new price of cereals is certainly making that possible. We are looking at a rebirth and a regrowth of those regional communities that are dependent upon grain growing. Please do not let us see front page articles and editorials in *The West Australian* that are trying to take that away from Western Australian grain farmers, at a time when they are looking to share in one of the great economic renaissances of their industry. We know the great value of the mining sector to Western Australia. We talk in this place about the boom that has been attached to the increasing price of iron ore and natural gas and our other minerals. Please do not take away the boom that is being experienced by cereal growers in Western Australia, when we can get it to rain, by trying to take away the option of selling cereals to the biofuel industry.

**MS K. HODSON-THOMAS (Carine)** [4.01 pm]: I wish to make a contribution to the Premier's Statement. Given my recent announcement that I will not be contesting the next state election, this will be my last opportunity to make a contribution to the Premier's Statement during the remainder of my time in this place. Not contesting the next state election for and on behalf of the Liberal Party was a very tough decision. It was difficult in so many ways. It was certainly not made lightly. It has been an absolute privilege to serve and represent the electorate of Carine—a jewel in the northern suburbs. I know that in some ways this might sound a bit like a valedictory speech, but I wish to place some things on record today.

What has driven me during those 11 years is my passion for people, my love of this state, and my desire to make things better for people. I absolutely deplore injustice, not to mention bigotry. I find no greater reward than advocating for my constituents and my electorate, and albeit some people might think those issues are small, the bureaucracy is a difficult beast for many to deal with, so my position affords me the opportunity to put issues before the Premier and his ministers in order to get a better deal for my constituents. I will continue to advocate for and on behalf of my electorate in this the final year of our four-year electoral cycle. Yes, I will still be writing to ministers those many letters that I am famous for. I have not finished with ministers yet!

I also take this opportunity to place on record my deep gratitude to the many people who have contacted me since my announcement, and who have thanked me for my service—I am still here, though—and my dedication during the 11 years I have served in this place, and for my advocacy on their behalf. I have always loved people, and I think I still do love people. Serving people has been a good fit for me. I have always felt a calling for the job. Those who know me well know that I am a warm and compassionate human being.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Hear, hear!

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Absolutely!

**Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS:** I remember telling staff and the former Leader of the Opposition that the left do not have a mortgage on a social conscience. I believe I have a strong commitment to social justice, fairness and equity for all people. However, that is also underpinned by my deep commitment and conviction to the Liberal Party—the party that endorsed me almost 12 years ago for the seat of Carine—and its values and principles. A first it certainly was. I was the first female to be pre-selected for a safe Liberal state seat, so I do thank those preselectors who saw fit to afford me the opportunity to pursue my passion for politics and the Liberal Party. I was a shy, self-effacing, quietly spoken, ordinary woman, but incredibly determined, the daughter of a Greek peasant woman who had migrated to Australia in search of a better way of life, and who taught me to walk with humility, never forget our humble beginnings and give my absolute best to the service of others, because there is no greater reward than serving people.

Today I make this speech more particularly for my parents and my two adult sons, for it is those four people who understood what drove me and understood the sacrifices that we all made for me to pursue those goals. I thank my parents for parenting my children in my absence, and my sons, because they know what they have missed out on so that I could pursue public service. They will never get those years back. However, needless to say they have, in all these years, been my greatest supporters. They know that I have dedicated the past two decades of my life to the Liberal Party, in both the lay party and the parliamentary party.

One of the most inspirational speeches that I have ever read is Robert Menzies' speech "The Forgotten People". In that speech, Menzies spoke about the people in between—the forgotten people. He talked about the socially disadvantaged and acknowledged that in a compassionate and just society, those people should be assisted and supported. He talked also about the wealthy, who were well able to care for themselves. He talked about the

forgotten people, those in-between citizens, with passion and conviction. He spoke about creating an environment in which people could prosper regardless of their gender and in which they could realise their full potential so that the cream could rise in all of us. That speech remains an inspiration to me to this day.

I believe I have always been a loyal servant of the Liberal Party. I have always been loyal to my leaders, who afforded me the opportunity to grow my knowledge in the different portfolios that I have held during our past seven years in opposition—transport, road safety, environment, small business and tourism. I am absolutely passionate about tourism. I thank the member for Cottesloe, the member for Kalgoorlie and the member for Warren-Blackwood for giving me those opportunities. I gave them my 100 per cent commitment and loyalty. I was steadfast in my allegiance to them.

I make this speech today also for the many citizens who have made contact with me during my latest media headlines. I was, as they said, the woman who dared to speak out and defend women in the workplace. However, this is not just about women in the workplace. It is about all people in the workplace, regardless of their gender, because all people in the workplace should be free of any kind of discrimination or harassment. My comments today are not made lightly. In fact, I make them with a heavy heart. Character assassination has never been my motivation. We all earn our place here. I respect the right of people to speak freely, openly and forthrightly about their aspirations and beliefs. We are afforded a privilege that should never be abused. We should encourage an environment in this workplace that is free of intimidation, free of bullying and free of sexual discrimination or harassment. I am not speaking about this robust chamber. I am speaking about our workplace, because in our workplace, staff should feel respected and be treated in that way. The Premier made some very salient comments in the opening address of the Premier's Statement yesterday. He said —

Parliament should be a place in which not only are laws made, but examples are set for the rest of the community.

He went on to say —

We should seek to lead the nation in respecting the dignity and the rights of every citizen — of all women. Here, in the Parliament, we should lead the nation. This Parliament should not be cast as a boys club, where the behaviour of sexist yobbos is not just tolerated but rewarded. It is completely and utterly unacceptable.

I agree with his sentiments but I also add this: I did not call this place a boys club. They are the comments of other members. What I talked about were standards and propriety. Yes, I agree that on this side of the chamber we are pretty blokish. I had often thought about wearing a tie on occasions!

I wish to place on the record today a number of facts. They have already been aired in the media. Yes, the Leader of the Opposition made inappropriate remarks to me. Yes, he apologised. Yes, I raised the matter of sexist and inappropriate remarks in my party room, not specific to him, and I told the party room that should it happen to me again, I would pursue the matter further. I was not being precious; I was just protecting my right as an individual to be respected and treated so. When I made my comments to the media about inappropriate remarks, I spoke about workplace behaviour, about standards and about propriety. I knew it would come at a very high price to me personally. It is not the first time I have learnt this lesson: standing up for principle is a very lonely place. It does not surprise me that women fear the recriminations that follow when they dare to speak up. That a staff member should be on stress leave as a consequence of this matter and feel unable to return to the workplace saddens me even more. What also struck me at that time was a perception that somehow I had brought this upon myself. That is truly a sad indictment on society. I thought we had travelled so much further than that in this modern era. That we are happy to reward bad behaviour, to dismiss it and accept it as the norm, to my mind is not acceptable. We should never lower the bar; we should in fact be raising it. We legislate to free people from discrimination and persecution, yet it seems for some it is okay to muddy our own backyard.

What I did find absolutely abhorrent during that whole saga, although I got support from many people, was that an unnamed colleague questioned my personal integrity. I am still gobsmacked by that unnamed attack on me. Watching my sons read the front page of *The West Australian* and read their mother described as some kind of liar was an absolute all time low for me. Because they are the ones who know the sacrifices that have gone into my investing 20 years of my life to the Liberal Party, they both told me, "Mum, you deserve better than this. Get out and do something that really rewards you for the kind of person that you are." When the new factional heavies turn on us for telling the truth, we have to question whether we want to remain in an environment where we stand to be condemned for doing just that—speaking the truth. To a female colleague from the other place, who implied that it was a storm in a teacup and that there were more important issues to speak out about relating to women and what they face on a daily basis, I say yes, there are many, but what about our workplace and what about harassment in the workplace. When some of the lay party told me that I should look in my own backyard when it came to standards and reminded me about my fall from grace and my parliamentary vehicle being impounded under the anti-hoon legislation, the facts were true, but I did not hide away; I dealt with it; I took ownership of it as soon as it became known to me. My son paid a very high price, and a very public price, for

that mistake, and he is still my son. I would like to make an appeal to some of my colleagues—but definitely not all of them. There are very many good men on this side, but for those who want to continue to campaign and undermine good people, they might well find eventually there is no-one left to undermine.

The remainder of my time I would like to dedicate to my electorate, that beautiful jewel in the northern suburbs. In the first instance, I would like to express my enormous respect and regard for the good men and women who work for the fire and rescue services, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the local government authority. Prior to Christmas, Carine open space was dealt a terrible blow. Somebody lit a bushfire right in the heart of the open space. It is a beautiful open space with lots of wildlife. Those good men and women who served my community ensured the safety and wellbeing of Carine. I speak for and on behalf of my electorate when I say that we are very grateful that we have people who are so prepared to put their lives at risk to protect and look after our community. I spent Christmas Day with close friends opposite Carine open space. I had lunch with my boys and my close friends. There they were: the men and women of the fire and rescue services came out as soon as the fire ignited. They were there onsite, ensuring that the fire was extinguished and making certain that the community was safe. The rangers from the City of Stirling were also onsite. They were available 24 hours a day for the community. I express my enormous regard and respect for those people who work for us.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS:** I also want to raise a matter about Reid Highway. Those people who have been in this place for a while would know that I became a very squeaky wheel when we were in government. I think I drove the Ministers for Transport, Hon Eric Charlton and then Hon Murray Criddle, crazy about the construction of Reid Highway. The highway was in fact constructed towards the end of my first term in this place. It was never constructed so that it would be dual carriageway. Unfortunately, that should have happened. Our government should have ensured the funding was available to provide a dual carriageway. I have watched over the past eight years the traffic increasing along Reid Highway. There is no doubt that it is time for that dual carriageway to be extended from Okley Road to Mitchell Freeway. I will be calling on the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in due course to see whether there is any possibility that funding can be made available to address those traffic issues.

There are a number of local traffic issues, and I think the member for Hillarys shares my concern about the 80 kilometre an hour limit on Marmion Avenue. There have been a number of fatalities on that road. In fact, a motorcyclist was killed at the corner of Freeman Way and Marmion Avenue. The motorcyclist was hit by, as I understand it, a young P-plate driver coming out of Freeman Way. Leaving aside the issue of reducing the speed limit on that road to ensure that there are no more fatalities, another area of concern is road safety education. Motorists should be aware of motorcyclists. I say that because a friend of mine is in an induced coma in Royal Perth Hospital after being hit by a four-wheel drive last week. The accident was no fault of his own. Again, a young driver did not see him and pulled out onto the main road and hit him. We really need to educate motorists about motorcyclists on the roads. Often, motorcyclists are doing nothing more than obeying the road rules. We can all blame motorcycle riders and cast aspersions on them, but, as motorists, we need to be very aware that they also use our roads. I will be calling on the government to consider an education campaign about motorcycle safety.

There are a number of other issues in the area of education that I will touch on. Two of the schools in my electorate are still awaiting upgrades. I had hoped that the Minister for Education and Training might make an announcement about a couple of schools. In fact, I think the upgrade to Newborough Primary School is underway, and the issues at that school are being well and truly addressed. However, Davallia Primary School has been waiting for many years for an upgrade to its administrative wing, and it is still no closer to finding out whether that will take place. I have raised that matter in this place over a long period. It is a shame that I have to say that I have raised that matter in this place over a long period. I will continue to pursue and send the relevant ministers letters about those issues. I know that the ministers tell me that I write too frequently. Perhaps I do not raise matters often enough in this place, but I certainly place on the record that many ministers have afforded me a great deal of professional courtesy and have looked after my constituents when I have asked that they be treated fairly. The Minister for Housing and Works is not in the chamber at the moment, but she is a constant recipient of my letters about Homeswest and some of the difficulties faced by Homeswest clients. I thank the ministers and I look forward to continuing to write to them. I also look forward to working with members on both sides of the chamber for the rest of this year.

[Applause.]

