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Thursday, 8 September 2016

Legislative Assembly

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THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland) took the chair at 9.00 am, and read prayers.

RIVA ESTATE — PIARA WATERS — HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINE

Grievance

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [9.01 am]: Today I am grieving to the Minister for Energy regarding a situation in the Riva Estate in Piara Waters. My grievance relates particularly to Riviera Turn. I know the minister is aware of this matter because we have had some correspondence on it. I know that some of the residents are on their way and I hope they get here before the grievance is complete.

This is a failure of proper planning, and I will explain why. With all due respect to the Minister for Energy, it is not his fault. How is that!

Dr M.D. Nahan: Are you sure?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If the minister wants me to, I will blame him, but I am actually blaming the minister sitting next to him in his former capacity as the Minister for Planning.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Do you want him to answer it?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I would have grieved to him, but he is no longer the Minister for Planning. Despite the fact that it was the former Minister for Planning who caused the problem, I hope that the Minister for Energy is the one who can solve the problem.

What happened is that there was an existing 132-kilovolt ampere line running through the Riva Estate. As I explained to the residents of Riviera Turn, this line is part of a circuit and is an important part of the electricity infrastructure for their community and for all the surrounding communities, because that is the way the electricity system works. They believed that it was supplying another estate, but as I explained, it is actually a circuit and therefore all the estates are equally impacted by this transmission line. What happened was that when the developer was putting together the structure plan for the estate, he chose to site a school underneath the high-voltage transmission line. Of course, a school cannot be built underneath a high-voltage transmission line. I do not know why the Western Australian Planning Commission and the Minister for Planning allowed the school to be planned on the site of the overhead high-voltage power infrastructure, because, clearly, a school cannot be built underneath high-voltage infrastructure. What was then agreed with the planning commission was that the high-voltage line would be relocated through the middle of the estate. I suppose that that could have been done if a large easement had been allowed so that people did not have that infrastructure sitting, effectively, in their front yard, but that was not what was approved by the Liberal government. What was approved by the Liberal government was that the overhead infrastructure would go down a narrow suburban street.

We all know that part of the modern way of doing estates is that the streets themselves are narrower, the verges are smaller and the houses are set closer to the property boundary, which brings all the houses closer together. That is obviously a better way of doing the estates as it means more houses can go onto less land and it therefore keeps block prices lower. Normally those estates do not have 132-kilovolt overhead lines running down small suburban streets, but that is exactly what was proposed and agreed to by the Liberal government for the people in this estate. That could perhaps have been done if the relocation of the line had occurred before the blocks were sold. What happened, of course, was that people went and bought the blocks of land in the new estate without being aware that there was going to be a 132-kilovolt high-voltage line going through the middle of the estate. It is true that some residents who actually have the line running immediately in front of their land did sign to acknowledge that. The point I make is that, firstly, they did not necessarily know what it was going to look like and how close it was going to be to their bedrooms et cetera, because they were just saying that they were aware of the easement; they did not necessarily know that that meant that outside their master bedroom window would be a massive steel pole. That is one thing. The other thing was that the people on the other side of the street in Riviera Turn were not asked to sign that document. Not only that, but the people affected on the streets near to Riviera Turn were not informed at all. I have had a meeting with the developer and he said that the maps were available. I have seen the maps and there is no reasonable way that an ordinary person would have interpreted the maps in that way, particularly because a powerline was already in the estate. It is not as though this was a brand-new powerline; this was an existing powerline that was moved.

As the minister is aware, I have also talked to some people at Western Power about this. I have written to the current Minister for Planning and I am looking forward to having her reply. I have also written to the council to draw its attention to the matter. The council says that it is really a state government matter. We have a situation in which bad planning was allowed to take place. The structure plan allowed for a school to be proposed

underneath an existing 132 000–volt line, which should never have been allowed. Then, having allowed that, the government agreed to allow the relocation of the line to an ordinary narrow suburban street, which clearly was never a sensible outcome. I am hoping that the minister can now use his control of Western Power to overcome this problem and that perhaps the line could be run along Nicholson Road, where no residents are directly on the road, which would get these residents out of their current problems.

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Minister for Energy) [9.08 am]: I thank the member for the grievance. I will go through the information that was in my briefing from Western Power. There was a development owned by Mammoth Nominees at lot 22 Skeet Road, Piara Waters in the Riva Estate. As the member said, there is no question that we need high-voltage lines. The question is where they are. Mammoth Nominees made an approach to purchase a block of land that it was going to develop. There was an existing transmission line through it and the developer wanted to move the transmission line to a different place to more effectively develop the property, as I understand it. Under Western Power's rules, which are set by the regulator, these actions and expenses have to be undertaken by the developer because the line already exists. If the developer wants to optimise it, he has to meet the costs. That is background information.

Mammoth approached Western Power in November 2010 to discuss removing the high-voltage line. Western Power told it a number of things. First, it had to undertake a community consultation process; that was its requirement. It then applied for and obtained an easement on the land from the Western Australian Planning Commission. The easement was registered specifically for use of the network infrastructure. Western Power understands that Mammoth undertook community consultation during this period. Western Power further understands that buyers were aware of the eventual transmission asset relocation prior to purchase and the registered easement. This asset relocation was written into the relevant sales contracts. This was in 2010. It was also asked for a down payment. Western Power did not see the developer for another two years. Something happened, and I suspect what happened was that the global financial crisis hit and Mammoth put off its proposals. Adjacent developments continued but Mammoth was not active. People bought land and built houses adjacent to it, not fully aware of the easement. As the member for Cannington said, until people are close to one of these things, they do not know the physical impression on the houses that takes place. In December 2014, Mammoth again approached Western Power. Clearly, when Mammoth went out there after 2012 having had community consultation, things were different. In 2010 nobody was there, but now people are there and they are experiencing troubles. They have looked at relocating this line in a number of other places, including Nicholson Road, and undergrounding it, which will cost \$4 million, which is pretty high. The Nicholson Road option has some technical difficulties with getting shared space and it will cost an additional \$1 million relative to the easement. Those are the things that Mammoth must deal with.

As for the school that the member mentioned, I think his argument is that the school was going to be placed underneath the easement. That would be a strange decision, in my view. I have not been briefed on that. I assume the school serves Mammoth's development and all the other ones in the area.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It is a proposed site; there is no actual school.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: A proposed school; okay. It would be a very strange thing to do. Western Power would not agree with that to the extent that it could. There is a big debate about the health effects of high-tension radiation, which is a different issue, but some people are concerned about it. Some people are concerned also about their homes being too close to it, for their amenity value or otherwise. This is a big issue.

