



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2013

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 8 May 2013

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 8 May 2013

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland) took the chair at 12 noon, and read prayers.

SOUTH LANDSDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Petition

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [12.01 pm]: I have a petition from 24 signatories. It is certified to conform with the standing orders, and reads as follows —

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled:

We, the undersigned, call on the State Government to acknowledge that Landsdale and surrounding suburbs are growing rapidly and that immediate action needs to be taken on an additional K to year 6 school at South Landsdale. Failure to take decisive action is short sighted and will lead to overcrowding.

Now we ask the Legislative Assembly that the South Landsdale Primary School be given higher priority and for the construction to be commenced without further delay.

[See petition 4.]

LAKE GRACE DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Petition

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [12.02 pm]: I have a petition with 1 043 signatures that conforms with the standing orders and reads as follows —

To the honourable the speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We the undersigned call on Western Australia Department of Health to take immediate steps to rectify the lack of functionality of the Lake Grace District Hospital by building a new hospital as promised so that it can service our communities for the next 50 years and beyond.

Now we ask the Legislative Assembly to afford the Lake Grace and districts communities the opportunity, as promised by the State Government through the Southern Inland Health Initiative (SIHI) for extensive staff and community consultation on the building of a new hospital and for significant funds from the SIHI budget to be allocated towards this new facility.

[See petition 5.]

PAPERS TABLED

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

BILLS

Notice of Motion to Introduce

1. Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Amendment Bill 2013.
2. Hospitals and Health Services Amendment Bill 2013.

Notice of motions given by **Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House)** on behalf of Dr K.D. Hames (Minister for Health).

STANDING COMMITTEES

Appointment of Members — Notice of Motion

Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House) gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

That for the present Parliament —

- (1) the Procedure and Privileges Committee consist of the Speaker and the members for Kalgoorlie, Butler, Midland and Swan Hills;
- (2) the Public Accounts Committee consist of the members for Alfred Cove, Bateman, Belmont, Victoria Park and Cannington;

- (3) the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee consist of the members for Armadale, Balcatta, Collie–Preston, Girrawheen and Morley;
- (4) the Economics and Industry Standing Committee consist of the members for Cockburn, Geraldton, Joondalup, North West Central and Willagee; and
- (5) the Education and Health Standing Committee consist of the members for Eyre, Forrestfield, Hillarys, Mirrabooka and West Swan.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Appointment of Members — Notice of Motion

Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House) gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

- (1) That for the present session, the Parliamentary Services Committee consist of the Speaker and the members for Cockburn, Girrawheen, Perth, South Perth and Willagee.
- (2) That the Legislative Council be acquainted accordingly.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION

Appointment — Notice of Motion

Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House) gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

- (1) That for the present Parliament, in accordance with Legislative Assembly standing orders 288 to 292, a Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission be appointed by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.
- (2) That the Legislative Assembly requests the Legislative Council to agree to a similar resolution.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Appointment — Notice of Motion

Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House) gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

- (1) That for the present Parliament —
 - (a) pursuant to section 51 of the Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006, a Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People be appointed by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council;
 - (b) the joint standing committee shall comprise two members appointed by the Legislative Assembly and two members appointed by the Legislative Council;
 - (c) it is the function of the joint standing committee to —
 - (i) monitor, review and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People;
 - (ii) examine annual and other reports of the commissioner; and
 - (iii) consult regularly with the commissioner;
 - (d) a report of the joint standing committee will be presented to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council by members of the joint standing committee nominated by it for that purpose; and
 - (e) the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly relating to standing and select committees will be followed as far as they can be applied.
- (2) That the Legislative Assembly requests the Legislative Council to agree to a similar resolution.

NORTHAMPTON TOWN SITE — LEAD CONTAMINATION

Statement by Minister for Regional Development

MR B.J. GRYLLS (Pilbara — Minister for Regional Development) [12.07 pm]: I would like to update the house on the government's ongoing response into the investigation of the distribution of lead tailings in the Northampton town site. The Northampton region has a long history of lead mining. Unfortunately in the past, lead tailings have been used by local builders and residents in building foundations, fill material, driveways and garden areas. In order to manage any risks associated with this, the government has set up a project team to identify the extent and distribution of lead tailings in and around the town site. Previous action by the state resulted in the closure of the Northampton battery site and the planned creation of a containment cell to prevent

further spreading of the tailings. Preliminary work in the Northampton town site undertaken by consultants in 2010–11 identified tailings at several properties. Following this, the state government identified the need to undertake a comprehensive screening of every land parcel in the town site of Northampton to determine the location of all remaining tailings. The remediation of the old battery site and the removal of the source of lead tailings has since been completed—it occurred in June 2012. Essentially, the old battery site has been buried and the lead tailings are contained and are not accessible.

Since the Department of Regional Development and Lands has taken on the primary role in this process, it has been consulting with the community and making preparations to manage the Northampton projects. This includes setting up an interagency committee to work towards substantial investigation of the distribution of lead tailings in the town site. The Department of Regional Development and Lands recently wrote to all Northampton residents advising them that the government is now planning to test every property and parcel of land in Northampton. The Departments of Health; Environment and Conservation are providing technical support to the Department of Regional Development and Lands to ensure there is a whole-of-government response. The community of Northampton is the top priority in this process. Residents have received information on how to minimise exposure risk and strategies for the management of the tailings and all information is available on the department's website. The government is taking action and working towards comprehensive identification and the remediation of any affected areas in Northampton.

HOUSING INDUSTRY FORECASTING GROUP — REPORT

Statement by Minister for Housing

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Minister for Housing) [12.09 pm]: I rise to advise the house of the latest report from the Housing Industry Forecasting Group, commonly referred to as HIFG. As members would be aware, each year HIFG releases an April update to its October report. The group comprises representatives from government and industry, including the Real Estate Institute of WA, the Housing Industry Association, the Master Builders Association of WA and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia. HIFG's report contains its forecasts for land supply and dwelling commencements in Western Australia. The main revision has been an increase in the forecast for dwelling commencements, with the group predicting an additional 1 500 dwellings will be started this financial year, making a total of 22 500 starts. This will be a 27 per cent increase in commencements compared to last year.

This movement in the right direction for dwelling supply is good news for employment and the state's economy overall. The group predicts a similar level in 2013–14, with 22 500 dwelling commencements, and has also increased its predictions for the out years from 2014–2016 with an additional 500 commencements per annum. To keep up with demand for land, approximately 15 000 lots will need to be supplied each year for new land development and vacant unsold lots.

The report also highlights that affordable housing remains a major challenge for the state. Despite some improvements to affordability, with lower interest rates and rising incomes, WA households on low or moderate incomes continue to face unaffordable private sector rents and an inability to access homeownership. The median established house price is above \$500 000 and the median rent is \$470 per week—up nearly 12 per cent on the year. This highlights the importance of continuing to deliver on the state's affordable housing strategy.

As at the end of 2012, under the affordable housing strategy, we have already delivered more than 7 600 new affordable housing opportunities and are well on the way to delivering at least 20 000 affordable homes by 2020 for people on low and moderate incomes. The people of Western Australia are feeling the benefit of the initiatives driven through the strategy since 2010, with 434 households being assisted with purchasing a home through SharedStart. Sales have been largely to people with average annual incomes of \$66 000 for families and \$55 000 for singles, with homes averaging \$200 000 below the Perth median price. Also 30 727 people have been assisted into rental accommodation through bond loans and 2 891 households that could not otherwise access housing finance have obtained Keystart loans.

WA's growing population and strong economy means increasing the supply and diversity of affordable housing needs to remain a priority for the government. HIFG's prediction of increased dwelling commencements is good news and our affordable housing strategy is helping to address the cost of accommodation. We will continue the good work being done by government in partnership with industry and the community sectors.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION — PRESCRIBED BURNS

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef — Minister for Environment) [12.12 pm]: I take this opportunity to update members on prescribed burning efforts by the Department of Environment and Conservation. I am pleased to inform members that DEC began early dry season prescribed burning in the Kimberley in March, following a wet season of average monsoonal rains that has resulted in a very fire-prone environment for that region in 2013. The window of opportunity to reduce fuel loads before the winter rains in our state forests and parks through

prescribed burning is now open. With the drying climate in our south west, these windows are shrinking. However, DEC must continue to carry out this vital work to help prevent the spread of large bushfires that threaten lives, property and our natural assets.

DEC has recently commenced its autumn prescribed burning program in the south west forests and across the south coast. When conditions are right, DEC will do what it can to create a patchwork of burnt areas that act as buffers to slow down any bushfires that come through. A proposed burn program for autumn 2013 has been developed for south west regions, which includes 187 candidate burns, totalling about 135 200 hectares. The program is intentionally large to account for burns that do not go ahead because of changing daily weather conditions, which are often unpredictable.

Prior to autumn, DEC was able to safely reduce fuel loads across only 18 000 hectares in the south west since July 2012. It is unlikely the department will achieve the annual burn target of 200 000 hectares in the south west this year as a result of prolonged summer weather and the time-consuming but essential operational improvements recently implemented by DEC in response to recommendation 2 of “Appreciating the Risk: Report of the Special Inquiry into the November 2011 Margaret River Bushfire”. I am pleased to report that the burn planning component of this work to ensure DEC’s processes are aligned with the latest international risk management standard has now been completed. DEC now has a new prescribed fire planning process that more thoroughly addresses the bushfire risks associated with each proposed burn on the autumn program. DEC’s prescribed burning program over the past several decades has had a positive impact in the south west and enabled the department to restrict the number of large and potentially very damaging bushfires. It has also served as the basis for world-leading scientific research into the biodiversity benefits of prescribed fire.

The Liberal–National government strongly supports DEC’s prescribed burning program. We will continue to encourage the department to achieve burn targets as part of its responsibilities to mitigate the impacts of inevitable bushfires—a responsibility which is shared by all landholders and owners in Western Australia.

I conclude by acknowledging the hard work of all of the state’s firefighters and support agencies over the summer during a season that presented the ultimate challenge through the death of one of their own, DEC employee Wendy Bearfoot. I know that the hard work will continue with the prescribed burning program, and I commend them for their efforts.

NATURAL GAS (CANNING BASIN JOINT VENTURE) AGREEMENT BILL 2013

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr C.J. Barnett (Minister for State Development)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Minister for State Development) [12.16 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to ratify and authorise the implementation of an agreement—scheduled to the bill—between the state and Buru Energy Limited, Diamond Resources (Fitzroy) Pty Ltd, Diamond Resources (Canning) Pty Ltd and Mitsubishi Corporation to promote the natural gas exploration and development of the area of certain petroleum exploration permits in the Canning Basin region of Western Australia. Buru Energy Limited, Diamond Resources (Fitzroy) Pty Ltd and Diamond Resources (Canning) Pty Ltd are collectively the joint venturers under the agreement. Mitsubishi Corporation is the guarantor of the obligations of its subsidiaries Diamond Resources (Fitzroy) Pty Ltd and Diamond Resources (Canning) Pty Ltd.

The onshore Canning Basin and the associated gas and liquids have the potential to make a significant long-term contribution to Western Australia’s economy and stimulate economic growth. The land area containing hydrocarbons is vast and larger than many countries, and the unconventional gas resources are also of an extremely large scale. The US Energy Information Administration has made estimates of shale gas resources around the world because of its overwhelming importance to society in the years to come. Shale gas has already transformed the energy situation in the US and has helped underpin economic revival in the US.

The EIA has estimated that the onshore Canning Basin may contain 229 trillion cubic feet of shale gas resources, without taking into account additional tight gas resources. This is roughly double Western Australia’s known offshore gas resources and is the largest shale or unconventional gas accumulation in Australia. That staggering resource estimate does not include the current focus of the joint venturers’ activities. Buru considers that its Laurel prospect might itself contain an additional 100 trillion cubic feet of gas and associated liquids. Of particular interest to the state is the potential of the onshore Canning Basin as a source of competitive gas supply to meet future domestic gas market requirements.

The agreement seeks to facilitate the establishment by the joint venturers of a domestic gas project, subject to them proving up sufficient reserves of natural gas from the agreement's title areas to underpin the establishment and sustained operation of such a project and the joint venturers otherwise being satisfied such a project is technically and economically viable. If evaluation and development activities proceed as planned, at least 1 500 petajoules of gas will be supplied to customers in Western Australia over the first 25 years of the proposed domestic gas project. In context, this represents an average daily supply of some 165 terajoules, which is some 15 per cent of the state's current domestic gas supply.

The agreement also seeks to facilitate the joint venturers, if they wish, undertaking an LNG pipeline project to deliver natural gas from within the title areas, and other areas with the consent of the state agreement minister, to an LNG production facility within an LNG precinct in the north west of Western Australia, or to a third party pipeline to such LNG production facility, for the production of LNG for export.

The title areas will initially comprise the area of the key petroleum exploration permits set out in the schedule to the agreement. These are held by the joint venturers under the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act 1967 over part of the Canning Basin region of Western Australia. The title areas are prospective for both conventional and unconventional natural gas resources. The joint venturers are already actively exploring the title areas for petroleum, including for the purpose of evaluating the technical and economic viability of the natural gas resources within those areas. The state wishes to encourage accelerated expenditure by the joint venturers in such continuing exploration and evaluation of natural gas resources. Accordingly, for the purposes of the agreement, certain provisions of the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act 1967 will be modified as set out in the agreement, including to allow the abovementioned petroleum exploration permits to be renewed twice—that is, within a limited suspension period—without the normal 50 per cent relinquishment obligation.

The Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act 1967 was not drafted with the recently emerging unconventional gas sector in mind. The limited suspension of relinquishment obligations recognises that proving the technical and economic feasibility of the Canning Basin commercial shale gas potential will require some years of high level expenditure and technical development. This has been the case for shale gas in the United States of America despite the presence of the most experienced petroleum services sector in the world. The agreement in return obliges the joint venturers to continue to explore and evaluate the title areas in accordance with their obligations under the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act 1967, as modified by the agreement, as holders of the relevant petroleum exploration permits. It also obliges them, in addition, to undertake field and office investigations, appraisals and studies and in due course marketing and finance studies and other matters necessary for them to prove up sufficient reserves of natural gas within the title areas to underpin the establishment and sustained operation of a technically and economically viable domgas project and subject thereto, to finalise and to submit proposals for a domgas project within the specified time frames.

The agreement recognises the current uncertainty about the extent of natural gas reserves within the title areas and the technical and economic viability of a domgas project. Accordingly, the state has agreed that the agreement be determined upon notice from the joint venturers—given not earlier than 31 December 2015 or later than 31 March 2016 under clause 35 of the agreement—for any one or more of the following reasons: the joint venturers have been unable to prove up sufficient reserves of natural gas within the title areas to underpin the establishment and sustained operation of a technically and economically viable domgas project; or the joint venturers' preparatory work under the agreement leads them to conclude that the production of natural gas to underpin the establishment and sustained operation of a domgas project is not technically viable; or the joint venturers' preparatory work under the agreement leads them to conclude that the establishment and sustained operation of a domgas project is otherwise not economically viable. The agreement does not include oil discoveries and their commercialisation, although the joint venturers are optimistic that shale oil will also be found. The focus of the agreement is on exploring and proving up natural gas resources.

Petroleum titles: As mentioned above, the agreement is based on the area of five key petroleum exploration permits held by the joint venturers within the Canning Basin. These will comprise the initial petroleum titles and title areas as defined in clause 1 of the agreement. The agreement allows for further petroleum exploration permits or petroleum drilling reservations held solely by one or more of the joint venturers within the Canning Basin to also be included in the agreement after 31 March 2016 and with the approval of the minister responsible for the state agreement. However, the state agreement minister must be satisfied that the land the subject of the title is prospective for natural gas and such approval would more efficiently or satisfactorily implement or facilitate the objects of the agreement.

The domgas project: In summary, the domgas project will involve the production of domgas in a treatment plant from natural gas obtained from within the title areas, and other areas with the consent of the state agreement minister, and the construction and operation of a pipeline commencing from a treatment plant within the title areas and extending to and connecting to the domestic gas pipeline network near Port Hedland or near

Dampier—unless the state otherwise approves another location in the north west of Western Australia, in which case near that other location—for the conveyance of domgas into the domestic gas pipeline network.

The agreement provides in clause 10 for the joint venturers and the state agreement minister to agree on a corridor within which the joint venturers may construct their domgas pipeline. The agreement provides in clause 34 for the joint venturers, after the domgas project operation date and with the state agreement minister's consent, to sell or otherwise dispose of such pipeline out of the agreement.

LNG project: The liquefied natural gas project will in summary involve the construction and operation of a pipeline commencing from within the title areas and extending to and connecting to an LNG production facility within an LNG precinct, or to a third party pipeline to the LNG production facility. It would transport natural gas obtained from within the title areas and other areas, with the consent of the state agreement minister, to the LNG production facility, or to the above third party pipeline, for the production of LNG for export. The LNG pipeline must be a separate pipeline to the domgas pipeline. The relevant LNG precinct, within which the LNG production facility may be located, will be agreed between the joint venturers and the state agreement minister as part of the clause 20 process for them to agree a corridor within which the joint venturers may construct their LNG pipeline.

The LNG pipeline project may be undertaken by the joint venturers, if they so wish, in addition to their obligation to undertake the domgas project. However, they may not submit proposals for the LNG pipeline project until after all their proposals required to be submitted for the domgas project have been submitted. Furthermore, their proposals for the LNG pipeline project may not be approved by the state agreement minister until all proposals from the joint venturers for the domgas project have been approved.

The agreement provides in clause 35(6), after the LNG project operation date for the agreement to determine in relation to the LNG pipeline project; that is, for the project to continue outside the agreement.

I would also mention the following important provisions of the agreement.

Community and social benefits: The joint venturers acknowledge in clause 6 of the agreement the need for community and social benefits to flow from the agreement. Clause 6 provides for the preparation by the joint venturers and approval by the state agreement minister of a plan that describes their strategies for achieving social and community benefits in connection with the initial domgas project. The state agreement minister may require that a similar plan be prepared in connection with an expansion of the domgas project, the LNG pipeline project and any expansion of that project.

Local industry participation benefits: The joint venturers acknowledge in clause 7 of the agreement the need for local industry participation benefits to flow from the agreement. Clause 7 provides for the preparation by the joint venturers of a plan that contains, in connection with the initial domgas project and in addition to the other matters specified in clause 7, a clear statement on the strategies the joint venturers will use to maximise local industry uses and procurement as referred to in clause 7. A similar plan will be required to be prepared in connection with an expansion of the domgas project, the LNG pipeline project and any expansion of that project unless the state agreement minister otherwise requires.

Domgas commitment: Under clause 8 of the agreement the parties acknowledge their common aspiration that, subject to the joint venturers proving up of sufficient reserves of natural gas within the title areas, they will progressively and continuously make available for sale into the Western Australian domestic gas market a certain quantity of domgas, produced as part of the domgas project from natural gas obtained from within the title areas, over a certain period as set out in that clause. Clause 8 of the agreement sets out the joint venturers' obligations with respect to the marketing and making available of domgas for sale, including petrochemical feed stocks which are high-value components of natural gas, with great potential for downstream processing.

In the event that liquefied natural gas for export is being produced, or is to be produced, from natural gas obtained from within the title areas, the joint venturers shall be obliged to market and make available for sale into the Western Australian domestic gas market a quantity of domgas from the title areas that is to be consistent with the state's domestic gas reservation policy that applies at the time. As part of their domgas commitment, the joint venturers agree to reserve or procure the reservation of natural gas from within the title areas sufficient for the sustained operation of the domgas project in accordance with approved proposals and otherwise for them to meet their domgas commitment generally.

Access obligations in respect of project pipelines: Clause 18 of the agreement requires the joint venturers to comply with and observe the laws for the time being in force in Western Australia with respect to the provision of access by persons to the project pipelines or either of them, including use by persons of the services provided by the project pipelines or either of them.

Commercialisation of natural gas from the title areas: Clause 24 imposes restrictions on the joint venturers' ability to sell, to dispose or otherwise to commercialise or permit the commercialisation of natural gas obtained

from within the title areas other than by means of infrastructure and activities comprising the domgas project or the LNG project.

Local content obligations: Clause 27 of the agreement imposes standard state agreement local content obligations upon the joint venturers in respect of both the domgas project and the LNG project and any expansions of those projects.

Term of the agreement: Clause 46 of the agreement provides for an initial term of 25 years with the ability for the state agreement minister to extend it for a further period of up to 25 years.

By entering into this agreement, the government is encouraging accelerated large-scale investment in the exploration and evaluation of natural gas resources in the highly prospective Canning Basin region of the state with a view to the proving up of natural gas reserves to underpin the establishment and sustained operation of a domgas project and, if the joint venturers so wish, of an LNG pipeline project. The state desires to facilitate such developments for the purposes of promoting industrial development in Western Australia generally and energy security in the said state in particular.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman**.

SUPPLY BILL 2013

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr T.R. Buswell (Treasurer)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the Treasurer.

Second Reading

MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Treasurer) [12.32 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill seeks supply and appropriation from the consolidated account for recurrent and capital purposes during the 2013–14 financial year of \$7.942 billion out of the consolidated account pending the passage of the consolidated account appropriation bills for the year ending 30 June 2014.

Supply is an integral element of the Westminster system of government and successive state governments and Parliaments in Western Australia have accepted and understood that the intent of supply is to give authority for expenditure from the commencement of a new financial year pending the passage of the consolidated account appropriation bills.

Each year through the budget process, authority is granted to agencies to spend public funds through the passing of annual appropriation bills. The funding is supplied to agencies for services provided in the coming financial year. Usually with a May budget, the appropriation bills are passed by 30 June, and supply is therefore provided to agencies for the coming financial year.

With an August budget, this is not the case, and a supply bill is required. While the Financial Management Act 2006 provides two months' automatic supply if supply is not granted before the end of the financial year, it is anticipated that the 2013–14 budget will not complete its passage through Parliament until the end of September 2013. As such, a stand-alone supply bill authorising supply for this period is required. An August budget will allow time for ministers to critically look at the spending of each of our departments. By considering all existing policies, each minister can then prioritise with the aim of delivering programs more effectively and implementing new election commitments.

This bill appropriates the consolidated account in aggregate pending the subsequent detailed appropriations. These moneys may be issued and applied to the works, services and purposes for which the consolidated account was appropriated by Parliament for the financial year ending 30 June 2013; or, in respect of which payments of an extraordinary or unforeseen nature were charged against the consolidated account in respect of the financial year ending 30 June 2013 under the Financial Management Act 2006. The bill prescribes a general monetary limit on the drawings against the consolidated account. By so doing, it overcomes the problems that otherwise could arise by prescribing monetary limits in respect of the individual appropriation that were detailed in the 2012–13 estimates of expenditure.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman**.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY*Motion*

Resumed from 7 May on the following motion moved by Mrs G.J. Godfrey —

That the following Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's speech be agreed to —

To his Excellency the Honourable Mr Malcolm James McCusker, Governor of the State of Western Australia.

May it please your Excellency —

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the state of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [12.34 pm]: Firstly, I would like to congratulate all the new members on both sides of the house who were elected to the Parliament on 9 March. May I also congratulate all the returning members who were successful in that same election. Congratulations also, Mr Speaker, to you on your important new office.

I believe the Liberal Party was blessed with many outstanding candidates. Some were successful and, unfortunately, some just missed out. Many of us, including me, achieved very large increases in our majorities. I at present hold virtually 70 per cent of the vote. I would love to think that the reason for this is because I am generally well liked within my electorate. I certainly hope I am well liked among the majority of my constituents. However, I will not delude myself and I urge other Liberals not to delude themselves either. We won seats that would normally be considered reasonably safe Labor seats. Although we had good candidates, I believe we owe the victory to one person, and that person, of course, is our Prime Minister. It is my belief that the Prime Minister and her government are very unpopular with not just the people of Western Australia but the whole of Australia and we will see a similar outcome in September with the federal election.

One of the main reasons the Prime Minister is so unpopular is that she was not truthful in her promises to the Australian people during the last federal election when she promised there would be no carbon tax under her government. People do not like being deceived. The challenge facing the re-elected government of WA is how it will maintain the trust and faith of people who voted Liberal or National and honour its election promises in the knowledge that in doing so it will increase the state debt even more.

The outcome of this election was very reminiscent of the 1996 state election when the Liberals won a majority in their own right. They decided to continue governing with the National Party, as we are now. However, in the short space of four years the Liberal Party was roundly defeated. As the old saying goes, a week is a long time in politics. Can I say that four years can be a lifetime and that may be the case for some members. A former Liberal member of this chamber pointed out to me recently that Cicero said in 55 BC —

The budget should be balanced, the treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt, the mobs should be forced to work and not depend on government for subsistence.

It seems we have not learned much over the past 2 068 years—nor indeed has the Italian government; nor have many other European governments for that matter.

Our state debt gives me very serious concerns and may well also play a significant part in the outcome of the next state election. Unless dealt with by way of a concerted effort, state debt will have a detrimental effect on our children and our grandchildren. It is a fact that debts are very rarely ever repaid by the governments that create them; they are nearly always repaid by future governments. This was the case in the federal arena during the Howard and Costello years in government, when they paid off all the previous Labor government's debt and put us in the black. Let me quote Hon Joe Hockey, shadow Treasurer, on the subject of government debt —

For net debt, since Labor came to power Australia went from \$44.8 billion in the black for 2007–2008 to net debt for the last financial year coming in at \$147 billion.

Labor will be paying \$7 billion this year in interest on this net debt—roughly the cost of fully funding the Gonski education reforms or the Commonwealth's contribution to a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Labor's gross debt—subject to the debt cap—currently sits at over a quarter of a trillion dollars, coming in at \$262 billion ...

At a state level, the Court Liberal government inherited a \$10 billion debt from the previous Labor government, which it reduced to \$4.5 billion and, to its credit, the subsequent Labor government continued the Court

government legacy and reduced debt further, albeit to a modest \$3.6 billion. In just four years, we as a government have increased that to a record \$18 billion, and that is due to increase to nearly \$25 billion over the next year or so. When the election promises are added, state debt could reach close to \$30 billion. In fact, my prediction is that without drastic action, state debt could end up between \$30 billion and \$35 billion within the next four years. The reason for this is that experience over the past 20 years has shown that infrastructure projects have mostly come in well over budget. We seem to be going against the usual trend of conservative governments that pay off Labor government debts. It concerns me deeply that we will lose our AAA credit rating in the near future. That will put even more pressure on us because we would then be paying a higher interest rate than we enjoy at the moment, not to mention the associated loss of confidence. Credit ratings agency Moody's already has us on a negative ratings outlook and has warned that we will remain in that position until we resolve to narrow our deficit and reduce the pace of debt accumulation. To that end, I predict that this year's budget will be one of the most austere budgets in decades. In fact, I believe this will be the trend for every budget until the next election.

There are many questions that we all need to ask ourselves: are we spending funds on what we need or simply what we want? Are we spending funds in areas that will give us a return on our investments? We have an abundance of resource commodities that have, until now, helped protect us from the financial disasters experienced by the rest of the world. However, we are not immune to those disasters and they do have an effect on our economy. Some would have us believe that all is rosy but anyone who follows the global financial crisis knows that recently in Cyprus at least 40 per cent of people's bank accounts have been stolen—sorry, taxed—if they had over €100 000 in them. That is known as the Cyprus haircut. An increasing number of European countries are desperately holding their hands out in need of a bailout and will become victims of their own nation's haircuts. In a sign of how desperate for funds our federal government is becoming, it is now acquiring the bank accounts of individuals if they have not been used for three years, to the point at which the banking industry is now advising people to make token transactions on their accounts just to stop the federal government from raiding people's nest eggs. That has actually happened to me.

The GFC hit us all in 2007. Some were more adversely affected than others but nonetheless it is obvious to anyone who sees with clear eyes that the heart of the problem lies with accruing too much debt. I find it strange that although the public seems to have caught on and is reining in its spending and people are paying off their mortgages, just as small and big businesses are paying off their debts, governments seem to be doing the opposite and are racking up unwanted fresh debts on the people's behalf. The people are setting an example to their governments, and both state and federal governments need to take heed. I feel that the worldwide events over the next four years could bring about such negative flow-on effects to the Western Australian economy that, when combined with all the debt we are piling up, we would have trouble paying our costs and interest bills and meeting all our other commitments without having to take drastic steps that the public would find very unpalatable. Is Western Australia going to experience what the newly elected Queensland Liberal–National government unleashed on its unsuspecting public last year when it announced that thousands of public servants' jobs would be axed? Aside from forced redundancies, should the WA public prepare for reductions to services and the sale of government assets as well as further increases in household fees and charges? It is startling to think that a state such as Western Australia, which has enjoyed immense economic prosperity in the past few years, should have to face such drastic and vicious economic measures, measures that would certainly hurt thousands of Western Australian families, many of whom are already struggling with the cost of living in a city that is ranked among the most expensive in the world. Rather than inflict punitive measures on the working public, I would hope that the government would first look at what savings can be made by reining in any unnecessary or unessential capital expenditure. There is an old saying that I have lived by in not only my personal life, but also my working life as a business owner: never go shopping with an empty purse. I fear that too many governments do exactly that.