**MRS D.J. GUISE (Wanneroo — Deputy Speaker)** [4.33 pm]: In rising to reply to the Premier's Statement, I first wish to commend the member for Carine for her speech. As a woman in this place, I should not have to say that it takes courage to speak out on these issues, but I will do so. I tell the member that it is a pleasure to work with her in this place. All of us in this place need to ensure that we rise to better standards. We all have fun in

this place from time to time, but we should also note where the line is drawn in the sand. I commend the member for Carine for her speech.

First, I will talk about some of the issues that are important to my electorate and then I will go on to some issues that are outstanding and hold challenges for us. We are very happy in Wanneroo at the moment. The signing of the town site agreement between the state government and the City of Wanneroo has meant that two major and exciting projects are underway. They are very welcomed by the community. The redevelopment of the Aquamotion aquatic facility, which focuses on health and wellbeing, will deliver contemporary and badly needed aquatic and recreational facilities to the region. Work has commenced on the cultural and learning centre, and completion is due in 2009. The centre will include integrated library facilities, exhibition spaces, community function facilities, a lecture theatre etc. The community cannot believe that it is finally going to get a new commercial shopping centre, so it is pretty thrilled about it, not that that has anything to do with government, but it is all part and parcel of the redevelopment of the area.

Work has also commenced on the \$12 million expansion of the mental health facilities at Joondalup Health Campus, which is part of the \$276 million redevelopment of the hospital. This is part of our commitment to the treatment of people who suffer from severe mental illnesses not only in our region, but also across the board. This expansion will increase the number of beds from 27 to 42 and help ease the pressure not only on mental health services in the area, but also on the emergency department.

This year the brand-new Hocking Primary School was opened. Unfortunately for my colleagues, I seem to be the member who gets to open schools, while some of them are in different situations. We are still experiencing unprecedented growth in the northern suburbs. Hocking Primary School was architect designed and built at an estimated cost of \$9.9 million. When I became the member for Wanneroo, primary schools cost about \$3.5 million to build and then that cost increased to \$4.5 million. Now in 2008 they cost \$9.9 million to build. The much-needed upgrade of Wanneroo Senior High School is also underway, and Ashdale secondary college is due to open next year.

Importantly for the northern suburbs, a new major 400-hectare industrial area is being developed at Neerabup. The state government, through LandCorp, has prefunded more than \$9 million in water, power and sewerage upgrades to allow the early release of land to the market. Meridian Park in Neerabup will offer the next generation of industrial development in Western Australia and will be a major contributor to our economic development in the north. The first stage of that development is on the market now.

The Alkimos Water Alliance between the Water Corporation, Multiplex Engineering Pty Ltd, Macmahon Contractors and Zueblin Australia Pty Ltd has commenced work to extend the Quinns main sewer a distance of some five kilometres. This will of course then be connected to the Alkimos waste water treatment plant, which is due to be completed by 2011. This is one of the largest tunnelling projects that the Water Corporation has undertaken in Western Australia and will underpin the development of Perth's northern suburbs.

Another project which is very dear to my heart and for which I have been lobbying for a long time is stage 1 of the construction of a dual carriageway along a three-kilometre stretch of Wanneroo Road between Wallawa Street and Joondalup Drive. That work is due to begin by the end of this year. The dual carriageway will be separated by a median strip. It is badly needed, as Wanneroo Road already carries some 25 000 vehicles a day. I am calling on the government to fund construction of the next section of Wanneroo Road from Joondalup Drive north to Hall Road, which is a further 5.5 kilometres, so that the whole section can be undertaken without interruption.

The Carpenter government is also making the most of these good economic times by building WA not only for our generation, but also for generations to come. There are a couple of projects I wish to mention today. I know that my constituents will definitely benefit from the new \$8 million trauma unit at Royal Perth Hospital, which will be equipped with state-of-the-art technology to treat the state's major adult trauma victims. Unfortunately, we still see these accidents in our workplaces and on our roads. This new purpose-built trauma unit will have cutting-edge equipment so that patients can be provided with better outcomes. It will also provide new opportunities for nurses from other hospitals to undertake important training.

For some time now people have had a somewhat controversial discussion about the new sports stadium. I am grateful that the decision has finally been made. I think it is a good one. It will be a stadium that people from the northern suburbs will be able to access. It will have a seating capacity of 60 000 and will cater for sports such as Australian Rules, rugby, soccer and cricket, and for major events such as concerts. It will be a welcome addition to our city, as will the new Western Australian Museum—a world-class museum for Western Australia that will be constructed on the former East Perth power station site. That was also a good decision. It will be fantastic. It will bring us into the twenty-first century, minister, and showcase our rich history, Indigenous heritage and unique environment. Therefore, I believe we are in pretty good shape.

There are certainly some challenges and opportunities ahead for the government and for me. I have alluded to the growth in my region. Recent advice from the local government authority indicated that some 571 new people a

month are moving into the local government area of Wanneroo. That just about keeps me off the page of the Electoral Commission book compared with the rest of the members in the chamber. It provides challenges but it also provides opportunities. One of the major challenges in Wanneroo is to make sure that we get the land use and water management planning absolutely right so that we are able to have a sustainable future economically, socially and environmentally.

Members have all heard me bang on in this chamber about the Gnangara mound. Water is a subject near to my heart, as most of my electorate covers a fair bit of the Gnangara mound. I also have an abiding interest, obviously, in the future of the agricultural and horticultural industries in my region. Therefore, it is to the subject of water in particular that I now wish to turn.

During the summer break, I was very fortunate to make the most of the time by further investigating the use of treated waste water. I visited a waste water treatment plant near Beersheba in Israel, as well as a kibbutz at Hazerim, where the world's largest irrigator has its headquarters, and waste water treatment plants in the United Kingdom. The waste water treatment plant near Beersheba is run by Global Environmental Solutions. It has a consortium that works with Netafim, the world's largest irrigator that I have just mentioned. It delivers environmental solutions, integrating water treatment systems with irrigation projects. It has designed plants for municipal agricultural and industrial waste water treatment. The plant that I visited uses conventional processes for the treatment of waste water, activating the sludge method with extended aeration. The plant is a bio-circle configuration and is completely automatic. The thing that struck me with this plant was that it was small, embedded in a community and designed for a specific purpose. It had only two full-time employees on site: a plant operator and a chemist. That is all that was required. This plant was serviced by three smaller neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Beersheba. The plant is designed to deal with some 3 000 cubic metres of effluent a day. It currently produces 1 500 cubic metres of treated effluent a day. This is class A water for irrigation purposes. The plant works on a three-cycle filtration method— aerobic, chlorination and biomass—and 100 per cent of the product is used. Interestingly enough, managed aquifer recharge is not used, as the water is polished for direct supply to the farmer.

The other thing that struck me in Israel is that the Israeli people totally accept the use of treated recycled waste water for food production, and Israel is a major exporter of fruit and vegetables. Israel also has the highest rate of recycled water re-use in the world—that is, 75 per cent—which puts our target a little below the benchmark that I believe we should be aiming for, and that is my message to government. I think we need to raise the bar, and certainly the science and technology are available to us to do that. That sort of rate in Israel indicates its diligence in applying cutting-edge technology that is environmentally friendly and economically viable. As I have also indicated, at other plants that I visited the excess sludge is treated, retained, thickened and used for fertiliser. Nothing is left out.

The other point that I want to visit closely, although I will probably revisit it again, is that Israel has moved away from the bigger waste water treatment plants. Here, we seem to think that we need huge plants. In actual fact, we have some smaller ones. They service country towns. Therefore, I will revisit this issue later in my speech, because I believe we can make better use of them, and I also question why we need those huge plants, even in the city. I think we could diversify slightly and make better use of them. In Israel, the plants are designed to deal not only with the waste that they take in, but also with whom they are then supplying to. For example, if people are growing cotton, they need only class C treated waste water, which is much cheaper. Therefore, the plant is designed to produce water that suits the crop that is nearby. If industry is being serviced, it does not need class A treated waste water, but it would be needed for edible vegetables. How sensible is that? Obviously, the Israelis have proved that it is not only environmentally sustainable, but also economically viable. Therefore, I think that we need to look at this a little more closely.

**Mr M.W. Trenorden:** Some of the substantial mineral sand operators use huge volumes of water.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Yes. I think they might still use potable water to this day, do they not, member? It is outrageous.

**Mr M.W. Trenorden:** From what they have said to me, I think they are happy to use a lower grade of water.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Yes. I rest my case, member. That is exactly the point I make, and I think it is time we addressed the issue. I will revisit that point also, because it is a very important one.

The other thing that struck me in Israel is that the people there have very much tied the method of irrigation to the supply of and demand for treated waste water. The methods are controlled using either surface or subsurface drip irrigation. Put simply, the farmer applies for water access, dependent upon the class of water required for the crop. The plant then puts in the pipe to the farmer, who pays for the water. I can tell members that the prices looked pretty economically viable to me. Everywhere I went, the scientists with whom I spoke said of the technology that "It's not rocket science." I heard that in both Israel and the UK. They said that the financing of the projects is the key. They are clearly able to do that, so we should be able to do it also. I think that we need to head in this direction. It was interesting to note that the whole time I was there, I did not see any sprinklers used

anywhere, either domestically or commercially for industry. The one exception is that in Israel, when establishing a particular crop, they are allowed one line of spray that moves 10 metres a day. That is it. Once the crop is established, the spray is turned off and they just go with the subsurface irrigation. I saw jojoba plants being grown in the Negev desert, and they were all serviced by subsurface drip irrigation. I wonder why we cannot do these things. Every path and garden and every roadside planting, whether it be residential, commercial or industrial, use drip irrigation, whether it is surface or subsurface.

I visited the Netafim plant at the kibbutz in Hatzetim. By the way, the kibbutz was established some 40 years ago, one year after the end of World War II. It is the oldest kibbutz in the area. Since 1967, Netafim has developed its research and development division to respond to the irrigation needs of field crops, using its technical knowledge to develop drip irrigation systems and products. This company has a worldwide presence, including in Australia. Clearly, from what members are hearing me say today, I was very impressed by the operation. The plant at Hatzetim is fully automated and works on a 24-hour production cycle, and it has a recycling capacity also. Although the irrigation pipes last a long time, as they need to be replaced the farmers take them back to the plant, they are attributed a credit and they are then able to put in the new equipment. It is very good. Nothing is wasted there. The subsurface irrigation system is usually placed about 35 centimetres below the surface, and the benefits, as explained to me, include no requirement for additional nutrients, no weeds and no chemicals in direct contact with the leaves of plants. Importantly—this is an important point for me as the member for Wanneroo, and for others who might have a link to the Gnangara mound—the crop takes up all the water and the nutrients, preventing leaching and ensuring no adverse effect on the environmental landscape. I will come back to that.

I also visited one of the latest desalination plants at Palmachim. This operates as a builder-owner-operator plant—in our language it is probably more appropriate to say that it is operated on a public-private arrangement. Global Environmental Solutions Ltd also runs this plant and has a 23-year contract with the Israeli government to design and operate the plant. A very advanced operation, it deals with some 30 million cubic metres a year of desalted sea water and is one of the largest of such facilities in the world.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** The plant is located in an industrial park some 500 metres from the beach in central Israel. For those members who are interested, the plant also takes in brackish water and mixes it with the desalinated water. GES designs and operates these plants—on both a small local and national scale—for both drinking water and irrigation purposes. Israel has 31 reverse-osmosis seawater and brackish water desalination plants and boasts the world's lowest costing desalinated water production.