In my view, it comes down to the developer. Unfortunately, the GFC hit and he put off his development. If he had had it at the time, he probably would have got the easement done and it would not be an issue for the other people who moved in. The reality is that people have moved in next door to the easement and they do not want it there. Western Power is facilitating the issue as much as it can to look at all other options. All the other options are more costly, but that is life. I have not been able to be briefed adequately on the powers of, let us say, the third party adjacent houses. Those people have to be interviewed, but they do not necessarily have a veto right over it. That is my understanding. This issue needs to be addressed. I am not critical of the planning, because when the planning commission agreed to the easement, no houses were adjacent to it. Unfortunately, there was the timing, and we think it was the GFC. Now we have to resolve this issue. I have great sympathy for all the parties involved, though this is life. I guess you could say that at least some of the people in the houses adjacent to the easement should have known about it. They were informed through their titles and by the developer that an easement was proposed adjacent to their homes. However, I accept the member's argument that they did not fully understand it. Western Power has been trying to act as broker in this issue, but it has limited powers. It has the veto over any movement within range. I understand, as the member indicated, that this is one of the difficulties of life with more dense living. Western Power has assured me that it will do its best to make sure that it comes up with an equitable and fair outcome, but I cannot promise anything. Nothing has moved yet. Some of the residents have approached me and, I think, the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Local Government, to seek assistance. We have responded and we will try to resolve the issue to the best of our ability. I will keep the member informed. Western Power was hopeful of brokering a deal that I could announce today, but it has not come off. I do not know exactly what the deal is, but it is hopeful that it will be acceptable within reason to all parties.

METROPOLITAN FARMING — WATER USE*Grievance*

MR P.T. MILES (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary) [9.15 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Agriculture and Food. Recently, the Department of Water finished its evaluation of the Gngangara mound. Part of that evaluation was about how much recharge is going into the mound in certain areas to ensure that we do not take out more than the recharge on a continuing basis. In the localities of Nowergup and Carabooda, which come into my electorate of Wanneroo, there are substantial vegetable and fruit growers and plants, trees and the like through there. It is a high-value part of my electorate. What makes this part of my electorate even more valuable is that it is now right on the edge of the metropolitan area, or the urban corridor. Therefore, job opportunities are a lot more sustainable. One farm that I visited recently has just over 300 people working on it, so I am talking about substantial sized businesses of great investment. I would like to see the agriculture department play a larger role in metropolitan farming areas. I think that is important. I know the minister is keen about that, because some technical issues need to be resolved. What size farm is sustainable in this area? Obviously, that needs to be discussed and worked out. Does this area need further planning adjustments for lifestyle blocks? We know that this area will not have urban infill because it is just not viable in that location. Perhaps in 100 years there might be more, but right now it will not happen in any way, shape or form.

One of the main issues with the Department of Water is that it has advised most farmers up there that they need to cut back on their water use by about 25 per cent. If farms lose 25 per cent of their groundwater use, especially in those areas where vegetables are grown, that pretty much starts to rule them out of business. I do not think that we can allow that to happen. We need to find an alternative source, which we know is nearby. I refer to the Alkimos wastewater treatment plant. Each day, it pumps thousands of litres of water into the ocean. I think the solution is to capture some of that water and feed it back to these farming areas so that they can utilise it and continue growing in the metropolitan area.

I want to mention in Parliament that one farmer in that area put a big investment into Lancelin, which is not too far away, and started growing up there. However, his costs were over 30 per cent more, which meant that some vegetables coming from the east coast were, believe it or not, cheaper than what he was able to produce and sell his vegetables for under his contracts with the local Woolworths, Coles and IGA. I find it very odd that that can happen. As was explained to me, it was basically done because the scale of farming to sustain this needs to be larger. However, we also know that some of our Vietnamese farmers are doing great work growing cucumbers, string beans and produce like that under shade and in hothouses. When the minister comes out later in the year, we will be able to show him some of that sort of work that is going on. They are always very keen to show us how innovative they are being in this space and I think that is really good.

The other aspect is, clearly, that keeping our farming community within our horticultural area in the metropolitan area makes it a lot more efficient to get labour. When some of these farmers were first out there, they were in the never-never and they used to have to pay for people's fuel costs, cars in some cases, or buses to get people to come in and work. Now with the growth of the urban area, through Alkimos and even my old suburb of Yanchep, people now are only five or 10 minutes away from a job and they can work there. The other really important thing I would like to see happen is continued growth in that space. Other agencies such as the Department of Parks and Wildlife are very keen to assist the Department of Agriculture and Food in continuing farming in this area and probably with more intensive farming. Over time, the department will probably allow some of its old forest land to be converted to farming so we can keep horticulture very close to our people and our produce can get into the metropolitan area at a reasonable cost.

In the minister's other portfolio, the Department of Transport, is investing heavily in the freeway to the north. This will allow these farmers to get on that freeway sooner to get to the Canning Vale markets and other marketplaces a lot quicker and more safely, rather than having to use the old roads. The farmers are quite happy to see some of those expansions come along. All the government investment in that corridor is good and the investment that we can now make through the allocation of water and having the Department of Agriculture and Food far more involved will be a bonus and a plus for our state and our community in Wanneroo.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [9.22 am]: I thank the member for his grievance today and his interest in supporting not only the horticultural industry within his electorate, but also the creation of jobs within his local community. As the member is already aware, the horticulture industry is an important part of the Western Australian economy, producing a diverse range of top quality horticultural products with a total value-added contribution to the state's economy estimated at \$2 billion.

The intensive horticulture industry in the Carabooda and Wanneroo area provides a valuable source of fresh vegetables and fruit for the Perth market, as well as plant nurseries and turf farms. Around 2 500 hectares of highly valued Spearwood sands are irrigated by the horticultural sector using the shallow aquifers of the Gngangara mound. The area's horticulture generates a significant contribution to the local economy, with the value of agricultural commodities produced estimated to be about \$81 million in 2014–15. I am also aware that

the horticulture industry creates a significant number of jobs for local farmers and businesses in the member's electorate. The Gnangara groundwater system is Perth's largest source of good quality, fresh water. It is a shared resource that supplies irrigated agriculture and public water supply whilst supporting important wetlands. The Department of Water measurements over the last 25 years show that groundwater levels across the horticultural areas at Carabooda, Neerabup and Nowergup have continued to fall at a rate of around 14 centimetres to 25 centimetres per annum. The Department of Water has indicated that recovery of water levels is needed to maintain a viable horticulture industry to provide long-term security for horticultural users in a drying climate. Finding solutions and minimising disruption to businesses will require ongoing support from agricultural peak bodies and the Department of Agriculture and Food to find ways to adapt and reduce groundwater use. An example of this was DAFWA's More Dollars per Drop project, which completed the Irrigate WA app to assist with the implementation of correct irrigation scheduling for a variety of crops, regions and soil types in Western Australia.

I would like to also share at this point that there has been interesting research done by people within the Department of Agriculture and Food. I am very conscious of one person's efforts to look at how we can increase productivity in the horticulture sector and reduce or be more specific with water flow to orchards in the south west. They are getting great outcomes in reducing the amount of water used but increasing productivity. Smarter or better ways of using technology to ensure that we have a better productivity output for the level of water used are potential opportunities that exist moving forward. Solutions around this, such as increased efficiency, new technology, effective urban design and innovative alternatives, will provide low-cost, accessible, good quality groundwater to meet all our water needs to 2030 and beyond.

As a result of the member for Wanneroo's advocacy on behalf of his constituents and farmers in his electorate, I have asked the Department of Agriculture and Food to form a committee working group, to be chaired by the member, to assess the issues and make recommendations for a sustainable horticulture industry in the long term. The committee will comprise representatives from Vegetables WA, the horticultural industry, the City of Wanneroo and the Departments of Planning, Water, and Agriculture and Food. The committee is to inquire into and report on the feasibility of establishing a Carabooda horticultural precinct focusing on the following key considerations. First, the impact of the proposed long-term reduction in water licences; second, the feasibility of using recycled water from the Alkimos treatment plant; and, third, the expansion and intensification of horticulture.