I am asked from time to time how it is that we have surpluses every year and yet the debt has grown fivefold. The answer in essence lies in the fact that we are really talking about only operating surpluses, not real fiscal surpluses. Major capital expenditure items are not expensed in our budget. We do not raise enough revenue to fund them, so we just keep borrowing. Although companies may conduct their accounting on these principles, they usually invest in assets that produce a justifiable economic return. The same cannot be said for many state investments, such as museums and stadiums; in fact, we create further operating expenditure to maintain these types of assets. Moreover, when we receive grants for capital programs, such as the infamous school halls program, we tend to count the grant as an operating revenue, but do not count the cost of building as an operating expenditure. The average member of the public, and indeed many politicians, do not understand these types of accounting tricks, so it falls upon the government of the day to govern for the long-term good, well beyond the electoral cycle. It also falls upon the media to scrutinise us properly and not to give us credit for running a surplus when we have really borrowed another few billion dollars. Some people have argued that the state should take on debt during the good economic times in order to take advantage of the opportunities; at the same time, others argue that we need to overspend in the bad times, as the federal government did during the GFC. In other

words, we have state and federal governments racking up debts for precisely opposite reasons. In the minds of some, there is never an appropriate time to break even or run surpluses. Unfortunately, that is the thinking that has led to European countries finding themselves with 25 per cent-plus unemployment, and in some cases over 50 per cent youth unemployment, with no money left in the kitty to deal with that tragedy.

On that note, I would also like to touch on the principles we need to consider for a viable state-based future fund. They are extremely useful, but can work or be worthwhile only if there are no huge debts to service. Peter Costello said recently that future funds can be effective only if there are large budget surpluses and we are virtually debt free. If we have a large enough amount in a future fund, we can easily live off the return without touching the capital. The Western Australian Future Fund lacks any real substance. This cannot change until we start producing operating surpluses; but, firstly, we need to get out of debt. With such a large debt hanging over our heads in this state, and one which is forecast to increase, perhaps it is time to rethink our commitment to the fund. I appreciate the fact that my position on state debt will cause some angst among some of my Liberal parliamentary colleagues, but I also happen to know that many of them agree with me.

Mr Speaker, I also accept that I caused some controversy running for the esteemed office that you now hold. I only say in my defence that I ran for another parliamentary term on the understanding that I would be supported in filling that role. As the wheels of politics turned, this was not to be the case, and I certainly accept that. I will not, however, accept the current and growing debt position; it troubles my conscience as well as my fundamental belief in good housekeeping. This is a matter of speaking now or forever holding one's peace.

As the re-elected member for Hillarys, I faithfully promise the people of my electorate that I will continue to think of their futures as well as those of their families. I have been very privileged to have represented the people in the electorate of Hillarys for the Liberal Party over the last 20 years. I, like many others, came into Parliament to try to make a difference. The area that concerned me most was law and order, but it was not until becoming the police minister that I could really make a difference in that area. I am very proud that under my watch the state's crime level fell by around 10 per cent. I believe this was in part because of legislation that I was able to introduce so that police and the courts were able to deal more effectively with criminals and with those individuals who carry out antisocial activities. It gave me enormous satisfaction to make it a mandatory sentence for anyone who creates bodily harm or grievous bodily harm against our fantastic police officers.

I am also proud of legislation concerning the public sex offender register, as well as legislation concerning the misuse of drugs, which dealt with the manufacture, sale and supply of drugs to or around children. I also took great delight in personally performing the first crushing of a hoon's car. Over the last few years, hoons have not only made life unbearable for many people, but also created great danger on our roads. Another achievement that I am very proud of is introducing into Parliament legislation that ensures all revenue from speed and red-light camera infringements goes into the road trauma trust account for funding road safety initiatives. It was very pleasing to see a decrease in the number of both road deaths and serious injuries during this time. The protection of innocent people, whether they be our children, our motorists or our law enforcement personnel, has always been a priority for me; but the main point is that protecting our citizens is the government's first duty, and it is an area in which this state government has been extremely effective, without the need for large and questionable spending commitments.

How necessary are some of the major commitments we are making in areas of far less importance than law and order? Do we get an effective outcome for every problem simply by throwing money at it? Instead of mortgaging the future of Western Australians, could we not get back to core Liberal values by supporting free enterprise to do more of the things that government is trying to do? Could we not support the family unit to do more of the things in which the government may now have taken too big a role?

I do not know what the next four years have in store for me, but I give this commitment to the people of Hillarys and, indeed, to the wider community of Western Australia: I will continue to work very hard to do all I can to enhance their lives and to maintain an honest dialogue with them. Finally, I pray that we will always have the courage to tell the truth.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [12.50 pm]: I also rise to speak to the Governor's address, following on from an outstanding speech by the member for Hillarys. He offered some timely words about state debt—words that have been said at some length by members on this side of the house, so it is now good to know that the lone Liberal has raised his voice on that side of the chamber to express his concern about the running of the state's finances over the last four and a half years. He quite rightly gave credit to the former Labor government for reducing debt and managing to get things done without increasing debt to unsustainable levels that, the member for Hillarys has just pointed out, offend his Liberal principles. I hope that other Liberals sitting in this place will pay attention to the member for Hillarys because ultimately, as the member for Hillarys said, it is our children and our grandchildren who are going to pay for the debt that the government is taking on right now. As the member for Hillarys said, governments that take on debt very rarely pay it off. I found the member for Hillarys' speech very accurate and very incisive. I dare say that all members, particularly new members in this chamber, should read the member's speech when Hansard is finished with it.

I rise to give my short Address-in-Reply contribution to the Governor's address and, Mr Speaker, I also congratulate you, as other members already have, on your election as Speaker of the house—bearing in mind that a significant number of Labor Party members voted for the member for Hillarys, because we think the member for Hillarys is a wonderful member of Parliament! Clearly, Mr Speaker, when you think about it, because it was a reasonably close vote, it was really the opposition that ensured your rise to the Speaker's chair in the end! I hope that when you are making decisions about the behaviour of various members of Parliament, that fact will be foremost in your mind, especially when you are making calls during question time!

I also acknowledge all the new members who have been elected to this Parliament, and I wish them all the best in their parliamentary careers. I hope that they find it an enjoyable and satisfying job, however long they happen to be in it.

I also want to reflect on the idea that the Premier has been putting around about this “new” government, as though the member for Cottesloe has suddenly, like a fairy, appeared on the scene—pop! We have not seen him before, he is new to us! This is a new government with new agendas—that is, a new government that can walk away from some of the more embarrassing things from its previous term. I think that is why the Premier has gone to some lengths to talk about the “new” government, rather than a continuation of the Barnett government. I am confident that members of the Western Australian electorate will not really take much notice of that attempt.

It took up some time during question time yesterday, so I will reflect quickly on the government's performance thus far, particularly in respect of the dismissal, the sacking, of the former Commissioner of Corrective Services. To be frank, that was an embarrassing, cowardly performance by this government. It is clear that no-one really knows how the Public Sector Commissioner got it into his head that he had to sack the Commissioner of Corrective Services. No-one is 100 per cent sure how Mr Wauchope suddenly decided that he needed to get rid of the commissioner. The minister certainly had nothing to do with it. The minister did not even have the good grace, or do the professional thing, to meet with the commissioner, despite being in the job for some four weeks before the decision was made. No-one really knows how Mr Wauchope, sitting in his office, decided it was time to sack the commissioner. Mr Wauchope has obviously gone rogue. I dare say that it will only be a matter of time before other directors general are silently but efficiently shot during the next few months by a Public Sector Commissioner gone rogue.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The ministers will find out about it afterwards.

Mr B.S. WYATT: The ministers will find out about it well afterwards. The ministers have no involvement with the directors general of their departments, whether they maintain their role or whether they are moved on by a Public Sector Commissioner gone rogue.

It has been an interesting not quite two months since the election of the new Barnett government. During that time ministers seem to have simply disappeared. Ordinarily, we would have thought that we would see ministers out and about explaining decisions and trying to persuade the electorate of particular public policy decisions that have been announced. What we have seen in those short two months is a “no comment” government. I thought I would have a look at how many times in fewer than two months we have had ministers respond to important issues of the day by simply declining to comment. First, I will start with the Minister for Corrective Services because, quite simply, he has been the greatest offender. He has been the greatest offender because, ultimately, he was too busy avoiding meeting the commissioner while somebody else apparently told the Public Sector Commissioner it was time for the commissioner to go. On 28 March, we have the corrective services minister's first offence regarding juveniles in Hakea Prison, on which the minister declined to comment. On 2 April, the minister declined to comment as part of an article headed “Bid to quash Hakea transfer”. On 4 April there was an article published headed “Kids in jail ‘paraded like zoo animals’”. The corrective services minister declined to comment. On 9 April, with respect to a Supreme Court review that had taken place, the minister declined to comment or have anything to do with that. “Sydney lawyer wants action for juveniles” was the heading of an article published on 10 April. Again, the corrective services minister declined to comment. An article headed “Jail work drags chain” was published on 28 April. The corrective services minister declined to comment. An article published in *The West Australian* on 30 April, headed “Minister and sacked jails chief never met” stated —

After refusing to be interviewed about Mr Johnson's removal on Friday, Mr Francis was forced to answer questions on his way into a Cabinet meeting yesterday.

Finally, after declining to comment for weeks on end about significant issues, the minister was captured by the journalist on his way to a cabinet meeting. No doubt that is probably where he found out that his commissioner had been sacked. Still, we are yet to find out reasons why that commissioner no longer has his position as a member of the public service. It is not good enough. If a minister is going to dismiss a senior member of our public service, he needs to have reasons and he needs to have the confidence and at least the courage to address him, meet with him and explain to the people of Western Australia why that decision was taken.

I want to make some comments about Browse. A lot has already been said about Browse so I will just make a few comments about it. That was a fine example of the heavy-handed interference by the Premier simply driving a project away. Ultimately, a process was in place that was going to deliver an outcome in a location that everybody would have ultimately been satisfied with, including those various environmental groups that, in the end ultimately, and I think a bit mischievously, decided it was time there be no development in the Kimberley.

I want to make some brief comments about Christine Milne, the leader of the federal Australian Greens party. She put out a media statement rejoicing the fact that an on-site liquefied natural gas plant was no longer going to be built at James Price Point. The problem that the senator has is that she does not pose any solutions. What is next for the Aboriginal people in the Kimberley? The article that was written by Peter Yu outlined that exact issue. What is next? This is the problem we have when Aboriginal economic development is linked to a particular industrial outcome. When that industrial outcome falls over for whatever reason, Aboriginal people are literally left holding the baby and working out what happens next, and a community is incredibly divided because the process that was in place was simply ignored and trampled over by the Premier of the day. So the Kimberley people sit there now, wondering what is going to happen in light of the fact that so much of government decision and investment in the Kimberley was built around a successful decision for an onshore gas plant at James Price Point.

I will read a quote, hopefully to bring to Senator Milne's mind where Aboriginal people sit today compared with perhaps the times when she would like them to sit. I will quote from Marcia Langton, who gave last year's Boyer Lectures, an excellent series of lectures. She made this point in her very first lecture —

But on the left, and among those opinion leaders who hang on to the idea of the 'new noble savage', Aboriginal poverty is invisible, masked by their 'wilderness' ideology. They describe the Aboriginal situation through a romantic lens. Their unspoken expectation is that no Aboriginal group should become engaged in any economic development.

Later on in that same speech she says —

By the late 1980s, Indigenous policy and much public commentary in Australia was based on a paradigm which cast Aboriginal people as victims of a brutal colonial legacy, as residents of remote regions where they strove to maintain the vestiges of a traditional way of life, an endeavour in which they needed the support of government through income assistance schemes and other policies that would help them to stay on their traditional lands. Over the following two decades this paradigm came under increasing attack, ...

The question I will put to Senator Milne, whom I have never met, but in the event that I do, is: what is her paradigm? What happens now with Aboriginal economic development? Clearly, the senator does not want to see any mining or energy-related development associated with Aboriginal lands but, interestingly, she offers no alternative. I do not accept for a minute that bland references to ecotourism will be anywhere near sufficient to deal with the economic development challenges that Western Australian Aboriginal people face, particularly in some of those remote locations.

I have a few things to say in my 30 minutes today. Just before I came to Parliament this morning, I went to a very significant signing of a memorandum of agreement, which I found out about only yesterday—it was embargoed, so I was very pleased that I could get there—between Curtin University and Colgate University in the United States regarding the Carrolup art. Many people may know the history of the Carrolup art. I want to read from a document prepared by Curtin University. It states —

Carrolup Native School and Settlement, now known as Marribank, is situated 30 kilometres out of Katanning Western Australia. In 1915 the Settlement was established by the Australian Government to provide education and training for Aboriginal children in accordance with the aims of the assimilation policies under the Aborigines Act of 1905. The Settlement closed in 1922 and its residents were transferred to the Moore River Settlement. In 1940, the Settlement was reopened as a farm training school.

During that time, many of those children did art that became incredibly famous simply for the fact that it left Western Australia and was found at Colgate University in storage. There has been a 10-year development of the relationship with the Noongar people, in particular Angus Wallam, the Aboriginal elder who was at the ceremony today, and Ezzard Flowers. Today Colgate University signed a memorandum of agreement to return the Carrolup art to Western Australia and the Noongar community. It will be stored by Curtin University and then toured throughout regional Western Australia and shown at John Curtin Gallery. Some 119 pieces of Carrolup art will be returned to Western Australia. Anyone who knows a little about art or Aboriginal affairs will know that that was indeed a very significant signing this morning. I would like to congratulate those representatives of Colgate University who came out to sign that agreement this morning and who clearly have developed a very strong relationship, as was shown by Angus Wallam in his speech this morning.

I would now like to move to my electorate. It is not often I get the chance to talk specifically about issues in my electorate. I thank the electorate again for re-electing me at the general election some two months ago. I also thank my staff. We all are here thanks to our outstanding staff and volunteers. I acknowledge Alison Cook, my electorate officer, who is currently on maternity leave. On 6 December last year, Jake Cook was born, and he is no doubt proving himself to be a worthy brother to his sister, Willow.

Much was made yesterday about crime. What I would like to speak about in respect of my electorate of Victoria Park is education. Victoria Park is an inner-city electorate that is undergoing a dramatic increase in population density. When I lived in Lathlain 20 years ago, I lived on a quarter-acre block. The vast majority of properties in Lathlain at that time were quarter-acre blocks. Those blocks have now all been subdivided, and what was once a quarter-acre block now has two or three properties on it. That has been replicated in all the suburbs in my electorate.

That means that in a very short period of time there has been a dramatic increase in the student population in my schools. For example, since 2009, at Victoria Park Primary School there has been a 50.7 per cent increase in student population, and at Lathlain Primary School there has a 34.1 per cent increase in student population. Between 2009 and 2012, at East Victoria Park Primary School there was a 25 per cent increase in student population. But in 2013, there was a decrease, because East Victoria Park Primary School was no longer the overflow school, and students were transferred out of East Victoria Park Primary School, mainly into Millen Primary School, which has now become my overflow school. That means that since 2009, Millen Primary School has had a 65.5 per cent increase in student population.

Mr J.E. McGrath: It is a very good school.

Mr B.S. WYATT: It is a very good school, yes.

Mr J.E. McGrath: It used to be in my electorate.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Since 2009, Kensington Primary School has had a 10 per cent increase in student population, and Bentley Primary School, the other primary school that I have in my electorate, has had a 14 per cent increase in student population. So there have been significant increases in student population in a very short time in all my primary schools.

One of the issues that I have, as other members of Parliament no doubt have—probably the member for South Perth has a similar issue, because we cover similar ground—is that the school infrastructure is now decaying. Victoria Park Primary School, which is at the end of my street, is landlocked and it can no longer expand anywhere, really. It is an old school—over 100 years old. What I think needs to happen in Victoria Park in my electorate is in respect of Millen Primary school; and I do appreciate the member for South Perth's interjection that it is a very good school. Millen Primary School is located on very old grounds. As I have just outlined, since 2009 there has been a 65 per cent increase in the student population at that school. A small amount of money has been spent at Millen Primary School on maintenance. However, it is time for a new school to be built on the Millen grounds. The reason I have picked Millen out of all my schools, when other schools would have just as worthy an argument, is because it is the overflow school, and also because the Department of Education owns a large area of land around that school that is currently a playground facility. That means that there is the capacity to build a new school at that location without affecting the education of the students at that school. A new school certainly needs to be constructed at that location. That would have a dramatic impact on the other schools in my electorate, which have seen an increase in student population, in addition to the increase in the number of overflow kids coming into Millen Primary School.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr B.S. WYATT: The other point I would like to make is in respect of secondary education. Every one of the primary schools in my electorate is excellent. I have great principals. I have active P&Cs. I have engaged parents. Therefore, as a result, we have great kids coming out of these schools. A number of years ago, the Leader of the Opposition described our primary schools as the jewel in the crown of our education system. I think that is right.

Mr M. McGowan: You have a good memory!

Mr B.S. WYATT: I remember everything, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr T.K. Waldron: Selectively!

Mr B.S. WYATT: I remember everything that is helpful to me!

But one of the things that has been raised with me regularly since I was elected in 2006 is a sense of dissatisfaction with the secondary education options in my area, which also includes the member for South Perth's area—not so much the member for Belmont's area, but possibly. Certainly, my patch also incorporates the member for South Perth's patch in respect of the education zones. The sense of some parents is that they are

not so sure that Kent Street Senior High School or Como Secondary College is right for their children. That has been for various reasons; they all have their reasons as to why that is. Just last week—this is not a rare occurrence—another couple moved from the electorate of Victoria Park to get into the catchment of Churchlands Senior High School. This couple has a very young baby, and they want to make sure that their child is in a catchment for a high school that they feel comfortable taking their child to. So, it is not the primary schools; there is a sense of discomfort about the choice of high schools that they have available. I want to make this point: I am in no way reflecting on the staff at either Como, member for South Perth, or Kent Street. That is not the point I am trying to make here. They are excellent staff.

I will tell members what I am about to do. I have prepared a discussion paper that I will send out over the next week to all my school parents and citizens associations and to all my school principals, and there will probably be some in the member for South Perth's electorate; I will also give him a copy of the discussion paper. I want my electorate to enter into a discussion about what they want. How do we develop in my area, which, as I said, is not just the electorate of Victoria Park? Educational zones are not bound by our electorate zones. How do we create in my area that Shenton College of the south east corridor? How do we create a Churchlands Senior High School? I note the member for South Perth nodding his head at those hypothetical questions I am floating.

There are a number of choices, and one of those choices that has been pursued by various principals of both Como and Kent Street over the years would be to effectively create one school out of Como and Kent Street. I know that is controversial. As soon as it is said that two become one, it inevitably means that one school disappears. However, the number of students going into both Kent Street and Como is no longer sufficient to attract the resources for the courses that we want to run and certainly does not fill up those schools. Looking at the My School website, Kent Street's numbers are increasing. Como has had some trouble; its numbers have been decreasing. Both schools still offer great alternatives, but there is now a concern, I think, in the broader community in my electorate—maybe the member for South Perth shares the same concern—about the choices they have available. So, I think it is time to look at that option. Maybe it is time that we merge and create one school that can take up to a couple of thousand students and attract the necessary investment that would therefore be needed to have the courses on offer, not just for those students who want to move on into university. I know that the maths course, for example, and the science course at Como are outstanding. In fact, Como could be made a gifted and talented education school now—absolutely right now. The decision should simply be made to get that done. Kent Street is very well known for its aviation school, its fashion and its cricket. They are two schools that I think would complement each other well.

The question is: if we were to do that, where would we do it? My view is that because of the land available at Kent Street and the fact that Kent Street is heritage listed, that would be the obvious location. It would also provide the density of students attending that would then perhaps one day attract the state's investment into light rail, which would go up to and run directly around Curtin University of Technology. Another option—I know that people are sensitive about one school taking over the other—that I know Curtin University is very keen on would be to create an entirely new school on Curtin University grounds. The proceeds from the sale of land would go into paying for a large component of that capital spend on a new secondary college in that inner south east area of my electorate of Victoria Park, and I have no doubt that the member for South Perth probably has similar —

Mr J.E. McGrath: That would be a better option for the Como area; it's more central.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Yes. I am painfully aware that I am not an expert on education, and I want to get some feedback, input and, hopefully, some support from the education department about how we should go about having this community discussion. Over the next week I will send that discussion paper out to all those relevant parents and citizens associations and principals because I want their feedback on how we go forward. My constituency regards choice of secondary education as the big, missing government-provided service in our area. Victoria Park is a wonderful inner-city electorate comprising the Swan and Canning Rivers. It also has a train line. It is a wonderful area but I think it is that choice of secondary education that people find wanting. I look forward to engaging in that discussion with my constituency. I want the member for South Perth involved as well because ultimately —

Mr J.E. McGrath: You might end up moving to South Perth!

Mr B.S. WYATT: No; I assure the member for South Perth that will not be the case! We can hopefully have a constructive dialogue around this. I really want to move outside any political element to it, member for South Perth, because it is an important issue. It impacts on the electorates of South Perth and Victoria Park. I have a final point in respect of education —

Mr J.E. McGrath: Is the member aware that there is a plan to turn Como Secondary College into a K–12 school?

Mr B.S. WYATT: There was. That was the initial closedown to do that. It never seemed to happen. Como has a similar issue in respect of a regular spend on maintenance but I think it is beyond that now. It is an old school; it

is beyond that. That may be an option: do we create one big K–12 school or should it be purely secondary? That is a discussion that the member and I can have here. We need further involvement from our constituents before we can progress that.

I want to make one other point in respect of schools. Like many MPs, I travel around Western Australia to visit schools. Section 125 of the School Education Act requires every government school to have a council unless it is exempted by the minister. Section 126 allows the Minister for Education to exempt the school from having a council for a number of reasons—for example, because of its size or nature. I put questions on notice to find out exactly which schools have been exempted from the requirement to have a school council. School councils generally comprise parents of the kids who are at that school, and I think they provide a very important service to those schools. Of course, in regional and remote Western Australia, a lot of Aboriginal communities really struggle to have a viable school council. In a small population, with the challenges of poverty, having a viable school council often does not exist. No doubt when the minister answers my question on notice I will find out exactly which schools are exempt and which have been exempted over the last few years. There needs to be a push from the Department of Education to get more people, including professional people, interested in education. They may be based in Perth but have the time and interest to serve on school councils outside the metropolitan area. That does not mean they will need to travel once a month to a remote location to attend a school council meeting. It may be that they only go to that location once or twice a year. That sort of input into government schools that are struggling at the moment to have a viable school council is very important for the ongoing success of some regional and remote schools. People living in small populations may not have the sort of expertise they would like to call on that, for example, some school councils in my electorate fortunately have.

My final point relates to the Governor of Western Australia, His Excellency Malcolm McCusker. This week I received a letter from the Governor. I do not know whether every member of Parliament received it—I did. It relates to some comments that he made in his speech to Parliament. Issue was taken in the media in respect of these comments made by the Governor —

Australia has one of the oldest democratic systems of government in the world, a system which was achieved without civil war or bloodshed, and which is the envy of many.

I know some letters have passed between the member for Kwinana and the Governor. Quite rightly, the Governor was upset that he was perhaps characterised in the media as somebody who was not understanding or supportive of Aboriginal people. The Governor, in a long letter to me—I assume other members received it also—set out his long-term support for Aboriginal people, not just in terms personal but of course in what have been very generous donations from the Governor and his family to various Aboriginal groups around Western Australia. I do want to make that point. I have spoken to the member for Kwinana, who shares the view that nobody doubts—I certainly do not doubt it for a minute—the Governor’s commitment to Aboriginal people in Western Australia. The one thing that has always struck me as very brave of the Governor when he was a senior lawyer, and since as the Governor, is that he has always been very, very strong in respect of his objection to the high rates of Aboriginal juveniles in detention. I do want to put that on record. I have not spoken to the Governor yet, but now that I have received his letter, hopefully I will do so in the not-too-distant future. With that, 28 minutes seems to have flown by, and I conclude by saying that, as I said, I have incredibly high regard for the Governor.

Amendment to Motion

Mr B.S. WYATT: I move —

That the following words be added to the motion —

but regrets to inform His Excellency that the Barnett government should be condemned for its handling of Corrective Services, and in particular the dismissal of Mr Ian Johnson, APM, the corrective services commissioner

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [1.20 pm]: I support the amendment moved by the member for Victoria Park. It is a very important issue we are raising, and we have raised this issue today because we have not received appropriate or full answers from the government in relation to what is an important issue of public administration in Western Australia; that is, the dismissal of a senior public servant, at great cost to the taxpayers of the state, without any explanation whatsoever from the government minister responsible, or indeed the government ministers responsible for that dismissal. So, we are going to keep raising this issue on behalf of the people of Western Australia until we get to the bottom of exactly what is going on in this very important portfolio of corrective services.

As Gareth Parker from *The West Australian* I think fairly aptly summed up last week, since the election a range of issues have come up that were not raised prior to the election that have been poorly handled by the government, and that I think are rapidly showing that the government is not handling important issues in this state well. The loss of the Browse project—the second biggest project in the history of the state; the loss of the

project due to the interference of this Premier; the loss of that project to Western Australia. It would have been the second biggest project in the history of this country. The re-merger of Synergy and Verve, without explanation and without making it plain to the public before the election that that would happen; the re-merger of Synergy and Verve, which is opposed by everyone in the state, including, I suspect, the majority of the Liberal Party—in fact the overwhelming majority of the Liberal Party—but supported by one person, being the Premier. It is opposed as an economic measure that will not advance the interests of consumers or business in this state. The very weak farmers package, whereby the commonwealth stepped in because the state was not carrying out the obligations it undertook to farmers in this state in the Premier's much-vaunted whirlwind tour out to visit some wheatbelt farmers, and then the failure to deliver anything significant there. Then we recently had the issues surrounding disability care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the failure to deliver there.

But in the midst of all this we have the debacle in the corrective services department, whereby Mr Ian Johnson, APM—Australian Police Medal—was recently dismissed by the government at a cost to taxpayers of \$420 000, without any explanation whatsoever to the public or to the Parliament when those issues have been raised. We are going to raise those issues, and as the member for Hillarys, the other Johnson of note—Johnsons seem to be dismissed with impunity by this government with regular frequency—recently said, in his speech just a moment ago, we need to get to the truth of matters, and we need to get to the truth in relation to this issue about Mr Ian Johnson. A full explanation is needed. What we are doing in this place today is providing the opportunity for this minister and for the Premier, who should be in this place for this debate as the minister for public sector management, to give us the facts as to why this senior public servant was dismissed and what other senior public servants in Western Australia, who are regularly lauded by the Premier, can expect from the government. Can they also expect summary executions? We need to know exactly what has gone on here.

Ian Johnson, the recently departed Commissioner of Corrective Services, joined the police force in 1976. He served as a police officer in this state for 29 years, rising to the position of assistant commissioner, and in 2006 left the police force to become Commissioner of Corrective Services. He received a five-year contract in 2006 and that was then renewed by this government. He was described in March this year as a very strong commissioner by none other than the Premier. The Premier, I think on the day he sacked him, also described the member for Hillarys as a very good minister.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It was the day before, I think.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The day before he sacked the member for Hillarys, the Premier described him as a very good minister. This person spent 29 years in the police force and five years as corrective services commissioner, and he was reappointed and lauded by the government. He did a course at the FBI National Academy in the United States and as corrective services commissioner put in place a number of improvements and reforms across the prison system in Western Australia. I will not go into all of those, but he established and put in place a range of reforms.

I saw him on the news last night. It is apparent that he is a bit perplexed by what has gone on. He indicated that he has unfinished business as corrective services commissioner. If someone indicates that they have unfinished business and then their job is taken away from them without their agreement whilst they have that unfinished business to perform, does that not therefore mean they have been sacked? Does that not therefore mean the person has been dismissed? He was carrying out his unfinished business, according to him last night on the television, and then he had his job taken away, yet the Premier came into this house and said he was not sacked. He was not dismissed, yet he says he has unfinished business and everyone in the world apart from the Premier thinks he was sacked. Certainly the entire media in Western Australia think he was sacked. Let us put this in context. There have been four Ministers for Corrective Services in the past four and a half years, one of whom served eight months before he was sacked from the ministry in this government. The new minister has occupied the post for six or seven weeks and he did not meet with the commissioner, the head of the major agency inside his portfolio; he did not even meet with him. For all the ministers in this government and in any government, it is inconceivable that a minister would not meet with the head of their department, particularly the most senior department within their portfolio responsibilities. It is inconceivable that a minister would not meet with that person. In the context of not meeting with that person, this Minister for Corrective Services the member for Jandakot over here, carried out a cold-eyed review of the portfolio. Not only has he created a new term for the English language, a “cold-eyed review” —

Mr J.M. Francis: Put it into Google and it will be there.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sure it will be a new entry.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Did you google Ian Johnson?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Had the minister googled Ian Johnson, he might have been able to find him and meet with him! In any event, the minister carried out this cold-eyed review, but when he was asked why the commissioner was dismissed following the cold-eyed review, he said that he did not know and that it was a decision for the

Public Sector Commissioner. He carried out the cold-eyed review and looked at all the issues across the portfolio, but does not know why the commissioner, the subject of the cold-eyed review, was then dismissed. That was a matter for the Public Sector Commissioner and therefore, the minister advised me yesterday, I needed to ask the Premier, as public sector minister, why the Commissioner of Corrective Services was dismissed.

So I then followed his advice. I asked the Premier why it was and the Premier could tell me why he was not dismissed. He said that he was not dismissed because of the riot in Banksia Hill—that had nothing to do with it. He was not dismissed in any way, shape or form or in any relationship to the removal of the member for Murray–Wellington as the minister—he was not dismissed because of that. But then I asked why he was dismissed and he says, “I don’t know.” He does not actually know why he was dismissed but he knows why he was not dismissed. If he knows why he was not dismissed, why was he dismissed? Why was he dismissed if he knows why he was not dismissed? These are important questions that the Premier should come into the chamber and answer. Why was this person dismissed?