In the United Kingdom I visited the Langford Water Treatment Works. The Northumbrian Water Group trades in the south of England as Essex and Suffolk Water and services two-thirds of Essex and three London boroughs; it has 1.8 million customers and a growing population! I was amazed at what happens in the United Kingdom. Here we are, fussing about some waste water issues, yet in the UK this company uses waste water—so it pays an abstraction licence fee—it cleans it up and then pumps perfectly good potable water back into the river system and then, three kilometres downstream, it extracts and cleans it again so its customers can drink it. I was just gobsmacked! The scientists rolled around laughing; the look on my face must have been a classic when I said, “You do what? You are putting perfectly good clean water back into a river system so that you can hoick it out three kilometres downstream!” It is absolutely amazing! They explained the plant history. Interestingly enough, they told me that when they first trialled this particular plant, the argument was not about drinking treated waste water, but about the fact that they might silt up the river. There was never any argument about drinking the stuff! Unbelievable! We are so precious in Western Australia. We need to get a grip and catch up with the rest of the world.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** My mother was against bore water until the day she died!

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** I think I am fast becoming the treated waste water queen of the northern suburbs. I think we need to get a life and move on!

This plant is capable of producing up to 40 megalitres a day and uses a combination of treatments. Interestingly enough, it is also a seasonal operation; that is, they supplement the water supply so that the plant does not run all year round. I should also point out that the company running this plant has been doing so successfully since 2002, with no adverse side affects—there is certainly evidence to back up its claims.

Another plant that I was interested in was near the Tilbury Docks in a very heavy industrial area. That plant takes in waste water from some pretty nasty industry sources. The plant also produces a very high quality fertiliser that is cleaned up, bagged, palletted, and exported around the world. It is clear that nothing is wasted—do not mind the pun! Everything is used.

Members, the reason I go on about this is that I believe it is unacceptable in this day and age for us to pump perfectly good water out into the ocean. It is outrageous that we continue to do this, and we do it all the way up

and down our coast. Why? We know we have a drying climate. We know we have water resource issues. There are no two ways about it: we are ahead of the game in the production of desalinated water but, frankly, I think we lag behind in the use of waste water. It is time that we embraced the science and technology that is available elsewhere. We too can be confident about its use just as the people in Israel, the United Kingdom, Singapore and the United States of America are—to name but a few.

To succeed, the horticultural and agricultural industries in my region need security of land tenure and access to economically and environmentally sustainable treated waste water of the highest quality. We need to move with the times. The technology available to us should be used, and areas such as my electorate should be provided with treated waste water of a quality suited to grow crops.

Similarly, the parks and gardens in all new developments should be provided with treated waste water. It is outrageous to see sprinklers continuing, with gay abandon, to use potable water to water parks and gardens. It is absolutely outrageous! It is also unacceptable that industries, such as those mentioned by the member for Avon, continue to use potable water in this state. We should not use potable water to mine gold. We should not build industrial parks that use potable water. They do not do these things in some of the countries that I have mentioned. We have a drying climate. This should be part of the overall suite of solutions that we look at.

The other part of this equation is, of course, the irrigation and watering methods that are employed by the end user. I referred to this before. In areas unsuited to the continued use of water bores—there are perhaps some, dare I say it, in my own electorate—drip irrigation methods, both surface and subsurface, such as those used in Israel, should be adopted. I particularly refer to the potential horticultural and agricultural areas and the new land developments in my electorate. That is a good place to start. We are happy to be the first cab off the rank, and then the government will, hopefully, look at retrofitting some of the other areas down the track.

As I have previously said, the Western Australian government leads the nation in the production of desalinated water. Our first plant is an outstanding success, and a second plant is proposed to be built shortly. The government is also undertaking the managed aquifer recharge trial. That is a pleasing development, but let us not reinvent the wheel! Let us not reinvent the wheel when we know that this science and technology is available. These things have been undertaken around the world for many, many years. Clearly, members can hear my frustration. I like everything to happen yesterday. I know I have to be patient, but —

**Mr M.W. Trenorden:** In California they direct streams into recharge areas and recharge the aquifers. It has been done for 100 years.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** That is right; and I think, member for Avon, in California the water might be lucky to be in the ground for six months before it is drawn out again; we are talking about 50 years. I think we can apply this new science and technology. It is clear that we can adopt these new methods.

What I am about to do is probably quite controversial, but I wish to challenge the Department of Water to put in place a 10-hectare trial of this system using subsurface drip irrigation. I am sure there are a few guinea pigs who would put their hand up for this trial. This system can be measured and monitored for its successful application in the future. I wish to see a trial in place for a waste water treatment plant that has water treatment designed specifically for the crop. I think a 10-hectare trial for this system would be perfectly reasonable.

**Mr M.W. Trenorden:** Northam Town Council negotiated with the Department of Water about our ponds. Fifty per cent of that water goes into the Avon River and ends up on your doorstep. There is no way that you can convince the Department of Water to do anything different!

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** There we go. I can see that I have some fans for this idea. That is good and we should all work towards this.

I put it to members that they need to educate their constituents on this issue so that we can all move forward together. It would be a very good thing. We owe it to ourselves and we owe it to future generations to change our current practices and embrace the use of treated waste water as part of the suite of solutions to ensure that into the future our water is secure and sustainable.

**MR D.T. REDMAN (Stirling) [5.00 pm]:** I will follow up on the theme the member for Wanneroo wonderfully chose and presented to this house; that is, the idea of having a strong focus on waste water treatment. There is a town in my electorate called Walpole, which, as members would be aware, is in the heart of the Walpole-Nornalup National Park, the Walpole wilderness area and the soon to be proclaimed marine park in the Walpole and Nornalup inlets. This community has a population of approximately 400 people and it is at the limit, as members would be aware from debates in this house, of its power capacity as well as its water supply and effluent disposal system. I believe there is an opportunity, not unlike that mentioned by the member for Wanneroo, to perhaps use the town of Walpole as a case study for alternative arrangement for dealing with water and effluent disposal. It would be an absolute jewel in the crown for this government if it could demonstrate in a community such as Walpole, which is in some ways the centre of international attention being in the middle of a wilderness area—a relatively isolated confined community in an environmental hotspot—to demonstrate

alternative approaches to those two issues; that is, water and effluent disposal. I have raised on a one-to-one level with the Minister for Water Resources that perhaps it is something that the government could consider at some time in the future. It wonderfully follows on from the member for Wanneroo's speech and it might present an opportunity for a synergy between her goals in her electorate and the goals I have for my electorate.

I turn now to my speech proper. I want to make a commitment in respect to representing my electorate in the issues that come forth. I will also refer to the good outcomes that have been achieved in my electorate over the past 12 months. All speakers so far in this debate have made reference to the economic boom. Certainly, significant regional growth has been a product of the economic boom. It is significant in the mining centres in our state. It is also significant to areas that traditionally have not been mining centres, such as Ravensthorpe that now has a significant nickel mine operated by BHP Billiton. It might also be significant in other areas of the state that in the past might not have seen such growth in the same proportions as other areas.

It is interesting to note that even the communities I represent in the towns of Cranbrook, Frankland, Mt Barker and Denmark in particular and, to a lesser extent, Walpole are undergoing substantial growth, which is certainly a product of the current boom and people choosing to live in those areas, firstly, because of the environment and, secondly, because, particularly in the inland communities, the price of housing is attractive to them. I found when I doorknocked in the area that some residents are working in mining areas on a fly in, fly out basis.

The other part of our state that is booming is the grain growing areas; not all grain growing areas I hasten to add. As a result of the success of last season, there have been substantial returns to the wheatbelt and the flow-on effect to the local economies in those areas and some of bigger regional centres is substantial. This gives Western Australia the capacity to invest in the future and leave a legacy to our children for future generations. We have had very few opportunities in the past to do that. That scenario is, clearly, playing out for this government. This government has put an infrastructure investment program in place that is substantial and reflects the substantial incomes it is getting in terms of public transport, the sports stadium, museum and foreshore developments. As the Leader of the National Party said, as regional politicians we do not begrudge those projects. They are substantial and often can only be achieved in boom times.

I come to the nub of my speech. This economic growth and regional growth is producing some growing pains. I guess those growing pains are difficult to handle. It is important to note that the social fabric of our communities form the basis to support that hard economic growth.

The politics in Western Australia is also changing. I will not debate the one vote, one value issue. I hope that this government and future governments do not use to their benefit the result of the change to representation. I refer to the fact that a substantial number of members come from the more populated areas of the state, which is probably only five per cent of the footprint of Western Australia. Therefore, the focus could be on infrastructure going into those areas and not the outlying areas. It would be really short-sighted if that focus were to be strong and the government did not support the communities that are contributing to the economic boom. We do not want to bite off the hand that feeds us. I put on notice to this government and future governments that that could well be a political reality. It is a fear for regional people and that is the reason for the discussions on how we might address the potential issues that arise.

I will talk about some of the core services in the communities that I represent. I will not refer to the major infrastructure projects, and certainly a big part of the Premier's Statement reflected the substantial investment in sports stadiums and the like. Time and again issues about core services are raised with me and I refer to roads, water and power, which are basic services. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure today highlighted the funding the government is providing for regional roads. That funding is still not getting through to the communities I represent. A substantial number of roads in the great southern and the south west are not up to scratch and are feeling the growing pains of the economic boom. The impact of the timber industry is putting more traffic onto those roads and there are pressures on the arterial roads into the communities as well as some of the local government roads. I highlight the point made by the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia in *The West Australian* when it reported on an independent assessment, using data from Main Roads Western Australia, and highlighted the 10 worst in Western Australia. The worst road in Western Australia happens to be the South West Highway—Yornup through to Shannon, which is on the boundary of my electorate. It is one of the main feeder roads into my communities. Muirs Highway is also mentioned in the top 10. South Coast Highway, from Peaceful Bay to Parryville, is also mentioned in the top 10. These are significant roads in my community that need an investment to ensure that these communities also are able to deal with the growing pains of the current economic boom.

Even at a very local level, I know the Denmark and Walpole communities are trying to raise funds to upgrade their main streets. Members should bear in mind that the main street is the number one highway that passes through the middle of those towns. The communities want to upgrade those roads to cope with the traffic flows and the dangers of those traffic flows and to improve the amenity of the front door of those communities for visitors. We know a substantial number of visitors visit those wonderful areas on the south coast.

I move now to water. Currently, there are three towns in my electorate that are having water carted into their community to meet their town's water supply needs. Water is being carted to Walpole from Quin nip, a 100-kilometre trip, to Denmark from Albany and to Cranbrook from Mount Barker. It is almost musical chairs with water. The Premier talked today about Western Australia leading the nation in water security, yet in three communities truckloads of water are being carted to meet their water supply needs. It is a huge concern and it is an embarrassment. I have my reasons, which I will put to the house, on why we have arrived at this situation.

I have written to the Minister for Water Resources—it is wonderful that he is present in the house—and proposed that the government consider a regional solution to the water supply to those communities, even to the point of suggesting a desalination plant for Albany. Presently, a pipeline from Albany to Mt Barker and up to Kendenup meets the water needs of those communities, but it does not go through to Denmark, Frankland or, significantly, to the west or further to the east. There is therefore the potential for a desalination plant if we consider the isolated costs of the production of water; for example, it costs \$4 a kilolitre to deliver water to the Denmark community. I recently toured the desalination plant. Including the amortised cost of the capital investment, I believe it costs just over \$1 a kilolitre for desalination. Denmark has the highest rainfall in the state and it is on level 5 water restrictions. The dam is there —

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is a really tough question. The current supply dam for Denmark is the Quickup Dam, which until recently was rated at one gegalitre but has been downgraded to 800 megalitres on the basis of a shortfall in catchment and other issues. I believe there will be environmental issues and barriers to other options. Damming the Denmark River was one option. A number of sites were chosen when the Walpole wilderness area was proclaimed. Already a number of people have raised the potential issue down the track of damming the river as a source. As we all know, the Water Corporation does not like dams because it does not regard them as an efficient way of dealing with water; yet Denmark has the highest rainfall area in this state. I think that even in Denmark the Water Corporation is looking at supplies from the Mitchell River, which is just at the back of the Quickup Dam, and comes from a different catchment. I suggest that perhaps one medium to long-term answer that is climate independent is a desalination plant in Albany, and I have encouraged the minister to discuss that suggestion in the regional cabinet meeting to be held in Albany next week.