I look forward to getting an update from the member for Wanneroo on the progress of the working group and I congratulate him for his advocacy on behalf of local farmers to support and expand a very valuable industry that creates jobs for people in his electorate and beyond.

BUS SERVICES — MIDLAND ELECTORATE

Grievance

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [9.26 am]: On Thursday, 16 June, I grieved to the Minister for Transport about public transport matters in my electorate, particularly the bus service on Old York Road, which he removed, and bus services 321 and 322. The fact of the matter is that I have an enormous number of problems with bus services in my electorate. I have written numerous letters to the Minister for Transport about many of them and I have not had a satisfactory response. It seems that the minister and his staff—it is mainly his staff who respond to my letters—keep wanting to hold the line. He has reduced bus services in my electorate. I would like someone dedicated from the minister's office or the department, if not the minister himself, to sit down and meet with me and my constituents to talk through the numerous bus issues we have in the electorate.

It is over a year ago since the bus routes down Scott Street through Koongamia were changed. That has resulted in enormous inconvenience to my constituents. I fully understand the reasons put forward about the 321 and 322 buses making the right-hand turn onto Great Eastern Highway, but that effectively traded the safety issue for the buses for a safety issue for pedestrians, thereby creating a safety issue for the people trying to use the buses.

Very early on, in the second paragraph, in the minister's response to my grievance in June, he advised, and I quote —

I will continue to look at some of the specific issues that the member raised today about coming down and going back out. I would like the department to help me better understand the issue. I will provide the information that I have been provided about the services, but before I do, I just add that since coming to government, we have made sure that in upgrading the fleet ...

And so forth. The minister made some reference to gas buses, which is an issue that predominantly affects the Kalamunda electorate rather than mine. Much of my electorate is flat, certainly the areas around Stratton, Jane Brook and Midland itself, so that has not been an issue for me.

My constituents have seen the minister's responses, both to the grievance and to letters; indeed, some of them have responses from the Minister for Transport. Mr Timothy Siragusa and Ms Phyllis Benson have shown me copies of their responses. There are options. I do not know whether the minister actually saw the photos that Mr Timothy Siragusa sent in. This is a photo of his leg taken a few years ago after he crossed Great Eastern

Highway to get the bus. He has ended up with pins and staples in his leg and injuries that make it impossible for him to drive. He has to catch the bus. One part of that solution is provided on only school days by the 323 service. Although that is good for school students it does not work for everyone else. It leaves those people who do not have the option of taking out a car in a very vulnerable position. When the streets do not have footpaths, they have to walk on bumpy verges, which is too difficult to do for anyone with a mobility issue. Alternatively, they have to cross the highway twice if they want to make use of the limited amount of footpaths there. They have to cross two lanes of traffic in each direction; it is going 80 kilometres an hour in one direction and 70 kilometres an hour in the other—that is four lanes of busy traffic. This is what the minister is expecting the infirm and disabled to do. My constituent and I have made some perfectly reasonable suggestions and I am keen to know the minister's response to them.

I want to raise another bus issue. Swan View Senior High School has a catchment area that includes both sides of Great Eastern Highway. Once upon a time, Governor Stirling Senior High School had plenty of room and was not in so much demand. My constituents who live in Koongamia, Helena Valley and the like could choose to send their children to Governor Stirling. At the moment, even though Swan View high school is very close to them, they have to catch the bus down Great Eastern Highway to the bus station and then back up Morrison Road to get close to where they started from. Swan View Senior High School's parents and citizens association has requested an across-the-top-of-the-hill bus service for mornings and afternoons to get the kids to and from school. A lot of the area that I am talking about is a lower socio-economic area and those kids need support to get to school expediently. I hope that this is something that the minister will look at and perhaps we can set up a proper meeting so that the P&C can talk to the minister's people about this.

I have also written to the minister about the school bus service that caters for Governor Stirling Senior High School and La Salle College and also goes to Jane Brook. This service is terminating short. The response that I have had from the minister's chief of staff states —

While there are some schools that are still being serviced by dedicated school special services, these are gradually being withdrawn and the resources redistributed into the regular bus network to meet the growing travel demand of the general community, which includes school students.

We want a simple extension. It would not be a huge new cost or a new service. This is just a matter of servicing the Jane Brook area that has significantly grown in size. Again, it is not too much of an impost to expect that extension.

The final matter I want to raise involves the Helena Valley bus service. Helena Valley has a very limited bus service and its people are crying out for better bus services. There are no bus services to Helena Valley at all on the weekend and only a very limited choice of bus services during the week. Helena Valley is probably only two or three kilometres away from the Midland train station, but on the weekend people living in Helena Valley cannot get to the station. This area has experienced a huge population growth, particularly with the building of elderly and retirement village-style accommodation, and those elderly people need access to public transport.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [9.33 am]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the grievance raised by the member for Midland this morning. A number of grievances have been raised on a number of bus services across her electorate. I will deal with them all specifically, but more broadly I want to share with the house that the track record of this government investing in the renewal and expansion of the bus fleet and the increased level of kilometres and services right across the Perth metropolitan area has been unprecedented. In the eastern suburbs there were old diesel buses in excess of 25 years old, but they could not be upgraded in the past because the previous Labor government had decided to move to gas buses. However, it could not buy gas buses for the eastern suburbs because there was never the pressure to fill those buses. Before I became minister, the previous Minister for Transport, Hon Troy Buswell, had commenced a program of going back to using high-quality diesel buses with very low exhaust emissions. We have seen a dramatic improvement in the quality of buses out in the eastern suburbs that did not exist before. I am sure that most people in those areas would have seen that the provision of bus services in the eastern suburbs has improved dramatically. I will table a report that shows the investment that this government has made to increase the level of bus services since coming to government. As I have said, we have seen a 30 per cent increase in the number of buses and that, together with the renewal of the bus fleet across Western Australia, has cost just under \$0.5 billion. The greatest impact of the renewal of the bus fleet, which was actually the greatest component cost to the state government, has been noted in the eastern suburbs. I will come to the member's point but I would like to table the report containing the facts about the bus network service growth at 1 000 kilometres per annum.

[See paper 4500.]

Mr D.C. NALDER: With regard to the specific issues raised by the member for Midland, I have talked in the past—as the member acknowledged—about the safety issues that go with the delivery of bus services. We need to ensure that the delivery of those services is safe for not only the people catching buses, but also the drivers and those passengers already on the buses.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Midland!

Mr D.C. NALDER: I know that this issue was raised in April and I did refer to it at another time. We talked about specific services and the numbers that the member talked about—the 328 service and —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It was the 321 and 322 services; the 323 is a school service.

Mr D.C. NALDER: It was about the 321 service and the right turning circles. I will not go back over all those details. I have asked the department to continue to investigate. I am happy to support the member's request to ensure that a meeting is held with the department and one of my policy people to make sure that the concerns are clearly documented.