Then the Premier said, “No, he wasn’t dismissed”, even though we know that he left the position after seven years of service and 29 years of service prior to that as a police officer rising to a very senior rank. We know that he did not want to go. According to the Premier’s definition, he was not dismissed, even though he did not want to go, and the Premier says he does not know why he was dismissed but he knows why he was not dismissed. So, why was he dismissed? That is the question we are all asking. The Premier, if he was not as cowardly as to not come into the chamber to participate in this debate, should be here to answer this as the minister responsible for public sector management. The Premier is cowardly cowering in his office at the moment, unwilling to come in and answer these simple questions on why a senior public servant was dismissed from his role at a cost of \$420 000 to taxpayers.

The Premier brazenly goes out there and says, “Oh, he received his entitlements, therefore it’s no cost to the taxpayer.” He was given the amount of \$420 000; that is, \$420 000 that taxpayers have had to pay. We have to also remember that we now have to employ a new Commissioner of Corrective Services. This is a significant cost to taxpayers, and the Premier should come in here and answer these questions as to why he was removed. It is to my mind inconceivable that the Public Sector Commissioner would remove Mr Ian Johnson, APM from that role without the knowledge or support of the Premier, or any sort of dealings with the Premier as minister responsible for public sector management, or our cold-eyed friend over here, the member for Jandakot, in relation to these matters. Yet they just tough it out without giving us any sort of explanation whatsoever.

We are here in the Parliament of Western Australia. This is the highest accountability body in the state. Parliaments have learnt over the decades across this country and internationally that this is where the answers need to be delivered. We do not get answers from Freedom of Information Act requests from the government. We do not get answers in any other way apart from raising issues in this chamber. The fact that the Premier will not come in and answer these questions should be a matter of some shame for him—some shame for him that he will not come in here and answer these questions in relation to this senior public servant who was removed from his role without explanation and without explanation to the Parliament.

What is going on here, and what can the rest of the public sector expect from this government? There are numerous senior public servants across the state. I have had numerous dealings with many of them; professional people who could get higher paying jobs outside of the public sector. Are they now subject to summary, arbitrary execution at the whim of someone inside government about whom we do not know? I ask that because we do not know why it happened. We do not know who issued the orders. The Premier does not know, according to his answers yesterday, why it happened although he knows why it did not happen; and we know that the minister in this place will not answer any of the questions, as he would not yesterday. So, what in fact has gone on? A full explanation of this matter is needed from the government, and a full explanation of the handling of the corrective services portfolio is needed, because this has been a very smelly affair indeed.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro) [1.35 pm]: I rise to support the motion. At the outset I view this issue as a matter of courage and integrity. I say right now to the Minister for Corrective Services that there is evidently a surplus of courage and integrity in the man that he sacked, the man that his government sacked; we are not sure exactly whether it was the Minister for Corrective Services or the Premier, and neither is the minister. My experience of the man in the two and a half years or so that I formally held the shadow corrective services portfolio was that he was forthright, honest and a professional public servant who, to the best of his ability, enacted government policy. Frequently I did not like what he did because he was enacting the government’s stupid policy, its failed policy—its clearly failed policy, as is being experienced right now in the prison system. The prison system, and the juvenile detention system in particular, are symptoms of the failure of Barnett government’s law and order agenda and certainly the failure of its policies in the minister’s portfolio. That the government should sack a senior respected public servant, a former senior police officer, after a long and distinguished career, for the purposes of so clearly scapegoating him for the government’s own policy and decision failures is extraordinary and shameful. That that should be done without the minister having the courage and integrity to front the man

himself prior to the sacking being announced to him by another faceless public servant is extraordinary. It speaks volumes about the minister's deficits of courage and integrity.

I will now reflect a little on the minister's performance to date, because in this portfolio it could be characterised mainly by an absence—an absence of courage and integrity, as I have explained, but also an absence of any presence. For more than a month following the minister's swearing-in, as we heard from the member for Victoria Park in his contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate, the minister was unavailable for comment. It is not as though the Department of Corrective Services was short of things to comment on. It is not as though the corrective services portfolio lacked any ability to draw the interest of the people of Western Australia. We in opposition were asking questions and the media in Western Australia were seeking answers from the minister on a number of issues. The first thing, the most obvious one, is one that the minister inherited—that is, juveniles having to be housed at Hakea Prison—and no blame can be attached to him there. That occurred fundamentally as a result of a bad decision by the minister's government. Last year the government chose to close one of only two juvenile detention facilities in the state, thereby creating a single point of failure in the form of Banksia Hill Detention Centre, where all juvenile offenders of the state were housed in double-bunking situations with, we know now, significant staffing shortages and other vulnerabilities. What happened? The single point of failure failed and as a consequence the current minister has found himself in the situation of having juveniles in Hakea. That was not the minister's fault, other than the fact that he was previously part of the Barnett government, which did not suddenly just pop into existence, as the member for Victoria Park so colourfully put it, but has been here for four and a half years. One of a series of bad decisions was the closure of Rangeview Remand Centre and the consequent clear failure of the system. When the juveniles went to Hakea and there was a subsequent court challenge to the government's decision to put juveniles in Hakea, the minister refused to comment. He refused to comment publicly. He refused to front the cameras; he refused to talk to media about the situation and the claims that were made publicly or raise the concerns of the public more widely, beyond those people raising the concerns. A great many concerns arose and they were not just raised by families involved, they were also raised by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Inspector of Custodial Services and the president of the Children's Court.

That series of publicly raised questions caused concerns more widely among the public, but the minister refused to make any comment. As a result of concerns about the situation within Hakea prison where those juveniles were being held, the situation started to impact on the judiciary of the state. They started to make public comment, which is almost unheard of, in relation to a government policy decision that was impacting on the prison system. A magistrate in Kalgoorlie ordered that a teenage inmate be released on bail because the magistrate did not feel it was appropriate for the teenager to be sent to Hakea adult prison. The President of the Children's Court, His Honour Judge Denis Reynolds, made probably unprecedented commentary on and criticism of what was going on within Hakea Prison. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Western Australia then called into use an almost unheard of law in the state to ensure that an inquiry was held in the course of the Supreme Court case into what was going on in Hakea. As a consequence of that inquiry—I doubt whether we would have heard otherwise—we learnt about the critical shortages of staff within youth custodial services at Banksia Hill and then in Hakea. That was made public only because of that inquiry. Through all of that, the member for Jandakot, as the responsible minister, would not talk to the people of Western Australia. He would not reassure them, let alone the parents of the families involved and other extended family, about those concerns.

But on coming into this chamber, under the protection of privilege, he made attacks on the people who were claiming that their children were being inappropriately treated. He did that, despite warnings by the shadow Attorney General that he may be breaching the sub judice rule. He did not have the courage and integrity to walk out of this place and front the cameras, the media and the people of Western Australia and give his answers directly. Instead, he had a dorothea dixer asked in here when he constrained his comments to what he wanted to talk about. That was inadequate.

That was not the only thing that was going on with his portfolio in the month he was absent. There was also a Bunbury prison breakout. It was not just a minor breakout; there were questions around the individuals who broke out and how recently their security had been downgraded. But that is by the by because that was not the issue. That a violent breakout by prisoners who passed female prison officers, who were advised not to intervene for the sake of their own safety, and that those individuals made their way into the community and then threatened the community was worthy of comment by the responsible minister. But the minister was not available for comment. That occurred on 18 April.

I understand that the inquiry into the children in Hakea began about 2 April. On 18 April there was the Bunbury Prison breakout. Also on 18 April the opposition raised in this place the issue of asbestos at Hakea. It is far more serious than the minister indicated in his flippant response. The asbestos at Hakea is widespread and dangerous. In my view, the nature of the asbestos means that it is an urgent matter and the minister has not dealt with it. Again, he has not commented publicly outside this place. He remained here unavailable to take questions outside

this place from the media and the people of Western Australia. The sacking of the former Commissioner of Corrective Services, which we have heard much about, is probably the minister's ultimate failure to be responsible, transparent and honest and to demonstrate courage and integrity. By sacking a man of the calibre of the Commissioner of Corrective Services without even personally bothering to tell him he was going to do it and why was shameful. The minister should be ashamed. It was appalling behaviour and I expect in his response that he will provide far greater explanation of his thoughts about the decisions and actions behind this matter than he has today.

My final couple of points on this matter are about what he has been willing to come out and say in public. Finally, after being absent and unable to be contacted for all those issues, the minister has made two public statements regarding his portfolio. But I think perhaps they would have been better left unsaid. Perhaps he should have remained absent rather than make these comments. Firstly, on 6 May this week, the minister attacked the youth custodial officers as being the problem. The minister said that perhaps the reason that we have such high stress and absenteeism through stress and sick leave at Banksia Hill Detention Centre is that the people there are not up to it; they are the wrong people. They were not the minister's exact words, but I can give those to him. The minister said in an online report in PerthNow on 6 May by Emily Moulten —

You have to say if you have that much of an issue in one particular section of the government, then perhaps we're recruiting the wrong people in the first place," he said.

It is extraordinary that the minister would choose to attack those people. I know some of them and I know that the reason for their collapse of morale and high rates of absenteeism and sick and stress leave is the government's bad decision to shut down one of only two juvenile detention facilities and cram in people held in remand with sentenced prisoners, which completely throws into turmoil any efforts they would normally have to try to reform those individuals. A day later I read in *The West Australian* another statement that I believe the minister should not have made and that he is possibly regretting—I hope he regrets it—attacking the state's prison officers. Having attacked the youth custodial officers as being responsible for their own stress and sick leave, the minister has now attacked the prison officers of the state by saying that they are rorting the system. Gareth Parker reported in *The West Australian* on 7 May that the minister —

... is concerned that some prison officers have systematically rorted sick and personal leave as he declared the job required "a certain thickness of skin".

Again, that implies that those quite dedicated individuals, many of whom I have met and admire and respect, are inadequate and that it is their fault they are suffering from such high levels of sick and stress leave. I will sit down because I want to give the minister an adequate opportunity to respond appropriately and to finally demonstrate some courage and integrity. Stand in this place and say why Commissioner Ian Johnson was sacked and apologise to the youth custodial officers and prison officers of this state. That is a group of people for whom we should all be very thankful and respectful of.

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Corrective Services) [1.47 pm]: I inform members that I will not yell because I am losing my voice. I will probably speak only at this level, member for Warnbro.

The member for Warnbro raised four issues, which I will address in the order that I have written them. The first is my not publicly commenting about a matter that was before the Supreme Court of Western Australia. Clearly the Chief Justice thought this matter was so important that he chose to preside over and hear this case himself. As the member rightly pointed out, the Chief Justice invoked a law, which I had not heard of, to give due process to the rights of juvenile detainees in this state. As I have pointed out before and will point out again, I was so concerned with some of the reports that the very first thing I did as minister was go to Banksia Hill Detention Centre and Hakea Prison to see for myself exactly what was going on. There were a number of reports out there, including that children were being locked up for 23 hours a day. Some of the reports were true in the early days, but that is not the case now. Obviously the member for Warnbro has read the Chief Justice's judgement from last week. It was reported that they were not being fed enough. There were issues around their diet initially when they were moved after 20 January but that is certainly not the case now and it certainly was not the case six or eight weeks ago when I went there. I was personally satisfied with the food; I ate it myself. It was not one of those occasions when they knew I was going to eat it; I just went rogue and did it pretty much without notice.

Obviously, a large amount of damage was done to the Banksia Hill facility. The bill to repair and modify some of the security provisions is around \$1.55 million. A significant amount of damage was done on 20 January at a significant cost to the taxpayers of Western Australia; we need to keep that in mind also. But it would have been inappropriate for me as minister to make public comments every time someone raised this issue in the media, making ridiculous and untrue claims about 10-year-old boys being locked up for stealing a can of Coke.

Judge Reynolds, President of the Children's Court, has reviewed the case of every juvenile in detention in Western Australia and has satisfied himself they are there for sufficient cause. They include significant offences that juveniles have either been convicted of or are in remand for allegedly committing, including murder and

aggravated sexual assault. I will get to the member's points in a moment, but they are significant offences and they are in detention for the protection of the community. My priority and the priority of the government will always be to protect the community.

Mr M. McGowan: What about the questions I asked you?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will get to the Leader of the Opposition in a second.

I believe it would have been highly inappropriate for a minister to run continual public commentary on a matter that was being heard by the Chief Justice of Western Australia.

Secondly—these comments are in no particular order—I come to the Bunbury prison breakout. The member for Warnbro asked me a question about that matter the day after it occurred. The member and I have often discussed some of the issues and pressures that were perhaps, as the member suggested, the reason for these prisoners' security and threat assessments to be downgraded early. The department has informed me that that was not the case and there has been no pressure to downgrade the risk assessment of those individuals early. The member for Warnbro can take that for what it is worth; that is the advice I have been given. After we have had that conversation I specifically asked that question.

Mr P. Papalia: I am more interested in the commissioner.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Thirdly, on the matter of Mr Johnson I can tell the member for Warnbro what I said yesterday; that is, Mr Johnson chose to take his four weeks' leave two or three days before the cabinet was sworn in. Mr Johnson was caravanning in regional Western Australia for four weeks and that is why I did not meet him. The member can now google what I meant by cold-eyes review. I am sorry the member had not heard that term before. Yesterday, he enlightened me on something that I had not heard before; we are always learning from each other.

But I spent those four weeks doing what the member would expect a new minister with a new portfolio would do, and that is thoroughly reviewing as much information about the department that I had inherited as I physically could every day. I have read a lot of information every day. I visited as many prisons as I could. I spoke to prisoners. I will not take up the house's time by sharing those stories, but I have been deeply touched by the stories of a number of prisoners in Western Australia, and by the work they are doing, especially by what is being done at Karnet Prison Farm to rehabilitate and save animals such as dogs. A number of issues have come to my attention. In fact, one of them even today is the Auditor General's report into workplace absence and injury management across government, which rings a number of alarm bells for me about the way government has managed some of these issues.

Mr P. Papalia: Can I interject just as a request? Can you hasten your office's response on facilitating my visits to prisons? It's extraordinary that the process has been made so complicated now, and yet we've had three other ministers and it wasn't complicated.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I have spoken to the member for Warnbro about that and I now have a chief of staff in place and we will expedite that. I am not in the business of hiding anything from anyone.

I determined early on that I believe the Department of Corrective Services needs to change tack, as I have said, on a number of different issues. The first is with crime prevention among at-risk juveniles, especially in the area of young Aboriginal boys.

Mr P. Papalia: Is that why you sacked Ian Johnson?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The member keeps saying this. I did not sack Ian Johnson. I had some concerns and I raised them with the Premier. I also believe that the department needs to change tack on a number of different issues.

Mr P. Papalia: Are you suggesting he was not capable of changing tack?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: As I said, I was not in the room when the Public Sector Commissioner had that conversation with Ian Johnson. That is an issue the member will have to take up. I know that I have only five minutes, and I do not want to yell.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Let the minister complete his remarks.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I think the member needs to go back and revisit the way that the Labor Party handled some of these issues when it was in government. I will refer to this article.

Mr M. McGowan: Is that your answer?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am just making a very quick point and I will get back to the question. In 2004 your government dismissed —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! You have had your opportunity to speak.

Mr P. Papalia: Is this called being responsible and having some integrity? Tell the commissioner why he got sacked!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am just making the obvious point that I think the member is bit red hot to raise some of these issues. An article in *The West Australian* in 2004 reads —

WA's top prison official will be paid \$140,000 in a golden gag deal to leave the troubled Justice Department.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet confirmed yesterday that it had agreed to prisons executive director Terry Simpson getting more than a year's pay to step down just six months into a new three-year contract.

I ask members to keep in mind that Mr Johnson was the commissioner for about eight years. To continue —

...

At the time, Justice Minister Michelle Roberts said she had been let down by the department.

Yesterday, she refused to divulge any details about the sudden departure and golden gag of Mr Simpson and would not say whether he resigned or was sacked.

She also refused to comment on whether he had her support. "The head of the Department of Justice came to an arrangement with Mr Simpson," Mrs Roberts said.

"I think the key thing that the public want us to do is to meet our objectives and I am very confident that in terms of what we have been doing in prisons —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I cannot hear the minister's response. You have asked him the questions; allow the minister to respond.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will continue —

... I am very confident that in terms of what we have been doing in prisons that we are moving forward, that we are ensuring less people are escaping."

That was the standard when members opposite were in government. What I said yesterday and what I will say again now is that I raised some concerns with the Premier and I asked —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It is not even comparable!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I raised those concerns with the Premier.

Mr P. Papalia: What were they?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I have been through this. I believe that the Department of Corrective Services needs to change its position on a number of different issues —

Mr D.A. Templeman: Why don't you start telling the truth? Tell the truth! You got up in your maiden speech saying how you were going to get all godlike and you would tell the truth all the time and how transparent you were, but you won't tell the truth today!

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: As I said, I was not part of the conversation between the Public Sector Commissioner and the former Commissioner of Corrective Services.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will move on to the member's last point about comments I made this week that perhaps some people may just be in the wrong job. I am amazed that the member finds that so offensive. I am just stating a fact here. I know it is a very tough job being a prison officer. Everyone knows it is dangerous. They are dealing with dangerous known offenders, and that is why these prisoners are behind bars. Prison officers I have spoken to also need to know that when a young prison officer comes through the system, they are safe and they have their back if something goes wrong, and that the young officer has been well trained and well selected. It is telling that in the last couple of days I have received numerous emails from prison officers who seem to believe that I have hit the nail on the head. One of those emails reads —

Sir, I'm a Prison Officer at ... Prison and have been for 7 years ... The point of my email is that I agree with you that the wrong people are being employed by the Department of Corrective services not only

in Juvenile but also in the Adult custodial I feel the aptitude test maybe simple for someone in their mid 20 to 30s —

Tabling of Paper

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister appears to be reading; I ask that he table the document.

Debate Resumed

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The email continues —

but very daunting to someone in their mid 40 to 50s and therefore the system is allowing someone that is academically clever but not street wise or mature enough to deal with situations that may arise. Therefore they take the first opportunity to shirk their responsibilities and go on long term workers compensation ... you can look at the selection processes and recommend changes. Thank you for your time.

Regards,

...

[See paper 286.]

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I have had a conversation with the WA Prison Officers' Union about the selection process and the training pipeline, and it believes that we need to review this. I think that is fair enough. If we look at the analogy of the movie *Top Gun*, we need the best of the best prison officers, who are keen to mould —

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 303.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

70. **Mr M. McGOWAN to the Premier:**

I refer to the news today that Queensland has signed up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, following Victoria last week, which means that New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory are all now part of the National Disability Care Scheme, yet the Premier is not allowing Western Australia to join. When will the Premier stop dragging out this process and playing politics, and instead direct officials to sit down and sort out the governance issues until they are resolved, so that we can sign up to the NDIS and get the best deal for Western Australian people with disabilities?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

Obviously the Leader of the Opposition is the messenger boy for Julia Gillard, but we will deal with the question.

Mr M. McGowan: You're making fun of people with disabilities now?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: A little bit touchy; I think I might have hit a little nerve there. Never mind.

Mr M. McGowan: It's a serious issue!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There are perhaps 400 000 people in this country who would come under the proposed disability care system, or NDIS. In this state, through successive governments going back more than 20 years, we have had a different model for providing services and assistance to people with disabilities and their families. Under that model, Western Australia as a state spends significantly more than other states on disability. I remind those members opposite who interjected just then to suggest that this government is not, I guess, caring—that was the tone of the interjections—that three years ago, this state government, the Liberal–National government, put an additional \$604 million into the not-for-profit sector, mainly providing for disability. I remind members opposite that no other government in Australian history, federal or state, has ever done that.

Mr R.H. Cook: That was the last government, not you!

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It was exactly this government. I think it was three years ago—the Treasurer might be able to confirm this—that there was an additional 25 per cent in funding; 15 per cent across the board for every community-based group, including the Salvation Army, Rocky Bay, the Cerebral Palsy Association, the Autism Association and Activ Foundation, and so it went on. That was \$604 million—a 25 per cent increase in funding over that four-year period. No other government has done that. Our credentials—through this government and

the previous government—on disability care lead Australia; no-one less than the Prime Minister has acknowledged that and stated it publicly. In terms of the level of care, support and funding, this state is ahead of every other state in Australia, and they can see that.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: You asked the question; listen to the answer.

In respect of the NDIS, apart from the additional high level of funding in this state, the other significant difference is that Western Australia has, over the last 20 years, developed a system, through the Disability Services Commission, through which state government spending is distributed to people in need through services provided by not-for-profit community-based organisations. That is the model—the ambition—of the NDIS. Members should try to understand that. Julia Gillard has held Western Australia out in front at COAG meetings as the model that we have to go towards. We are in front, in funding and in the structure.

The third point I would make is that the funding of disability services is provided by state governments. In the case of Western Australia, 80 per cent of the funding of services is provided by the Western Australian government. The commonwealth has been a small player. It will raise the ante. That is good. We should not step back from what we are doing in this state to the standard of the other states, which is lower.

I also make the point that it is highly likely that the eligibility criteria under the NDIS will mean that a number of people in this state will get less levels of support than they currently get today, and the moment people turn 65, they are out of the NDIS. There are some very substantial issues for people in this state.

I have made it very clear from the outset that this state government supports the principles of the NDIS. That is accepted by the commonwealth. For the past year we have offered to have one of the launch sites in Western Australia; that offer remains open. Negotiations between the state and the commonwealth continue to achieve that. The difference is that some of the launch sites in other states are very restrictive. I think in Tasmania it is a launch site for children aged between zero and five. In South Australia, it is for a teenage cohort. In other states it is for a limited number of disability conditions.

The minister has announced some details of the My Way project. My Way allows people to choose how they spend the funding available, on what sort of services and from whom. Under the My Way trial being developed now, there is a difference. In Western Australia, unlike any other launch site, it covers every area of disability and every single demographic group, not just children and teenagers. I think the messengers opposite are suggesting that we should lower standards in this state. We will not do that. We will not constrain eligibility criteria either. What is being done in My Way complies exactly in eligibility with the aspirations of the NDIS. Western Australia will sign. We will join it. Did the opposition hear me? We will join the scheme. What we are negotiating and what I am optimistic that we will reach agreement on is that the trials that will be done in Western Australia will be on a more devolved, decentralised, federated model. Indeed, the anecdotal feedback from some of the launch sites around Australia as they are being developed is that commonwealth public servants are basically admitting in private that it cannot be run out of Canberra; it has to be run at a local level as it will not work out of Canberra.

This state, due to this government and previous governments, leads the nation in disability services. I acknowledge that people are missing out. The Minister for Disability Services, Hon Helen Morton, referred to the proposed levy in the media today. I supported the levy. Campbell Newman suggested it at a COAG meeting before Christmas. It was dismissed. I supported him, as have other Premiers. I presume that the levy will come into effect. That will raise the total funding for disability. That is good. That will bring more people into the disability services area. It will widen the eligibility criteria. This state is working. We are in front of the game. We are working with the commonwealth for a scheme that will come into play in 2018–19, which is still a fair way away.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

71. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Premier:

I ask a supplementary question. The Premier's Liberal colleague Barry O'Farrell said that this issue should be "above politics". Why does the Premier not roll up his sleeves, sort out these issues and sign Western Australia up?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

I challenge the messenger boy to give me one example of where I have played politics on disability.

Withdrawal of Remark

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Standing orders require that the Premier refer to the Leader of the Opposition by his title or his seat.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

VETERANS — INITIATIVES

72. Mr J. NORBERGER to the Minister for Veterans:

My question is to the minister for veterans' affairs. Before I ask my question, I quickly acknowledge on behalf of the member for Southern River the year 9 students from Thornlie Christian College who are in the public gallery today.

I am asking, as a former serving member of the Royal Australian Air Force, could the minister please outline some of the new initiatives that the Liberal–National government has introduced since the election to support our veterans?

The SPEAKER: The minister for veterans' affairs.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

Just for the record, and for everyone in the chamber, I am actually the Minister for Veterans—full stop. Thank you, Mr Speaker; I am sure that you are aware of that.

I thank the member for Joondalup for his question. I know he has a particular interest in this issue, having served six years in the Royal Australian Air Force. On behalf of the members for Willagee, Warnbro, Churchlands and Rockingham and I, we welcome you to a rather special place. We are three a side now; there are a lot of us.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We are looking at a number of issues. I want to acknowledge one of the issues that we have resolved. I thank the Minister for Transport for coming to the party to make life just that little bit easier for a small segment of the veterans' population in Western Australia. In particular, totally and permanently incapacitated and extreme disablement adjustment cardholders will now not have to pay for a driver's licence in Western Australia. The fee of \$37.60 a year that is charged at the moment will be waived. Previously, they were eligible for a 50 per cent discount on that fee. I think it is great that hundreds of veterans who are in those particular categories will be able to get their driver's licences for free from the Department of Transport in Western Australia. We are looking at doing a number of different things, and this is just the first one. This will be a great step forward in acknowledging the contribution that a lot of people have made in the service of their country. The total cost of this particular program will be an estimated \$42 500 a year, which is not an awful lot of money in the scheme of things, but for a lot of veterans who are on a pension, that is just that little bit extra that they do not have to worry about forking out money for.

I thank the member for Joondalup for asking the question. I thank the Minister for Transport for recognising the contribution that a number of veterans have made, particularly those who have a disability through their service, and for just making life that little bit easier for them. It is a very welcome achievement.

COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES — RESIGNATION

73. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I refer to the minister's claim in this place yesterday that he could not have met with the former commissioner of his department before he was sacked because he was on four weeks' extended leave.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that Mr Johnson returned from leave on Monday, 15 April and that therefore the minister had an entire week to meet him prior to his fateful meeting with the Public Sector Commissioner on Monday, 22 April?
- (2) Given that yesterday the minister also said that he talked to lots of people in his department as part of his cold-eye review, why did it not cross his mind to meet with the department's commissioner in the week that he could have?
- (3) Why did the minister mislead the house yesterday when he said that he could not meet with Mr Johnson when he was on leave?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

(1)–(3) I will have to check the date on which he officially returned from leave. I do not know that date.

Mr M. McGowan: I just told you.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is what the Leader of the Opposition said. I will have to check that date. I am not going to take everything the Leader of the Opposition says for granted. I am not that stupid. I will check the date on which he returned from leave.

Mr M. McGowan: Will you correct the record? You misled the house.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: What I understand is the case is that he went on leave before the new cabinet was sworn in and that he returned three or four weeks after that. I will check the date. I do not know.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.A. Templeman: You would know!

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I call you for the second time. I would appreciate it if the minister could answer the question and a further supplementary question could be asked, as well as any further questions on the subject. Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: What I know is that he was on leave. I do not think it is proper for me to tell the Parliament where he was. But I know that he was out of the metropolitan area.

Mr P. Papalia: You said he was on a caravan trip around the state!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is right, but I am not going to tell members the exact location. What I can tell members is that he was not in the metropolitan area for some time—three or four weeks. I know that he did come back, and for whatever reason—I think maybe it was a sitting week of Parliament—I did not have the opportunity to meet him —

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: — for a short amount of time.

Mr P. Papalia: How long would it have taken you to tell him that he was going to be sacked?

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is a conversation that the Public Sector Commissioner had with the former director general and that I was not part of. What I can tell the Leader of the Opposition is that I will find out on what date he returned from leave. But I know that he took four weeks' leave just before—maybe days, maybe a week—cabinet was sworn in.

COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES — RESIGNATION

74. **Mr M. McGOWAN to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I have a supplementary question. If indeed the minister had a full week in which to meet with him, why did the minister not meet with him as part of his cold-eye review of his own agency?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I will check the date on which he returned from leave, and I will even make available to the Leader of the Opposition my diary. But, for whatever reason, I was unavailable and he was unavailable to meet with me.

TRAINEES AND APPRENTICES — PILBARA HOSTELS

75. **Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Regional Development:**

I was pleased to learn that the Liberal–National government recently announced funding to establish hostels for trainees and apprentices in the Pilbara. With this in mind, can the minister please inform the house about this exciting new project to support this important part of the workforce?

Mr B.J. GRILLS replied:

I thank the member for North West for the question. Hopefully there will be some opportunities for young people from the member for North West's region to gain skills and training in the resource sector in the Pilbara region.

Just last week, the government announced funding to establish two new hostels for trainees and apprentices, one in South Hedland and one in Newman, with \$16 million from the royalties for regions program, \$11 million from BHP Billiton, and \$6.5 million from the Department of Housing through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing with the commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The land for the South Hedland hostel will be provided by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. It is good to see a partnership between multiple agencies—housing, training and workforce development, and regional development—to bring projects like this to fruition. For a long time we have pushed the idea of trying to provide more opportunities for young people in regional areas to build their skill base and to participate in the resource sector. The skills shortage is a challenge across the resource sector in Western Australia, and this project will go a long way to address that. I am particularly excited about the opportunity for Indigenous trainees to be engaged in this project. But the project will also be available for non-Indigenous trainees. The South Hedland hostel will be constructed on the Pilbara

Institute's Pundulmurra campus, and a site and design have yet to be finalised for the hostel in Newman. The South Hedland hostel will initially be a 48-bed unisex facility, and it is designed to be expanded to 68 beds, with additional accommodation for hostel staff and mentors. So it will be a substantial hostel in South Hedland. Construction is expected to be completed in 2014. This is an important step in developing training in the Pilbara, while at the same time providing trainees and apprentices with safe and secure accommodation and support services close to home.