Another pet concern that I raised a number of times last year is the issue of electricity, particularly in areas of the state on the edge of the grid that have met their capacity limits. In the 12 months to September last year Denmark had no new or upgraded connections. The outcome of that was a new government policy position to impose a headworks charge that is dependent on the capacity required and the distance from the substation. That headworks charge is levied on top of all the normal costs of connection and augmentation. I believe the headworks charge is also putting a substantial limit on potential opportunities for growth in these communities in utilising the benefits of the economic boom in Western Australia. We have a water supply limit, level 5 water restrictions in one of the highest rainfall areas of this state and a headworks charge imposed on all new electricity connections. That is putting substantial pressure on the release of residential and industrial land. These communities are not able to respond to the demand that is coming into play. The first demand is for land in coastal locations; that is occurring all along the west coast. Secondly, as I pointed out earlier, there is a demand for land in some inland communities because the pricing structure for houses is substantially cheaper there than it is in much more populated areas; it offers people an opportunity to own their own home, as was highlighted by the Leader of the Opposition in his address this afternoon.

I will move on to my theories about why we have finished up in this situation. As a member of Parliament I guess I am trying to be proactive in taking my concerns to the government and seeking to give it an opportunity to consider alternative ways of tackling these issues. It is my view that the corporations model—that is, the Water Corporation and Western Power, which are both government corporations—do not deliver to regional areas in Western Australia, particularly the fringe areas of the integrated supply system for water and the south west interconnected system for electricity. I will be calling formally through his house for an inquiry into whether the policy environment for the Water Corporation and Western Power actually results in sufficient and timely investment in these core service areas.

**Mr M.W. Trenorden:** No, it doesn't.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I know it does not and I believe it is time for an inquiry into them. Western Power and the Water Corporation need to run a business case to make a capital investment in infrastructure to supply these communities and industry with a core service. If that business case comes up short and it is deemed not viable to carry out the project on the basis of tariff return, Western Power imposes a headworks charge to get some of it back, and the Water Corporation claims a community service obligation payment to support the difference. In both cases they impede potential development in those communities. Therefore, before those two corporations make an investment in capital infrastructure, they run right down to the wire on their current infrastructure. The level of what I call "capacity margin" that should be in water and power is not there as it used to be. They are

running the infrastructure so fine that if they experience something a bit different from the norm, such as a couple of dry years as the minister highlighted, or a little extra growth in some communities that was not planned for, they find themselves without the “capacity margin” to cater for those changes. The communities then finish up with no new connections for 12 months—which happened in Denmark last year. We then found ourselves carting water into Denmark, which I think started two months ago and will probably go through to the first rains—at substantial cost I might add. I do not believe that the corporations model is delivering those services in those regions and I will be calling formally through this house for an inquiry to assess whether there are alternative ways of managing government investment in that infrastructure. I believe that not enough weight is put on the social benefit of people working, living and investing in those regional centres. It certainly was not the thinking when back in the mid-1940s members of this house were making decisions to invest in the south west interconnected system. They made investments, not based on capital return, but on social outcomes, building the economy from the ground up and implementing initiatives such as the Kalgoorlie pipeline, which is a good example of that.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I emphasise that the issues I am raising are about water, electricity and roads. Those are the focus areas of the communities I represent; yet in his statement yesterday when commenting about the wealth of the state and the economic boom, the Premier made strong comments about the government making huge infrastructure investments in other areas. The caution I give is that the government is not putting a strong enough focus on core services in the communities that regional members of Parliament represent.

I propose another solution, which has been discussed a number of times in this house, and I refer to the issue of infill sewerage. Part of the issue of housing affordability is the supply of land, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned today. There is a growing demand in regional communities for the supply of land to people showing an interest in the regions. One of the most efficient ways of satisfying that demand is to develop deep sewerage. Substantial blocks in these communities can be subdivided. All the rest of the infrastructure—roads and power, provided capacity is maintained—and other services are there. People can simply subdivide their lot and build a second house. I believe investment in infill sewerage in regional communities is one way to seriously address the shortfall in the availability of property and the issue of unaffordability. I think that is a good argument to support an increased level of funding for infill sewerage. I believe there is \$30 million in the 2007-08 budget. I know that the communities I represent can only foresee the next investment in infill sewerage and deep sewerage in 2018-19.

To give the government a little bouquet—it is important to give credit when it is due—I was very pleased, as was the community in Mt Barker, at the government’s announcement to fund stage 2 of Mt Barker Community College. Stage 1 of that college was announced and funded by the then Minister for Education and Training, now our Premier. More recently, stage 2 has been funded. That will make it possible for that project to go through to completion. The community has worked tremendously hard and has demonstrated a great deal of vision and forethought in seeking to provide a full service school in that community. I acknowledge the painful processes that the community has had to go through, and indeed the disruption that the school community is now going through with the college having to operate on two sites. It is great that the government is supporting this project through to the end. That project will be a tremendous model for some of the other large regional centres in Western Australia.

While we are on the theme of education, another issue that I need to raise is the concern about the use of acting principals. That is a huge concern in not only the communities I represent but also the communities of many of my colleagues. Last year, we met with the Director General of Education and Training to discuss a number of points of change that the Department of Education and Training might look at in its human resource processes. We are due to call a meeting early this year to see what progress has been made on that matter. I sincerely hope that the spirit of the discussions last year will be carried through and that some real changes will be made in the department’s human resource processes so that we can achieve the continuity of leadership that is so dear to regional communities and to the education of the children in those communities. I certainly seek the minister’s support in that matter.

It is often the small things that frustrate us the most. People in regional communities often raise with us issues which may seem small but which will have a substantial impact on the people in those communities. The particular issue I want to talk about now is driver’s licence tests. There has been a backlog in most communities in the waiting time for a driver’s licence test. In my community, the waiting time is about six weeks. Until now, those tests have been conducted by the police out of police stations. However, if the police happen to get a call-out on a particular day, the tests for that day are cancelled, and they then join the backlog to be done six weeks later. We have been informed by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure that from the beginning of July this year, driver’s licence tests will no longer be conducted at police stations. I understand that the Department for Planning and Infrastructure will be putting in place a plan for the provision of this service in regional communities. I am concerned that even though this change is supposed to take place from the beginning of July

this year, no plan is yet in place. I also fear that even when the plan is in place, there will be a reduction in the provision of important service in regional areas. I support the move to take driver's licence tests away from police stations, because I do not believe that conducting driver's licence tests should be a front-line responsibility of the police. The front-line responsibility of the police should be to provide police services in the community. Therefore, as I have said, I support that move. However, it is important that the same level of service is maintained for regional communities. I do not want any plan that may be put forward to be driven by funding, because when the plan is put before cabinet, cabinet might say that it can be funded by only this much, and that might be used as the basis for a cutback in the provision of that service in our regional centres. Therefore, we will certainly be watching that closely, because I highlight that that is a big issue for people in regional centres.

I might add that a particularly important demographic in many regional communities is people over the age of 85. People over the age of 85 need to undergo an annual driver's licence test. In many of the communities that I represent, the only towns that these people have driven in over the past 10 years are the towns in their own particular shire. If these people need to go to Albany or a bigger centre, they usually get someone else to drive them there. At the moment, these people undergo their annual test at the police station in their local community. I am concerned that if people over the age of 85 who live in Cranbrook, for example, were required to take their driver's licence test in Albany, that would be a significant stress point for them, because they might get nervous about taking the test, because they are in territory which they may not have driven in recently and which is unfamiliar to them, and that might cause them to fail their test and lose their licence and hence the independence that is so critical to people who live in regional communities and do not have access to public transport services. That is another reason that it is vitally important that the right plan is put in place. The Department for Planning and Infrastructure has suggested the option of a mobile service to provide driver's licence testing in the more isolated regional communities so that people will not need to go to a larger centre for this basic service.

I want to talk now about police station closures. As members would be aware, the WA Nationals took up this matter strongly last year. We are very concerned about this matter and about the need to maintain a basic police service for regional communities. I have some concerns about these closures. To use the example of Cranbrook in my community, the two police officers in Cranbrook were relocated to Tambellup and Mt Barker. The police officer who was relocated to Tambellup recently won a promotional position, so Tambellup has gone from three police officers back to two, because no replacement officer has been put in place. That has led to a diminished police service for the Cranbrook community. The closures were described by the minister at the time as a different way of delivering police services. Indeed, we will be highlighting in this place the need to maintain the staffing numbers in police stations, particularly in some of the more hard-to-staff regional centres, perhaps by providing greater incentives to encourage people to move to those centres to maintain the services that are so important to those communities. The Commissioner of Police gave an undertaking at the time that he would be reviewing those closures in the middle of this year. We are engaged in ongoing discussions with the relevant authorities with regard to that review, in the hope that the commissioner will reconsider those closures. I would certainly like the commissioner to reconsider the closure of Cranbrook Police Station.

I have a lot of material to cover and I will not be able to get through all of it, but I want to talk about the current beef cattle crisis. As some members may be aware, I attended the beef cattle crisis meeting in Bunbury last year. A number of people have phoned me and discussed with me the issues in that industry. The issues in that industry are indicative of many of the issues in the broader agricultural field. I guess one of those issues is horticulture in the south west and great southern. In my discussions, I have analysed and looked at what would be an appropriate response to this matter from government and, indeed, from a member of Parliament. It is very clear that Western Australians want sustainable regional communities. They want a viable agricultural industry in Western Australia. They want to be able to buy Western Australian product off the shelf in supermarkets. In that context, it is important to consider three things. Firstly, it is important to maintain a strong independent sector in the Western Australian grocery market. This may sound like a blunt instrument, but it is for that reason that I do not support the argument to deregulate trading hours. I do not support that for the simple reason that in Western Australia there is still a relatively strong independent sector, and that sector is a strong supporter of regional producers. Secondly, Western Australians genuinely want to buy Western Australian product. It is, therefore, important that consumers are able to identify Western Australian product on the shelves. I therefore support the government's recent push, aided by the work of a parliamentary committee that dealt with this matter, to strengthen the Buy WA campaign. Thirdly, in the case of the beef cattle industry in particular, I am supportive of anything that can be done to sustain a second export abattoir in Western Australia. I have had conversations with the executives in T&R Pastoral, which operates out of South Australia in particular, about what they are looking at with regard to the North Dandalup site. I have also had conversations with Ian Longson in the Department of Agriculture and Food about what support the Western Australian government can give to companies that want to invest in infrastructure in Western Australia to get another export abattoir up and running. My belief is that the ball is sitting firmly in the court of private industry. Some support is being offered by government, certainly for the processes that are needed to get an abattoir up and running, which is not easy. Right now, we need someone to step up to the mark and say that they are prepared to invest in this industry. It is

at that point that we can have discussions about what support the state government can and should provide to get a bit of competition into the marketplace in Western Australia so that we can ensure that our beef cattle industry is sustainable. Indeed, we see similar patterns in a lot of other agricultural industries in Western Australia that we also want to be sustainable, so that my kids and grandkids can go to a supermarket and purchase products that are farmed, fished or grown in Western Australia. That is the legacy that we would like to leave behind for future generations.

**MR G. WOODHAMS (Greenough)** [5.29 pm]: I listened with great interest to the Premier's Statement yesterday. I listen to the Premier regularly and he has a fondness for using particular phrases and words. The word that I picked up on the Premier using yesterday, not once or twice but several times, was "iconic". He referred to the new Perth Arena as iconic. He referred to the new museum complex as iconic. He referred to Fiona Stanley Hospital as iconic. He referred to them all as iconic developments in Western Australia. There is a great icon in the electorate of Greenough—although there is some irony in a sense with the use of the word "icon"—the Greenough Convict Bridge.