The delivery of services across the metropolitan area is always a challenging task because we have committed to delivering a service within 500 metres of 85 per cent of all homes in the Perth metropolitan area. As suburbs expand, and as new suburbs open up, it provides additional challenges. However, we can see from the investment that the department has been working hard to ensure that it delivers a first-class service. I would like to think that the majority of people can see that. It is a challenge to maintain high frequency services along low-patronage routes where people simply do not catch the bus. Some bus routes have very few people on them. The expense of delivering those services can be exorbitant. It is always a challenge and it is difficult for the department to manage. The department works as hard as it can to deliver the best and most optimal outcome for all people who catch public transport. I acknowledge the challenge that the department has in delivering those services without costs going through the roof to the extent where sometimes, and this is a difficult thing, it can be cheaper to pay for a taxi service than to provide a bus service. Obviously, that is not a practical thing to do because where do we stop with that? The cost of some of these services is exorbitant but, at the same time, we understand the community's needs. I would love to have high-frequency public transport everywhere within the metropolitan area. I would love to have rail tunnels everywhere in the metropolitan area. There are a lot of things that I would love to be able to do, but a responsible government needs to make decisions that can be justified to the broader community that deliver the optimal outcome.

I am more than happy to accede to the member's request for a meeting with the department and policy advisers to specify and work through to see whether there are alternatives. Today the member mentioned a simple extension. I am more than happy for those to be considered. I do not look to stop those things. If there is an opportunity for us to be able to do it, I would like to see it occur. I am more than happy to go through that process with the member, and I will request that that meeting be set up posthaste.

BUSSELTON HEALTH CAMPUS — PRIVATE PATIENT ADMISSIONS

Grievance

MS L. METTAM (Vasse) [9.40 am]: I direct my grievance relating to the Busselton Health Campus to the Minister for Health. This grievance regards admission rights at Busselton Health Campus, or the ability of patients with private health insurance to see doctors of their choice at this new facility. As the minister would be aware, Busselton Health Campus is a relatively new facility. The \$120.1 million health campus was opened in February 2015. The Busselton hospital has been a product of two years of hard work by a lot of people. It is a testament to the Liberal–National government's commitment to ensure that regional healthcare facilities in Western Australia deliver the quality and range of services that people enjoy in the metropolitan area.

It is an integrated site with state-of-the-art information technology functionality and equipment, 15 emergency department spaces, 84 beds, two operating theatres, renal dialysis and an increased dental clinic. Importantly for the Busselton community, it sits on the original site of the old hospital near the shores of Geographe Bay in West Busselton near the centre of town, which was very much a consequence of the actions of the Liberal–National government and, in particular, a credit to both the former member for Vasse and the former Minister for Health who effectively pushed against Labor's plans for a \$65 million health campus at Vasse and instead provided a \$120 million facility in the centre of Busselton.

There has been much pride in the community and the surrounding area in this new facility—a new facility that many in the community fought hard to see at the site it stands on today. However, concern has been raised with me by a number of constituents about the right for private patients to see the doctors of their choice or their private doctor at Busselton Health Campus. I have received the same letter from several residents in the area that raises the following points —

... the main reason I am writing is to point out to you, as I am sure many other folks will, that, IF you are a patient in our local Busselton Hospital, you "Cannot" have your Own Doctor to come in and attend to you.

Your Doctor can Visit, but can have NO say in your treatment.

We have had the same Doctor for years and there are things that we will Only discuss with our own Doctor.

Our Doctor has all of our Records, so how are the Hospital Doctors going to know if a certain medicine will have an adverse effect on our bodies.

Surely, with this wonderful Hospital facility here in Busselton, you would think that ALL of the Medical Professionals would be working as closely as possible to obtain the Best result for their patients and to Share the load.

There are many people who are very disturbed about this arrangement and we are asking you to investigate the “reason” WHY we cannot have our own Doctor to treat us in Hospital.

In addition to this letter, I have met with several constituents who have raised with me concern at not being able to see their private doctors at this facility. I have met with the team at the WA Country Health Service about this issue and I appreciate that they are well aware of it. Could the minister please provide some assurance that this matter will be addressed as soon as possible?

Furthermore, and although not the intended purpose of the grievance, I take this opportunity to raise with the Minister for Health another issue. The expectation was that that new facility would mean that there was less need for patients to travel from Busselton to Bunbury for treatment. However, this has not been the case and there is a concern that Busselton Health Campus is simply a referral point to send patients to Bunbury. I would like the minister’s clarification on that point, as it has been raised directly with me by constituents in the area, and for him to confirm whether this is the case. I thank the minister for taking this grievance and I look forward to his response.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Minister for Health) [9.45 am]: I thank the member for Vasse for raising this issue. I acknowledge the strong interest in ensuring that the still relatively new Busselton Health Campus serves the local community of Busselton and the wider south west region very well. It is certainly an excellent facility that, as the member indicated, was constructed at a cost of about \$120 million and commenced operations in April last year. It has marked a significant milestone in healthcare delivery for Busselton and the south west region. I will come back to the last issue the member raised about it; namely, suggestions that it is essentially a referral centre for the South West Health Campus. That is not the case. Overall there has been about a 50 per cent increase in capacity at the new health campus compared with the capacity at the old Busselton hospital. For example, there are 84 four beds and 15 emergency department spaces at the new hospital compared with 54 beds and 11 emergency department spaces at the previous hospital.

The particular issue that the member has raised relates to the fact that I understand a local Busselton general practice is seeking to admit private patients to the hospital. It was the case that until September 2014, the Busselton hospital inpatient ward was staffed by general practitioners who were contracted as visiting medical practitioners under a medical services agreement. Prior to the opening of the new hospital in 2015, the majority of local GPs advised the WA Country Health Service that they would not continue to offer an inpatient service in the new hospital. To ensure continuity of admitted patient care, the ward medical staffing model was changed to a salaried senior medical practitioner workforce. Currently, GPs who have a medical service agreement participate in the public hospital roster and admit a small number of private patients. The 25 contractor GPs provide public services in obstetrics, anaesthetics and palliative care. I note that these 25 are in addition to the salaried medical practitioners and that they are not ward doctors. They are allowed a right of private practice under their MSA and admit a small number of private patients. GPs who are not on the Busselton Health Campus roster do not admit any public or private patients.

The GP practice in question does not have GPs who are participating on the Busselton Health Campus roster under an MSA, so the request is therefore outside normal GP admission practice for the WA Country Health Service. It is estimated that approval of this request would involve no more than three patients a week; however, it may set a precedent whereby local GPs who do not provide care to public patients access public hospital beds only for their own private patients. WACHS has requested legal advice from the State Solicitor’s Office to determine whether standalone private practice arrangements can be established and, if so, what is required to ensure patient safety and that clinical governance standards are met and maintained. WACHS needs to comply with the policies of the Department of Health for credentialing and defining the scope of clinical practice. All medical practitioner credentials are reviewed through a WACHS credentialing and scope and practice committee. The process is designed to ensure that medical services and treatments are safe and performed by appropriately trained and experienced clinicians who undertake regular maintenance of skills. If the State Solicitor’s Office advises that the arrangement is possible, a legal framework will be required with private general practice to ensure that the patients sought to be admitted are private patients and are aware that they are being admitted as such and that payments and/or gap payments for the patient may be required depending on their health fund coverage, including for medical imaging. It will also need to be ensured that all GPs who will care for private patients are credentialed by WA Country Health Service and comply with its approved scope of practice, and that only patients with conditions and care requirements within the endorsed service capability at Busselton Health Campus are admitted. It will need to be ensured that a GP is available on a 24-hour-a-day basis to attend to the private patient, including after hours for non-emergency and emergency response. Public rostered doctors would respond to a patient in an emergency until the GP arrives. It needs to be ensured that patients are admitted for clinically sound reasons and that the length of stay is within the national benchmark unless they are clinically required to stay longer. It will need to be ensured that there is compliance with WA Health and

WACHS policies and procedures, including clinical documentation and completion of medical records and discharge summaries, and compliance with medication policy and incident management policy. All those issues need to be addressed and I am advised that they are being considered at the moment.