Once again, the government is looking at completing the full jigsaw of opportunities to address the skill shortage in the region and making sure that young people get the opportunity to participate in the region. That is why this project is such a positive announcement for the Liberal–National government.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES — OFFENDER STRATEGY

76. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I refer to the minister's sacking of the Commissioner of Corrective Services and the chaos and confusion the minister has brought to the corrective services portfolio in his five and a half weeks or so of tenure. Last week the minister said that every dollar spent keeping someone out of jail is better than \$10 spent keeping them in jail.

- (1) What is the minister's intention in relation to the prison population in Western Australia—to increase or decrease it, noting all the minister's other commentary on the subject?
- (2) Will the minister be reintroducing the intensive supervision program—otherwise known as the family intensive team program—which successfully reduced recidivism by between 25 and 70 per cent, in long-term overseas studies, and which is a program that the minister's government abolished in its second year of office?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Warnbro for his question.

- (1)–(2) One of the things that has obviously come to my attention is the fact that perhaps in some circumstances it may be better to spend a little bit more to put a few more resources into stopping some juveniles, in particular, from crossing that line that will land them in jail. This government obviously has a very strong record on protecting the community—on locking up people who are a threat to the innocent people of Western Australia—and I will not, and I am sure the government will not, apologise for that stand. But I also think that we can do a little bit more to spend some money in helping to keep some of the at-risk juveniles, in particular, from crossing the line that will land them in jail in the first place. It is not one of those areas in which if we just had millions of dollars and could throw \$1 million at every single person in Western Australia, we would stop people from committing crimes. We are still going to have people in jail. What I am suggesting is that perhaps we should spend a bit more money and put a few more resources into trying to stop people going down that wrong path that will land them in jail, which will just create a waste of human capital by locking them up. If we can keep them from committing crimes in the first place, that will provide a better outcome for them, for the individuals who will not be the victims of the crime and for the taxpayers, because at the moment it costs somewhere around \$630 a day to keep a juvenile in detention in Western Australia. Does that answer the member's question?

Mr P. Papalia: Is this in Banksia or Hakea?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The member gets where I am coming from.

As far as the programs are concerned—I am sorry, member for Warnbro; I know what your second question was—as the member would have heard, at the moment I am doing what I call a stocktake. I am having a look at these programs that we spend about \$2 million a year on delivering for at-risk juveniles in Western Australia to find out whether there is a better way of doing this. We need to work out which programs get better value for money for the taxpayers than others. It is very hard to put consistent key performance indicators on this as well, and it is very hard to gauge this, but we need to try to work out how we can do this. We need to work out which ones are working well and perhaps those that are not working so well, and maybe direct taxpayers' money towards the programs that will help to keep juveniles from crossing that line that will land them in jail in the first place. We are reviewing all these programs, and we will see how we go with that, member for Warnbro.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES — OFFENDER STRATEGY

77. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister reintroduce the family intensive team program—the award-winning, internationally proven family intensive team program—for high-end juvenile offenders that the minister's government axed in its second year of office?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

Member for Warnbro, we are reviewing all these programs, and we will have a look at the ones that work and the ones that do not work. I am not going to take the member's word on which ones work and which ones do not work. We will have a look at what experts have to say, what the judiciary has to say and what a lot of different people have to say as to the effectiveness of all these programs, and we will put the resources into the ones that work and we will probably pull the resources out of the ones that do not work, and that will get the best value for money for the taxpayer.

MUNDA BIDDI TRAIL

78. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Environment:

As someone whose electorate is home to national parks, I know the significance of ensuring that the government can expand access to our national park network. With this in mind, can the minister please update the house on the recent opening of the Munda Bididi Trail and its significance in supporting tourism and managed access to our state's national parks?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

For those members who do not know, Munda Bididi is a Noongar term which means "path through the forest". The Munda Bididi Trail is now the world's longest, continuous off-road cycling trail. I am pleased to inform the house that the final section of the trail between Nannup and Albany was recently completed. The trail now extends over 1 000 kilometres, all the way from the south coast to Mundaring. I recently had the fantastic privilege of opening the trail in Mundaring. I got to wave the riders across the line as they completed the Munda Bididi Epic 1000 event. Twenty-six riders were the first people to traverse the full extent of that trail. I am pleased to inform members that this event received extensive coverage from as far away as the United Kingdom. We even had coverage in *The Telegraph* in England.

This trail is managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation in partnership with the Munda Bididi Trail Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that was set up around the same time we were planning the trail. The Munda Bididi Trail Foundation does an outstanding job in not only community engagement but also promotion of the trail. Over \$4 million in government funding has gone into this program over the years, through programs such as royalties for regions and through the Department of Environment and Conservation. We also received support from Alcoa and the Peel Development Commission, and Lotterywest provided support through the Department of Sport and Recreation. Significantly, Minister for Corrective Services, some prisoners have also assisted in the construction of parts of this trail, through an ongoing partnership between the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Corrective Services.

The completion of the Munda Bididi Trail will deliver real benefits to the tourism industry throughout the south west. It will boost the economies of small communities along the trail as it encourages more and more people to get out on their bikes to enjoy our natural environment in an environmentally responsible way. Assistance has been provided to communities along the trail, particularly between Albany and Nannup, supporting them to become cycle tourism-ready. Some people have been quite creative in trying to entice new services such as bike washing facilities and showers along the way for cyclists, tent areas if people do not want to book accommodation, and a range of cycle tourism strategies for some of the small communities.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Well done!

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you, member.

Around 20 000 people already use this trail annually. That number is expected to grow exponentially now that the trail is completed, and indeed is the world's longest.

POLICE — BALLAJURA POLICE STATION

79. Ms R. SAFFIOTI to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the minister's comments about a new Ballajura police station, particularly the comments she made here last night. I will quote from notes that I took —

Mr T.R. Buswell: Quote from the notes you took!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am quoting what the minister said. She said —

It wasn't going to be 24/7; it was just for a police station.

- (1) Does the minister today stand by those comments that the Liberal Party did not commit to a 24/7 station in Ballajura?
- (2) Did the Liberal Party tell Ballajura residents before the election that the police station was going to be a 24/7 station?

- (3) Will the minister today confirm that she is going to break a key law and order election commitment to the people of Ballajura just two months after the election?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

(1)–(3) To redefine what our commitment is to the people of Ballajura —

Ms R. Saffioti: You're going to redefine it!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: To define it and put it on the record again: we committed to build a police station at Ballajura. We expect site tender for that police station to happen within the next 12 months with a view to construction beginning towards 2016. Twenty-four hour policing will occur out of Ballajura police station consistent with all of our police stations. It will be a modern policing facility. At this stage it is not anticipated that it will be a district 24-hour counter-service police station. To be very, very clear to members in the house: all of our police stations in every suburb in the metropolitan area have police officers who operate out of those stations at night, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is coverage across the entire metropolitan area 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from our police stations. Ballajura police station will have officers rostered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That policing will occur consistent with our other stations.

POLICE — BALLAJURA POLICE STATION

80. Ms R. SAFFIOTI to the Minister for Police:

I have a supplementary question. Minister, why did the Liberal Party have adverts, one week before the last election, reading —

LIBERAL FOR 24HR 7DAY POLICE STN

Why is the minister breaking a key election commitment to the people?

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It was authorised, Minister for Transport, because we checked with the Electoral Commission.

Why is the minister breaking a key election commitment?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I maintain that I am not breaking any election commitment to the people of Ballajura.

POLICE — SOCIAL MEDIA USE

81. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Police:

I have noticed that our police have started using social media as a way of engaging with the Western Australian community. With this in mind, can the minister please outline the details of this approach being taken by Western Australia Police?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for the question, and indeed his high interest in law and order issues in his electorate.

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I thank the member for Kwinana for his input, but I would like to answer the member for Forrestfield's question at this time.

The SPEAKER: Minister, answer the question.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have been on the record a number of times in this place talking about how community engagement is an area of very high priority for this government. So, consistent with that approach to improving the opportunities for community engagement with our WA police service, we have started a three-month trial on social media. Members in this house will probably already be aware that WA Police already has a presence on social media; it is on Facebook and it is tweeting, and that is being centrally managed. Effectively, that is being used at the moment as more of an intelligence-gathering tool, whereby police will monitor social media for the purposes of determining where out-of-control parties are, and they monitor hoon sites—all those sorts of activities. With this project—it is a three-month trial—we are devolving the use of social media in two districts, the north west metropolitan district and the south west district. This will give those local districts an opportunity

to start tweeting information—indeed, they have already started—to the community that is of interest to those local communities with interests around the local districts. There will also be a Facebook page set up by the north west metropolitan district on a trial basis for the next three months to see what sort of community response there will be, and whether this can improve opportunities for community engagement with police. We envisage that the local districts will be able to get information out to their communities—it can be used as an emergency management tool—by tweeting, and updating their Facebook pages about areas that may be of interest to the local groups that will subscribe to their local districts to get local information about crime, law and order issues and emergency information.

ALBANY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL — ASBESTOS

82. Mr P.B. WATSON to the minister representing the Minister for Education:

My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Education, and some notice has been given. I refer to the asbestos in the room at Albany Senior High School that was partially repaired in 1996 and has now suffered a ceiling collapse.

- (1) What action has been taken since asbestos particles were found to have fallen from the ceiling into rooms at Albany Senior High School?
- (2) Have all asbestos particles been removed from the contaminated ceiling space?
- (3) Has the education department counselled staff over this issue?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

I thank the member for notice of the question, and I provide this response on behalf of the Minister for Education.

- (1) Four teaching areas and a staffroom were vacated and sealed soon after a ceiling panel fell into the staffroom last term. The following work was undertaken during the recent school holidays —
 - (a) In the staffroom, all ceiling panels were removed and cleaned; the ceiling space was vacuumed and cleaned; the panels were reinstalled; the room was cleaned; and, air monitoring was conducted on 7 May—yesterday—and the air monitoring results are not yet available.
 - (b) In the two metalwork rooms, the existing ceiling panels were removed; the ceiling space was vacuumed and cleaned; new metal grid and ceiling panels were installed; the rooms were cleaned; and, air monitoring was also conducted yesterday, with those results again not yet being available.
 - (c) In the two woodwork rooms, several ceiling panels were repaired in situ; the rooms were cleaned; and, air monitoring was also conducted yesterday, with the results not yet being available.
- (2) The spaces above the ceilings that were disturbed have been vacuumed and cleaned.
- (3) The school has communicated with all staff regarding this matter.

ALBANY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL — ASBESTOS

83. Mr P.B. WATSON to minister representing the Minister for Education:

I have a supplementary question. I have spoken to some of the staff there and they have been really distressed. Some of them have gone off on stress leave. I do not think the counselling has been done properly and I wonder whether the minister can follow it up.

The SPEAKER: What is the question?

Mr P.B. WATSON: I was just having a discussion with my friend.

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

I am sure the Minister for Education will take on board the comments of the member in that non-question.

RESOURCES INDUSTRY — FATALITY-FREE PERIOD

84. Ms W.M. DUNCAN to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

The government and the resources industry should be congratulated on achieving a fatality-free 18 months — Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: We have a standing order here that states that members are not allowed to have a preamble to the question, so the member should just ask the question and get on with it.

Ms W.M. DUNCAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Several members interjected.

Ms W.M. DUNCAN: I think I have been set up!

Several members interjected.

Ms W.M. DUNCAN: Can the minister please outline how the government's safety reforms have contributed to achieving a fatality-free 18 months?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I thank the member for Kalgoorlie for an outstanding question. It is a very important question for her electorate because there are many operational mines in the seat of Kalgoorlie. I know the member for Kalgoorlie takes mine safety very seriously—as do I.

Mine safety is a serious issue and I am pleased to inform the house that it is true that for the past 18 months we have had no fatalities in any mines in Western Australia. I stand here as the current minister, but apart from the industry, which is responsible for implementing safety regimes, the previous Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Hon Norman Moore, must take more credit than me. I would like to table the outstanding performance measure of the previous minister. If members look at the chart, they will see that —

Several members interjected.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Mining is inherently dangerous, as people know, and if members look at the chart, they will see —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr W.R. MARMION: Mr Speaker, this is a pretty serious issue. For those people who have —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Can members let the minister answer the question.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

People like me who have been on sites on which there have been fatalities will know that they have an amazing and terrible impact on not only the workers on the site, but also the families of the deceased and the industry. It is a very serious issue and it will be the highest priority for me in my term as Minister for Mines and Petroleum. I table that chart.

[See paper 287.]

Mr W.R. MARMION: What has the government done to assist industry in bringing about this wonderful achievement? The mine safety levy introduced by the previous minister has made a real difference to the sector. The levy has allowed us to employ 23 extra inspectors with very broad skill sets through a number of areas of engineering, including mechanical, electrical, civil, structural, mining and petroleum. These extra skill sets mean that we now have 107 mining safety specialists; 63 mine safety inspectors; 16 petroleum safety officers and risk analysts; and 28 dangerous goods officers. We have 975 operational mines in Western Australia, so we need this skill set to examine these sites and make sure that mines are operating safely. Just to give members an idea, mine inspectors alone carry out 2 400 inspections every year throughout Western Australia. These additional resources have enabled a more thorough analysis of incidents, have also determined the root causes of these incidents, and where necessary have enabled more targeted and effective enforcement by the department.

As I said, mining by its nature is a hazardous industry. That is why it is important that the department, and I as the minister, are vigilant in making sure that all mines throughout Western Australia are operated safely. It will be one of my highest priorities, if not my highest priority, in the next four years.

PEEL HEALTH CAMPUS — CONTRACT RENEGOTIATION

85. **Mr R.H. COOK to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the commitment made in this place on 8 November 2012 to test the market for other operators interested in running Peel Health Campus when the contract expires in 2017.

- (1) Now that Health Solutions (WA) has sold the contract to Ramsay Health Care, is it still the minister's intention to put the operating contract out to market?
- (2) Will the examination of other potential private operators also include the option for public sector operation?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I thank the member for the question.

(1)–(2) The member would know the background to why I made that position plain. The member would remember that the contract for Health Solutions was to run until 2016, I think, from memory—is that correct?

Mr R.H. Cook: It was 2017.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It was to run until 2017. Part of that contract required us to negotiate in good faith in the three years leading up to that time.

As the member would know, although I was of the strong view that the standard of the health service provided was of a very high quality, I did have some concerns about the operational management style and I expressed those concerns in this house. As a result of that, I was keen to see the interest that there was in some of the other players in the market. Although we were at the stage of doing those negotiations, it was reasonable to go out and see what any of the other companies had to offer around that space. Remember that there were only a few options. One was that they could put in a bid and offer to buy out the existing company, or we could decide, when the contract expired, whether it was in the best interests of the government and the patients attending that hospital to implement an alternative system.

That has changed since then of course. Since then, one of those potential other operators came in and bought out the contract. The proposal that was put forward to government by the previous contractor was an extremely good one. In response to some extra lease time for a patch of land on that site on which it would build a brand-new private wing of the hospital, it offered to hand over all the existing buildings, including all the private rooms at that hospital, and to expand the emergency department. My concern at that time—I have said it quite frankly—was with the management style, not with the performance. Now that that has changed and a new company has bought out the contract, the government is yet to make a decision on whether to go through with what I said would occur in the first place—that is, we would seek expressions of interest from the market—given that there is now only one other prospective operator in that space. We are not at that stage yet. I imagine we will make that decision in the relatively near future.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Go to public tender!

The SPEAKER: Member!

Dr K.D. HAMES: In answer to that, we are not considering going back to the public sector.

We have shown, particularly through the work with the new hospitals that we have constructed or are constructing, that there is a huge advantage to the government in going to the private sector to provide services in two areas. One is the efficiency of the operation of the service and the standards and quality of care that is provided; secondly, the significant savings in health expenditure to the government and taxpayers, which can then be spent in other areas of health. I refer, for example, to the investment of more than \$150 million over the last term of government and continuing investment over the next term in improving the quality of child health services. It is in the best interests of those patients for the private sector to provide those services.

As we know, United Voice spent in the order of—we think—\$1 million in its strong campaign against the contracting out of services in our hospitals, and where did we get our best results?

Mr D.J. Kelly: In Mandurah!

Dr K.D. HAMES: Yes, how did that go?

Mr R.H. Cook: It wasn't in Dawesville, I am sure of that.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We got the best result ever for a Liberal–National government in the history of the state. Every polling booth around those hospitals that we were contracting out showed a significant swing towards our government, particularly in the area of the new hospital in Midland—especially in the area of the new hospital.

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Dawesville did not do too badly at all. The swing against the member for Mandurah was only small, but for my seat I think all we have to do is look at the two seats in comparison. My margin was 10 point something, his margin was nine point something; clearly they like me better!

PEEL HEALTH CAMPUS — CONTRACT RENEGOTIATION

86. **Mr R.H. COOK to the Minister for Health:**

I have a supplementary question. Did Ramsay Health Care seek any concessions from the government before it purchased the contract from Health Solutions (WA), including whether the contract would be rolled over subject to the purchase; and, is the minister today confirming that a private–public comparator will not be done in relation to the hospital's operating arrangement?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

The answer to the question is no. No assurances from government were sought in terms of the potential extension of the lease and the proposals that were put forward by Health Solutions to government. In fact, I had very little involvement. Most of those discussions occurred during caretaker mode and they occurred with the director general, not with me. We do private sector comparators when we look at changing and whether we go out to the private sector as opposed to retaining something within the public sector. That decision was made when Peel Health Campus was first established and we have no intention of doing that again.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY*Amendment to Motion*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Corrective Services) [2.47 pm]: Before question time I was referring to my comments that the member for Warnbro took some offence to, which were that some people are not necessarily in the right job, and I referred to an email, one of a number of phone calls and emails that went into my electorate office from prison officers. People who work in the system are saying, “You know what, you’re on the money. Perhaps we can review the selection criteria and the training program.”

Mr P. Papalia: How many emails did you get like that?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will not yell over the top of the member for Warnbro. The people who contacted me said perhaps we could review the selection criteria and the training program curriculum for young prison officers. I was making the *Top Gun* comparison. In the movie *Top Gun* the aim of the fighter pilots is to be the best of the best, so they can end up as instructors of other fighter pilots. Perhaps there is now an argument that we need to be a bit more selective in getting the right people to be instructors at the academy for prison officers, so that when new prison officers join the system they are taught and mentored by what I would call the best of the best. I had this conversation with the people at the Prison Officers’ Union and they agree with me. They think there is merit in reviewing the selection criteria and the training program for prison officers. When I refer to prison officers I always make the point that it is a very tough job to be a prison officer. They need a certain cut of the jib, they need a certain thickness of skin, they need a certain toughness about them to deal with essentially very dangerous people. It is a difficult job and we have to respect that. We have to respect what prison officers do and we have to acknowledge that they have a very challenging job. But just like someone needs a certain thickness of skin to be a prison officer, just like someone needs a certain thickness of skin to be in the Navy or to be in the Army, or that it takes a certain type of character to be a bus driver or a train driver or a pilot, a person needs a certain type of character to be a paramedic who turns up at the scene, or to be a journalist, whatever —

Mr J.E. McGrath interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Member for South Perth, a person needs a certain type of character to be a politician! Can members imagine what would happen if a member stood in this place and said, “Stop Parliament. I’m so stressed; I can’t handle what members of the Labor Party are saying to me!” We would be yelling at the member to resign. If the member for Warnbro was so offended by that comment, perhaps he is in the wrong job. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging that sometimes across all of government some people might be in the wrong job. They may not be cut out to do the particular job they are doing.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr P. Papalia: You’re getting upset because we criticised you for that.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: You are the one who took offence at my remarks!

Mr P. Papalia: I didn’t.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: What is so wrong with saying, “Perhaps —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Members! The member for Jandakot is on his feet. Please give him respect by remaining silent so that he can be heard.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I do not know what is so wrong with saying that perhaps some people in society across a range of jobs are not cut out for the job they are doing. When we look at the raw statistics such as —

Mr P. Papalia: You did it in the context.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Ease to five, midships—just cool down!

We have to look at some of the statistics that ring alarm bells to me, as were reported in *The West*. When such a large number of youth custodial officers are on workers' compensation leave and almost 50 per cent of the causes are stress related, if that does not ring alarm bells to the member for Warnbro, he is obviously not looking at it objectively. The number of workers' compensation leave claims related to stress among adult custodial prison officers, which is somewhere between 30 and 40 per cent, compared with the general government sector, if we look at the Auditor General's report today, which shows them at somewhere around 10 per cent, clearly —

Mr P. Papalia: That's their work environment.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Member for Warnbro, I am happy to have this conversation. When the member left office in 2008—I have only just done indicative figures on this—there were about 2.8 prison officers for every prisoner. There is now about three. We have increased the ratio of prison officers to prisoners to higher than it was when the member left government in 2008, so I cannot accept that point of view. If the member for Warnbro is going to say that we have failed to provide enough prison officers, we are doing a lot better at it than his government did. We have increased the ratio. In the first four years of this government we recruited more than 670 net new prison officers. I accept that the prison muster has gone up. It took the Labor government eight years to get the same ratio.

Mr P. Papalia: How many did you say?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: About 670 net.

Compared with the growth in prisoner numbers over eight years during the previous Labor government, which was roughly about the same, we increased the number of people working as prison officers dramatically. I accept that the prison muster has increased. Over the past two years the prison muster has grown just slower than the population rate, which says to me that tough penalties actually work.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It is an incentive for people to not commit crimes.

Mr P. Papalia: By how many has it grown in the past two years?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I cannot tell the member off the top of my head. I will get that information if he wants to know. We have to look at the fact that a huge percentage of youth custodial officers and prison officers are on workers' compensation leave due to workplace stress. Perhaps some of them are in the wrong job. I do not think there is anything wrong with saying that. We can say that about anyone in any occupation. I suspect that some politicians are in the wrong job, who perhaps cannot handle the stress of the job.

Mr P. Papalia: If they were in the job for 10 years before you shut Rangeview, is it their fault or yours? It's entirely yours.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Government is about adapting and overcoming. Sometimes we just have to change with the times. No-one is ever in the same job doing the same thing for such a long time. Sure, moving from Rangeview to Banksia Hill would have presented some challenges for some people. But that does not explain all the numbers I have just given the member.

I would say, member for Warnbro, when we look at the high rates of stress leave in this particular sector of government, I stand by the remark that perhaps just some of them—I say “perhaps”—are in the wrong job, and there is nothing wrong with saying that. People can move on and do other things with their life. Everyone in this place has a different story to tell. Members have found that some of their previous jobs were stressful while others were not. If I stood up and said, “Premier, I can't handle the stress”, the opposition would be yelling at me to resign. They would say, “You're in the wrong job, minister. If you can't handle the interjections from the member for Albany, you're in the wrong job. If you can't handle the interjections from the Leader of the Opposition and you're too stressed, you're in the wrong job.”

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Bring it on! The opposition does not bother me. What I am saying—keep interjecting—is that perhaps some people in all jobs across all society might be in the wrong job if they cannot handle it.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [2.55 pm]: I rise to speak to the Address-in-Reply and respond to the Minister for Corrective Services' statements. Let us get to the facts of the corrective services portfolio and the situation we face today. The number of prisoners has gone up from under 3 500 to more than 5 000 over the four and a half years of this Liberal-National government. The Liberal-National government said it would deal with the expansion of prison numbers by building more prison units and providing more prison beds. The government has allocated \$670 million to the construction program to deal with that expansion. As a result of that expansion

program there are six new units, two of which are occupied by children, one of which is still not open and three existing units have been closed, supposedly for maintenance. That gives the government a net gain of under 10 extra beds for \$670 million. The construction of the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison has been put off until 2014 before it even commences, and I doubt it will even start then. I believe the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison will be deferred yet again. We have seen the privatisation of Rangeview Remand Centre, in contradiction to a cast-iron commitment a previous Liberal government gave to local residents that it would never become a prison. The privatisation of that facility being run as a private prison by Serco has led to overcrowding in the Banksia Hill Detention Centre and ultimately to the riot that occurred at the Banksia Hill juvenile correctional facility. From the time children were transferred from Rangeview Remand Centre to Banksia Hill, we saw the level of violence and animosity between the children in the facility and between the children and the guards grow and we also saw an increased number of incidents. In June or July last year a deputation of nearly 100 correctional services workers came to the front of Parliament House and laid out the problems of violence in the Banksia Hill juvenile facility to the then correctional services minister. One of the staff members showed the then minister the injuries that he had just received from one of the inmates.

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: As the minister just said, they were looking for leadership, and they got none. They warned the correctional services minister last year of the likelihood that a riot would take place, and it happened.

The summary of what has happened in correctional services over the past four and a half years is that there have been four ministers, a riot, children locked up in an adult prison and overcrowding. It is no wonder that the minister has staff on sick leave or on workers' compensation. It is not because they are bludging but because they have been injured and taken to hospital. That is why they are receiving workers' compensation. The minister has staff at the prisons doing overtime because of the shortage of prison officer numbers. They are not rorting the system, as the minister said was the case. If the minister thinks their skin is not thick enough, he should go and do the job for a week. He should go to Casuarina Prison and mix with the type down there! See if you can do that job yourself, big mouth! See how tough you are! See how thick your skin is! The minister should not stand in here criticising the work of prison officers who every day do a job that nobody else in the community would do because it is so dangerous. Every day when they go to work, they are possibly or likely to be injured, but the minister says, "If they don't like it, well, they're in the wrong job; their skin is not thick enough." This minister is the man who came into this chamber and whinged about United Voice driving a trailer past his house and he felt threatened: "I feel threatened because a trailer is coming past my house!" This is the guy who is talking about prison officers being thin skinned, but he was concerned that a union that drove a trailer with a sign past his house was a threat to him and his family. What a joke!

Mr J.M. Francis: Do you condone that action? Is that an acceptable standard for you, member for Cockburn?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If I were to compare what happened to my family, in my role as an MP, with the minister's experience, we would be here all afternoon. I could introduce the minister to my wife and she would tell him what it is like to be really threatened. When your children have to climb over the back fence to go to school, the minister will know what being threatened is like!

Let us get down to answers we have heard in this house so far from the Minister for Corrective Services, because this is serious and they will require further examination. The minister has told this house over and over again that, first, he never met Mr Ian Johnson, the then Commissioner of Corrective Services; second, the minister was away for four weeks —

Mr J.M. Francis: No, I was here.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The minister told the house on numerous occasions that he was on holiday for four weeks —

Mr M. McGowan: The commissioner.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I said that—the commissioner, Ian Johnson. The minister said that he had no opportunity to meet Mr Johnson because he was on holiday for four weeks. That is what the minister told this house over and over again. The minister also said, "I know he did come back for a week, but I will check my diary and see why I was not available and he was not available". The minister told this house over and over again that he had no opportunity to meet with Mr Johnson because he was on holiday for four weeks and after that he was terminated by the Public Sector Commissioner. When the member for Warnbro pointed out to the minister that Mr Johnson was available to meet with the minister for one week, the minister changed his story and said, "He was on holiday for three or four weeks. I don't know. I'll check my diary and see why I wasn't available." Why would the minister not be available? Corrective services is his key portfolio. Mr Johnson was the head of that department. It was the minister's opportunity to meet with him. The minister would have been available. He needs to front up and tell this house exactly what went on, because so far he has told this house three different versions of the one story. First of all, he did not have an opportunity to meet with him; then he was away for four weeks; then it was three or four weeks. Now he says he is going to have a look at his diary to see why he did not

have an opportunity to meet with him. The minister needs to tell this house the truth. He also needs to tell the truth about why Mr Johnson was terminated. The minister has said to the house that, over the four-week period that Mr Johnson was away—this is one of the stories that the minister has told the house—he, the minister, had undertaken a thorough review of the portfolio; the cold-eyed review that the minister claims took place. As a result of that, the minister formed the view that the department needed to change tack. He then said to the house, “I had some issues, and I raised them with the Premier”. The question that has been put to the minister in this house on two occasions, by the members for Rockingham and Warnbro, is: what were those issues? Minister, would you like to tell us?

Mr J.M. Francis: I’m not going to respond by way of interjection. I’m not going to interject on you. It’s not my style.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: What were the issues? The minister wants my argument? It is right here: what were the issues?

Mr P. Papalia: What a weak person!

Mr J.M. Francis: And that’s exactly the reason why I won’t respond to your interjections.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: What were the issues?

Mr J.M. Francis: If you’re going to resort to personal abuse, tough luck.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: This is the minister who suggested that some prison officers should change jobs because of their thin skin, yet he will not front the media and explain why the head of his department was sacked. This is the tough minister telling prison officers they should go and get another job! He will not front the media to explain why he terminated a highly respected, highly regarded long-term public servant from his job. The minister told the house that he had nothing to do with the termination of Commissioner Johnson and that it was all the work of the Public Sector Commissioner; that was one of his stories, but today he has admitted that he had carried out a review of his portfolio, that it was a cold-eyed review, that the department needed a change and that he had some issues with Commissioner Johnson, which he raised with the Premier, but he will not tell the house what they were. He has contradicted what he has already told the house, but when he is given an opportunity to say what the issues were, he says, “I’m not going to answer your questions; why should I?” We will find an opportunity in which the minister will answer the questions; we will find an opportunity where the minister will be required to answer the questions.

It does not become any minister—never mind one that has been in the job for only five weeks—to behave in this way. It is disgraceful behaviour for a new minister to have the temerity to say to the Legislative Assembly that he will not answer questions about the termination of a senior public servant in Western Australia. That is a disgraceful situation, made even more disgraceful because the minister will not go out and front the media and tell the general public of Western Australia what the issues were. That is the record of this minister, five weeks into the job. He tries to cover up this absolutely disgraceful behaviour by saying, “I’m going to take a new approach. I’m going to look at justice reinvestment.” His government has had four and a half years to look at justice reinvestment and did everything it possibly could to trash the whole notion. When the former member for Bateman was taking the mickey out of justice reinvestment, guess who was nodding his head, like the poodle he is? The member for Jandakot—the minister. He was nodding his head, indicating that, yes, justice reinvestment was a load of rubbish because his mate the then member for Bateman, Attorney General and Minister for Corrective Services, was dissing the justice reinvestment policy. Now he comes into the chamber and says he has completely changed his mind and that justice reinvestment is great. The member for Bateman has gone, the minister is his own man and suddenly, on the road to Damascus, he has had this complete change of heart and justice reinvestment is now good.