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** Yes, the local member is iconic! Maley's Convict Bridge is iconic. The bridge used to span the Greenough River at the Greenough Hamlet. At the beginning of the year before last, part of the bridge was washed away. This is not an issue that I have referred to only in this speech in the house; I have referred to it on a couple of occasions. That iconic bridge stands, as it did a couple of years ago, halfway across the Greenough River. A couple of weeks ago, the Greenough River flooded, as it regularly does, but the word "regularly" has to be put in context. The river might flood only once every five, 12 or 13 years, but it does flood. It was with great interest that, after the flood, I went to the Greenough River where Maley's bridge spans the road, which goes from one side of the hamlet to the other, to see the water come down because it had not quite yet reached the bridge on that Sunday morning. I waited in the riverbed, which is where the cars cross from one side of the hamlet to the other because the bridge has not been rebuilt, and watched the water come down. It was a beautiful sight. Most people hope that the river "floods" regularly, because it is nice when that part of the Greenough River has some water flowing through it. It is nice to have water flow through the front flats. When I came down from that part of the world on Monday night, there was still water flowing through there, but no bridge to cross.

I use the word "iconic" because it seemed to me that, although the Premier was referring to these magnificent developments that will occur in the metropolitan area, perhaps some of the great icons of regional Western Australia could do with a little boost. The Convict Bridge at Greenough is one such icon. There are other great icons in regional Western Australia. Probably the greatest icon in regional Western Australia is the Mundaring to Kalgoorlie pipeline. Certainly, it was a visionary piece of work for its time. I do not know that I can add anything in this house to the history and the great import of that development. It was also interesting today to hear the member for Kimberley, when she spoke on the condolence motion for Sir Charles Court, refer to the Ord River project and the ongoing work that needs to take place in that part of the world. Notwithstanding the natural gas pipeline, which has been with us for several decades, the Mundaring to Kalgoorlie pipeline, which has been with us for a century, and the somewhat undeveloped Ord River project, which has been with us since the late 1950s and early 1960s, there are no government-driven iconic developments going on in regional Western Australia. There are no iconic state building developments on the scale of the Ord River project, the Mundaring to Kalgoorlie pipeline or the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline. It was refreshing to hear the member for Kimberley reinforce the importance of that project, and Ord stage 2 in particular, to regional Western Australians. Those regional Western Australians are a long way from my electorate of Greenough, but they are regional Western Australians nevertheless and have over many years been disadvantaged by the tyranny of distance from the capital of Perth. It is something that many regional members from both sides of the house will give testament to. Being a regional member often has some tremendous advantages because regional members represent some of the most wonderful people they could ever hope to represent. That is certainly what I do as the member for Greenough. I am sure that the member sitting next to me, the member for Stirling, represents wonderful people, as do all members. However, there are challenges ahead for regional Western Australia that are not necessarily appreciated by the government at this stage. I hope that some time this year the Premier could use the word "iconic" again in reference to Ord stage 2 and that that becomes a great developmental icon in Western Australia because its full potential has not been realised. The full potential of regional Western Australia is no longer being recognised or realised as the government focuses more and more on projects in Perth.

One point that I would like to reflect on as the member for Greenough is that this past year has been another difficult year for the people in our agricultural communities. It has been the second year of drought—the year we were never going to have again. From a farming community's point of view, there has been a migration of people away from many smaller farming communities. I am sure that if the member for Moore, who is currently in the house, and I put our two electorates together, we would have more than 50 small regional communities

and towns in our two electorates. The member for Moore knows what I am referring to. He does not have to read between the lines. He understands these things. Most of those small regional towns have survived over the past 100 years because of agricultural endeavours. With the changing nature of agriculture and with changing markets, many of these communities struggle to survive, and we see visited on these communities some of the impacts of those changes. One impact is declining school numbers. Another is the closure of a school. For example, the community of Wubin had a school until the end of last year. The Department of Education and Training, in its wisdom, saw fit to close the school. The struggle for that community grows greater as they determine where to send their children to school and deal with the enhanced tyranny of distance. Indeed, the journey for all those schoolchildren has become considerable.

While I am speaking about the tyranny of distance, earlier this year I travelled out of the state of Western Australia, which is a marvellous thing to do. It is good to travel to other places to appreciate what is going on. The reason that I travelled out of Western Australia was to take a look at other drought-affected and impacted communities. I travelled through much of the central and north west of New South Wales. I will not go into the details of that journey because now is not an appropriate time to do so. I took with me two devices, which I will hold up for members to see. One is a mobile phone, which was supplied by Telstra Countrywide, because Next G does not work. Telstra Countrywide is trying to prove that Next G does work. What I am holding is an FI65, which is Telstra Countrywide's attempt to enable regional Australians to access Next G. It does somewhat. It is still not as good as the old CDMA network. Members can make their own decision about that.

The other device, which some members may have, is one that plugs into the side of a laptop, which enables information to be downloaded from the internet and emails to be accessed when one is travelling. It is not inexpensive. As I have been made aware by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, as a regional member of Parliament I am not entitled to any reimbursement for this device. I have acquired it entirely at my own expense. If I travel somewhere in regional Western Australia or regional Australia, as I did, and utilise this device because there is no service available in my hotel room—many hotels do not have that service—I pay for that call entirely. It is a mobile call. I say to all members of the house, no matter what side of the political divide they come from, if regional members of Parliament are to have access to the same services to which members in the city and large regional centres have access, this sort of device should be fully refundable.

**Mr A.D. McRae:** Will you be making a submission to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal?

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I will. I have sought advice from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, because I was using it for parliamentary business. It was deemed, via a conversation over the phone, that I am not eligible for any refund. I will take the matter further.

**Mr A.D. McRae:** Can I suggest two things? First, your submission is important. Second, that is absolutely an allowable electorate expense.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I would have thought so. It is a bit like the trailblazing that previous members did with mobile phones. I want every member to have what I would describe as communications equity.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Don't you get that paid for out of your electorate allowance?

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** Possibly. I am seeking more clarification from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I have been advised that it has to be paid for out of the account of GA Woodhams, member for Greenough.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** It is the same as mine. I have to pay for mine.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** What is the point? We all pay for phones.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** The point that I am making is that, with this device, any member of Parliament who travels to anywhere in Western Australia will still be able to connect to and download from the internet.

**Mr R.F. Johnson** interjected.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I will seek further advice.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Country members get a bigger electorate allowance than city members.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I am not arguing about that.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** They do not have as many postage stamps to buy as city members.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I lick a lot of postage stamps.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs J. Hughes):** Order, members! I am sure the member for Greenough has more to say.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I am aware that members are always concerned about my welfare. I appreciate their interjections.

There are many issues facing regional Western Australians. A major issue is travel, which is reflected in what I have just been talking about. The road and rail infrastructure in regional Western Australia remains totally inadequate. I have been approached by a person in my electorate about a petition and, in due course, I intend to present that petition to Parliament. The petition calls for the return of a rail service to areas north of the metropolitan area of Perth. As you would be aware, Madam Acting Speaker, previously there was a rail service to places such as Geraldton. Some people who would like to see a return of that rail service. I am encouraged when I hear the Premier and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure talk about proposed rail lines and improved rail services to places such as Bunbury. A rail line to the areas north of the metropolitan area could be another iconic development in regional Western Australia.

When people travel on the roads of regional Western Australia, which most regional members do on a regular basis day and night, but particularly in the early morning and mid-afternoon, they pass school buses. The state's school bus system and its drivers provide a fantastic and unparalleled service.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** However, the pressure faced by school bus drivers in my electorate is unreasonable. The main pressure comes from increased traffic on Brand Highway. I am not referring to the motor vehicles that members might drive on a regular basis, such as a sedan. Rather, I am referring to the number of B-doubles on the road, the large road trains that frequently travel on Brand Highway in increasing numbers. On many parts of Brand Highway, particularly those that are old in construction, there are many dangerous spots at which a school bus and a road train pass each other as they head in opposite directions. There is increased danger because many of the trucks are on the road 24 hours a day and because, at the moment, many of the school buses are, even this month, driving students around in the dark. The government faces many challenges. It must get transport and transport safety right, particularly on Brand Highway. I make special reference to school buses that carry a large number of children and frequently use the stretch between Dongara and Geraldton. One of the main reasons there is a greater number of school buses on that road is the government's inability to understand the requirement and needs of the Dongara community, particularly with respect to the education of its high school students, who, because the government has made years 11 and 12 compulsory—that is an admirable concept and one that I support—are travelling in greater numbers to Geraldton. That is because Dongara District High School is not able to provide the necessary programs and services that this increased number of students demands, needs and deserves. Therefore, it is a dual-edged sword, if one likes, particularly with road safety and school buses, but it is linked to the government's decision to not upgrade services, to not upgrade facilities and to not increase resources at Dongara District High School, so that more and more students are forced to travel on school buses at this time of the year, with daylight saving, in what I would describe as unsafe conditions.

If there is one issue that is continually raised with me, it is daylight saving and the way in which a cavalier decision on this issue was made. I will not traverse the daylight saving argument. Suffice it to say that certainly the majority of people in my electorate want an end to it. People continue to approach me, not only from my electorate, but also from all places in Western Australia and from all walks of life, demanding an end to daylight saving and sensibly requesting that this government acknowledge the three noes in the referendums—perhaps it should be “three strikes and you're out”.

The member for Stirling referred to an issue that has tremendous resonance in my electorate; that is, the inability of the corporations model currently being used by Western Power and the Water Corporation to effectively deliver to regional Western Australians what should really be a community service obligation. The model is failing miserably in delivering power to communities such as Morawa. I believe it behoves this government to take a look at that model, to say why it is not working and to acknowledge that it is not working. Thousands of Western Australians are being disadvantaged on a regular basis. Hundreds of businesses in regional Western Australia must, at their own expense, do one of two things: store enough potable water or buy backup generators to make sure that when Western Power crashes—as it does on a regular basis in communities such as Morawa—the local stores, particularly supermarkets and other shops, are able to keep their businesses operating. None of those things comes cheaply. Therefore, I urge the government—I believe I would have the support of many regional members of this Parliament—to look at that corporations model that has been imposed on Western Power and the Water Corporation, because it continues to fail regional Western Australians, and it is not going to deliver. It is socially inequitable and totally unfair, and it is costing people time and money and causing social distress. It is not something of which the government should be proud. I know that privately certain people within both those corporations often feel very hamstrung by it. Therefore, it is an issue that I urge the government to look at.

The other major issue that is raised with me on a continuing basis is what is going to happen to Oakajee. I am sure that if the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure were in the chamber, what she would tell me today would be different from what she was able to tell me last week and from what she would tell me next week. That

is not to say that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure does not have a deep and abiding interest in the port of Oakajee and the myriad issues that surround it. However, it is an issue that has continually tormented the community of the mid-west. It is an issue that is continually held up before us as being perhaps a commercial lifeblood or one of the financial rivers for the entire region. However, at this point I do not believe that anyone in this house can really come to grips with what is happening, so muddied are the waters, so confusing is the debate and so difficult is it for the minister to make decisions and give directions. I believe that some—to use jargon—transparency is needed so that the whole community of the mid-west can understand what is necessary for this project to go ahead, because I believe it is the great belief of the majority of the mid-west communities that the Oakajee project should go ahead.