In relation to the suggestion that Busselton Hospital is essentially a referral centre for Bunbury Hospital, that is not the case, and in fact the amount of activity—the number of patients being treated—both in the emergency department and as inpatients at Busselton Hospital has increased quite substantially. Also, inpatient transfers from Bunbury to Busselton have increased by approximately 53.5 per cent from 2011–12 to 2015–16, an increase from 95 to 146. Going in the other direction, inpatient transfers from Busselton to Bunbury have decreased by approximately 44 per cent in the same period, from 261 to 146. The emergency department transfers from Busselton to Bunbury decreased by approximately 6.2 per cent in 2014–15 to 2015–16 at a time when overall ED presentations in Busselton increased by 10.4 per cent. The ED presentations at Busselton increased by approximately 10.4 per cent from 2014–15 to 2015–16, from 20 688 to 22 834. The number of birth deliveries increased by approximately 11 per cent over a 12-month period at Busselton, and the average monthly full-time equivalent staffing increased by 24 per cent from 168 in 2014–15 to close to 209 in 2015–16.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before going to committee reports, can I just ask the people in the gallery to please keep their conversation low. We can hear it on the floor here.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Eighty-seventh Report — “Observations Arising from the Committee Review of the City of Joondalup Local Government and Public Property Amendment Local Law 2015.” — Tabling

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [9.52 am]: I present the eighty-seventh report of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation entitled “Observations Arising from the Committee Review of the City of Joondalup Local Government and Public Property Amendment Local Law 2015”.

[See paper 4501.]

Mr P. ABETZ: The report that I have just tabled advises the house of the views of the committee following its consideration of the City of Joondalup Local Government and Public Property Amendment Local Law 2015. It advises the house of the committee’s perceived limitations in scrutinising such laws under its terms of reference, and makes one recommendation.

The instrument in question made one simple amendment to the City of Joondalup Local Government and Public Property Local Law 2014, extending its powers to make determinations on permissible or prohibited activities on local government property. The committee found the amending law to be within power and unobjectionable in and of itself. However, instead of using this new power to deal with charity collection bins that had been a cause of nuisance to the community, the council banned the placing or maintenance of all charity collection bins from local government property. These collection bins had been a useful asset to a number of charities operating in the area. In fact, there had been some 76 charity collection bins on local government property and the council’s own report indicated that only a handful were a cause of problems. The council decided by using this process of making a determination not to allow them on any council property. That effectively prevented the charities from being able to appeal the decision and seek a review.

What this case reveals is that, whilst the committee has a duty to ensure that any sub-delegation contained within delegated legislation is lawful, reasonable and appropriate, it has no authority over the actual exercise of that sub-delegated power into the future as that is not the committee’s role. The committee therefore recommends that the Minister for Local Government looks into administrative or legal means to ensure that local governments making determinations that may impact on the existing rights of groups or individuals act reasonably in all circumstances and ensure that a means exists outside of judicial review whereby such decisions may be challenged.

I commend this report to the house.

Eighty-eighth Report — “Review of the Government Response to Report 84—Access to Australian Standards Adopted in Delegated Legislation” — Tabling

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [9.56 am]: I table the eighty-eighth report of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation entitled “Review of the Government Response to Report 84—Access to Australian Standards Adopted in Delegated Legislation”.

[See paper 4502.]

Mr P. ABETZ: The report that I have just tabled advises the house that the government tabled its response to the committee’s report “Access to Australian Standards Adopted in Delegated Legislation” on 25 August 2016. The committee wishes to acknowledge that response, and recommends that the house gives consideration to the matters raised in that eighty-fourth committee report as well as to the responses by the government to the recommendations put forward in it.

I commend this report to the house.

“EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION — ANNUAL REPORT 2014–2015”

Statement by Deputy Speaker

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms W.M. Duncan): I have received advice dated 1 September 2016 from the Attorney General indicating an error in the Equal Opportunity Commissioner’s annual report 2014–15, which was tabled on 14 October 2015. The Attorney General has attached an erratum to correct some discrepancies between the commission’s audited financial statements and key performance indicators and those which were published in the tabled annual report. The discrepancies occurred on pages 83, 92, 93 and 95 of the report, and I advise that I have authorised that the necessary corrections be attached to the tabled papers.

[See paper 4503.]

TAXI AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 September.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [9.58 am]: I want to make a contribution to the debate on the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016, which is before the house today. I know it will be debated today and is expected to pass this chamber and go into the other place next week. I want to start by really castigating the Minister for Transport on what I consider to be, using Australian vernacular, a total balls-up. The Minister for Transport’s carriage of the whole issue of the taxi industry over the last two years, and particularly the last year, has been nothing short of appalling. His appalling disdain, ultimately, for taxidriviers, not just in the metropolitan area, but across Western Australia, is simply unacceptable. It is therefore understandable that so many people who have invested their savings and their livelihoods into the taxi industry as operators —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, can you acknowledge the Chair when you enter and can you also ask for permission to pass in front of the speaker. Thank you.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is just unacceptable. The fact is that so many taxi operators in Western Australia have been let down by this government and by the minister. It is totally understandable why so many of them would be angry with this minister and this government over their handling of what is ultimately their livelihood.

Yesterday during their contributions to this bill, some of the members on this side highlighted individual experiences of some taxidriviers who are also their constituents, including the member for Thornlie, who highlighted some individual examples. We know about the high profile example that was featured in *The West Australian* last week, in which the livelihood of a family is ultimately at risk. It is at risk and has been at risk because of the appalling stewardship of this portfolio by the Minister for Transport. We now have legislation before us that, as the opposition has highlighted and as our lead speaker, the member for West Swan, will be outlining later today, is a challenge for the opposition to support simply because of that poor stewardship by this minister and this government.

Although the minister has previously said that the changes predominantly affect only the metropolitan area, I want to challenge that and highlight the situation of the taxi operators in Mandurah and the Peel region. I understand that the proprietors of Mandurah Taxis, Julie and Greg Murray, met with the minister recently. I want to outline to the minister how Greg and Julie have operated Mandurah Taxis Pty Ltd for the last 10 years since they took over from the previous owner. Mandurah Taxis has been operating in Mandurah and the Peel region since 1959, so there have been cabs in Mandurah since 1959. Max Swinbridge held the licence, if you like, for the business for many, many years before it was sold to Greg and Julie 10 years ago. We know that during the last 10 years, Mandurah, in particular, has grown dramatically in terms of population and, indeed, in terms of demographics. The demographic nature of the population is such that we have a large number of older citizens, people with disabilities and people with specific transport needs. The proprietors of Mandurah Taxis, Greg and Julie, have worked extremely hard to manage and develop an even stronger 24-hour, seven-days-a-week taxi industry in the region.