Dr A.D. Buti: Member, he won’t acknowledge who’s the author of it—our side, the member for Warnbro.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I know. The only reason this minister has had a change of heart on justice reinvestment is, as the member for Warnbro just said, by necessity. There are 5 000 prisoners, and that number is growing. As a result of implementing the election commitments that were given just recently about locking up more people, that number of prisoners will grow substantially. One way of trying to reduce the prison numbers is to take the path that the Minister for Corrective Services has highlighted, which is justice reinvestment. That does two things. First, it reduces the intake of prisoners. Second, it keeps the costs down as a result of keeping people out of jail. The only reason this minister is looking at justice reinvestment is not because he really believes in it, because he does not believe in it. He likes to portray himself as this hardline, right-wing, free marketeer gunslinger. Does he really believe in justice reinvestment? Of course he does not. He would not have a bar of it if it did not benefit his government in helping to keep prisoner numbers down and thereby keep the cost of running prisons in Western Australia down. The only reason the minister is looking at justice reinvestment is because his department has a major economic problem.

Division

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr P. Abetz) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (21)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.B. Watson
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms J. Farrer	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms R. Saffioti	
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr C.J. Tallentire	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr P.C. Tinley	

Noes (36)

Mr P. Abetz	Ms M.J. Davies	Mr A.P. Jacob	Mr N.W. Morton
Mr F.A. Alban	Mr J.H.D. Day	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr C.J. Barnett	Ms W.M. Duncan	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr J. Norberger
Mr I.M. Britza	Mrs G.J. Godfrey	Mr R.S. Love	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr T.R. Buswell	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr V.A. Catania	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr M.J. Cowper	Mr C.D. Hatton	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Mr A. Krsticevic (<i>Teller</i>)

Amendment thus negatived.

Motion Resumed

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Before I gave the call to the member for Cannington, would members please take their conversations outside the chamber and give the member the opportunity to speak in silence.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [3.20 pm]: Thank you very much, Mr Acting Speaker.

I want to start by noting that we meet on the traditional lands of the Noongar people, and by paying my respects to their elders past and present. I make the point that this is the first time that I have used that introduction in the chamber. I think that it is worth members thinking about this. Four years ago when I gave my inaugural speech, I did not give an acknowledgement of country and I now regret not having done so, because I think it is worthwhile. This is something that I have come to terms with over the past four years as a member of Parliament. I think it is time that Australia moved on with Indigenous issues.

I note that the member for Kimberley gave a thoroughly excellent inaugural speech. We all get applause at the end of our inaugural speech. But I think that every member of this chamber, no matter on which side they sit, gave genuinely warm applause to the member for Kimberley for her contribution. I think that her inaugural speech will be looked at by people in the future as an important occasion for the Parliament of Western Australia and the development of democracy in Western Australia. The reason that was such an important occasion is that the member for Kimberley used her Indigenous language in her speech. I note that the standing orders do not actually allow us to use a language other than English. I used Indonesian once. That was because I was referring to a formal name, and it was easier to use Indonesian to describe something about Indonesia than it was to use English. But I immediately provided a translation of the words. It is odd that our standing orders do not allow traditional languages of Australia to be used in the chamber. I understand the reason for that and it is that we need to ensure that the words that are being said are parliamentary. But I think it is time for the Parliament to consider how we deal with people who have as their native tongue an Australian language that is not English. I think it is time for our standing orders to be looked at in that regard. I do think that the member for Kimberley's powerful and moving inaugural speech will be looked at by future scholars of the development of our democracy. Yesterday, many members reflected very well on the late Ernie Bridge and the great achievements that he made for our Western Australian democracy. I do not want to undermine the value of other Indigenous Australians who have served in this Parliament, such as Carol Martin and the member for Victoria Park, but I think that the member for Kimberley's inaugural speech will be seen as being very special.

I want to make another point about the standing orders. There are some people who think that it is controversial that the Parliament starts each day with a prayer. I make this point not just because I am a Christian. I believe it is important that we reflect that prayer. I make the small comment also that in the past four and a half years, the Catholic version of the Lord's Prayer has been used, and now we have returned to using the Anglican version of the Lord's Prayer.

Dr A.D. Buti: Shame!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, no! That is fine by me. I just want to make that point, because I think it is important to recognise the difference. I do not have any problem with that. I think it is good. I think it is worthwhile. We

should continue to start each day with a prayer. But I also think that we should look at what they do in the Australian Capital Territory. The ACT Legislative Assembly starts each day with an acknowledgement of country. As I have said, I believe very strongly that it is important to start each day with a prayer. But it is probably now time for us to look at also providing some acknowledgement of country each day when we start our work. After the 2008 election I went on a holiday with my family—just the usual sort of thing post-election—to New Zealand, and I visited the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa in Wellington. The integration of the Maori culture in the story of New Zealand is extraordinary. The New Zealanders have done a brilliant job of ensuring that their Indigenous culture is not only acknowledged but also part of their continuing culture.

The next step for Australia is how to move on from the acknowledgement of an Indigenous history. The member for Kwinana made the worthwhile point that Australia has had a violent history. As an Irish Australian, I acknowledge the Hunters Hill uprising, the Eureka Stockade and the story of Ned Kelly. Every morning when I look across the chamber I often think about Ned Kelly and that fabulous beard, which is now seen on players on the Australian Football League field and even an attendant in this chamber. It should not be forgotten that Australia does have blood in its history. Although I am not Indigenous, I believe that Indigenous Australians should feel offended that the blood that was spilled by Indigenous Australians is not acknowledged.

Although I do not remember the title, I refer once again to the book written by Stan Grant, in which he detailed the resistance to settlement by Indigenous people in New South Wales. I am not familiar with all the stories of Indigenous resistance, but I am familiar with the story in that book and we should begin to think about how to acknowledge and include Indigenous culture in our story. I believe it would be appropriate for the house to acknowledge our Indigenous heritage by integrating it into the prayer at the beginning of the day. As a Christian, I believe it is good that we pray at the beginning of each day, and I wanted to raise that matter because it is part of my journey in understanding Indigenous Australians. I also hope that other members will think about and discuss that possibility, because I am not right on every idea.

I now thank the people of the Cannington electorate for endorsing me again for this important job. The electorate of Cannington is, like every other electorate, special and unique. In Cannington many young people are starting out in their lives. There is an overrepresentation of not only young people but also old people in the electorate, people who have made a great contribution to the state, the city and their community. Many of those older people work as volunteers, and many of the vibrant community groups in Cannington survive only because of the work done by those older Australians. That is not to say that young people do not make a contribution, because they are also active in the community.

Another important characteristic of the electorate of Cannington is its large number of migrants. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, about 45 per cent of the people living in Cannington were born overseas, with 25 per cent having been born in Asia. There is also a large Indigenous population in the electorate. I believe that when one looks at Cannington one is looking at the future of Australia. It is a community with a large percentage of older Australians, a large percentage of migrants and a large number of young people. It is a great honour to be endorsed by the people of Cannington to serve again in the Parliament of Western Australia.

I thank all the volunteers who worked on my campaign. I have a list, but I will not mention every single name. I would like to thank every one of the more than 85 people who were involved in my campaign, including all those people who helped with the letterboxing, the election day work, the enveloping and the different campaign tasks that members would be familiar with. I thank my electorate staff for the hard work they do in dealing with all the problems and issues that arise in the electorate.

I also want to acknowledge my kids. We acknowledge them in our inaugural speech, and then sometimes we probably do not think to acknowledge the work they do and the separation we have from them. So, I want to thank Rebekah, Zoe and Liam. They put up with a lot, as I am sure do the children of other members of the Assembly, and we should not forget them. I was talking to the member for Bunbury yesterday, who made the point that when you get to the end of your life, nobody says, "I wish I had spent more time at work." But we do spend a lot of time at work, and that is what the member for Bunbury and I were talking about yesterday. Our families do suffer, and I want to acknowledge them. Of course, I want to thank my wife, Hon Kate Doust, a member for the South Metropolitan Region, and the support that she continues to give me.

I want to congratulate the newly elected members of the Assembly and those members who were re-elected. In particular, of course, I want to congratulate the people on my side of the chamber, as members would expect. I acknowledge all the new Liberal members, and I note the comments of the member for Mandurah. It will be interesting to see how that goes. I look forward to working with the new member for Alfred Cove, the new member for Bateman and the new member for Belmont on the Public Accounts Committee. That will be interesting. It will be a new job for me, and it will be interesting to see how that all works.

I would also like to congratulate the Liberal Party on its clear and decisive election victory. The Premier might be sitting in his office choking right now! But I also acknowledge that the Premier had a ringing endorsement in this election. As a Labor member, I cannot say anything else. After the 2008 election, the Premier used to get

cranky with me because I would never acknowledge that he won the election, because what he did, in fact, was win the negotiations with the National Party to form a government. The National Party might have made a different decision, and then there would have been a different Premier. But this time we have to acknowledge the result, and that means that the Labor Party acknowledges that we were defeated.

I will just make the point that the people of Western Australia never get an election result wrong. That is the purpose of democracy—to let the people make a decision, and they made a decision. But that is not to say that WA Labor does not have a role here in the Parliament. We have a solemn duty too. Our solemn duty is to hold the government to account, and we will do that. We will do that in a robust and energetic fashion, because that is what we are expected to do. When the Premier flaps his arms and folds them and says, “Don’t you get it? You lost”, yes, of course we understand that, but that just means that we have a different job from that of the Premier. The Premier has to run the state, and we have to make sure that he does it properly and we will continue to do that.

I want to go on and talk about some issues in my electorate, because, as all those who have been here for a while know, we do not get a lot of chances to talk about the issues directly related to our community, and this is one of those occasions. I was pleased yesterday to catch up with my good friend the Minister for Housing to talk about some issues in my electorate, so I want to get them on the record here as well. The first one is the proposed development at the former Ferndale school site. I want to make the point that I am not opposed to urban infill—it plays a sensible role in the development of Perth—but that does not mean that every proposal for infill development is sensible. The Karri Way site is over five kilometres from a train station, so we can hardly say that that makes it a transport-oriented development. When the government decided—I support the government’s decision, even though I did not know about it in advance—to sell the school buildings to Damla College, I thought that was a great decision. That means that the bushland will be saved, which everybody has in writing from the former Minister for Education, Hon Dr Liz Constable, and that is good. But once we save the bushland and save the school buildings, there really is not enough space there to build houses and we will end up with no open space. That is an important piece of open space for the southern end of Ferndale. I do not think that the development the Department of Housing intends to build can be built on that site. There is another site it wants to build on, which is the former Kinlock primary school site. I have a different view: I think the Department of Housing and the state government can build an effective development on this site but it needs to think about how much open space is retained. There has to be enough open space to kick a football. That is the way I put it. It is not just to have a couple of trees. Of course saving trees is important, but we need a bit more. We need somewhere for kids to go with their father or mother to kick a football. I am happy for the development to go ahead subject to ensuring the roads do not point right at somebody’s bedroom and those sorts of technical issues that I am sure can be accommodated by the planners. There needs to be sufficient open space for people to still kick a football around.

The Department of Housing is also involved in the Quattro development. There is a series of multi-unit blocks at the end of the development. The Quattro residents originally thought 36 units would be built on those blocks. They now find that 97 units are to be developed. This is 1.5 kilometres from Queens Park train station, on a narrow suburban street. The government has already worked out that a bin truck and a bus will not fit down the road when there are cars parked on the street, and cars will be parked on the street. There needs to be a proper assessment of how that is done. I do not think the current proposal will work. The most important thing for local residents is they did not know that development would happen when they bought their blocks. It is a bit rich for the Department of Housing to wait until the last block was sold to the new residents in Quattro before it announced there would be 90-odd units on the site. If the department had been more honest, it would probably be less of an issue. The department needs to think about that.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I now raise the issue of the block at the corner of Cecil Avenue and Sevenoaks Street. It is literally across the road; hardly further than from me to you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P. Abetz), from the train station at Cannington. It is a perfect location for a TOD—a transit-oriented development. There is a block next door owned by the Department of Health. There is some council-owned land across the road—go for it. If the government wants to build up to 150 units on that site, a couple of floors, shops and offices—go for it. It would be a fabulous site. There will be traffic issues. It will have to be properly planned, but that is an ideal site for fairly priced housing. There could be some units for older people. It could be a great opportunity to provide the spark that is needed for the Cannington town centre to get going. The council has had plans for a long time to get the CBD, as they describe the Cannington town centre, going. It has not happened. The council has employed a very experienced planner in Mike Mouritz. It is a great opportunity, and the Department of Housing could help by working out what it wants to do on that site and do it. Some affordable housing would be great; a bit of social housing would be okay; some aged accommodation would be great. It would be a great development.

I want to go on to note that since Parliament met last year the City of Canning has been suspended. It will be interesting to see what results from an inquiry. I look forward to seeing that in March of next year, which I think

is the month the report is to be completed by. It means that the ratepayers of the City of Canning do not have any elected representatives. I keep in touch with the commissioner on a regular basis, but I caution a couple of things: the first is that I hope this is not used as an opportunity to bring out the garbage in terms of planning—the sorts of controversial planning issues that might be around that could not get through an elected council. I do not expect that that would be done during this period. I certainly hope it is not.

The next thing is that there is going to be pressure on rates, and we do not want to have rates increase unnecessarily. That goes to the question of boundaries; we do not want to have the council chopped up while there are no elected representatives, with the potential for rates to go up significantly. I know there is a proposal around from some people to cut the City of Canning into pieces, give part to the City of Gosnells, part to the City of Melville, and amalgamate another part with the Town of Victoria Park and give that whole bit to the City of South Perth. That, potentially, would increase the rates for people in my electorate quite significantly, and I would not support that.

I just want to go on to some local issues I think are important, and I want to get on the record my desire to have these things dealt with. The first of those is Hester Park in Langford, which has been neglected for too long. I worked on the City of Gosnells for the last four years to get it to create a master plan, and last year it finally decided that it would allocate resources to creating a master plan for Hester Park, which I would welcome. Unfortunately, when it went to the Department of Planning to get sign-off on the work it was going to do, the Department of Planning told it not to do any more work because the Department of Housing had raised with the Department of Planning that it saw Hester Park as an opportunity to subdivide the land and put more houses in. It has been pointed out to me by local residents and activists that when the so-called Ruby Gardens development was done on the corner of Nicholson Road and Spencer Road, it was actually carved out of the pre-existing Hester Park, and the local community accepted Ruby Gardens on the basis that that would then protect the remainder of Hester Park. So it was sort of salami tactics, and they are now coming back and saying hang on. I am very concerned about that and local residents are concerned about that. There might be some opportunity to come up with a good plan, but I think the Department of Planning needs to get out of the way and let the council finally get on and do something at Hester Park because it is just not something we can be proud of. When I look over the bridge to Canning River Regional Park in the City of Canning and the high-quality nature of that park, I can see what Hester Park could look like if we could get a master plan and some investment. Let us get Planning out of the way so that we can get on with it.

The next issue I raise is Langford shops, which are a disaster with hardly any tenancies occupied. It is a place that encourages criminal behaviour because it is not open to the street, and all the shops have shutters on them at night-time. One of the restaurants at the Langford shops even locks its doors at night, so if people want to go and have dinner there, they have to knock on the door to be let in. It is ridiculous. As I understand it, the problem is that, from memory, there are 23 separate tenancies with 18 separate owners. It is not going to go anywhere without some leadership from government and from the council. I know the council would basically give any zoning approval to the owners of the shops, but it probably does need a bit of effort from the government as well because otherwise all the interests will not be able to be aligned. In saying that, I of course point out that it is a long way—five or six kilometres—from a train station, so it is not really going to be a transit-oriented development. But the shops cannot be allowed to go on as they are because it is just a magnet for crime.

Moving on to Beckenham, I encourage the government to put some money in for the council's Mills Park redevelopment plans; they are worthwhile and they just need a bit of help. They need help from the federal government as well, but if the state government can help, that would be great. In talking about Beckenham I have to raise aircraft noise. I am interested that the Minister for Transport is still leaning on the airport to build the third runway. I make the point that his arguments are quite spurious, and it would cost \$600 million to build the third runway. It is not clear that it is needed. There are 21 million passengers a year through Brisbane Airport and there are 12 million passengers a year through Perth Airport. Therefore, it is not the airport configuration that is causing the problems because, clearly, Brisbane is only just now investing in a third runway. Clearly, the current airport configuration can take many more planes. The other thing I point out is that if a third runway is built, it still does not solve the problems of the fly in, fly out workers who have their terminals on the northern part of the airport, because those planes will still have to cross the principal runway to get to either the existing east-west runway or the proposed runway. The proposed runway will be a full-length runway anyway. That will deliver unfair load noise on to the people of Beckenham and I am opposed to it and I will continue to be opposed to it.

The Canning Agricultural, Horticultural and Recreational Society at the showgrounds is a great organisation, but we still need—the Minister for Racing and Gaming is not here—a commitment that the dogs will stay at Cannington. We do not want them moving into the city. One way or another, the showgrounds are an important opportunity for investment in the local area. Again, it helps the City of Canning with its Canning town centre.

Kent Street Weir is not only an important part of Canning River Regional Park, but also an important environmental management tool. It needs some work. It needs renewal. It needs a fish ladder. It needs all the

different bits and pieces that will keep it effective in preventing salt inflow into the Canning River. A bit of money needs to be spent there.

The Gerard Street bridge needs to be landscaped on the East Cannington side. It is ridiculous that it is landscaped on the Canning city town side where nobody lives, but it is not landscaped on the side where the houses are so every summer the wind just blows all the sand over everybody's backyards, so that needs to be worked on.

The bike path that the City of Canning has built along Railway Parade is fabulous, but it is ridiculous that it ends with a sign that states "no road". It is ridiculous. We can see a photo of it in which there is just the bike path and when we get to the City of Gosnells, there is literally a line on the ground where the city's boundary is and a sign saying that the path has ended. The City of Gosnells needs to continue that path through to Kenwick. During the election campaign I was handing out stuff at Beckenham train station and saw a number of pushbike riders coming out of Beckenham and further east winding their way through the traffic to get down the road to the bike path.

Local residents complain about four-wheel drives using Maniana Park. On Monday night I met with the Maniana soccer club, which has to jury-rig lighting at night. Clearly, we need more work at Maniana Park. Likewise, Queens Park bushland right next to Maniana Park needs a bit of work.

A very important issue in the local community is Bentley Hospital. The government's desperation at the 2008 election over Royal Perth Hospital has directly led to the cut in services at Bentley Hospital. We need to retain the services at Bentley Hospital, including the maternity services. The minister said he might give it a lick of paint, but the local community deserves better. It is an important local facility and the idea of not having a local health facility is not acceptable to the local community. Likewise, I have raised before, and I will keep raising, the question of the Wharf Street, Hamilton Street and William Street railway crossings. With the increasing volume of train traffic, those three crossings are now not functional in the morning. Between 8.00 am and 9.00 am there is half an hour with the boom gate down. It does not work. It needs to be addressed. Albany Highway past Westfield Carousel Shopping Centre does not function. The Acting Speaker's (Mr P. Abetz) residents probably suffer in the same way. The corner of Nicholson Road and Metcalfe Road is also a problem. As a result of increasing volumes on Nicholson Road, people cannot get out of Metcalfe Road and traffic is going into the other parts of the suburb of Lynwood. That is not good enough. We need a solution. I have some ideas for the Minister for Transport, if he talks to me, about how we can deal with Nicholson Road to try to break up the traffic flows around there and provide some crossing for schoolkids going from Langford to Bannister Creek Primary School and from Lynwood to the Catholic school in Langford.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler) [3.49 pm]: I want to speak about infrastructure in the electorate of Butler. I have spoken before in this chamber about the exploding population in my electorate. Two years ago at the redistribution the population was levelled off at between 23 500 and 24 000 electors, but by election date the number of electors in my electoral district of Butler had risen to just under 29 000. It is the largest number of people in any metropolitan electorate and geographically the largest electorate in the metropolitan region. The growth along Marmion Avenue north from Butler through to Yanchep and then to Two Rocks after that is just phenomenal and has to be seen to be believed. The provision of infrastructure in the area, however, is abysmal. The growth has far outstripped the local government's ability to provide infrastructure. Thousands of families are moving into this area. The Premier has spoken before about the number of people arriving in Western Australia on a weekly basis. A very large number of them are moving into Jindalee, Alkimos and Jindowie. Members may have seen some of these names advertised in the large advertisements in the real estate sections of newspapers, but no community infrastructure is being provided. This has led to a crisis in my electorate. There is one playing oval in the district of Yanchep, being Oldham Reserve. It was there as a small oval when Yanchep was a village, which is now completely swamped by the number of people trying to use it. On any one weeknight about eight football teams try to train there; little athletics teams cannot use the oval, as there are just too many people; the cricket club cannot use the oval, as it is over-run; and the surface is ripped to shreds by the number of people using it. This has had the effect of people dropping out of sport because they have to travel kilometres—right down to Butler some 14 kilometres away—to access playing grounds. Youth are dropping out of sports and teams are falling over because of inadequate facilities.

It was therefore in these circumstances that the former Mayor of the City of Wanneroo Jon Kelly sat down to try to figure out an answer. He came up with a solution to propose to the major landowner in the area, Yanchep Beach Joint Venture, because the City of Wanneroo did not have the funds to build any playing fields out there. It could not keep up with the development, as it has to service Banksia Grove, Carramar and everywhere over the City of Wanneroo. The proposal to this landowner, which owns most of the land between Yanchep and Two Rocks—a huge area of land—was for the company to pre-fund the provision of community facilities. By the way, it was initially for one football oval; then two football ovals and passive recreation space; and by the time the requests were finished, the city was seeking an area of 17.6 hectares in total, of which 12.8 hectares would be for active playing fields and four-odd hectares for passive recreation. Yanchep Beach Joint Venture, through its chief executive officer, Mr Gin Wah Ang, who is very community-minded, agreed to the city's request to pre-

fund all these works. The city said it would build an access road into the proposed grounds, but when the time came and it was getting closer to doing all this, the city worked out that it could not build the access road where it intended because there was a four-metre height differentiation. The city therefore said that it would have to build a new access road by extending Marmion Avenue to what would become little Marmion Avenue and said, “And that would cost \$1.8 million, Mr Developer; can you pay 50 per cent of that as well?” So the developer met and said it would pay for 50 per cent of the access road as well. To cut a long story short, the council, over several meetings, kept on resolving to proceed with this plan. This area of land exceeded the 10 per cent of public open space that the developer in the full course of time would have to cede free of cost to the public—we all know that scheme; as land is developed, 10 per cent of the land has to be ceded until a maximum is reached. Because this would exceed that 10 per cent, taking the figure to 13.8 per cent of the total development, the city said it would buy the land from the developer in the same way as was done by the City of Gosnells with the Passmore Street playing fields. The city would fund the purchase of this from the district development fund. All the other landowners in the area developing their lots would be required to contribute money, as is normal, to a district development fund and in the fullness of time some credits would come back to the developer who was pre-funding all of this. This was all proposed in “District Planning Scheme No. 2 — Amendment No. 122” for the Yanchep–Two Rocks development contribution plan.

As recently as October 2012, it was full steam ahead. The council unanimously resolved to proceed in this way to expedite the delivery of some playing fields so that something could be done to provide facilities for young people and families in this area. Just think how far away Yanchep is. They desperately need these playing fields up there, because if we do not engage the youth with sport and good activity, we know what happens and we know the social problems that will evolve in the course of time. That is the reason the Yanchep Beach Joint Venture, through Mr Gin Wah Ang, agreed to pre-fund all this. It was pre-funding approximately \$3.8 million worth of works; that is a lot of money for a developer to pre-fund as a community contribution, knowing that it would be 10 years before a lot of this money was recouped. Even the planning for this has involved expenditure by Yanchep Beach Joint Venture of some \$400 000. A deed was to be entered into between the city and Yanchep Beach Joint Venture to facilitate all this going ahead, and it was resolved as recently as October 2012 that the city would enter into and complete this deed. But then the city officers extended the period for comment on proposed amendment 122 to give associated landowners as far south as Alkimos, because they would all be contributing to the district fund, a chance to comment. Not much of an explanation was given to developers as far south as Alkimos about why the district development fund, the community facilities plan, would be pre-funding the purchase of this land—that is, to accelerate delivery of these facilities about 10 years ahead of time—so they put an objection in that was received after the time for objections had lapsed. We do not take issue with that. That was dated 22 November 2012. A further meeting was held between the other landowners; that is—I will name them here—the Capricorn Village Joint Venture, the Peet Yanchep Land Syndicate, the Fini Group, the Australand Property Group, the Police and Nurses Landreach Pty Ltd, The Reef and Peat Yanchep Pty Ltd. They all had a meeting to discuss this and resolved to change their stance somewhat from their initial objection once the whole scheme had been explained to them, so that on 4 December 2012 they wrote to the city a letter, which reads —

In relation to this, we first want to clarify for the record that we are in no way critical of the Yanchep Beach Joint Venture ... or their involvement in the early delivery of this open space. Secondly all of the landowners are fully supportive of the Yanchep District Open Space proceeding next year, —

That is, 2013 —

ahead of when it would normally be provided.

They then go on to say that they seek some justification from the city for why the land is being purchased and not ceded free of cost in due course. I have already covered that because the land involved exceeds the 10 per cent that was required under the legislation to be ceded free of charge and it was being delivered 10 to 15 years in advance of what would be required under the legislation. This was being done to provide facilities for the thousands of families being moved into the area by the six developers I have named here in Parliament today. As I said, that letter was dated 4 December 2012.

A report was prepared for the Wanneroo City Council on 11 December by the city officers; that is, a week after the developers wrote supporting the proposal, but just seeking some clarification, and no mention was made of the developers’ change of position. The report by the city officer reads in part —

Critically, Council should note that during recent advertising of proposed Amendment No. 122 ... the City received submissions from developers ... objecting to the proposed inclusion ...

No mention is made of this letter of 4 December. I do not want to name this officer now; I will name him later. It does not surprise me; it is the same officer who was involved in the Yanchep sky bridge fiasco, which caused the Liberal Minister for Planning to be so critical of the processes of the City of Wanneroo and write a letter to the city telling it to dismantle or radically alter the sky bridge it built six metres high in front of people’s homes. It is

the same officer. Anyway, I will leave his name for another day. No mention is made of this letter of 4 December.

The community is told that it will all go ahead, but suddenly in February 2013, an announcement is made by the City of Wanneroo that it is completely abandoning this project in its entirety and, as an alternative, is going to Two Rocks, 14 kilometres to the north, and tearing up the public open space, the passive area up there known as Charnwood Reserve, which is very much valued by the local Two Rocks community, and trying to build on that reserve among people's houses one football oval with floodlights without any consultation at all. That set the Two Rocks community on fire. The member for Wanneroo is smiling because he lives not far from this area and he knows what happened and how upset those people are. He is nodding assent because he knows the truth of what I am saying; that is, this community was aghast at what the City of Wanneroo did.

I then issued a freedom of information application on the City of Wanneroo to get to the bottom of why for two years it had been promising the community early delivery of these ovals. When I sent my freedom of information request through, I was contacted by the information officer. He said to me, "John, there's a bit of a problem here." When I asked why, he said, "I'm told you can see some documents, but there are documents you will never be allowed to see." I got off the phone from him and wrote straight to the Information Commissioner to report this event. He then rang me back in distress saying, "Don't make me the scapegoat. I told you that in confidence." This city is trying to act in secret. I kept on digging, which is how I got to this secret report in which the city was seeking to blame the six adjoining land developers for their decision to cancel this project. I will repeat the landowners' names—Capricorn Village Joint Venture, Peet Yanchep Land Syndicate, the Fini Group, Australand Property Group, Police and Nurses Landreach Pty Ltd and Peet Yanchep Pty Ltd. They were not aware that they were being used as the excuse for denying all the families that they were bringing into the area the use of the recreational facilities. They had written off this letter of 4 December thinking it would be taken on board.

After I was denied access to the documents by the City of Wanneroo, I made some further investigations and was able to independently source the letter of 4 December that the landowners wrote. I forwarded this letter to the new mayor. When I say new, she is not that new; she has been around for 18 months, but she took over from Mayor Kelly and voted on this report and followed the officers' recommendation and cancelled the reserves. I said to her, "Mayor Tracey Roberts, were you aware of this letter?" I faxed it to her at six o'clock one Wednesday night.