I want to return to the 50 communities that, between us, the member for Moore and I represent. I believe we represent them very well. However, we have 50 communities that I believe are, in the main, neglected by this government. We have communities that have imposed on them a range of dysfunctions. One might ask: how could that happen? As has been evidenced in this place before, services are withdrawn. A three-person police station becomes a two-person police station, and then perhaps it becomes a one-person station, with someone there in an acting capacity. It leads to dysfunction. Perhaps it is because a government department might identify a certain town as a repository for some people who are having health difficulties and those health difficulties are not ones that the department is managing particularly well. They could be mental health problems, for argument's sake. I am not saying that they are, but they could be. Therefore, a family is moved into a community without any consultation, without any discussion and without any involvement of the local government or the local people. All the other services are then expected to pick up this family when, predictably, it is not able to cope. However, what services are there in these communities? In many of these small communities, the services are very few; and, if there are services, they perhaps come from places such as Geraldton or Northam, or maybe even from the metropolitan area, on a once-every-two-weeks basis, on a needs-be basis or on a crisis basis. Therefore, many of our small communities have a range of management difficulties. As the Leader of the Opposition made abundantly clear today, they are not sharing in the largesse—the so-called benefits—that this state is apparently enjoying at the moment. Therefore, on behalf of those people who live in the electorate of Greenough, I ask the government and the Premier, with his iconic visions, to perhaps put a couple of icons aside for a moment and visit downtown Mullewa or downtown Yerecoin to see how much our people are sharing in the great wealth that is being generated. I think that a lot of Western Australians are not sharing in it at all; a lot of regional Western Australians are never going to get a chance to share in it at all. I believe it is the responsibility of this government to make sure that everyone gets a slice of that pie, one that people in small town regional Western Australia are not seeing.

**MR A.D. McRAE (Riverton)** [6.00 pm]: It is a pleasure to give my response noting the Premier's address to the opening of the 2008 Parliament. In doing so I will not only record some significant matters of interest in my electorate of Riverton, but also take the opportunity to reflect on where we are as a state and the challenges that face us in the future. It is true for all members of Parliament that our first responsibility in these kinds of debates is to reflect on specific issues, interests and priorities in the communities within our electorates. Closely following that is an obligation on members to reflect on the broader needs of Western Australia.

Sometimes it might be that we feel a need to recognise that the priorities of the state come before the specific and immediate interests of the people in our electorates. I will give an example of that. During the past seven years, particularly in the latter three or four years of the Howard coalition government in Canberra, there was much debate about the need to use the commonwealth's budget surplus to invest in the productive capacity of Australia rather than use that budget surplus to pay for quite modest tax cuts to individual workers. The reason that people were making that argument about the allocation of record and unprecedented budget surpluses to productive capacity was that many of them feared that the allocation, at a commonwealth level, of those budget surpluses to individual income earners would serve only to increase inflation and, through that process, ultimately put pressure on interest rates. Those fears have been found to be true and a correct analysis.

The alternative view of what the correct priorities would have been in the course of those four or five years of the last half of the Howard coalition government was an investment in productive capacity. Members might remember that about three years ago the Howard government made a great deal about bottlenecks in Australia's export capacity and conducted a survey of Australia's port performances. We saw photos in the national media and, to some extent, in *The West Australian* showing queues of ships waiting to come into port. When the analysis was completed, we could see that not one of those ports that was identified as an export bottleneck was in Western Australia. The reason for that was that the Western Australian government had been investing very large amounts of money in restructuring, upgrading and increasing the capacity of Western Australia's trade infrastructure.

The difference between the policies of the Western Australian government over the past seven years and those of the Howard coalition government over the past seven years is a case study in productive investment versus short-term political investment. It is that challenge that faces us today.

We have heard in the contributions to this debate today legitimate concerns of members from regional and urban centres about adequate services, adequate use of resources and adequate allocation of priorities to the communities that most need the support of the state government in these times. Why do I say “need the support of the state government in these times”? It is because I will give members broad statistics of where we are as a state.

In 2008 the Western Australian economy is more than \$125 billion. We are 2.1 million people occupying 2.5 million square kilometres. That ratio tells members that on a global scale there is an extraordinary level of economic activity from a relatively small number of people in a vast expanse of geographic space. The latest forecasts coming from population researchers on the eastern seaboard and, indeed, in Western Australia, suggest that Perth’s population, which traditionally over the past 10 to 20 years has been 75 per cent of Western Australia’s total population, will grow from its current 1.6 million people to be well in excess of 3.2 million by 2050—in just 40 years the population of the city will double.

If members contemplate the extraordinary growing pains that we have been dealing with over the past six or seven years as the state has grown at an average of about 40 000 to 45 000 people a year and extrapolate that out for the next 40 years to 2050, and imagine that we will be doing that on the current scale and, at times, at a greater rate of growth, they will see the dimensions of the challenges that face not only this Parliament and government, but also members of this Parliament in representing the interests of their communities. It is within that context that I talk not about the conflicting demands but certainly the competing demands on the attention of members to represent the future interests of this state and their electorates. It is in that context that I will make some relatively brief comments on the Premier’s Statement and make some observations about the needs of people in my community in the electorate of Riverton.

Firstly, my community is characterised by working families. I know that that phrase was used a lot in the lead up to the last federal election. It is a phrase that I have used since I first started campaigning to be the member for Riverton in 1999. The reason I used that phrase is that I was campaigning against the then member for Riverton and former Minister for Industrial Relations, the architect of what was called the first, the second and the third waves of industrial reform of the Court government. The reason I am the member for Riverton is that working families and working people overwhelmingly rejected those kinds of industrial laws and practices. If it is not enough that I was elected for that reason, it is one of the overwhelming reasons that the Rudd government is now in place and the Howard government has been cast into the history books. The Howard government simply failed to understand that working families in Australia expect decent industrial relations laws that give balance and fairness in the power relationship between an employer and a worker engaged on the company books. WorkChoices was clearly unfair and swung the balance in favour of the employer to the extent that employees had no chance of adequately representing themselves in fair debates on wages, conditions and service arrangements at the workplace. Increased flexibility is something that we want to see in businesses and the economy of Australia, including Western Australia, but not at the expense of workers’ conditions, because workers are entitled to protection so that they are not subject to the whim of an employer. There is another reason that this debate about working families is contemporary rather than historical. As we contemplate continuing reforms and drive to make our economy more productive, we must question whether we want industrial relations laws that allow downward pressure on wages to be the key by which a business in a competitive environment can survive. Should a business survive on the basis of its success in driving down the wages and conditions of employees or should it succeed and prosper on the basis of its capacity to deliver good services and products? That is the question we need to ask about the Western Australian economy in the long term. The future of sustainable businesses rests in our creative capacities, our ability to be technologically advanced, and our capacity to engage highly skilled, productive and loyal employees. Reduction in wages costs should not be the single greatest lever for a sustainable business. That equation still divides the Labor Party side of the Parliament from the conservative opposition. It is clearly understood in my community that that is one of the defining differences between a Labor representative and any conservative candidate. Conservative representatives in the seat of Riverton have traditionally been very hard right-wing economic rationalists. I note that the Liberal Party seems to be repeating that pattern in choosing its next candidate for the seat—another hard right-wing economic rationalist who advocates free market philosophy for absolutely everything, particularly the labour market.

Priorities for working families in Riverton are education, health, sport, community safety and the environment. There is no rocket science in that; those are standard interests and priorities for every family, household and individual in my electorate and across the state. People want an education system that delivers opportunities for learning and development, and the creation of lifelong opportunities. Some of the markers the Premier used yesterday in his statement indicate that we have made some great strides in education but some very great challenges remain. We have very significantly increased retention rates. We have raised the school leaving age from 15 to 17 as of this year. We have increased the rate of participation in apprenticeships and traineeships by more than 30 per cent. More than 28 000 people are now involved in registered training programs.

At the same time, in the past two years we have seen a decline in the number of people wanting to take up university education. That is an area that is overwhelmingly influenced by commonwealth policy, particularly in relation to higher education contribution scheme charges and the services and support mechanisms offered to students on university campuses. The pathological and ideologically driven destruction of student unions is one of the pieces of evidence of the failure of the Howard government to understand what is essential in nurturing, encouraging and sustaining students through their university years. For people involved in apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as those at university, these are years when their personal lives are going through all sorts of wild and wonderful moments. They are young people in transition from dependent living as students in their family homes to an increasingly independent life as young adults. That process is inevitably challenging for individuals, and inevitably young people will need support through that process. The pathological hatred of student unionism at universities is one piece of evidence of where the Howard government did a disservice to not just itself but also the working families in my electorate. Overwhelmingly, young people benefited from student unions operating in universities. At the same time, industrial trade unions maintain a very strong interest and involvement in apprenticeships and traineeships and offer a framework of support in those learning environments. That framework was stripped out of the environment of universities in another example of blind rage against what people saw as collective action, and it was a wrong and strategically poor policy move.

The health sector in Western Australia, in common with health sectors across Australia and indeed around the world—as I found in studies that I did in Europe in July and August of last year—is under pressure. That is the only way it can be described—health systems are under pressure throughout the developed world. To suggest that somehow they are in chaos or crisis is melodramatic and overreaching. The reforms that have been carried out in Western Australia by this government have been difficult and have required an extraordinary level of cooperation amongst all the interest groups. They will continue to challenge people to think outside of their own self-interest. I give the example of the Fiona Stanley Hospital in the southern suburbs. By any measure, we must have a major tertiary hospital in the southern suburbs. We need only look at the scale of population growth in the south to see that that is true. However, the opposition to our plans for Fiona Stanley Hospital was based on nothing more than naked self-interest. I saw no argument presented that could have been reasonably assessed as having been based on the strategic advance of the health sector and health policy in Western Australia. The Liberal Party went to the last election opposing the Fiona Stanley Hospital with a half-baked idea of somehow refurbishing Fremantle Hospital to take on that role. It is simply not possible to reconstruct an ageing and deficient major hospital like Fremantle into the world-class tertiary institution we will construct at Fiona Stanley in Murdoch.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr A.D. McRAE:** That is a stark example of a difficult and innovative reform that is necessary in our health sector. I note that we have substantially reduced waiting lists for elective surgery and non-essential surgery; that is, surgery that can be banked up a bit, even though that causes discomfort to people who have to wait. I am well aware of the people in my electorate, for example, who are waiting for hip replacements and all sorts of other procedures. However, that queue cannot be reduced to zero overnight. The fact that we have more than halved the waiting times for elective surgery is a remarkable achievement. We must think about ways in which we can increase the retention rates for nurses because it is very clear that the nursing cohort within the health sector is providing the very direct primary health care and nursing service to patients in the system. With all the economic pressures and concomitant economic opportunities it has become increasingly difficult to retain nurses in the health system in the longer term, in the same way that we see many teachers and police officers, for example, taking up opportunities within the private sector, simply because our high-speed resources sector is operating in the international economy and offering much higher wages and salaries than those available in the domestic-based economy.

Sport in all Australian communities is at the core of so very much of what we do. Willetton Basketball Association operates in the heart of my electorate. It has a very substantial stadium out of which the club operates. It plays in the city premier division of basketball. It plays against teams in Joondalup and Wanneroo. Willetton Basketball Association has now expanded to the point that it has registered more than 3 500 individual players, which I believe makes it one of the largest suburban basketball associations in the state. About 400 metres away is Willetton Senior High School, which operates a basketball scholarship program for outstanding basketballers. There is a very close liaison between the high school and the basketball association, which has brought wonderful things to the whole community. That relationship between the basketball association and the school not only has raised the level of skill of a number of people who come specifically to participate in basketball in elite sports programs, but also has brought home to us the best things about sport in the community. Participation, doing one's best, finding a level and a grade in which one can be challenged, can excel, can have fun and can find companionship and develop friendships are all ingredients that are the elements in nurturing the growth of young people in Australia. Young people who participate in sport in one form or another—I do not care whether it is tiddlywinks or high level basketball—typically in my view have a much

greater sense of community participation and of their part in society than do those who cannot find a way in which to participate.