As the minister knows, Mandurah Taxis operates within the country taxi zone. We are a country taxi zone and we have been for a long time. Indeed, it is important that that status remain. However, challenges are created by being in close proximity to Perth. Mandurah Taxis has given exemplary service to the region, particularly during the last 10 years. The Murrays have brought to the industry in Mandurah and the Peel region an even greater and more intimate understanding of the population needs. The fact that it caters for the increasing number of people with disabilities who require taxis, for example, is admirable. In fact, Mandurah Taxis has received awards in the past and has been a finalist in awards relating to disability support. In 2010, it was a finalist in the National Disability Awards that were presented at Parliament House in Canberra. It is accredited with the Tourism Council WA. Mandurah Taxis was nominated for this year’s Disability Support Awards for regional excellence. They are not the only awards or acknowledgement of the contribution, commitment and service to the Mandurah–Peel community that Mandurah Taxis has been credited with. In 2009, it received the Count Us In WA Disability Services Award. In 2015–16, it was a finalist in the business category of the Alcoa Peel Business

Excellence Awards sponsored by the Peel Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In 2015, Julie Murray was a finalist in the corporate and private category of the Telstra Business Women's Awards. In 2015, Mandurah Taxis was a finalist in the transport and tour operator category of the WA Tourism Awards. In 2016, this year, it was nominated for the regional road safety award. In 2016, it was nominated for the regional achievement award in leadership and innovation, and in 2016, it was nominated for the Tourism Council WA Award. Julie Murray herself has served on the Taxi Industry Board, representing regional taxidrivers or taxi operators in regional WA.

I want to read to members a letter from Julie in which she highlights the challenge that now faces Mandurah Taxis from a taxi operator's point of view as a result of the botched handling of this whole issue in a region south of Perth, the Peel. She states —

Personally as Taxi Operators we just want to continue with our business, provide income for our staff and drivers and save our home!! We have been working extremely hard managing a 24/7 taxi service for 10 years to get where we are and we don't want to lose everything!!

That is the challenge that faces her business and so many drivers and operators in Western Australia now because of what the minister has not done and because of his absolute lack of stewardship of this issue during his time as Minister for Transport. Julie continues —

Taxis are a vital component of the public transport network ... Taxis provide privately funded 24/7 on demand, door to door, universal transport ... safe or accessible. Taxis complement other forms of public transport ...

Of course they provide a social and economic service to people. The letter continues —

Taxis are mobile tourist information services ...

That is important to remember. Some of the best promoters of our state and our icons are taxidrivers. The letter continues —

Mandurah Taxis Pty Ltd has been operating in the Peel Region since 1959. The current owners purchased the taxi plates in December 2006. The plates were valued by a Bank, approved by the Dept Transport and we still have a large outstanding debt now secured against a \$0 asset.

By the way, minister, they have no access to the transitional assistance package that other plate owners have been told they will have access to. As the member for Willagee said last night, that is a pitiful amount of \$20 000 and a pitiful offer by the minister.

The letter continues —

The ANZ Bank has made it very clear we have an unsecured debt and we are being closely managed. I am perplexed as to who advised the Minister that Regional operators would not be impacted by reforms?

Mandurah Operators have been doubly impacted initially by Govt inaction and lack of compliance and now first stage reforms which, due the proximity of the Peel Region, are anti competitive. We now have even more operators (both legal and illegal) flooding into the area whilst our Taxis are legislated to operate and provide a 24/7 service restricted within the Peel Region including undertaking the majority of the less viable jobs ... It is anti competitive reform that is impacting on our assets and income as a small business and could lead to Mandurah Taxis becoming insolvent.

I hope that does not happen, minister, because they have worked bloody hard to build up this business. They employ some wonderful people, some wonderful taxidrivers, in my region, many of whom speak a second language. They are trying to eke out a living for their families, but the minister has put it all at risk.

Julie's letter continues —

This week we are reviewing rosters and staff will be significantly reducing hours. Our Taxi Drivers have had their incomes reduced by up to 40%. This is harsh in the Peel Region which has the highest unemployment rate in the state at nearly 12%.

The last thing my region needs is more unemployment, but this is what the minister is foisting on it because of his haphazard, bungled handling of this whole issue. The letter continues —

WA Country Taxi Operators (WACTOA) have had serious concerns about the performance of the On Demand Transport Unit staff —

Mr D.C. Nalder interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What is wrong with you?

Mr D.C. Nalder: Will you take an interjection? That is an appalling statement to make. That is an absolutely appalling statement to make.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Why is it appalling to state that you have put people's employment in peril? Why is that an appalling statement to make?

Mr D.C. Nalder: Because you're factually incorrect.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mate, you have botched this whole system.

Mr D.C. Nalder: No, it's —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mate, you have botched the whole system!

Mr D.C. Nalder: How? Demonstrate how.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Why do you not apologise to the people up there? Why do you not apologise to the 250 people who turned up at the Italian Club last night, who —

Mr D.C. Nalder: You're grandstanding, aren't you? Grandstanding!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Because you do not know how to say sorry, mate! That is the problem with you; you do not know how to say sorry and you try to deflect everything. You are just like your Premier, mate. You want to be the Premier, but you are just like him! This is the problem with you and the problem with your government, mate!

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What did you say? "Cheap"? You are cheap! You do not stand up for your taxidriviers!

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Member for Mandurah! Let us just take this one at a time. Calm down, member for Mandurah.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The ACTING SPEAKER: People in the public gallery, we are totally sympathetic to your concerns, and I am sure the minister is too, but you are not meant to be making any noise, or someone will come and remove you, so please keep the noise down. Smile and wave, but no noise.

Member, did I hear you call something out when I was on my feet? That is absolutely not to be done, particularly if it is someone from that neck of the woods. Was it you, member for Geraldton? Please, member for Geraldton, it is not appropriate to call out when I am on my feet and it is not appropriate for anyone to be talking while the Chair is on their feet. That is enough.

Minister, you asked if you could interject; I think that time has passed, so please just sit tight.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will not be called "cheap" by you, member for Vasse, when I am standing up for my community —

Point of Order

Mr D.C. NALDER: Point of order.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Member for Mandurah, I think, first of all, that we established it was not the member for Vasse; it was the member for Geraldton.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It was. Have the guts to tell the truth!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Secondly, member for Mandurah, I call you for the first time. Please, no yelling across the chamber. Member for Mandurah, you have been here long enough to know to direct your comments through the Chair, so I ask that you continue to direct your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will, but I will not be called "cheap" by a member of this place who says —

Mr D.C. NALDER: I would just like to draw the Acting Speaker's attention to the fact that what is at hand is the bill about taxis. There was no acknowledgement by anyone in this chamber about comments that were made on the other side. That was dealt with in your —

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am sorry; is this a relevance point of order, member?