Mr P.T. Miles: At 10.00 at night.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: No, I sent it through to her at six o'clock. She went to one of her colleagues who lives close by—a very decent man who is soon to be the Liberal member for Moore, Mr Ian Goodenough—and they had a confab. They were both aghast that they had not seen this letter and that it had not been drawn to their attention.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: At 10 minutes to 10.00 pm, the mayor rang me and asked me if I was up because she was going to send me an email. I said I sure was because my blood was boiling. At 10 minutes to 10.00 pm on a Wednesday night, she received an email from the chief executive officer of the City of Wanneroo saying, "Attached is the letter of 4 December. We have just found it." At 10 minutes to 10 at night! "This must be the letter that Quigley's referring to." The mayor of the City of Wanneroo then convened a special supplementary council meeting for 10 April 2013 at which by an absolute majority the council revoked the decisions of February when the sporting ovals were cancelled and directed the city officers to re-enter into negotiations. On 4 April, about four working days before that meeting was convened on 10 April because of the intervening weekend, a city officer—not the one who is responsible for this fiasco—got one of his subordinates to write to the six landowners in response to their letter of 4 December. The city officer's letter states, "You wanted the justification of why we're trying to provide these sporting ovals in advance and fund them out of the district contribution fund." The council's letter refers to the landowners' requests for justification and tells them to go and read the original documents. What a haughty and stupid letter they wrote! They were told to give a response within three days. These officers had taken four months to respond to the landowners' reasonable requests, and then they gave the landowners three days to reply, giving no justification or explanation whatsoever. Since then, when the council met on 10 April, it revoked the decision to cancel the development of the ovals and instructed the city officers to try to conclude the deal with Yanchep Beach Joint Venture. The board of this joint venture had scrapped this old plan because they had been told it was all off. They were also going to go and tear up the plans for the Charnwood Park redevelopment. However, in good faith, the joint venturers still received the mayor when she came to see them. The mayor took along a city officer, whom I will later name in this Parliament, who, I am told, stood stiff as an ironing board, drumming his fingers on the arm of a chair. The member for Wanneroo has heard this story as well. This officer was drumming his fingers on the arms of a chair; he did not want to be there or to act in good faith with this developer at all. The developer, Yanchep Beach Joint

Venture, which was acting in good faith in the interests of all the residents who were coming into this area, sought independent advice—I know there are some people from local government in the chamber this afternoon—from Mr Guy Ferraro, a former executive director of the Department of Planning, and from Mr Mike Allen, who was also a senior director at the Department of Planning, to reassess this proposal. Under this proposal the land would be purchased out of the district development fund and delivered 15 years ahead of time to satisfy the current need. Under the normal course of events, as this report identifies, it will be something like 2026 before there are sporting grounds out there. We will have lost two generations of youth from sport. The children who should be using these ovals will be parents themselves by the time this comes about, because of these silly council officers! A report has been prepared, and here it is. I will seek your leave, Mr Speaker, to lay this on the table for the rest of the day for the information of members.

The SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will lay it on the table at the end of my speech for members to read.

I understand this report has now been distributed to the six adjoining landowners who, as long ago as 4 December 2012, sought this information. It is provided here. In its conclusion, the independent report reads —

- The proposed District Open Space located near the Yanchep City Centre is intended to provide the district, sub-regional and regional community with active senior playing fields. In the short to medium term these facilities will serve a regional catchment from Two Rocks to Alkimos.

That is right outside the area funded by the Yanchep Beach Joint Venture. In other words, they would be pre-funding grounds that will be serving families that are not ever likely to be their customers; they are doing this in the community to be seen to be good developers and good community members. The second point reads —

- Being 17.6 ha in size, the facility will be significantly larger than what can and should be described as local/district public open space facility under the objectives of LN. —

That is, local neighbourhoods —

Providing such a large public open space contribution in one location would be contrary to the intent of established planning policies and will result in adverse residential amenity outcomes for future residential areas around the Yanchep city centre.

- The local/district and regional components of this facility should be separated to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of costs —

That is, fair and equitable distribution of costs amongst all the adjoining developers —

for the provision of these necessary facilities. Consistent with the requirements of Liveable Neighbourhoods, a maximum of 7ha of this open space should be included as part of the 10% local/district open space contribution. The balance should be acquired —

This is critical —

through the City of Wanneroo Developer Contribution Plan. The approved plan of subdivision for the open space has identified a lot of 12.8ha which is the land that should be acquired under the DCP.

I am laying this document on the table and I will send this speech and this report to these six developers, because the community wants to know whether these additional six developers, now that they know the truth and have the full information before them, will try to stand in the way. What is being said is that they are going to have to contribute anyway, over the years, but are they going to stand in the way of the district development fund being used for the acquisition of this land? In other words, are they going to continue to bring families into this area by selling it as an area for new young families, like Alkimos or Jindowie—these places that we see in the big advertisements—but at the same time use their commercial might to try to influence the City of Wanneroo to deny families reasonable playing areas?

I will come back to this chamber—I know the Legislative Council meets on 20 May—and I shall report on the response of these six developers. I have heard, through word of mouth and hearsay, that one of them—a very large, publicly listed company—has said, “Now that we understand, we fully support the scheme.” I have spoken to the chief executive officer of another developer—who acts for a consortium and whose salary, I understand, is dependent upon certain key performance indicators and what profit is shown—who does not want this. When I explained to this particular gentleman that these families need it now, not in 2026, this chief executive officer—whom, I might add, lives down in the leafy western suburbs near Cottesloe, where there are ample facilities—said to me this: “I don’t care; let it happen in due course.” It reminded me of what Marie Antoinette is reported to have said after she inquired about why the peasants were rising. When she was told it was because there was not enough bread to eat, she said, “Let them eat cake.” That was the response of the chief executive officer. I do not want to name him here, because he is acting for a consortium. I cannot imagine, knowing the quality of the

companies he represents, that that is the considered position of the board of each member company of the consortium; I cannot imagine that for a moment. I think—I hope—that that was just an off-the-cuff remark.

I can imagine that if any of these six developers wanted to put their foot down and stop this playing field and force the City of Wanneroo to then desecrate and rip up the Phil Renkin reserve in Two Rocks and destroy another community, there will be a lot of people between Alkimos and Two Rocks who would be upset with any developer who takes such a mean-spirited attitude. We know that the big developers involved in this, including Yanchep Beach Joint Venture through Mr Gin Wah Ang and another big developer that is a public company, have, through hearsay, already voiced their total support for it. We know that this is not a scheme dreamt up by Yanchep Beach Joint Venture to sell land into this scheme, because it was Yanchep Beach Joint Venture that was approached by the City of Wanneroo to come on board and pre-fund it all.

What more responsible developer could we have in a community? The community is desperately hoping that once the six developers that I named in Parliament this afternoon have read the independent report of Mr Guy Ferraro and Mr Mike Allen, who had assessed this, and realise that this scheme that was proposed by the City of Wanneroo exactly replicates the process by which the City of Gosnells worked to deliver the Passmore Street playing fields, they will say, “We want the families that we are bringing into the area to have proper recreational facilities.” I will lay these papers on the table.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

MR M.J. COWPER (Murray–Wellington) [4.20 pm]: I would like to take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to congratulate you on your ascension to the position of Speaker, and to all other members who have taken their seat in this chamber. Each of the 59 members who occupy this place have their own stories as to how they came to be here.

This is my opportunity to quickly touch on the progression that the electorate of Murray–Wellington took in recent months. First, I would like to acknowledge and thank a range of people who assisted leading up to the last election. It is very important that from time to time we go back to the people of our electorates and put forward our case for being re-elected to this esteemed place. The feedback and comments I got from the people who supported me and voted for me on the day was very warming. One young chap said, “Murray, I voted for you because you are honest.” That is probably one of the greatest compliments that anyone has ever paid me. With that, I acknowledge that I have a responsibility to the constituents of Murray–Wellington. During this four-year term, it is my intention to robustly put forward the various issues that are affecting the people in the Murray–Wellington electorate. As the previous speaker said, a number of issues impact on electorates, particularly those in peri-urban environments.

The Murray–Wellington electorate consists of the Murray, Waroona and Harvey shires. The Murray shire has seen growth of about six and a half per cent while the Harvey shire has experienced growth of about six per cent. They take in areas in the south, including Australind, Kingston, Treendale and Galway Green, which have aspirational families. We have seen a great commitment by this government to build facilities in these areas. We are spending a lot of money on recreation in particular. The recreational area around Leschenault is significant. New playing fields and pavilions have supplemented the existing facilities, including the recreation centre and the swimming pool. In recent times, new schools have been built to accommodate this very fast growing area. In fact, this year Australind Senior High School has in excess of 1 300 students. Given the growth in the area, it will get to around 1 600, which is remarkable, given that when I was the officer in charge of the Australind Police Station, it had about 1 300 students. After Eaton Community College was built, numbers were taken back down to manageable levels. We have seen continued growth. That is evidenced by the size of the primary schools that are feeders to the Australind Senior High School, including Parkfield Primary School, which has around 600 to 650 new students. Kingston Primary School is a new school that opened about two years ago. It commenced with about 500-odd students and now has in excess of 750 students. Of course, we have seen great commitment in recent times to a new school at Treendale. People who travel through the south west along the Old Coast Road on the Australind bypass will see Treendale on the right-hand side, about 10 kilometres out from Bunbury before they get to the Collie River. We welcomed, in particular, the announcement by the government during the election of a bridge to connect the communities of Eaton and Australind, Eaton being in the member for Collie–Preston’s electorate, and the communities of Treendale and Australind on the north side of the Collie River. That bridge will create a great connectivity between the two groups. It will allow access for people to shop and obviously to travel to and from work, but, moreover, it will significantly improve the capacity of the State Emergency Service, the fire brigades, the Australind police and also St John Ambulance, which, with the exception of the fire station, are all located in Australind. The fire station is an ongoing problem. We need some commitment from the Minister for Emergency Services to the fire station. As members may well know, there was a problem when a developer went broke and the contract for the land that was set aside for the new fire station unfortunately fell through. The parcel of land on Paris Road in Australind is obviously still tied up with legal problems. The contract expired on 30 June last year. After discussions with the previous minister, we have a commitment to build a new fire station. The money that was allocated three years ago has since been

reinvested in the Bunbury fire station. Given the growth of the population in that area, I look forward to seeing a commitment to a new Australind career firefighting station at that location.

As I mentioned, the Murray–Wellington electorate is not short of issues. It has an agricultural base and is arguably the premier food-producing area of Western Australia. It has a dairy industry and a beef industry. Vegetables such as potatoes, onions, carrots and the like are grown along the Myalup coast. Of course, it has the remnants of a timber industry in the forests, particularly around Dwellingup. It also has orchardists and the like. It is a very diverse electorate that has a number of varied issues.

One of the other points that wash across this whole area is that it is also a mining region. People may seem surprised that that is the case. In fact, the Peel region is the third-largest mining region in Western Australia. It has the Boddington goldmine, the alumina refineries at Wagerup and Pinjarra and also the bauxite deposits in the Darling Scarp. On top of that, there are also mineral sands and the like. In summing up all of that, the community contributes well above its weight to the state's coffers. Members of the community see themselves as people who can do. In recent times, the community has been the beneficiary of some royalties for regions funding. I look forward in the next term of government to some of that sunshine coming further south to Peel and the south west. If we sit down and analyse where the money has been spent, we will see that a considerable amount of that money has been spent, quite rightly I believe, in the Pilbara with the Pilbara Cities program, the Ord River project and the like. Significant money has been spent in the midwest, the goldfields and the wheatbelt. I do not think anyone in this place would deny that, over many years of neglect, some of the facilities in the wheatbelt have been forgotten about. It is very pleasing to see that the people who live out that way who contribute to the wealth of this state are getting some of that sunshine. What I am signalling is that some very patient people down my neck of the woods are very keen to see some of the issues of concern addressed.

I wish to touch upon only a few of those significantly important issues, but that is not to say that it is an exhaustive list. Of particular interest to the people in the northern part of the electorate in the Peel region is the accessibility to industrial land. I am referring to the Nambeelup industrial estate. This is an area of land to the east of Kwinana Freeway, near Lakes Road, that has been identified in a number of planning schemes as a future industrial estate. This industrial estate has the capacity to produce 7 000 jobs for people who live in Mandurah and the Shire of Murray. In fact, it has been the number one priority for the City of Mandurah and the Shire of Murray, and also for the Peel Development Commission. The problem with this land is that it has been subject to inordinate delay in bringing forward what is urgently needed for this region. It would appear that a number of hurdles have been presented, one after another, to delay this project. I have a particular theory as to why that is the case. I will not discuss that in this forum. But I will say that I am at the end of my tether when it comes to my patience with the bureaucracy that is occurring in some government departments. When we consider the number of different reports and requirements of some of the government agencies that are dealing with this land, it is just crazy. The handing down of the report has already been delayed for two years. We will now have a further delay of six months. The reason given for that delay is very flimsy. At the moment, there is a traffic strategy that involves looking at the traffic movements around this proposed industrial estate up until 2031. However, someone has now decided that that strategy needs to be extended from 2031 to 2051. That has set back this project another six months. As I understand it, there is a bit of conjecture between various landowners and the proponents of this area, in particular LandCorp, which owns a considerable chunk of the land in this area, revolving around the width of an easement for a transit bus that is likely to adorn this area sometime in the next 30, 40 or 50 years. That would appear to me to be another example of the impediments that have been thrown up, I believe deliberately, almost in a scandalous manner, to delay this project.

Currently, a number of landowners are sitting on landholdings in this area, and it is costing them, by virtue of the money that they have tied up with banks, to the tune of about \$6 000 a day. In the past two years alone, the money that has been lost on this project is in the vicinity of \$8 million. That is money that will never be recouped and that will inevitably be passed onto the potential buyers in this estate. That will put some of the costs beyond the reach of people who may wish to set up shop in this neck of the woods. I believe that the reason this project is being delayed is that there is an attempt within government departments, particularly the Department of Planning, to pay a free kick to the Keralup proposal. Keralup is a portion of land in the north west corner of the Murray shire. There are significant environmental problems with that land. I believe that LandCorp and the Department of Housing, which are the proponents of the Keralup development, think of themselves as some sort of pseudo land developer. They might see themselves as potentially a Nigel Satterley or a Peet and Co. The only difference is that they are using taxpayers' money to do this. As a Liberal, I have a fundamental problem with that, because suitable land is already available in the district for this purpose. This land is already owned by large developers. I am not pushing the barrow of any particular developer. But I would say that if Keralup is to rise or fall, it should do so on a level playing field. It should rise and fall on a playing field that provides equal opportunities for all the proponents in the district. I am not asking for any special favours. But it would appear that someone is standing on the hose of the private land developers in order to get the Keralup project up and running.

I have already made comments in this place and outside this place about my belief as to what will eventuate at Keralup. I have concerns that it will turn into a ghetto; I have concerns that it is going to impact significantly on, and to the detriment of, the environment in that neck of the woods. When we look at the amount of land that is currently available in that district, we can see that the issue of having affordable housing can be satisfied by simply allowing free enterprise to go about its business. So, once again, I have called upon the Premier to intervene in this proposal, look at why it has been delayed, and get off the hose and allow them to get on with their business, because at this time the cost is spiralling for no other reason than that some bureaucrat sitting in a government department somewhere has to satisfy what I believe are other surreptitious reasons for the delay.

In the meantime, there are other significant issues around the place involving planning. As far as housing is concerned, a number of land developers have found that they have fallen foul of the existing planning procedures, such as the south metropolitan Peel regional 2031 spatial plan, which I have referred to, and also the greater Bunbury region scheme. Again, they put out, at great cost to the community, a consultation process under which people could make submissions on what should be done and where it should be done, in making urban deferred land available. When all the submissions were collated and put together, an indicative report was produced. When the final report was handed down, it appeared to be totally different from that which was discussed and circulated between all the proponents in those areas, or people who had an interest in those areas. That is an ongoing, very frustrating issue that I will be seeking some clarification of.

As I mentioned before, the areas around Australind are growing rapidly. Therefore, some assistance will be needed to get some of the land rezoned in order to make good land available for housing for aspirational Western Australians. Members also have to remember that the people who are moving into these areas do so for a number of reasons. One is that many of them are coming to the area from the north, from the east and from overseas.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.J. COWPER: They wish to take advantage of the lifestyle—one that is not reliant on having to jump onto a bus or a train to get themselves all the way into the city. In my neck of the woods, we have access to infrastructure. We have a freeway through the heart of the electorate; we have the main water source that supplies water to Perth running through the middle of the city; we have the powerlines that run from Muja power station to the city. Therefore, we already have in place significant infrastructure to deal with the potential growth in that area.

What concerns me is that the departments seem to be fairly willing to allow development on the northern side of Perth with free abandon. The problem with that, though, is that every time they tack another suburb onto the northern end of the Perth metropolitan area, it is up to the taxpayers to submit to money being spent on extending the railway line, the freeway, the power supply, the water supply, the sewerage and all the infrastructure that goes with that. All that stuff that I have said is already in place in our neck of the woods has to be added on. The cost of the extension of the railway line by five kilometres—I recall bringing that bill to this place—was \$240 million, and so it goes. When we look at the cost of that for the taxpayers and compare it with the cost of the land in my area, it would appear that there has been, if you like, some favouritism. That is another area that I wish to pursue during these four years.

In my last 12 minutes, another issue that I wish to speak on is an application by a very big corporate citizen in my electorate, Alcoa, which has been in the area for a number of years. In fact, it is celebrating its fiftieth year of operation in Western Australia, and it is about 41 years since the refinery opened in Pinjarra. It was established at that time under a state agreement act, with the assistance of the then Premier, Sir Charles Court. It saw the construction of a purpose-built town in north Pinjarra, or Carcoola, which housed mostly British immigrants who had come to work at what is now the Pinjarra refinery. Up until now the refinery has obtained bauxite from the Darling Ranges. For every tonne of alumina extracted from bauxite, there is about three tonnes of residue. Residue is the waste product. It is currently being stored at a rate of about 10 million tonnes per annum. The “mountain” at the back of Pinjarra is growing at a rate of 10 million tonnes per annum. Over the next 30 years that will amount to around 300 million tonnes. It equates to about the same amount that is currently there. The residue contains sodium hydroxide, which is caustic. It is used in the process of extracting alumina. It remains evident in the materials. Alcoa has been looking at ways to deal with this waste material. There is a plant at Wagerup. I have been working with Alcoa to try to enable the material to be processed in a fashion where we can extract the caustic to use for building material. At one stage it was producing about 10 tonnes per day.

I believe Greenland Road, the new road that is part of the connection between the South Western and Forrest Highways, was made from the material that I am talking about. The sand was extracted, and the company was able to extract the caustic. It now has a use for the waste residue, which I think is commendable. Unfortunately we do not seem to be progressing much beyond it being used on a small scale, as was demonstrated. I will be very interested to observe how Alcoa deals with this waste residue issue. When residue is dumped in a big pile, it has to be kept wet. If it is not wet, people will be covered in dust. If it is not wet, there is potential for particles of caustic to fly in the wind and land within a certain radius of that plant, depending of course on how strong the

winds are. Anyone who lives along the Darling Scarp would know that during summertime there is a very strong prevailing easterly wind.

There are two applications by Alcoa. One application is to the Murray shire for an amendment to town planning scheme 4. It is for an amendment to the 283 hectares that allows the land to be specified “special use” rather than “rural”. It will allow the Pinjarra refinery footprint to increase by around 600 acres. The idea is then to relocate some water treatment areas. The existing water treatment area will be converted to waste residue. It will increase the size and the footprint of the mountain that sits there.

Straight up, Alcoa is a very important part of the community in my electorate. It employs many, many people. Alcoa has been a very good contributor over many years to a number of community-based events and programs. It sponsors the local football league. It also contributed towards the local swimming pool. Over time the company has demonstrated it is a very important part of the community. Notwithstanding the fact that it has been there a long time, many residents distrust Alcoa, which may well be unfounded. It may well be an unfair criticism. The reality is that there is that perception to contend with. Given that this application to the Shire of Murray for an amendment to town planning scheme 4 also coincides with an amendment to the Peel region scheme, which, as I understand it, goes to the minister for determination, then if the minister sees fit to sign off on the Peel region scheme amendment, town planning scheme 4 will have to comply with the Peel region scheme. That being the case, there is very little value in the community informing the council of its concerns by way of submissions. Having said that, I put on record in this place that I have written to the Minister for Planning and the Premier of Western Australia, asking them to deal with this issue and to have regard to the community I represent. This is not a minor amendment; it is substantial. A minor amendment would be something like a new roadhouse out there on Forrest Highway, which hopefully we will see sometime in the near future. A minor amendment would be the reclaiming of some land on an intersection that, for one reason or another, was not required anymore, and therefore it would be able to be used in a manner that was in the best interests of the community. That is a minor amendment. The 283 hectares of waste residue that contains sodium hydroxide and other mildly radioactive material inherent in that type of material is not a minor amendment. We are about halfway through the life of this refinery and about halfway through the life of the extraction of minerals from Darling Scarp, and it will impact on not only this generation, but also those of the next 30 or 40 years. It is appropriate that a community consultation process be entered into, notwithstanding that Alcoa will protest that it has met all the various requirements. It needs to go back and better engage the community further in a more open and transparent manner.

By way of example, when the refinery opened in 1972 or whenever it was, 80 per cent of the workforce of the Pinjarra Alcoa refinery lived in Pinjarra; nowadays, I believe it is as low as 20 per cent. Nearly 60 per cent of the workforce no longer lives in the town; it has chosen to live elsewhere. From that, an inference can be drawn that there are people who choose not to live in the shadow of the great mountain that has built up over the past 40 years. It is appropriate that, before we go bringing the waste residue area closer by about half to the town, which will put it about a kilometre away from the back of the Pinjarra racetrack—those who are familiar with that area know that it would encroach—there is an opportunity for the community to discuss with Alcoa whether it could look at perhaps relocating its residue areas to the east, south or even the north. Certainly the concern is that it is progressing westwards towards the town, which is something that people who have been in contact with my office are not comfortable with.

Members may know that I brought a petition to this place yesterday, and I understand from my office that I will be bringing in the same petition with further petitioners when Parliament resumes next week. This is a major issue as far as the relationship between the town and a major employer, and the capacity for a decision-making process that involves the community. I think that is the key point. At no time have we said that Alcoa should shut down, at no time have we said that Alcoa has not been very good for the community—it certainly has—but in essence we are asking for there to be greater involvement with the people who, at the end of the day, will be most affected by this decision.

Alcoa’s operations also extend down to Wagerup and, as members will be aware, people living in that area have had concerns for many years. Alcoa has largely demonstrated a good capacity to be able to deal with them, although not everyone has been satisfied. Under the supplementary property purchase program instituted by the previous government, Alcoa has purchased land that people have considered to be too close to the refinery. The people who felt affected or aggrieved by it have since relocated. I think that same sort of spirit should be demonstrated in this case. I look forward to working with the community, Alcoa, the minister and this Parliament to come up with a resolution for this issue because this is a matter that will impact on many people for many years to come.

In the last minute I thank my family for their support and my close friends who have got me back into this place. They put a lot of effort into where we want to go and put up with a whole lot that they probably should not have to. The same could probably be said for everyone in this place.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [4.51 pm]: I firstly congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on being elected as the Speaker of the house. I cannot think of a better man to do the job; you have my full support and obviously also did during the vote. I am happy to say that publicly. I also congratulate all the members who have been re-elected and elected to this house. It is good to see that there is still a vocal group that is keen to express its opinions, which is very, very important in this place. I also thank the parliamentary staff whom I have seen over the past five years do a fantastic job in supporting members in this place and throughout Parliament. As one of the class of 2008 I found that support to be invaluable and I know that the new members in the 2013 election will also find them to be very professional and helpful. Please utilise their services because they are very keen to help.

As we all know, one of the most important parts is our staff in our electorate offices. Without them and without the professional and hardworking dedication that they display every day we would not look half as good as we do in the community. I have some outstanding staff who deliver at an exceptionally high standard. They keep me on my toes and they always encourage me and support me in raising the bar. They are also very keen to challenge decisions and things happening at both government and community levels. It is important to understand that we need staff who will tell us what is happening on the ground and who will share not only their views but also the views they get from the electorate. If we disregard their advice, we are obviously on the back foot. I really encourage everyone to make sure they engage with their electorate staff.

In terms of the Carine campaign, I thank all the people who were involved in my committee and all the supporters, both Liberal Party and friends. Without all those people manning booths and doing all the other work that is important, we would not have been able to present the professional face that we did on election day. I had an abundance of people helping on election day. I was not knocking people back, but I was redirecting them to other electorates to assist. It is not all about me. For a long time, as the member for Carine I have realised that it is important to support all our colleagues, not only on the ground during election campaigns, but also in Parliament. It is important to share opportunities, experiences and advice. The Liberal Party and the branch members are the most important in this whole equation because their job is to do the preselections. If we are doing a great job, they will preselect us. Obviously, that needs to be ratified by the wider Liberal Party, but I am lucky enough that everyone within the branches and also within my electorate thought I was doing an outstanding job in the first four and a half years. Their support has been greatly appreciated and we can never value that support enough.

I just want to put on the record that I realise I am here in this place because of them. It has also been stated that as much as I might think I am a great bloke who does a wonderful job, at the end of the day people in the electorate vote for the party of choice, and in my electorate the party of choice is the Liberal Party. It always has been and always will be, subject to the fantastic work that the local member does, of course, which also contributes to that support. The next preselection is a long time away, so I do not need to spend too much time talking up the candidates; they all know exactly what I think of them anyway. I say to all the people who ran in those 59 seats that from our perspective we had the best group of candidates that we have ever had.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Certainly better than in 2008!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: In 2008 we were obviously outstanding and we will come out of that a bit better. In saying that, of course, the 2008 crew were candidates again at this election and every single one of them came back and was re-elected. It is very unusual for every single person to be re-elected.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It may well be. It just goes to show the outstanding and wonderful benchmark set in 2008, which then obviously encouraged a whole new group of amazing candidates to put up their hand for the 2013 election to become part of this wonderful team that we have on this side.

The member for Mandurah identified that we have a great amount of talent on our side and he is already starting to single people out and talk them up. He has done that over the past four and a half years and most of the people he has pointed to are either ministers or parliamentary secretaries who have worked their way up somewhere through the Parliament. The member for Mandurah is therefore a great spotter of talent; he is a great talent scout. It would be great occasionally if he were able to identify some talent on the opposition side rather than always identify it on our side. That is just a bit of advice for him—that he might start looking that way as well and maybe some things will change there too.

As I said, all the candidates did a great job. I want to mention two particular candidates. The Liberal candidate for Midland, Daniel Parasiliti, lost by 24 votes. He did an outstanding job. He is an outstanding young man. I have met him on numerous occasions. I think Midland has missed out by not having him as its local member. He is full of energy. He is a very intelligent young man. He is well connected with the community and understands what needs to happen. He lives locally and he is just someone who really would have contributed in a great way.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You don't even know where he lives. Where does he live?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: The other person I want to also mention is the candidate for Collie–Preston, Jaimee Motion.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You have just misled the Parliament. Are you aware of that?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I am sorry?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You have misled the Parliament. He lives south of the river. He doesn't live in Midland.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I think he is shifting. Is he shifting? I am not sure, but he works locally anyway and has a physiotherapy business there. So I may be mistaken there.

Jaimee Motion also did a great job in Collie–Preston, losing by 56 votes. That was, again, an outstanding achievement. All the candidates across the board did a fantastic job and I really want to thank them for the great job they did.

Obviously we came to the last Parliament in 2008 and we won the last election. It would be honest to say that we were surprised by the result on that occasion. But when we came to this Parliament in 2008 there were 24 Liberals in this house, five Nationals, four Independents and 26 Labor —

Dr A.D. Buti: You didn't win the election. How can you say you won the election?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: We formed government with the Liberals and the Nationals and the support of the Independents. That was obviously a decision that was well founded by the community, as we came back in 2008 as a minority government. When we look at the make-up of our government in 2008 with, as I said, four Independents, five Nationals and 24 Liberals and we look at the federal Labor Party, which is in a similar minority government position, we can see that the difference between those two governments is like chalk and cheese in terms of how well we have done as a government. When I talk to people out there in the streets, they talk about the wonderful, strong decisions that are made by the Premier and about the fact that he stands up for WA and gets things done; all those sorts of things that members of this house were complaining about were not issues that people were seeing in the community. That is an important thing to remember. Members on our side of the chamber would have got that message loud and clear, not just during the election but also over the past four and a half years in terms of how well we did during such trying times.

Dr A.D. Buti: Trying times? What trying times?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Order! Let the member for Carine continue his speech, member for Armadale. He is not asking for interjections.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Thank you very much for your protection, Madam Acting Speaker. I was not seeking interjections. It would be nice to get some of these facts on the table without too many interruptions.

When I came into this Parliament and became a member of the Public Accounts Committee I was told that it was a great committee to be on. I was told I would learn a lot, it would ease me into the Parliament and build on my skills. The member for Jandakot, Hon Joe Francis, who is now a minister, and I were the two Liberal Party members on the Public Accounts Committee. The committee also comprised the former member for Willagee, Hon Alan Carpenter, the then member for Balcatta and the member for Gosnells. I thought, "Wow! This looks like it will be a lot of fun." It was also a lot of hard work. When the former member for Willagee left this Parliament he was replaced on the Public Accounts Committee by the member for West Swan. She had been a chief of staff for Premier Carpenter and had worked in Treasury for many years. Members can imagine what it was like. On that committee were former ministers, a former chief of staff and a former head of the Conservation Council, and the member for Jandakot and I walked into that committee fresh, without that kind of background and experience, and I thought, "This is going to be very interesting." But I can say there were many challenging inquiries in those four and a half years and the committee was faced with many difficult situations, and I believe we on our side did an exceptional job.

Ms R. Saffioti: You did, member.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I thank the member for West Swan very much for that comment. It was a great learning experience even though it was an opposition-led committee. I learned a lot in those four and a half years, and opposition members knew what they were talking about, had something to contribute and were very capable, especially the then member for Balcatta and the former member for Willagee. I took the opportunity to learn from them and that four and a half years' experience has made me a better member of Parliament. Although I am not on the Public Accounts Committee this time around, those four and a half years afforded me a fantastic opportunity.