I work assiduously to encourage young people to participate in either a sport or some other form of voluntary group in the community. I quite often get wry smiles when I talk to community groups about the compulsory voluntary program that exists now in high schools. People love the idea of a compulsory voluntary program; that is, students are required to do 20 hours of voluntary work in years 11 and 12 as part of their graduation requirements. That has been a great change in education policy that has also made people aware of the links between young people's development and the community in which they are growing up. It helps to break down some of the relative social isolation that can occur in the fast growing, busy, urban and suburban environment in which my community operates and lives. Sport and compulsory voluntary participation, therefore, are essential ingredients for my community. The state government's investment in the refurbishment of the Willetton Basketball Association stadium has been extremely well received, as has the government's investment in the new basketball court at Willetton Senior High School, which is of international competition playing standard.

The environment, of course, seems to be one of the great political and social issues of our time. That is clearly because of the concerns about climate change and all the science that suggests we face a serious challenge in sustaining biodiversity, economic activity and resources use in and around the changes that will come to our climate. I believe that at its base the environment has always had a very high priority in my community, probably because Canning River is the dominant physical feature in my community. Other members of this place might have wheatfields in their electorates; some have the Swan and Canning Rivers on either side of their electorates; others have coastline that they are concerned about; and others have escarpment, hills and agricultural development. However, it is the Canning River that catches people's imagination in my community. Any visit there will indicate to people that it is an environmental jewel in the city. Canning River Regional Park is well known locally, but I suggest it is not particularly well known to members outside the immediate South Metropolitan Region. It is an extraordinarily diverse and wonderful regional park. Some volunteers involved with Canning River Regional Park conduct biannual surveys of bird species. They have done that in association with the Western Australian ornithological society.

**Ms S.M. McHale:** Ornithologists.

**Mr A.D. McRAE:** Ornithologists; I thank the minister very much for that.

The WA ornithological group has been involved in some of those surveys. The bird surveys in the past three years have revealed a remarkable increase in the diversity of bird populations in Canning River Regional Park, from some 55 birds in earlier surveys to in excess of 75 bird species now present in that park. I ask members to reflect on that: more than 75 bird species in a relatively small regional park in the middle of a fast growing and intensely developed urban environment is a remarkable study. It is evidence that this jewel can be sustained if we take measures to protect the biodiversity and the habitat of those species.

Members will be aware, as they have heard me talk about this before, that the people in my electorate and its surrounds are very excited that within a couple of months the Canning River Regional Park eco education centre will be opened. It is a \$2.5 million education centre moulded to some extent on the Herdsman Lake project, with which I think the member for Cottesloe might have had some involvement in its early stages. Some 10 000 to 15 000 students a year use the Herdsman Lake centre as a field study site where they can get direct engagement with the environment. I believe the Canning River Regional Park eco education centre will be shown to be an equivalent centre in the southern regions.

In the last couple of minutes I have available to me I want to touch on some matters that go beyond my electorate. I have often described Western Australia as the Indochine of the twenty-first century; Indochine being an old French colonial word to describe the south east corner of South East Asia represented by Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. It was called Indochine because in European eyes at the time it represented the intersect between two giant cultures and economies in India and China. I believe Western Australia is clearly poised now to be the Indochine of the twenty-first century, if we grab those opportunities and make it sustainable and diverse and if we engage on multiple levels across the region. I am developing some ideas and will put the proposition to government that we should take advantage of our geographic and trading position across the region and use our international trade offices to forge a trading alliance. Perhaps on a sister state or trade office basis we could host a conference of our trading offices and our host governments and states across the region within the next year or so and talk through what we can do to assist with technological developments to address climate change, trade and the development of technology, governance, and the expansion of trade across a broader range of products and services between our member economies and peoples. This is an exciting opportunity because Western Australia carries credibility amongst its trading partners as a state with an outward looking, optimistic, highly skilled and very capable government and business community. We could add value directly to our trading partners and their associated communities on a collaborative basis one amongst another. For example, our trading offices in the region, in Korea, Japan, China, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and India, also give service into Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan and Sri Lanka, and into the greater Indian subcontinent and the Middle East. I

think that kind of focus upon the East Asia axis in which we live and west across the Indian Ocean is our future. Although the Premier's Statement was very much focused on the work that is going on within the state, it also points us into the future of the twenty-first century as a key international trader in our region.

**MR G. SNOOK (Moore)** [6.31 pm]: I want to also respond to the Premier's Statement of yesterday. I want to provide a view from a rural perspective to the Premier's Statement and his outlook for the state and the proposed future that Western Australia is looking at. Indeed, my constituents in the electorate of Moore will obviously be participants in that future.

The Premier painted a fairly rosy picture and, of course, in terms of our economy that is not challenged. This state is experiencing, as has been said before a number of times in this house, probably the most unprecedented economic boom. That is fantastic. It is great! Of course, as has been outlined by a number of speakers, the question of equity in sharing in the spoils of our economic boom needs to be considered. I will endeavour to do that this evening from the viewpoint of my electorate.

The resource industry can probably lay claim to the fact that in the early development stages of this great state, it was the catalyst—through the gold industry in the gold rush days—that got Western Australia out of its economic strife in the late 1800s. Prior to that, as a colony we were reliant on food production. I think parallels can be drawn between today and our history in terms of the vagaries of the minerals industry and resource development. In the gold rush days, the state's economy took off at great speed, but then, of course, it ran into difficulties in later years. I take this opportunity to remind the people who sit in this place and make decisions about the future direction of this great state from a strategic and security point of view that one of the most important things we need to recognise is security of food. We only have to read the history of great ages in the past to see that civilisation's capacity to be what it is called—civilised—really came about only when there was a surplus production of food. Principally, I make these comments to put into context our need to be forever conscious of the fact that food production is the key element of the sustainability of our civilised society.

Western Australia has always been a great food producer. Of course, the economic boom in the minerals industry has captured the headlines and the limelight of our current great financial position. However, I think we need to remind people that agriculture is still one of our great export earners. Agriculture is worth in the vicinity of more than \$4.5 billion to this state. That is an enormous contribution to the economy of Western Australia. Consider the multiplier effect of that food production and all the industries that support it. Therefore, it is vital that in this place we be continually cognisant of the fact that we need to ensure the future of Western Australia's village garden; that is, the great rural areas of our state that produce our food, the greatest proportion of which is exported, which brings in those valuable export dollars. No doubt there will be some degree of a downturn or recession in the minerals industry. At this stage it cannot be foreseen and it may not occur to any great extent for a number of years or at all. However, we need to be aware of and accept the possibility of a downturn in the resource industry. As we progress through the coming decades, we need to have a strategic direction in place to ensure that we retain the capacity for our rural areas, farmers, horticulturalists and fishermen to produce food, not only for our own growing domestic needs—the population of Western Australia has been projected to expand by considerable numbers through the next decades—but also for our contribution in feeding the world population. It is estimated that by 2050 the world's population, all things being equal and the status quo continuing, will increase from six billion people to nine billion people. An extra three billion people will need to be clothed, housed and, more importantly, fed. That is a 40 per cent increase on current food production around the world.

The effects of global climate change—I will not enter into the debate of its causes, but it is happening—are being felt all around the world. In Western Australia we are losing, through salinity and for other reasons, arable food-producing land. Therefore, we face the prospect of increasing demand for arable land on one side of the equation and, on the other, the diminished capacity, in terms of area, of arable land. What makes up the difference? Technology. The technological advances that we have made through the application of new techniques in farming practices, chemicals and bioscience has enabled us not only in Western Australia but also worldwide to stay in tune with the demand for agricultural products. Therefore, rural and regional Western Australia plays a vital role. I am unashamedly biased towards the view that we, universally, must not take our eye off the ball in ensuring the prospect for our rural producers and those people who live in rural areas to maintain their sustainability in providing the economic drivers of food production and in securing our domestic needs.

Yesterday the Premier spoke in glowing terms of the government's expenditure in regional Western Australia. In fact, I believe that today, in response to an interjection from the Leader of the Opposition, the Treasurer stated that \$1.6 billion worth of regional infrastructure expenditure is planned for regional Western Australia. I think he was making the point that the 25 per cent retention of royalties proposed by the National Party would fall far short of that by some \$600 million or \$700 million. However, in examining where that expenditure is proposed and where it is currently being spent, it is essentially being spent in regional centres. I endorse that expenditure; it is needed because each of those regional centres is the hub from which we can access our services from

farming and pastoral producing areas. They also provide the ports for the goods to be shipped overseas. They play an essential role. Therefore, I endorse both the past and the proposed expenditure. However, those areas that are missing out are the vast areas surrounding those regional centres—the central midlands areas, the mid-west, the great southern and the areas surrounding the great city of Bunbury. Many people, particularly on this side of the house, have highlighted the lack of investment in infrastructure such as roads, rail, power and water in this area, where, sadly, funding has been underspent. That is leading to a rapid deterioration in the quality of those infrastructure systems. If we are not careful, as can be evidenced by some of our power infrastructure, this will lead to dire consequences. I refer to my electorate of Moore in the central midlands area, where power outages of up to 16 and 17 hours, and in some cases for longer, occur on a regular basis. People lose tens of thousands of dollars worth of equipment and goods. One example is the Dandaragan stock supply and hardware store, which supplies various inoculants that require refrigeration. Recently this summer, as a result of one 14-hour power outage, the store lost between \$12 000 and \$15 000 worth of inoculants. The store's fridge blew up. The inoculants must be disposed of in the correct way; they cannot be simply thrown on a tip or buried. Some of them must be incinerated in a proper furnace. However, it was in the middle of the fire season in summer so the store owners could not light a fire in the rubbish bin outside to burn them.

An opposition member: They need compensation.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** Exactly, compensation! This is an ongoing issue; it is not a one-off event. People are fed up to the back teeth with power outages continually happening. It is not only expensive but also cuts to the core of the capacity to supply a service to farmers and graziers who need this product, but who, of course, will go elsewhere to source it. This puts pressure on local rural communities and businesses. It is simply not good enough. Why is it occurring? It is occurring because the infrastructure is 40 or 50 years old and either very little work or inadequate work has been done to upgrade it, particularly in recent times. That is a problem that the Minister for Energy has assured us will be addressed. I hope that it does not fall into the same category as lots of other projects for which millions of dollars have been allocated, and which sound good, but which are spread out over the next 10 years. In many cases, we cannot afford to continue to stand by and watch some of our rural roads, and particularly our rail freight infrastructure in regional Western Australia, sit there rotting and be faced with spending billions of dollars to upgrade it.

It is my view that an investment into infrastructure that earns us export dollars should have some greater priority than it currently has. It all costs money. There is a requirement for a contribution from producers. Producers have indicated that they are happy to pay something. However, they should not have to be flogged to death and be making more than what is a reasonable contribution. It is up to the state government to come up with the real money to retrofit and upgrade rail infrastructure in Western Australia to provide the capacity to handle our bulk wheat so that the vast part of that volume of freight can be taken off our roads, which are deteriorating, because they were never designed to carry that increasing volume. This year, because of drought, we produced only about seven million tonnes of grain in Western Australia. Our average crop is 12 million or 13 million tonnes. A very good crop is 15 million tonnes. Good seasons prevailing, we have the capacity to produce 15 million to 20 million tonnes of grain. Wheat is currently fetching a high price. Last night I heard that, on the Chicago Futures Exchange, wheat pushed through \$12 a bushel, and that drives up our price to unprecedented levels. That is a great windfall. However, with volumes such as that, in the future decade we will be faced with a really big problem in maintaining our road system. I am calling for better strategic planning and direction from the state government in its recognition of the vital role that rural and regional Western Australia play in maintaining their contribution to the economic wellbeing of this state. I hope the resources boom goes for decades. I am informed there is the prospect that it could do that. However, we must prepare ourselves and ensure that we maintain the capacity to call on what has underpinned this state's economic capacity; namely, agricultural food production and agricultural production per se. It is essential that we retain that capacity. It should cut right across politics. It should be a business decision. In this Parliament, we should consider it in the same way we consider the resources industry. Everyone in this chamber supports the mineral boom that we are experiencing and all the benefits that flow back to our communities and the state's economic wellbeing. We should take that same approach to agriculture and rural Western Australia.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr G. SNOOK:** We should not look upon it as though there is an alternative. What frightens the daylights out of me are comments I hear from some members in this house such as, "If farmers are going broke and can't produce the food we need, we'll just import it". That is totally unacceptable; it covers a number of issues, such as loss of jobs, loss of food security and loss of quality control and standards, which are vitally important to all of us. Regardless of which side of politics we come from, those issues must be seen as vital. I therefore urge members opposite to be mindful of the need to ensure our food security. Western Australia's regional centres, my electorate in particular, play a very important role in the provision of food security for Western Australia.