Mr D.C. NALDER: The relevance of the arguments he is making about the cheap shots.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I have listened to the point of order; it is not a point of order. Member, please recommence your speech.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will not be told by any member of this place that this is cheap. The fact of the matter is this: I am standing up for the proprietors of the taxi industry in Mandurah, in regional Peel, and I am standing up for the drivers who are employed by that company down there in Mandurah. It is my right to represent them and it is my right to make sure that their concerns are heard. That is what I am doing, so if the member wants to call me cheap and then not have the guts to admit that she said it, that is trash. Why not stand up and withdraw the comment?

The fact of the matter is this: this minister has botched a process that is now threatening the livelihoods of people in my community —

Point of Order

Mr D.C. NALDER: Allegations are being made that I have botched the process. I would like to understand the specifics of the allegation.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Sit, please! Sit! That is not a point of order, minister. You should know better than that. You have not been here long, but you should know better than that; you are a smart man. There is no point of order. Do not raise those kinds of things again.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The minister will have his chance during consideration in detail and when he sums up. This is why this issue causes so much concern within so many parts of our community. It is because of how it is handled by the minister responsible. He has been duded in his shot to become Premier, and now he is trying to defend the indefensible. I am reading information from the proprietor of Mandurah Taxis; that is my right. She and her husband are not only defending the business which they have worked really hard over the last 10 years to build up and which is acknowledged for the quality of service it delivers; they are also pleading on behalf of the many people that rely on them as a Mandurah business to make sure that they have an income with which to sustain their families. That is my responsibility.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I hope the member on the other side who had a go at me earlier will stand up and defend the taxidrivers and people who work in her community. That is what I am doing.

Julie and Greg Murray are absolutely concerned about the future of their business, but they have dozens of families relying on them because dozens of drivers and operators rely on Mandurah Taxis for their income. I am passionate about this matter because two years ago one of our taxidrivers in Mandurah, Lindsay Ferguson, was killed. Just last month, the murder charge was overturned. I know that family, and I know the anguish that the family went through, and continues to go through, because of what happened to Lindsay Ferguson on the day he was, in my view, murdered while doing his job. Lindsay had been a taxidriver in Mandurah for many, many years. He was loved because he drove mainly Maxi Taxis, which deliver services to people with disabilities and older citizens in Mandurah. I am sorry, but I feel passionate about this, so I get angry when I am told that I am being cheap. I get angry when I am told that sort of thing. I am angry because Lindsay Ferguson did not deserve to die behind the wheel of his taxi in Mandurah. He did not deserve to die. This is about people. This is about families. This is about whether people are going to take home enough income to feed their families. This affects the people in my community. I will speak passionately about it and I will represent them. I will particularly represent a business such as Mandurah Taxis because I know that it has worked bloody hard to build up its business, and the minister puts that at peril. That is why I am passionate about it.

Mr D.C. Nalder: How have I put it at peril?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Because of your botched process! You sat there on your hands and you promised to do something and you did not do it and now we have legislation that is going to affect them.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Member, just direct your comments to the Chair; otherwise, you are inviting interjections.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will take almost anything, but I tell members something: I will not take that rubbish from over there anymore! Julie Murray says the following, which I think is really important —

WA Country Taxi Operators ... have had serious concerns about the performance of the On Demand Transport Unit staff and the reform process ...

She mentions that she has notified people of these concerns —

We have notified the Premier ... and the Minister for Transport in many different forums of the impacts of these reforms on regional operators. Mandurah Taxis owners have also provided information and met

with the Minister for Transport regarding the issues we are facing. It would appear that ... despite industry recommendations and all of the meetings being held significant changes are being pushed through with little thought of the consequences for operators, drivers and the public.

Mandurah Taxis has personally notified Minister Mischin, this minister, Minister Harvey, former Minister Hames, now in his capacity as the local member for Dawesville, and me. Mandurah Taxis has also notified all of its local members about the issues that face regional taxi operators as a result of this legislation and what this minister is pushing through this Parliament.

On Saturday night I was at the 2016 Peel Business Excellence Awards in Mandurah; 400-odd people attended, including Julie and Greg Murray. Mandurah Taxis had been nominated but it was not a finalist, but Julie and Greg went along because they have been very focused on making sure that the taxi industry in Mandurah delivers to service requirements and needs. Over the 10-year period of their stewardship of the taxi industry in the region, they have tailored their services to cater for the specific needs of people in that area. That is why they have won awards and been acknowledged for their delivery of disability services through taxis. They have been nominated for various tourism-related awards because they are part of the community and the economic viability of Peel and Mandurah as a regional city. Julie and Greg are part of that. The minister's appalling stewardship of this issue has resulted in many people—be they drivers or owners of a company such as Mandurah Taxis—becoming absolutely vulnerable and at risk. If this minister cannot see that, for goodness sake, I appeal to the government backbenchers to understand it, because many of them have people living in their electorates who drive taxis or who have bought plates in the past and are now at risk. I know some of the backbenchers have had meetings with those people, but now is the time to stand up and represent them. Get up and have a say.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They probably will not. Get up and have a say. For the minister to say, "Well, I'm offended because I have not done any of this. I haven't botched this. I haven't done anything wrong" is rubbish.

Mr D.C. Nalder: I didn't say that.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: So the minister is admitting that he has done something wrong.

Mr D.C. Nalder: Just say what I said. If you are going to quote me, quote me correctly.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Gee, I tell members what: if we had to sit around quoting the minister, we would have a dictionary of interesting quotes!

Ms R. Saffioti: Just quote the media advisers.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We could always quote the media advisers, too. Certainly the Premier's media adviser would have some very interesting quotes about you, sunshine. I would not like to repeat those in this place. They were repeated yesterday.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, I remind you that when you are referring to members in this house, you must refer to them by their electorate.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I certainly would not refer to a member as the media adviser from the Premier's department did. I would not use unparliamentary language such as that. It was very interesting to watch question time. Now the big strategy of the Minister for Transport in question time is to keep his head as low as possible. Have members noticed that? He flicks through papers and pretends that he is reading something. I saw that in the last question time. He had his head down. "Oh, gee, give me something to look at as if I'm reading so I can avoid any eye contact." That is what it is all about.

I conclude my comments by saying this: this has been a botched process. This has been botched by a fake contender for the Premier's position and a minister who has had no understanding of the real impact that this has on real families who rely on the taxi industry through drivers and taxi plate owners. He has had no understanding of that. It will bear very heavily—I might say, not on him, because he had his wrestle with the member for Bateman and he has wrestled the safer seat, so he will probably be okay—on those on the back bench, particularly those members who have these taxidrivers and their families living in their electorates. Be it on those members' heads if they do not stand up and defend those people and acknowledge the pain and angst that this has had on many families in the taxi industry, and will continue to have. Be it on their heads if they do not stand up and acknowledge that and support them. Be it on their heads at the next election, because this sort of thing brings down governments because it demonstrates how out of touch the government is with the general public in Western Australia. The government does not care about the budget and the fact that it has run up the debt it has run up. It does not care about the deficit. The Premier just bats that away. Perhaps he will still be here or, if he gets beaten, he may not even come back into Parliament after the next election. To those members who will not be here, examples such as this will have signed their death warrants. That is the situation government backbenchers face. They should stand up for their community and the people who drive taxis or own taxi plates. They should not just be told by the Premier and the bumbling minister that they have to follow through with it.