Opposition-led committees were an interesting concept when they were first floated, and due to the make-up of the Parliament we did that the first time around, and I think they worked. The inquiries were vigorous and focused on particular political avenues, but at the end of the day the government scrubbed up well. Those inquiries showed that the government was doing things well but that there is always room for improvement and

things could be done better. That will probably never change whichever party is in government, because of circumstances, processes, the bureaucracy and the need to work through things.

In 2008 the coalition won 10 seats from the opposition; in this last election the coalition won five seats. That is a fantastic result. As for the quality of members of Parliament, 13 new members came into this house in 2008 and there are eight new members this time around. There is 13 out of 24 and now there are another eight, so 22 out of 31 members are from 2008 and 2013. That shows a great level of rejuvenation, strength and growth for the party and the Liberal–National government will benefit enormously from these new members.

The 2013 election produced a 58 per cent two-party preferred result—an amazing result and the best since 1917. I am surprised it was so large. Given the feedback I received from the people I met in the street I expected the coalition to do well, and a small part of that could be due to discontent with the federal government, but I would like to think it was not a large part. The feedback I received was that the government was doing a great job and the Premier was doing fantastic work, and I was told to keep up the good work, keep making those decisions, keep delivering those projects and stop talking about things. That worked a treat.

In terms of my own electorate my primary vote was 45.1 per cent and the two party–preferred vote was 68.2 per cent, so there was a great 18 per cent increase. I think it is important to highlight these facts. On the Liberal side 20 seats now have a margin greater than 10 per cent as opposed to eight in 2008. The ALP has two seats with a margin greater than 10 per cent and the Nationals have two seats with a margin greater than 10 per cent, so I think we have had an outstanding result for all those members in all those seats. Some of those are marginal seats and the elected members have done a great job.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Tell us about your seat, member; I'd be interested to hear about your seat in Carine.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I will get to that; I have some points to cover there.

In terms of Canberra and its attack on federalism, in 1901 we became part of the Federation and back then the Federation was really about defence and immigration.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Members!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That was what it was about. It was also limited to the powers of section 51 of the Constitution. I think it is important that we take note of that and that we do not forget that federalism has its place, but we have to be careful about giving up too much power to Canberra, either through weak state governments, or through adverse High Court decisions, which have obviously eroded our powers. I also say that from that perspective uniform legislation is something we need to be wary of because that is just a way of Canberra grabbing more power, and eventually if we sign over too many powers, the balance will tip in the other direction and I think that would be very, very detrimental to this state. Things like the mining tax have had an impact. The world is struggling and things have slowed down in the rest of the world, but we have to be careful not to slow things down in Western Australia and Australia. Things like the mining tax have been poorly crafted and push businesses away. At one stage the federal government wanted to take over the health system. That seems to have fizzled away very quickly. There's obviously the carbon tax, and there is the Gonski report, which the federal government is trying to use to take over education. The federal government wants the states to fund these things; it wants to throw a few dollars in itself, but it wants to try to take control and centralise these things. We need to keep supporting the Premier and ensure we stand up on all these attacks on our individual rights as a state. Do not forget that 10 per cent of the population has been producing 40 per cent of the wealth.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: As we know this state's population is growing by 1 000 people a week and it is putting pressure on all of our services, whether it is our roads —

Several members interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I will have another 14 minutes left once I get an extension, so there is plenty of time to talk about my electorate, but there are some broader issues —

Several members interjected.

Mr P.T. Miles: Ask for an extension.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Can I have an extension please?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Extension granted.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker. I want to make sure I get some stuff in about my electorate as well of course. But it is okay, because at the end of the day it is not just about talking in this place, it is about action on the ground. I will talk a bit later about action on the ground. That obviously translates into votes at the ballot box as well, so I cannot complain about that.

We talked about state debt and like all of us out there, we know we need to borrow to build and we need to borrow to do things. We have to ask ourselves how much we are borrowing, what we are borrowing for and whether it is adding value to the community. I do not want to spend any more time on the federal government, but as we know, it was in the black to \$40 billion and now it is in the red with some \$262 billion of net debt. I am not sure too many people can physically grab on to many things and say that the \$300 billion turnaround has resulted in some assets, at least not here in WA. In terms of state debt, this 2012–13 capital works program is worth \$7 billion, but what are we spending this money on? We know there is a new \$1.2 billion children's hospital being built at QEII. We know there is \$610 million for the City Link project. We know there is \$440 million for the Elizabeth Quay development. We know there is \$428 million for the new museum and cultural centre. There is \$393 million for the Joondalup Health Campus. There is another \$117 million for the Albany Health Campus. There is \$2 billion for Fiona Stanley Hospital. There are the roads, the rail, the hospitals, the schools, the cultural centre; there are all sorts of things.

Several members interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: There is rail going up to Butler.

There are independent public schools, the Ord project and Pilbara Cities. The former member for Perth criticised a lot of these projects and did not support them, and he is not in this place any more. He is not in this place because he was not supporting the people of Perth and he was not supporting the projects that were being built in Perth. He was just criticising them all and wanting them all to be stopped, and I think that is reflected in the results of the election. I think a lot of good work is being done. It is not about how much we borrow; it is about how we invest our money. I think we have done a fantastic job from that perspective and we should continue down that path. A lot of these projects will build and redefine the city and create opportunities for the private sector to come on board and grow and build on that.

I will focus on a couple of very key points in my electorate. One of the first things I did when I was elected was to advocate for a new Lake Gwelup Primary School, and that was built, thank God. The original school was in very poor condition and was falling apart, but was in a growing area. Some great work has been done there. Prior to the election I was arguing very strongly for an upgrade of Reid Highway between Erindale Road and Marmion Avenue, and \$48 million has been allocated towards that project. That will make a huge difference to not just the people of Carine but those in all the northern suburbs. It is fantastic to finally see these things happen.

On social issues, we have spoken about the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village, so everyone is familiar with it. New legislation has been passed to help people in retirement villages.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Half of it.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: The main components are through and the rest will come through this term. The residents are very grateful. Their issues have been resolved and they are doing a great job rejuvenating that village and putting people's lives back on track.

Dun Craig Senior High School, which is within the newly redistributed part of my electorate, has been allocated \$5 million for a new administration block. That school caters for gifted and talented students and is doing a fantastic job. I have started connecting with the new area of my electorate by visiting schools and going to P&C meetings and starting to become part of that community.

Being a member of Parliament is also obviously about the little things we do and about local issues, whether it is advocating on behalf of the community at local government level or at federal government level or even through the state bureaucracy. A lot of work has been done at that level from not just my office, I am sure, but all members' offices. The electorates of Hillarys and Scarborough are on either side of my electorate and my constituents use the facilities in both those electorates extensively. I think the \$30 million Scarborough redevelopment is a fantastic opportunity that will rejuvenate the area. I think this state has a very, very bright future. A lot is happening. A lot more private investment will come on board. Hopefully, in the next four years we will look at getting rid of red tape, reducing bureaucracy and making it easier for people in business to navigate through government departments, because I think that is very, very important. Some of those things have already happened, but there is a lot more work to do. I am very keen to support that and make sure those things are freed up. All the members on our side are actively pursuing ways to reduce various pieces of red tape and complexities to try to make life easier. I think that is very important because the private sector wants to be let loose so that they can create jobs and therefore add to the state's wealth. That is very important because it is

not about government creating wealth but about government creating opportunities so that the private sector can jump on board and do what needs to be done.

Things are pretty good in my electorate, I have to admit. Some of the sporting facilities there have become rundown, but from working with the local council I know that the community facilities at Charles Riley Reserve and a range of other places are all being upgraded. They are well and truly overdue. It is important to make sure we are reinvesting into those areas. People talk about giving back and ask how they can give back. We give back by doing things at that community level. I think that is very important. In my electorate the government has supported core activities at the grassroots level so that people can participate in sport and community activities and really feel connected. I am very positive about the next four years; I am very positive about our legislative agenda; and I am very positive about the new ministers.

Several members interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I think a lot of great opportunities will become available. It is important to give that support. I am sure that, as usual, the opposition will criticise all the good decisions, including the law and order decisions. It is their job to oppose everything.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Members, that is enough. You have had your fun. Let the member continue.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: From my perspective, we have done a great job over the last four and a half years and no doubt we will continue to do that. As a member of this side of the house I will make sure that we support the community and business and fight for this state's rights. I will continue to do that with my colleagues.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-Reply thus adopted.

FIREFIGHTERS — WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Motion

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [5.16 pm]: I move —

That this house urges the government to introduce without further delay workers' compensation laws that contain a rebuttable presumption that scheduled cancers diagnosed in firefighters were contracted as a result of their employment.

The history of this motion in this place goes back more than a year. In February 2012, I introduced a private member's bill entitled Workers' Compensation and Injury Management (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2012. I said at that time that I hoped the bill would receive bipartisan support. Unfortunately, that was not the case and the bill did not receive any support from members opposite. I think that is very important. As the member for Carine said, there are a lot of new members who might not be aware of the subject of this bill, so I will take a bit of time to explain what the intention of the bill was. Frankly, the inflexible stance that was taken last year was contrary to the evidence and the science. It is my fervent hope that the government has now seen the error of its ways and will pass legislation without further delay. In the meantime, since I introduced that bill I am aware of a couple of cases of firefighters who have died of cancer and whose loved ones did not have the benefit of workers' compensation payments because of the inadequacies of the existing laws.

The bill introduced last year was about the cumulative effect of the exposure of firefighters in their day-to-day duties—in some cases over many years—to a range of toxins and carcinogens. As I said in the second reading speech, it was narrow in scope but we believed that it would have made an enormous difference to firefighters contracting cancer through their years of occupational exposure to a conglomerate of carcinogens, hazardous materials and toxins. We considered that it was bad enough that a firefighter had to face the ultimate battle for life, but also he is burdened under the existing law with the knowledge that during his struggle with cancer, he is not entitled to workers' compensation payments and so his family faces the additional strain imposed by this financial hardship. The reason for the current law is that a worker must point to a particular source to prove what caused the cancer. In other words, firefighters must identify the carcinogen or toxins to which they were exposed and also when they were exposed to it. They must specify which fire, fires or emergency led to that exposure. Of course, practically, that is never possible. On the other hand, if a firefighter were killed or physically injured when attending a fire incident, he would receive compensation for work-related injuries. We believed that this very unfair anomaly needed to be remedied. As I said at the time the opposition introduced this bill, I was confident, which turned out to be ill-founded, that ultimately the bill would receive support from both sides of the chamber. As I said at the time, and I think it is no less true over a year later, we would all agree as parliamentarians that if we see a wrong we should seek to right it; if we see an injustice, we are duty bound to strive to right it. Unfortunately, that did not occur.

The federal Parliament passed similar legislation for ACT firefighters and for firefighters attached to airports, who come under commonwealth jurisdiction. Such legislation has also existed for a number of years in many overseas jurisdictions, principally, a number of states in the United States and provinces in Canada. The sky has certainly not fallen on anyone's head by having this legislation. On top of that, it needs to be said that we are probably talking about, at most, a handful of individuals each year who will be affected, and all we are talking about is their capacity to collect workers' compensation and their need to not make common law claims.

The opposition believes that legislation such as that which we are urging the government to pass acknowledges that WA firefighters, who are charged with protecting the community and property, have an inherently dangerous job and that these dangers are physical ones, not only through physical injury as such but also the imminent danger and damage caused by toxins and exposure to fumes, which is a day-to-day experience for firefighters. As I said, the legislation is about acknowledging existing inequities.

The other point that is very important to mention in this context is that it is not possible to take full precautions to eliminate the risk, because by the very nature of firefighting, firefighters have to wear personal protective equipment that is able to breathe to some extent, otherwise they get too hot. We have to acknowledge that.

There seems to be a rugby scrum over in the corner, Madam Acting Speaker!

We have to acknowledge that firefighters cannot totally protect themselves from exposure to toxins.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They are all follicly impaired!

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is a follicly impaired rugby scrum, according to the member for Midland!

The opposition is saying that as many precautions as can be taken are currently being taken, which acknowledges that there are no further precautions that can effectively protect firefighters from contracting cancer. We believe that this legislation is a must.

I also have to say that an extensive Senate inquiry was undertaken that led to the federal legislation. I commend members who are interested in this area to read the report of that Senate inquiry. There are some very moving accounts from firefighters and their loved ones on the practical implications of them not being able to claim workers' compensation; in fact, there were a couple of witnesses from Western Australia, and it is worth reading their moving accounts. I did read extensively from that report on the last occasion I spoke on this issue. I commend that evidence to members as it is worth reading.

The Workers' Compensation and Injury Management (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2012, which the opposition proposed, was quite simple. It would have inserted a separate part into the existing workers' compensation legislation. The bill had only five clauses. That provided a rebuttable presumption that specific cancers are occupational diseases for firefighters. Had that been enacted, it would have meant that the presumption existed that the cancers listed in the schedule to the act were occupational diseases for firefighters. Therefore, if it were a specific scheduled cancer and the relevant required years of service had been met, there would be entitlement to WorkCover. As I said earlier, this legislation did not create a new right; it did not, for example, create any new common law right. It was only designed to repair the inequity that existed.

At the time we moved that legislation, we were restricting our concentration to full-time firefighters, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the Department of Environment and Conservation and contracted firefighters with Transfield Services or at RAAF Base Pearce or HMAS *Stirling*. There were reasons for that; legislatively speaking, they were all defined as "workers" and it was a reasonably simple amendment to make to the existing legislation. However, there has been some discussion about including volunteers in the regime for any such legislation. I have to say that that contains some added complications, which I will talk about shortly.

In respect of the history of the debate, there was a conversion on the road to Damascus; on 31 October 2012, the Premier and the then minister, Troy Buswell, opened the new Fire and Emergency Services Authority headquarters in Cockburn, and a press release came out. Members will recall that in February 2012, the government's response was that there was no scientific evidence of a nexus between the exposure of firefighters to toxins and fumes, and the development of cancer; yet, in October, the government suddenly embraced the idea. Of course, I welcome that; I did not know I was that persuasive, but that was terrific. I do not know what happened in the intervening time, but I suspect it was a result of some quite significant and excellent lobbying by organisations such as the United Firefighters Union. In any event, by October the government had changed its tune. I will read in part from its press release of 31 October.

I will say that I have to make a complaint that will, hopefully, be conveyed to the people who put government media releases on the internet. When we print out government media releases these days, they print out in something like a size 6 font, which is very hard to read! In fact, I have had to print out this release on A3 paper so that I can actually read it! I am sure there is nothing sinister about this; I am sure it is not the case that we cannot read the press releases because they are padded out and do not contain anything, but for those of us in our

middle years or maybe a bit older it can be difficult! In my capacity as shadow spokesperson for seniors and ageing, I would appreciate it if press releases could be printed out in a size 12 font!

The press release states, in part —

Mr Buswell said the package would include:

- Consistent insurance coverage for all volunteers operating under the emergency services Acts

That goes back to Serpentine–Jarrahdale firefighter Pam Storey, who worked for a bush fire brigade that was covered by local government insurance arrangements that were unsatisfactory. Had she been a volunteer but working for a volunteer fire and rescue service, she would have been covered by RiskCover. Again, firefighters can be working side by side and have inconsistent insurance arrangements, so I certainly welcome that commitment, but that is not what we are dealing with today.

The minister also committed to compensation claims being simplified for career and volunteer firefighters who develop a prescribed cancer. I will go back to the volunteers element in a minute. Not only is the minister accepting what we said should be passed, but he is also broadening the legislation to include volunteers. Minister Buswell goes on in his press release to state —

“Our Government greatly values the support and commitment by both career firefighters and volunteers who perform a sometimes difficult and dangerous job protecting WA communities,”

...

Mr Buswell said the package would also amend legislation to ensure a career or volunteer firefighter who developed a prescribed cancer—one of 12 cancers as scheduled in the Commonwealth legislation—would have greatly simplified workers’ compensation considerations.

He then went on to say, which I find remarkable in view of the history of the matter —

“It has been established that firefighters are at an increased risk of developing certain cancers through exposure to carcinogens while performing lifesaving roles for the community.

This next bit is quite important when it comes to volunteers —

“This legislation will provide cover for career and volunteer firefighters who predominantly undertake structural firefighting duties, and retrospectively take into account their past years of service.”

Many volunteers in the regions are required to fight not only bushfires but also structural fires. The recordkeeping involved in keeping track of who has gone to jobs that involve structural firefighting duties and those who have not is very difficult, as is the issue of baseline medical testing, which volunteers are not exposed to at the same level as career firefighters. We are calling for legislation for the professional firefighters first. The government seems to have walked away from that. It is very simple legislation. It consists of five clauses, and it will effectively cover firefighters who work for both the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Environment and Conservation. Then let us see how we can logistically cover volunteers. It is a very, very difficult drafting exercise. Keeping track of the health outcomes of 30 000 volunteers is incredibly difficult. For example, in September last year I asked how many appliances DFES had and where they were located, and I am still waiting for an answer to that question. If the Department of Fire and Emergency Services cannot even keep track of its trucks and appliances, I do not know how it will have any sort of meaningful monitoring or program relating to volunteers. That is not to say that we oppose it, but technically the legislation will delay providing protection for professional firefighters. It will be a very messy piece of legislative drafting. We have to remember that fundamentally this is about workers’ compensation. We need to cover people who earn a wage and are workers in that sense. If the minister can convince me at some later stage how this can be achieved legislatively and what sort of figures would be around the 30 000 or so volunteers to be covered under the government’s commitment, I am happy to be convinced otherwise.

Following the announcement made in October by the then Minister for Emergency Services, we then had the election policy, which again contained a commitment to such legislation. In particular, at page 7 of the policy, it states —

A re-elected Liberal Government will introduce amendments to legislation which ensure a career or volunteer firefighter who developed one of 12 prescribed cancers recognised in similar Commonwealth Legislation would have a significantly simplified workers’ compensation consideration.

Again, there is the issue of how workers’ compensation can apply to volunteers. I do not want to nitpick or be negative, but it seems that there is a misunderstanding about how laws can operate. Then there are weasel words such as it will apply to volunteer firefighters “who predominantly undertake structural firefighting duties”. Again, there are qualitative and subjective words such as “predominantly”, which mean that the proposal as it stands is somewhat illusory. As I have said, I am happy to be convinced otherwise that this can work within the workers’ compensation scheme, but I am just not sure.

I think people on both sides of the chamber would acknowledge that the member for Vasse is a very astute political animal. He made this commitment on the basis that he included a group of 30 000-plus volunteers, and that, of course, would be electorally very much supported. He thought more about the venal political concerns than he did about the legislative scheme and the fact that this related to people being able to perform their paid jobs in a manner which is as much as possible free from hazard and which, if not free from hazard, would at least provide the protections of the workers' compensation system.

I am not being critical, but I think that members who were not here during last year's debate need to understand the conversion on the way to Damascus. The now minister, the member for Jandakot, was one of the few government members who spoke on the bill and was genuinely supportive. However, during the debate in this place on 8 August, he said —

The issue, however, that we now face with the member for Girrawheen's private member's bill is not that we do not absolutely agree with what she is trying to achieve. Under the federal act there is a general presumption that when a worker suffers from an asbestos disease—I use the parallel to cancers and exposure to toxics caused by fire—and his or her employment has involved exposure to the inhalation of asbestos fibres, the disease is deemed to be due to that employment. However, there is a clear medical basis for that special arrangement. Presumptive legislation for firefighters in the absence of clear and civil data—at the moment as we speak right now—specific to Australian conditions has far-reaching implications for the workers' compensation scheme. I note that as we are the guardians of taxpayers' money, we have to be aware of the consequences of our actions, no matter how well intended they are.

The other person who spoke on this bill and was genuinely supportive but had similar reservations was the member for Eyre. The member for Eyre was concerned that no studies had been done in Australia at the time. However, as I pointed out to the member for Eyre just this afternoon when we had a chat about this issue, in relation to the nexus between smoking and lung cancer, health authorities in Australia acted following overseas research. We did not feel the need then to do independent parochial studies on that nexus between lung cancer and smoking; we accepted the medical evidence that was available overseas. The evidence from overseas is substantial in the case of a nexus between firefighters' duties and cancer. A huge study was done of over 100 000 firefighters in, I think, Minneapolis, and recent articles of great stature in publications such as *The Lancet* also point to this nexus. A lot of work has also been done post September 11 in relation to the health outcomes of firefighters who were involved in the rescue missions at the World Trade Center. In fact, I know from speaking to firefighters who were at that site that all of the glass in those buildings was reduced to powder. On the whole of that site, there was virtually no glass left; it was just powder. So the amount of toxins and carcinogens that was ingested by those rescuers over a three-month period was substantial, and the number of fatalities on that day has been followed by a significant number of people suffering cancer and respiratory diseases, leading to further fatalities.

To conclude at this stage, the science is there. The duty to look after people who protect our community is there. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to right what is a significant anomaly in the existing laws. It is simply unfair and unjust that families of firefighters are in financial difficulty because of this legislative anomaly, and it needs to be righted without further delay.

The government's legislative program is not heavy, although the member for Carine seems to think that there is a large legislative agenda. It seems to me that the time is right and the opportunity is there within the legislative program to introduce this legislation.

I do, however, understand that if the government wants to progress at this stage with making provision for volunteers, that will create some difficulty in terms of the scope of the workers' compensation legislation. I would, therefore, be very interested to hear the minister's solution for how that will operate. We are not unresponsive of making provision for volunteers. We think that down the track there does need to be provision for volunteers.

But let us get this legislation in now, and let us protect the 1 000-plus firefighters in the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the fire managers and firefighters at the Department of Environment and Conservation. Let us get that in place, and we can then look at how we can implement a scheme for volunteers that is fair and practicable and will not cost too much.

With those words, I will leave it to my colleagues. We now have a new Minister for Emergency Services, the member for Jandakot. I know that he is a minister who is committed to this legislation. Last time we debated this legislation, the member for Jandakot was constrained by his obligation to comply with the direction of his colleagues not to vote for the bill. Now that he is the minister in charge of this area, I would hope that he no longer feels that he is operating under a constraint to vote against this legislation and that he will give us an indication of when we can expect the legislation to be introduced.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [5.43 pm]: I rise to add some comments in support of this motion. I would like to congratulate the member for Girrawheen for bringing this matter before the Parliament. As the member has outlined, this matter was brought before the previous Parliament, and we did have general support from those members on the other side who spoke on this legislation. Therefore I really did not understand, to tell members the truth, why they did not vote for this very important piece of legislation. As the member for Girrawheen has told us, when the Barnett opened the new station complex in Cockburn it announced that it was proposing, as part of its policy, legislation that would have the same purpose and effect as the legislation that was brought to this house by the member for Girrawheen.

I would like to make many comments, but I have been told that a number of members wish to speak on this motion, so I will keep my comments rather brief and just make some of the more pertinent comments that I wish to make. Workers' compensation is, of course, a vital and very important legislative and policy area that Parliaments and governments have to deal with, because, as we all know, the workplace is not always safe, but some workplaces are more harmful than others. In some occupations, it is not possible to make the workplace completely safe, and firefighting is one of those areas.

Workers' compensation is a system that we, as parliamentarians, have enacted due to community support for the principle that if a person is injured at the workplace, they should be compensated. The workers' compensation scheme is built on the fact that it does not matter whether the employer was at fault or was negligent; if a person injures themselves at the workplace, they will receive compensation, and that is the way it should be, because workers can have their lives destroyed—their families can also be destroyed—through no fault of their own. It may not even be a fault of the employer. That is why we have a workers' compensation scheme. That is why we have a statutory scheme that seeks to protect, or to provide compensation for, workers who are injured at the workplace. We also have another legislative policy framework, and that is occupational health and safety. Under that framework, employers are obligated to make the workplace as safe as possible. Unfortunately, every week in Western Australia, someone dies at the workplace. As the Premier has told us, the mining industry has a very unsafe work environment, and deaths occur on mining sites basically on a weekly basis.

As the member for Girrawheen mentioned, firefighters work in an environment that is impossible to make completely risk averse to health problems or health consequences. I have a nephew who is a fireman. The stories that he tells me about what he has to endure on a daily basis would, I am sure, persuade members on the other side, if they are not already persuaded, that they should support the legislation.

Firefighters have a special status in our community. I have been a member of this house for just over two years, and in that time we have had many debates as a result of fires. As we all know, there were the hills fires, which were adjacent to my electorate, in Roleystone, or the Kelmscott hills. There have been fires in the Margaret River area, and there have been fires in Toodyay. Fires are something that we live with. But firefighters do not deal just with fires; they also attend car accidents. They attend house fires from which they have to remove dead bodies, often infants. So, the mental stress that a firefighter has to endure is significant. As the member for Girrawheen has told us, because of the fumes that firefighters have to endure in their workplace, there are cases of cancer, or work-related cancer consequences, as a result of being a firefighter. Surely, as a Parliament, if we consider ourselves to be a decent body of people, if we are part of a civil society, and if the Liberal Party wants to be true to its liberal philosophy and, some would say, its egalitarian principles—although that would be debated under some political theories, but there are some strains of classical liberalism that refer to equality and egalitarianism and that Parliaments or governments will enact legislation when it is absolutely necessary—there is no doubt that the Liberal Party will support the bill that was brought to this house by the member for Girrawheen.

I will read out a poem about firefighters. It is incredibly important that all members of this house, particularly members on the other side who voted against legislation when it came before the house in the last Parliament, really sit back and reflect that if they do not support this motion, they are saying to our firefighters that it does not matter whether they become sick or die as a result of work-related disease. Surely that cannot be true. I will read this poem —

I AM YOUR FIREFIGHTER

I spend 1/3 of my life away from my family, so I can protect you and your family.

I love you, even though I have never met you.

I would gladly die to save your life, or the lives of your neighbors.

I gladly risk injury to protect your property.

I love my life. I chose this life above anything else in the world.

I am your firefighter. When something terrible happens in your life, you can always call me.

I am waiting for that call. It is what I live for.

I will come flying to your home or business to assist you in any way I can.

My food can wait to be eaten.
 The training class I am taking can be paused, because you called.
 I am your firefighter. I hurt. I cry. I laugh. I am human.
 I learn to cope with neglect from you.
 I have so many things to offer, but somehow I get lost in the political shuffle.
 I work, and think, and try to come up with ways to make your community better, safer.
 I put all those things aside the minute the Alarm rings, and you need me.
 I am your firefighter. The call comes in... “There’s smoke in my bedroom”
 I am on the way. Only 3 of us on this fire truck, but we’ll do our best.
 Blackness is all you see, choking, blinding, smoky, blackness.
 A hand is touching you. It is rough and bulky, covered in a glove.
 I hand you to my partner, then search on for someone else.
 I am your firefighter. Sunlight breaks on your face as you leave the burning structure.
 Safe. Safe. Safe. Breathe the clean air. Breathe
 You hear a loud mechanical wailing coming from the building.
 The one who brought you out, yells, “If we only had more men” and rushes back in.
 Now he is dragging another who looks like him out the door.
 I am that firefighter. You watch as the fire truck drives slowly by.
 The wailing siren breaks the quiet morning.
 The slow parade of firefighters marches past you.
 The flag above you waves softly in the breeze, but halfway down.
 The flag over me is still. For you see ...
 I was your firefighter. Don’t cry for me. Cry for my wife.
 Don’t pray for me. Pray for my brother firefighters who need the strength.
 Don’t let my life be in vain. Do all you can to help my Fire Department.
 Don’t say “What a tragedy”, Thank God another life was saved.
 You see, I chose this life. It is all I have ever wanted.
 I am A Firefighter!

I conclude by urging all members on the other side to read the speech that the member for Girrawheen made in February 2012—which can be found in *Hansard*—when she brought a bill before the house. That gives an eloquent and comprehensive analysis of why the member for Girrawheen was motivated to bring this matter before the house and why we all must support this motion today.

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean) [5.53 pm]: I rise to support this motion. I begin by commending the United Firefighters Union of WA for bringing this issue to public attention. We hear a lot of people say that they really appreciate the work firefighters do, they are a very important part of the community and they should be rewarded well for what they do. The fact is that without the advocacy that the United Firefighters Union provides for this group of workers, their conditions would not be anything like they are today. So, logically, if people really love their firefighters, they really should share some of that love around for their union. The fact is that without the advocacy of that union, firefighters would not be in the position they are today, and this particular issue—this change to the workers’ compensation act we are seeking—would not be where it is today. It is fashionable in this place to take a pot shot at various unions, so I just wanted to remind members that if they like police officers, nurses and firefighters, they really should share some of that love with the unions that represent them because they are the ones who, in reality, bring these issues to the attention of the public and get the changes made to support these very important workers.

As most in the chamber will know, for many years prior to coming to this place my previous experience was in the trade union movement. That involvement taught me a little about workers’ compensation. At United Voice we provided a workers’ compensation service for our members, so that members of our unions did not have to seek to have their workers’ compensation claim progressed by one of the private law firms out there that are very willing and eager to progress someone’s workers’ compensation claim for a fee; they could come and have their workers’ compensation claim progressed through their union at virtually no cost. Because of that, I have seen hundreds of workers from a variety of industries come through our office and have their workplace injury dealt with. Having seen that, the workers’ compensation system is a good one, but it is also at times incredibly stressful for the injured worker. We all think we are bulletproof; we all think we are going to go to work and do

our job—in the case of workers like firefighters, act courageously—and then come home and spend time with our family. Sadly, when we get injured it comes as a bit of a shock, and all of a sudden we are thrown into the workers' compensation system, which most workers do not understand, and we very soon realise that it is quite a stressful system.