The electorate of Moore is a wonderful, diverse electorate. Everyone's electorate is great, but my electorate is particularly diverse and encompasses eight shires up the coast, north of your electorate, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It is a very good region.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** It is a wonderful region; it has fantastic development opportunities. In my region there are dry wheatbelt farming areas up to the high rainfall coastal areas south towards the shires of Chittering and Gingin, and there are new and developing industries in the olive industry and in viticulture and silviculture. Of course, I cannot stand here and fail to mention that there are also —

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Different grades of sheep!

**Mr G. SNOOK:** I was not going to mention that, member for Cottesloe, but now that the member has drawn that to my attention, I must say that the diversity of animal production is providing fantastic opportunities. All jokes aside, it is a credit to our Western Australian graziers and growers that they have looked for all opportunities. That is the case particularly with rural-based graziers and growers, but they are all contributing. That has brought about a diverse range of production, and those opportunities will continue to exist.

In the central midlands area, there are vast amounts of underground water, and there are massive aquifers. I note that the Minister for Water Resources is in the house. The minister would be well aware of the potential of that area, and also of the need, which we are looking at, to manage those resources well. There are great opportunities in that area. Proposals are now under consideration to establish a dairy industry in the central midlands in the Dandaragan-Moora-Eneabba area. Another successful project is already underway with the growth of perennials without irrigation. Some really good results are coming out of the new plants that are being trialled in that area. It is one thing to look at the doom and gloom that in many ways is surrounding agriculture in Western Australia, and of course across the nation, due to the drought and the changing climatic conditions. However, there is great hope in Western Australia. I am mightily proud of, and look forward enthusiastically to, the prospect of even greater agricultural diversification in the electorate of Moore. That is really, really exciting.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Innovative farmers!

**Mr G. SNOOK:** Absolutely—innovative farmers. The good thing is that outside of agriculture, capital investment is coming into my region. That is great. All these things play a vital role. That will not succeed unless we invest in the infrastructure that is required to meet the needs and the demands.

One matter on which all the local authorities in my electorate are continually lobbying me is the need for more land to be released. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned in his response to the Premier's Statement the difficulties with housing affordability in the metropolitan area. Many development opportunities are being missed throughout regional Western Australia, particularly in my electorate. In the three years that I have been the member for Moore every shire in my electorate has written to me complaining bitterly about the need for more blocks to be released to meet the high demand for land, particularly in the coastal shires. In small towns throughout the wheatbelt, where there is a high demand for housing blocks, a simple mechanism should be put in place to cut through the one size fits all model. That model makes it very constrictive for small local shires that want to release half a dozen blocks of land in little towns such as Yerecoin or Bolgart. We need to be able to cut through the regulatory processes to such a degree that we make it easier for small shires to fund small land developments. There is not a great deal of profit in these types of developments, so LandCorp is not interested. LandCorp is a corporate organisation. It aims for the big bucks. It goes for the high profile developments in coastal areas or the larger regional centres, and it makes its money out of that. That is fine. However, we are missing the opportunity to keep in our small rural communities the heart and the pulse that is so important in those communities. A large number of people are now shifting to regional areas. That provides the opportunity for growth in those areas. However, we need to accommodate that in our administrative processes. We should not allow those processes to get bogged down as they always appear to get bogged down.

As a former fisherman, I cannot let this opportunity go by without reflecting on the fishing industry. As a matter of record, probably 30 per cent of all the lobster production in Western Australia is from the coastal area of my electorate. That lobster production plays a very important economic role in my electorate. There has also been a very strong wetline fishery in my electorate and in the central west coast region.

**Mr C.J. Barnett** interjected.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** The day the member for Cottesloe brings me a little piece of his newfound pet sheep that I may be able to barter for a little piece of a crayfish leg, we may be able to do a deal! However, farmers like the member for Cottesloe seem to be very stringent with their generosity. It is on record. I will swap the member for Cottesloe a crayfish tail for a couple of lambs!

**Mr J.C. Kobelke:** Do you know the particular name of the one you want?

**Mr G. SNOOK:** Yes! Is it Lily, or is it Dolly? I cannot remember! Of course the member for Cottesloe's lovely wife would have some say into which one was to go!

Back to the point. That diversion did not work, member for Cottesloe! I was talking about the fishing industry. The fishing industry is facing a very sad set of circumstances. I want to place on the record my disappointment

with the government, and particularly with the Minister for Fisheries, in trying to address what is claimed to be—I do not argue the point—a sustainability problem with our scalefish industry. It is appalling that the action that this minister has taken, and that this government has endorsed, is impacting on the scalefish industry in this way. At the outset, the minister held a wetline review. That review sliced the number of participants in that industry by putting in place criteria that eliminated more than 50 per cent of all the wetline fishermen. Many of those fishermen have fallen through the cracks in meeting those criteria, and that has placed them under enormous financial strain. Secondly, the minister announced a closure of the metro fishery between Lancelin and Binningup and placed placing a total prohibition on the taking of scalefish by the wetline industry in that zone. That has relocated the effort; it has displaced people; and it has smashed the heart out of families. There are not a lot of them, but they are people like me and like other members. Of course, the other appalling aspect is that under the minister's directive, rock lobster fishermen are not allowed to take fish home, even as bycatch, to put on their table. That is disgraceful; it is idiotic; it is discriminatory; it is unfair; and it does not reflect good spirit. I say that with a great deal of conviction and disappointment. A rock lobster fishermen should be allowed to keep a fish that has come up in a craypot. That fish, commonly known as a bycatch, is to all intents and purposes already dead, because of the depth that it has been brought up from, and decompression. If it is thrown back into the ocean, it will just be eaten; it is lost. A fisherman is not even allowed to even put that fish in his craypot as bait. It is an offence for a crayfisherman to keep a fishing line or a fishing hook on his boat. That is absolutely diabolically crazy. It is a nonsense. I call on those government members who are in this place now to take note of what I am saying and to inquire into this matter, because the minister has refused to accept this reasonable argument.

In summary, the criticisms that I have made of the government in a number of areas have been made in the context of the need for infrastructure investment in rural Western Australia. I would also like to place on record that at long, long last it appears that there is hope for Indian Ocean Drive. This has been a passion and a project of mine for about 34 years—24 years in local government, and 10 years before that. I have been in this place now for three years. It appears that the government is committed to this project. I hope the government does not fail on this project, because the economic boost and advantage that will provide to the electorate of Moore from tourism and industry, and from an income return for the government, will be enormous. I acknowledge that commitment. I conclude on this note: if the Government of Western Australia is willing to make the necessary investment in infrastructure in rural and regional areas, it will go a long way towards securing the future of those rural and regional areas.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House)**.

*House adjourned at 7.01 pm*

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### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

#### LOT 1004 GRIBBLE ROAD, GWELUP

2884. Ms K. Hodson-Thomas to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure

Given the concerns the City of Stirling has in regard to the methodology employed to fill and stabilise Lot 1004 Gribble Road, Gwelup, would the Minister advise:

- (a) how did the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) reach its decision to clear conditions 10, 11 and 12 of the subdivision of Lot 1004 (HN 100) Gribble Road, Gwelup;
- (b) will the WAPC agree to place notifications on the certificates of title for Lot 1004, and the lots created by the subdivision, outlining concerns regarding the fill, stability and contamination of the site, in accordance with Section 165 of the *Planning and Development Act 2005*; and
  - (i) if not, why not;
- (c) will the WAPC take responsibility for structural problems that may occur in houses being constructed on this subdivision in the future given the City of Stirling's concerns with the stability of the land; and
  - (i) if not, why not;
- (d) will the WAPC take responsibility for structural problems that have already occurred in adjacent homes that were constructed before this subdivision was given approval to proceed; and
  - (i) if not, why not; and
- (e) whether the Minister intends to meet with the City of Stirling in the immediate future; and
  - (i) if not, why not?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN replied:

- (a) In order to make a decision in relation to the conditions imposed on the subdivision at lot 1004 Gribble Rd, Gwelup the Commission sought information from various sources. This included seeking information from the engineering firm, Parson Brinckerhoff, on the original works they undertook at the site. Further to this the Commission requested Coffey Geosciences to conduct an independent review of the fill methodology used at the site. The Department of Health and the Department of Environment and Conservation also provide advice on the status of the site in relation to decontamination and applicability for the residential use.
- (b) The Department of Environment and Conservation has advised the Commission that under the Contaminated Soil Act 2003, the residential site is classified as 'decontaminated' and no memorial is required on the title.  
  
The Commission has required Notifications under the Transfer of Land Act to be lodged on the new land titles advising on the three matters of rock fill, sheet piling and drainage runoff as apply to the land.  
  
In addition the landowner has provided a letter of undertaking to inform prospective purchasers of lots of the classification provided by the Department of Environment and Conservation for the land.
- (c) On the basis of the technical advice received, the WAPC has approved the subdivision and cleared the relevant conditions as the Commission considers the site suitable for its residential purpose.
- (d) The WAPC has considered matters relating to the subdivision of the site and its suitability for residential purposes. Issues on individual land development (buildings) and possible damage to adjacent properties from historic development activities on the site are issues usually addressed by the local government and are more appropriately addressed by the City of Stirling, or indeed by the builder. For example, different soil conditions require different footing design responses and these are determined at development approval and building licence stages.
- (e) I have asked the Western Australian Planning Commission to undertake such discussions, which I understand is occurring.

HOUSING — COTTAGE HOMES, WAGIN

2956. Mr T.K. Waldron to the Minister for Housing and Works

I refer to the eligibility criteria for elderly country people wanting to move into Homeswest community housing, such as the Cottage Homes in Wagin, that states that people over 60 must not have cash assets in excess of \$80,000, and I ask:

- (a) how long has it been since the Department of Housing and Works has reviewed the eligibility criteria, given an average country home now sells for more than \$150,000;
- (b) does the Minister concede that in the current economic climate, the limit of \$80,000 needs to be reviewed, so that elderly country people can stay in their own communities;
- (c) is the Minister aware that half of the 40 applicants for the Wagin Cottage Homes are now ineligible for public rental housing as they have cash assets in excess of \$80,000 since selling their family homes; and
- (d) when will the Department of Housing and Works increase the criteria for the amount of cash assets, and how much will it be increased to?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

- (a)-(d) I approved an increase in the Department's income limits for housing assistance schemes in May 2006, the first change in limits since July 1996. The Department of Housing and Works advises that the cash assets criteria were adjusted in 2003 and an additional loading of 40% on income limits continues for all tenants living in North-West and remote regional communities. This loading has been determined based on escalating property values and lack of affordable private rental properties in those areas and will continue to apply should the income eligibility limits be increased.

Wagin Cottage Homes is liaising with the Department in relation to a housing development that is about to go to tender.

The Department advises that cash assets criteria in Western Australia compare favourably to other jurisdictions, in NSW for example where the maximum allowed cannot exceed \$5,000. In Western Australia the current limit of \$80,000 is exclusively set for senior 60 years and over including singles and couples. For couples under 60 the limits stand at \$63,800 whereas a single applicant under the age of 60 is limited to \$38,400.

However, given your specific concerns with seniors and applicants for the Wagin Cottage Homes, I have asked the Department of Housing and Works to provide me with further information.

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