One of the points of stress in that system is being able to prove that the workplace injury or disease is a result of the occupation. It is not just taken for granted that if somebody contracts some disease or injures themselves that they are then covered by the workers' compensation system. They have to show that the disease or injury is directly attributable to their occupation. In the case of firefighters, it had been long suspected that many of the cancers that their members attracted were the result of them being firefighters. But it is incredibly difficult for them to prove that their cancers are directly related to their occupation in that when they attend a fire they breathe in a lot of toxins over a long period, which then makes them more susceptible to certain types of cancers. So, they get a terrible thing like a cancer and suspect it is as a result of them being firefighters, but under the current legislation it is incredibly difficult to prove. So, they are grappling with this life-threatening illness, and the workers' compensation system as it currently stands is not there for them. The idea of amending the workers' compensation legislation, not for the general population but specifically for firefighters, is so that if they contract certain types of cancers, the legislation will provide a presumption that it is because of their occupation, which would take away a lot of stress for firefighters. They would then not be in the position of having to prove the cancer was caused by their occupation. In fact, it would be the reverse; it would be for others to prove that their cancer was not as a result of their occupation in order to deny them access to the workers' compensation system.

This is a reform that the union, on behalf of its members, sees as a practical way of addressing this issue. It is a reform that is now not just a whim or an idea; it is a reform that is now backed up by science. There is now a scientific body of work that demonstrates that a number of cancers can be directly attributed to the work that firefighters do. The science is there. It really now is incumbent upon us as a Parliament to make this reform a reality. In the last Parliament, Labor introduced a private member's bill. The member for Girrawheen introduced that bill to put that reform in place. I have read her speech. She was very optimistic that the private member's bill would achieve bipartisan support because, given that the science is there, given that there are other precedents in the United States, Canada and federally here, it just seemed as though it should be done. I know that she was greatly disappointed, as were the firefighters, that the members of the Liberal Party and the National Party could not bring themselves to vote for this legislation. We hope that by raising this issue again through this motion, this Parliament will do the job. We are particularly hopeful because prior to the election the Liberal Party put out a policy statement stating that it would support such legislation. I do not know what caused the change, but the very good advocacy of the United Firefighters Union is probably the reason, again, that there seems to have been a change of heart by the government.

Through this motion we are saying that the science is there, the UFU says it is time to do this and it is an adequate response, and the Liberal Party made an election commitment to do this. Let us bring it on without delay. A lot of things get promised during an election campaign and they never see the light of day. We do not want to see this commitment or this reform being one of those broken election commitments.

As the member for Girrawheen pointed out, it is true that the commitment given by the Liberal Party during the election campaign had some qualifications in it, and it had some complications in that it extended to not only professional firefighters but also volunteers. We hope that the qualifications that were given in the policy and the commitment to extend it to volunteers do not result in this reform for professional firefighters being delayed. We are not opposed to giving additional benefits or protections to volunteer firefighters—not at all. But we do not want to see the complexities that that might throw up leading to the much-needed changes for professional firefighters not being introduced. We know that the new minister, who seemed to be supportive prior to the election, has had a lot on his plate since he took over. I have watched him battle through those issues in the chamber and he is to be congratulated for the enthusiasm with which he has dealt with the corrective services portfolio. I do not want to see him sidelined from this very important reform that the firefighters want, that the science compels him to do and that the Liberal Party platform commits him to do. There should be no delay. The legislative change to amend the workers' compensation act is really quite simple. The member for Girrawheen gave it to the minister on a plate in the last Parliament. It is now just a case of getting on and doing it. We urge the government to do it and we urge members tonight to support this motion.

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [6.05 pm]: I feel compelled to speak on the Address-in-Reply motion. I just want to tell some stories of mine. I will start with a conversation I had with the member for Alfred Cove over lunch. We got talking about 9/11, of which everyone in the chamber would be deeply aware. We all know where we were and what we were doing when this terrible terrorism attack occurred in the United States. I certainly know where I was. I had the privilege of visiting the World Trade Center approximately 12 months before that attack and I think having that firsthand knowledge of the site itself gave in-depth knowledge about the other infrastructure that abounded at that location, including not just the structures above the ground, but also the structures under the ground with the commercial aspect, the subway lines, the plaza and the other buildings.

The thing that struck me when I visited that site was the number of people visiting that location at any one time. Of course when I watched in horror as planes flew into the buildings, it was the images of the brave emergency service men and women, in particular the firefighters of New York City, that were strewn across televisions near and far—the brave deeds they undertook on behalf of the citizens of New York City, not just at the time of the disaster, but also in the ensuing weeks and months.

Closer to home, I have a dear friend I have known for many years who is a career firefighter. In actual fact he is based at Armadale and the last time I saw him was towards the end of the last school year when I was a deputy principal in the Armadale area. I got a phone call from the front desk saying a bunch of firefighters were there asking to speak to a member of administration. I thought: Is the school on fire? I was not quite sure. They came through the office and there was my friend. There was a bit of a reunion and he very quickly got down to business and said that all pleasantries aside, they were there to review our fire response procedures and they then very diligently went about doing that. I had watched my friend many years prior as he pursued the course of joining the firefighters as a career firefighter with much dedication and perseverance. There were many hours of fitness training and there were many hours of reviewing for the academic side of the testing that was to come, and he did so with great determination. He is a man with a young family, two young daughters and a lovely wife, and I would hate to think that in the pursuit of his job, a job that serves the community at large, that in performing those duties, he would in some way, shape or form be at harm or in harm's way or have his health affected because he has to perform those duties on behalf of our community. I would like to think that the state would have his back. The dangers I talk about are of course exposure to things like bushfires, house fires, factory fires, chemical spills and fires, serious car accidents and other community services that our firefighters offer the community. I guess it is one of those things that no-one really thinks about until they need them.

I refer to a personal experience. I remember a Sunday in February fairly recently when I was sitting watching the cricket on the sofa, which is a rare moment, but one I try to enjoy when I can. This one-day match was in Perth and from memory the commentators were Michael Slater and Mark Taylor—do not quote me on that. I think it was Michael Slater who started saying in his commentary that reports were coming through of houses burning down in Roleystone. For those members who do not know, my parents live in Roleystone, so of course I sat up and took notice. As the reports continued to filter through, the number of houses grew and grew, so I was quickly on the phone to my parents and spoke to my mother who was in a slightly panicked state, as members can imagine, and I asked whether there was any way I could assist. I was still able to gain access to their property, which I did, and pursuant to that my parents were evacuated from their house and we ended up with several people staying at our house for several days. But they are the things we do.

Can I get back to the firefighters, who are the subject of my point, and who perform their duties with distinction? Testament to that is that not one life was lost during those fires. They were fires that saw 70-plus houses destroyed. I saw firsthand their dedication to their cause, their dedication to the community and the way they went about performing those tasks without fear or favour. Indeed, as recently as 3 May there was a fire in my own electorate of Forrestfield in a house where nine people were saved, including a baby. Who was there to do the saving? It was none other than our lionhearted firefighting men and women—men and women who put themselves, as I have said, in harm's way in the pursuit of the conservation of our peace and safety? In August last year—I have a picture of this moment, which I am happy to lay upon the table, that depicts me, the Premier and one of our upper house colleagues, Hon Alyssa Hayden—we had the pleasure of meeting the seventy-second graduating class from the firefighting academy, which happens to be based in my electorate. It was a rare moment of getting to speak to these people who are very dedicated and passionate about what they do. They are an outstanding group of people, who are fit, strong and dedicated individuals. When we were mingling with them at one end of the group, I asked a general question of seven or eight of them about whether they ever consider the danger they put themselves in when they charge into a house fire or a bushfire. Their response was unanimous and succinct. They turned to me and said, "Nathan, we have the training and we have a job to do." I certainly felt far more secure knowing we have highly trained individuals out there potentially putting themselves in harm's way for the security of our community.

Mr J. Norberger: Selfless.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Absolutely. Thank you, member for Joondalup.

Their training is extensive and exhaustive, including much fitness, medical and academic testing and, of course, job-specific training so that they are best placed to ably assist and support our community.

As I alluded to, I am very proud that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services firefighting training academy is located within my electorate of Forrestfield. Indeed, as we speak, the recruitment process is underway to find the next batch of outstanding young men and women who will take up the cause as firefighters within the state of Western Australia. I know that at 547 Dundas Road in Forrestfield, some outstanding young people will be aspiring to that cause.

I want to finish with one final personal story. This person was a friend of my parents. As teenagers, as is often the way when trying to get a part-time job, we use our network, be it very limited, to try to obtain some part-time work. This was one of those moments. This particular day, the person in question came to our house in Roleystone to pick me up and take me to the place of employment, which was in East Perth. It was not a short drive for a rather introverted teenager. There are two things from that journey that spring to mind that have stuck with me. The first is the awkward silences that occurred due to my being a teenager who did not quite know what to say or where to look. I will get to the other one in a second. This man was a Vietnam veteran who had seen active service in Vietnam. Suddenly we were conversing when he started talking about the firepower they used and the things they used to do. By the time we arrived he said, “When I left the army and got back to Perth I joined the volunteer firefighters, and I had to fight a fire.” Remember, this is a man who saw combat action in Vietnam. He said, “Nathan, of all the things I have done, the scariest thing I have done is fight a fire.”

I finish by commending the government for pursuing this legislation.

MR S.K. L’ESTRANGE (Churchlands) [6.15 pm]: I would like to contribute to the debate on workers’ compensation for firefighters. It has been heartening to hear such effective words spoken in this house about the support we are trying to achieve for our firefighters and their families. I have a personal history of service in the Defence Force and so I understand the motivation behind young men and women who do something that could be dangerous in the service of their community or country. I have also been a consultant for the resources sector. One of the consulting roles that I played for a time, with a large resources sector company, was in business resilience and recovery program planning. A key component of that is emergency response planning and the involvement of what is called the emergency response team. The emergency response team performs very similar duties to that which a firefighting team performs. I got to know those guys pretty well. They worked in remote areas in the north west, particularly in the Pilbara.

Emergency response teams and firefighters have to operate in very difficult conditions. They must operate in confined spaces; at heights; sometimes over water carrying heavy equipment, putting them at risk of drowning; they have to deal with grass fires; structural fires; vehicle crashes and vehicle fires; and hazardous materials, including chemicals and toxic fumes. Our firefighters and people working in emergency response teams face some obvious dangers. It is obvious that when someone confronts a burning building, they could be burnt or the building structure could collapse and crush them. There are very obvious and clear dangers. However, some of the dangers are not so obvious. Some of the dangers may come to the firefighter immediately without them knowing. For example, a firefighter might inhale very dangerous fumes and pass out. In that process, they might quickly understand that they are facing a very grave danger, or the danger could be subtle and occur in a small amount over a short time when attending an event, or it could occur over five or 10 years due to multiple exposures to a toxin or contaminated hazardous materials, and that very real danger may result in a cancerous disease. It is the not-so-obvious dangers that the firefighters sometimes do not think as much about that we, as policymakers, should think about and give serious thought to when looking after our firefighters.

I draw members’ attention to the notion of rebuttable presumption. I found a definition of “rebuttable presumption” that I will share with members. It is an assumption that is taken to be true unless someone comes forward to contest it and prove otherwise. That definition of “rebuttable presumption” would be very reassuring for firefighters because it means that if they contract one of the scheduled cancerous diseases as a direct result of their service as a firefighter, they can be looked after because they do not have to prove that the cause of the cancer was a particular event or series of events during their service; rather, the onus of proof is on another party to prove that it was not caused by that. I think that can provide firefighters with some assurance—God forbid that they do not get any of these diseases; but if they were to get one, there will be some sense of security that we will support them.

My understanding of the Liberal–National government’s intent is that it is looking to introduce amendments to legislation which will ensure that a firefighter who develops one of the prescribed cancers recognised in similar commonwealth legislation will have a significantly simplified workers’ compensation consideration. That is important. I related this to a former firefighter. I interviewed this former firefighter recently, a fellow called Paul Lawrence, who served from 1994 to 2009. I tried to get a sense from him of, first, what drove him to become a firefighter; and, second, what were some of the dangers he faced and that he often reflected on as a former firefighter. Before he was a firefighter, it is interesting to note that he was a Royal Australian Infantry soldier serving in the 2nd/4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. He went on from his army service to become a firefighter. I had a chat to him about this. What came out of our chat was some commonality of what drives people to serve in industries that are predominantly dangerous. Duty was one of the things that came to mind, as was a service ethos; the challenge and excitement of the job; courage; teamwork; and mateship and camaraderie. But, more than anything, what really came to the fore when push came to shove, and when danger was imminent, was this need to help others and to put self second. Taking on danger as a part of the job and not letting your mates down was a key aspect of both his careers, as a soldier and then as a firefighter. I think a lot of young men and women do this; in fact, more often than not, it is the younger men and women in our society who

think they are invincible. They think they can take on risks and do really dangerous and challenging jobs, because whatever went wrong or whatever happened that hurt somebody else will not happen to them. Like a lot of people my age, I tend to think this is pretty foolish and foolhardy, but the young people who take on these dangerous jobs, working as police and firefighters or in the defence forces and emergency services, take on these jobs for the reasons I explained earlier: duty, service ethos, challenge, courage, teamwork, mateship and camaraderie; and most of all to not let your mates down and to help others. Saving lives can make ordinary people extraordinary or make them do extraordinary things. In trying to understand how young people think, I realised that a lot of young people, whom I had come across in Afghanistan through my time in the Army and whom I met after returning from Iraq and from Afghanistan, had openly said to me while I was over there with them, “Gee, I can’t wait, boss, to get back out there and get stuck into it. It was really exciting the other day.” I think to myself: What is it that drives these young people to want to put themselves in danger? Do you know what? Sometimes it can just be youthful exuberance backed up with a genuine desire to support their mates and to show that they are the best they can be in their chosen profession. That is admirable.

The fellow I interviewed, Paul Lawrence, the former firefighter, worked in stations such as Perth, Maddington, Claremont and Kwinana, plus he spent one to six months in relieving duties throughout his career in all stations across Western Australia, both in rural areas and metropolitan Perth. He said to me that on any given day when his station was called to an emergency, he faced any or all of the possible dangers that I mentioned when I first stood to speak tonight. I will say again: those dangers could involve entering confined spaces that contain toxic fumes or water, or that could be about to collapse. They could also include working at heights; working over water with heavy equipment; trying to put out grass or structural fires; trying to put out vehicle fires; trying to save people from vehicle accidents or people who have been crushed in vehicles; and, of course, dealing with hazardous materials such as chemical spills. In addition to this, he faced the awful but necessary task of body retrieval, and he mentioned some of the incidents in which he had to do this, be it a person who had been killed by a train, a person who had been burnt in a building, or a person who had been killed in a car crash. It highlighted for me just how stressful the job of being a young firefighter, man or woman, could be, given that on any particular day those are the types of dangers that they face. Suffice it to say that it is clearly a stressful job.

Paul Lawrence, the fellow I interviewed, has thousands of examples of dangerous encounters in the line of duty. One particular example that he recalled was a fire that took place in the dementia wing of an aged-care facility. Paul and his colleague—his mate—went in and did multiple rescues of people who were bedridden and suffered from dementia. In addition to saving a number of lives, they also unfortunately recovered two deceased people. The dangers that they faced there were fire, falling structures and toxic gases and fumes, and it is those toxic gases and fumes that we readily relate to the issue we are talking about today in this place. Even though Paul and his colleagues wore breathing apparatus, because of the nature of the work they were doing, they had to take their breathing apparatus off to replace new oxygen tanks and so on. Whilst this was happening outside the burning building, the fumes, as one would expect, were in the air around them.

As members can imagine, this exposes firefighters to air that may contain carcinogens. Paul does not have cancer; he has not contracted cancer, and I hope he never does. However, he did reflect on some of his colleagues—one who he said was very young and who contracted cancer—and he also mentioned a couple of others. He said that it seemed unusual for these extremely fit young people in his industry to contract cancer.

So what do we do about this? What we as policymakers should always do is ensure that we provide our brave firefighters with the best equipment, procedures, training and leadership they can possibly have so that, although we acknowledge that it is part of their job to do dangerous things, we can ensure that they are best equipped, best trained and best led so that when they do those dangerous things, minimal harm will come to them. However, sometimes that harm may be unavoidable.

What we have been talking about today is to support them when, with all of the above in mind, they risk their lives to save the lives of others but, through no fault of their own, they may expose themselves to carcinogenic substances. Implementing policies that are just and right is a noble cause, and we need to make sure that we get this policy right.

I bring members back to the notion of rebuttable presumption. If firefighters, in the course of their duty, are at a later date found to have contracted a scheduled cancer, an assumption is taken that the cancer was caused by their service, unless proved otherwise. Therefore, compensation would need to be made available to support the firefighter or the ex-firefighter who is ill and therefore also supporting their family. This is noble. We need to get this legislation right.

We must ensure that the policy is robust, that we thrash out any secondary and tertiary consequences and that it is right for our firefighters so that they are looked after, not only while they are serving as a firefighter, but also long after they have ceased being a firefighter.

MR M.H. TAYLOR (Bateman) [6.30 pm]: I rise this evening in support of local firefighters and firefighters across the state. The electorate of Bateman is blessed to have a very good fire station, the Murdoch Fire Station, which was opened on 21 September 2005. There are four platoons, or shifts as they call them, with eight to 13 firefighters on each shift, with a total of 52 firefighters. They range in service from a few years to over 25 years. They say that they are called out to two to three incidents per shift. In summer that is most commonly bushfires and at other times it is traffic incidents, structural fires, chemical fires, suicides and special services.

Upon reading this motion yesterday, I made an effort to visit this fire station just before lunch today; in fact, it was the reason I was late to the chamber today. I thought it was important to talk to the local firefighters in my electorate and hear from them firsthand how they are being influenced and the stories that they have relating to this motion. I start by saying what an impressive group of people they are. I got to meet with 10 firefighters today. There was one lady and nine gentlemen ranging in age and service from a couple of years right through to about 25 years. When I asked them whether they knew of colleagues who had been diagnosed with cancer, they rattled off an amazing number of names straightaway. They instantly knew of many colleagues who had been affected by cancer. One lady, Kim, had been a firefighter for 10 years. Five years into her service, she contracted cancer. She battled that cancer and overcame it, eventually going into remission. It later returned. She is now overseas trying to get treatment subsequent to the treatment that she received previously. The impact that this has had on her family is massive. It is life changing not just to her but to her family. It was really quite heartening to hear her colleagues talking about her story and the support that they had for her, including holding a football match to help raise some money.

They also mentioned a fellow named Gavin, who they said was incredibly fit. He was a non-smoker and a non-drinker, yet he contracted lung cancer. As a result of contracting lung cancer, he left his job in the service. This is not an uncommon situation according to these firefighters. Their attitude was quite incredible, despite knowing that there are so many examples of colleagues who have cancer and who are fighting danger. Even though they know that they are not totally protected when they do their job, they still accept the risks of their job. Their dedication to service is just outstanding. It is quite amazing and unlike most situations that we would be aware of. They think about and talk about the health risks after every job and sometimes during the job. They will have a pre-job discussion about what is ahead, although a lot of the time it is uncertain. They are aware of and talk about the risks of their job essentially all day, every day when the conversations are mapped together.

They commented on safety equipment. They commented on suggestions to reduce the health risks to each other. They even gave examples of when they were in a truck driving back from a job and one commented that the safety gear of somebody smelt of toxins or a pollutant that warranted it being removed from the cab of the truck. They live with these risks every single day and they talk about it every single day, yet, despite that, they are super-keen about their job. When I asked them whether they would have started this career path if they had known about these unforeseen risks and the uncertainty associated with the impacts of the risks, every one of them said yes. It was quite extraordinary.

It is not just the firefighters who are affected by these complications and diagnoses; it is also their families. This does not affect just firefighters; it affects the wives, the husbands, the children and the parents. It affects everyone. The flow-on consequence of that throughout our community is big.

They talked about headaches from fighting bushfires, but not due to dehydration. They said that they are full of fluid, yet they still get a headache at night from fighting a bushfire, presumably as a result of the unforeseen gases. They talked about coughing up substances in the shower after a job. Safety has improved to the point now at which they take showers after each job to try to remove pollutants from their skin and to be as clean as they can after fighting a fire. They will regularly cough up and remove from their sinuses particles from the fire that they have just fought. Chemical exposure is not just through the eyes, the nose and the mouth; it is also through the skin, especially parts of the neck, the skin on which they say becomes quite thin from rubbing against their safety gear throughout their career.

The fear of contracting work-related illnesses is a genuine concern. They know that an abnormally large proportion of people get sick. John, for example, has worked for over 20 years in the fire service and he would have no idea what he has been exposed to over those years—a multitude of chemicals, not just in volume but in duration and type. We all know that the level of these chemicals is unable to be tested. When somebody enters a fire, they do not know what range or level of chemicals they will be exposed to or exactly how long they will be exposed to them. It is not like a workplace where there is a known hazard and there are systems in place to deal with it. There might be appropriate breathing apparatus if there is a known gas, or there might be safety clothing that will protect people from a certain chemical in a manufacturing industry or a heavy industry. In these situations, the chemicals are monitored and people are aware of their exposures and they are managed. Firefighters go into fires often not knowing exactly what is in the air. They do not know what chemicals they might be exposed to, the duration they will be exposed to the chemicals or the effect that the chemicals will have on them.

They know that safety is improving, but so, too, is the complexity of the fires that they fight. One of the conversations we had was about a firefighter who remembers in the old days going in to fight a fire wearing essentially black cotton pants and a woollen jumper. He said that he feels a little spoilt with the new gear and protection. He is grateful for the improvements, but he realises that the risks have increased at a rate that is at least equal to the improvement in the quality of the safety gear.

It is not just the risks. There is also the stress of fighting a fire. One of my good friends, Paul, is a fireman and in fact sometimes works at Murdoch Fire Station. I remember from talking to Paul that he said that after the first fire that he fought, he required some counselling, just because of the mental stress that is put on people who fight fires. Therefore, on top of the chemical risk, there are the psychological stresses that are placed on firefighters.

That is why we need to support firefighters by taking the onus away from them in the event that there is a diagnosis of a known cancer from that field. I do not think we should require firefighters to prove that their cancer is related to a specific fire or to their work function. We should respect the role that they play in our society and admire their acceptance of the risks that they face daily in what they do. We should be assisting them by not requiring them to fight potential litigation. Their whole focus should be on dealing with the cancer, seeking treatment, comforting family, and recovery. For that reason, I am fully supportive of the Liberal campaign commitment to support firefighters by removing the onus from them.

Dr A.D. Buti: We brought the motion in! Support us! Say that we have done a good job!

Mr M.H. TAYLOR: It is also a Liberal campaign commitment that I am fully supportive of.

Dr A.D. Buti: We are the ones who brought it to Parliament!

Mr M.H. TAYLOR: The member is not disagreeing with what I said.

Dr A.D. Buti: Give credit where credit is due!

Mr M.H. TAYLOR: I am. I am giving credit to the Liberal Party for its campaign commitment to ensure that we remove the onus from firefighters.

Dr A.D. Buti: Amazing! Just amazing! Unbelievable!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Thank you, members!

Mr M.H. TAYLOR: I think the focus should be on treatment. We should respect and appreciate the amazing attitude of firefighters, despite the high risks and the uncertainty that they work under, and the Aussie spirit with which they tackle their jobs on a daily basis.

MR P.T. MILES (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.40 pm]: As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Commerce, I want to make some brief comments. WorkCover is the agency that will be amending the WorkCover legislation to accommodate this process that we are talking about tonight. I want to acknowledge all the members who have spoken on this motion tonight. I also want to acknowledge the fact that the member for Girrawheen did bring on this legislation in February 2012. The previous Minister for Commerce, Hon Troy Buswell, and the Premier have acknowledged that, to the extent that in October last year this government gave a commitment, as the member for Girrawheen stated earlier tonight, we would bring on this legislation as soon as practicable after the state election on 9 March. Of course we are dealing with that. The Minister for Commerce, Hon Michael Mischin, is dealing with that legislation right now, and it is going through a couple of drafts.

I do not think anybody in this house would say no to our courageous firefighters. This is legislation that every member will need to look at seriously when it comes before the house in the next few weeks or so. I think this legislation should pass through this house quite effectively and efficiently, and I would hope and trust that there is no sort of stunt behaviour whereby every member wants to talk for 30 minutes on the bill, because that will hold it up. But I do not think the member for Girrawheen will do anything like that.

I also want to acknowledge that every member who has spoken on this motion has spoken true words and has done very well. Presumptive legislation is something that the government is very, very committed to, and we will be bringing it to the house as soon as is practicable.

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Emergency Services) [6.43 pm]: Member for Girrawheen, I suspect that we are all in furious agreement on the necessity for this piece of legislation and in understanding the urgency of it. We obviously agree on the principle of giving firefighters the benefit of the doubt—firefighters who risk their lives on a daily basis so that if our house is burning and our family is in danger and we call 000, they come. They come in big red trucks; they come in white trucks; they come in all kinds of devices, and they put their lives on the line to protect our assets, our lives and our families.

What we are basically agreeing on is the principle that if they contract or develop a cancer due to exposure at their workplace, as I said, we will have their backs and give them the benefit of the doubt. We have to keep in mind that unlike in a lot of other workforces and workplaces, but a lot like the police and the military, people who choose to become firefighters and people who are selected to undertake firefighter training are generally

younger and generally much fitter, which is why the workplace injury statistics for firefighters in the first five years of their career seem to be very low, even though the dangers are very high. These people run up ladders with hoses over their back, they lift heavy things, and they walk through burning buildings. They are exposed to heat, to carnage and, unfortunately, also to death. So, we have to be very aware of the risks they take, and if they are contracting and developing certain cancers at a faster rate than the rest of the population, we have to give them the benefit of the doubt that it is essentially a workplace-related injury. When people do develop a cancer, the last thing they need to do is fight a protracted legal battle to prove that it was a workplace-related injury. Of course, we support this motion wholeheartedly.

The government made a commitment to introduce presumptive legislation for firefighters, and we are doing that. We will do that as soon as possible, as quickly as possible, and I expect that members will see the results of that in the very, very near future. So, let me assure the house that, as the Minister for Emergency Services, I am very committed to that, and also the Minister for Commerce and the government as a whole are committed to undertaking that task.

For the information of the member for Girrawheen, obviously, as the member highlighted in her opening speech, there will have to be two tranches of this legislation. Permanent firefighters are obviously covered by workplace injury rules that are different from those covering volunteers. The intention is, of course, to look after the career firefighters first, and then the volunteers and their injuries—not only the development of cancers, but also injuries generally—in a second round of legislation. That is not to say that we in any way accept that they are less important. Of course, they are just as important because, as a volunteer firefighter still myself, I know that they will still go out there and do the job.

Ms M.M. Quirk: It's a drafting technicality, basically.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Essentially, one is a much more difficult job, and we do not want to delay the process for career firefighters because of the drafting requirements of essentially a far more complicated issue.

I also note my appreciation of, friendship with and support for Kevin Jolly and Steve Matthews from the United Firefighters Union. They have provided me frank and fearless advice on this and a number of different issues. I enjoy their company, and I think it is worth noting, as other members have noted, the contribution that the UFU has made to bringing this issue to the attention of governments all around the country. In fact, interestingly, last Tuesday, I believe, similar legislation was introduced into the Tasmanian Parliament. I am not sure whether the member for Girrawheen has seen that, but it is worth having a look at how the Tasmanian Parliament is approaching this issue as well. Nationally, the UFU has highlighted this issue in a number of jurisdictions, and obviously they are moving to address it as quickly as possible, as we are in Western Australia.

Having said all that, as we are in furious agreement, I would like to move an amendment to the member for Girrawheen's motion.

Amendment to Motion

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I move —

To insert after “employment” —

, and notes that the Ministers for Commerce and Emergency Services are expediting the process

That is simply acknowledgement that we agree on this, we are working on it and we are trying to get it done as quickly as possible.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [6.49 pm]: I rise to say a few brief words in support of the motion. It certainly gives me great pleasure, as a former Minister for Police and Emergency Services for a five-year period, to support the member for Girrawheen's motion. I also acknowledge the amendment moved by the Minister for Emergency Services and signal that the opposition will support his amendment. Hopefully, that will be the basis for the government supporting the member for Girrawheen's motion, with the minister's amendment incorporated.

Some very fine words have been said tonight, most of which I wholeheartedly agree with. As has been noted, it is a year since the member for Girrawheen introduced a bill into this house that could have done the job. The government said that it would look at this legislation and that it was important to get it right. I agree—it is important to get it right, but I fail to see why it should take longer than a year. It is a fine truism that justice delayed is justice denied. Further delay on this legislation will deny firefighters the protection that they need and that they need now. I note that the minister's amendment states that he and the Minister for Commerce are expediting this legislation. I certainly hope so. I note that another member said that they hoped that once the legislation came to the house, perhaps it could take a long time or it could be progressed quickly. I signal here and now on behalf of the opposition that we would give this legislation priority and we would deal with it quickly. I see no reason this could not be law by the middle of this year. If the minister brings the legislation to

the house, we are prepared to see that legislation get the highest priority. We will speak briefly and concisely on it in order to pass it through this house and send it to the other house so that it can become law and firefighters can have the protection that they deserve. We need more than words. It is fine to stand here tonight and talk the talk, but the time has come to walk the walk and give firefighters the protection that they deserve, and to give it to them now.

Minister, we await that legislation and we await the opportunity to universally support that legislation and make it law as soon as possible. I see no reason why, come the middle of this year, firefighters should still be waiting for the justice that they so richly deserve.

Amendment put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.53 pm