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [10.28 am]: As we want to get the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016 through today, I will keep my comments very brief. As I have said in this place many times before, I have a large number of taxidrivers in my electorate and I have had meetings with taxidrivers going back to 2009 during the boom time, so it is not a more recent interest in the taxi industry. They came to see me because they wanted to buy their lease plates. I argued with the drivers and said that I did not believe that that was a good way to go because when there is an inevitable downturn, it will be important that the government can pull lease plates from the market to match the supply with demand. I am pleased to say that I understand—the minister may be able to comment on this in his contribution—that 20 per cent of the lease plates have been withdrawn from the market, which has helped to lessen the impact of the downturn and the arrival of Uber at the same time.

In my meetings with taxidrivers prior to the arrival of Uber, there were many complaints about the conduct of Swan Taxis, the dispatch service, and their frustration in wanting to provide a good service to the community and the dispatch service really standing in the way of that. I do not have time to go into the details of that, but many of the drivers in the public gallery will know exactly what I am talking about.

An issue has been raised that the government did absolutely nothing: I do not think that is quite true. The government initiated prosecutions of Uber drivers; I am not quite sure where those prosecutions are up to, but the minister may comment on that. I certainly appreciate the financial stress that those drivers in my electorate, and elsewhere for that matter, are under, having purchased their plates in more recent years. The member for Gosnells mentioned the family who bought six plates. When the member for Gosnells mentioned that the husband has three and the wife has three, I just thought: who gave them financial advice? If I was going to invest \$1.2 million to \$1.6 million —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Member for Armadale!

Mr P. ABETZ: — I would seek some financial advice. I would never put all my eggs into one basket.

Several members interjected.

Mr P. ABETZ: I am not asking for interjections.

I certainly appreciate the fact that people have purchased a taxi plate with a view to having the right to drive taxis for as long as they wish, and that that is a licence to do that. But I think it is really important to remember that government regulation of an industry does not guarantee the capital value of the licence. I know of another example of that. My daughter is a pharmacist, and in the pharmacy industry the value of the licence that people need to operate a pharmacy has absolutely plummeted. Pharmacists are physically handing in their licences and shutting their shops because the licence they purchased a few years ago has become valueless because of the changes the government has made to the pharmaceutical benefits scheme and the way it funds things. We need to keep that in mind.

The member for Willagee mentioned yesterday that all industries have their downtime—down cycles; ups and downs—and the taxi industry is no different. The taxidrivers I have talked to acknowledge that that is something they accept; they are in an industry that that is part and parcel of. But I think the difficulty that has arisen is that with the arrival of Uber, and now moving to a deregulated situation, we are facing a double whammy, if you like, for the drivers.

It is interesting that some of the drivers in my electorate who have spoken with me are actually still doing quite well. I have one taxidriver who does wheelchair taxi work. He is a lovely, gentle guy, and he told me that he takes one or two jobs a week off the dispatch service. He gives the disabled people his business card and mobile phone number, and he is, basically, booked up all week with private jobs. That is what he does, and he does it well. In 2009 he was telling me that, and he is still fully booked. In many ways the value of his licence to him has not depreciated one little bit because he has built up a microbusiness, if you like, for himself.

I was recently in Gosnells doing a bit of doorknocking and I came across a gentleman who had a taxi in his driveway. I said, “You must be doing it tough at the moment.” He was an Iranian migrant, and he said, “I’ve been driving taxis for five or six years. I’ve got my licence, and it is down—true—but I’m still earning enough to make a living.” I said, “So how’s that working for you?” He told me that he gives people his business card and mobile phone number and gets a lot of private jobs. He said, “That’s what’s kept me going. I provide a good service.” He has been able to develop his own clientele base.

I appreciate that people who have entered the industry more recently have not had a chance to develop that, and that makes it more difficult for them to keep going. Those who depend on the dispatch service are certainly struggling the most. I accept that the rank work and hail work, which has been reserved for the taxi industry, is in some ways not as big a part of the market anymore. By virtue of the Uber app, a person can call an Uber vehicle and it will come to where they are; in a sense, the app makes a mobile rank. It will be interesting to see whether rank work and hail work continues to make up 40 per cent of taxi work.

Towards the end of July I caught a taxi from the airport and chatted with the driver. I said, “Things are pretty tough at the moment, aren’t they?” He said, “I don’t know what’s happened, but in the last two weeks it’s really picked up.” I said, “Why’s that? Do you think there are fewer Uber drivers on the road?” He said, “I don’t know.” Remember, on 4 July the regulations changed and they now require Uber drivers to be licensed and front up with about \$800 in up-front costs. They are now obligated to have insurance and pay extra registration costs et cetera.

I received a letter from Jessika Loefstedt, manager of public policy and government relations for Uber, in May 2016; I think other members also received it. She said that 80 per cent of Uber drivers have declared they would not drive if they have up-front costs of \$500. Now they are facing \$800 up-front costs, and my guess is that as time goes on the number of Uber drivers will diminish considerably. The up-front cost should have been there earlier. I accept it when taxidriviers say that we have taken an awfully long time to get that in place; it should have been done quicker. But I think part of the reason for the delay in getting the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016 before this house has been that some backbenchers have been arguing very strongly that there should be something like a \$1 a ride levy to provide some further compensation for the taxi industry. The minister has been working on that with the department, and that has delayed the entry of this bill. I have frequently said, “Why don’t we get this bill into the house and get the \$20 000 available to all taxi plate owners?” For those struggling to pay their bank loans, the \$20 000 grant—it depends on how much they still owe—will be somewhere between six and 12 months of bank repayments. That will give them the opportunity to have a little bit of a break and get the bank off their back, if that is happening at the moment for them. It will give them a chance to get organised. Then, of course, there is also the hardship fund for which people can apply. That is particularly necessary, I think, for those who purchased their plates in more recent years.

The reality is that I do not think anybody can predict the value of a taxi plate in two years’ time. The question is: how do we move forward from here? I believe this bill, which will provide a \$20 000 grant to every plate holder, is a very worthwhile measure that will help everyone. For some, like my friend who does the wheelchair taxi work, it will be a very welcome \$20 000 that he does not really need because his business has not fallen; for many it will be very, very welcome. Once this is in place and people who have hardship issues apply for the fund, I think the \$6 million may perhaps prove not to be sufficient, but again that is something that can be addressed if we run out of funds on that score.

I believe that the taxi industry is very much in a state of transition. Within the taxi industry, there is real potential for people to take the initiative to develop private clientele, or perhaps even to group together in a taxi cooperative to operate their own dispatch service and their own branding to carve out a niche market for themselves. It may be a taxi service of all women drivers, for argument’s sake, because women may feel more comfortable catching a taxi knowing that they will have a woman driver—that type of thing. I think there are real opportunities to carve out a niche market. In the meantime, and given the current downturn in the economy, there is obviously less demand for taxis. I think we will see some more decline in the number of Uber drivers. An Uber driver came to see me because he was very concerned. He said that when he did the sums, he was earning about \$5 an hour. Once he took the depreciation of his vehicle into account and the extra insurance he needed et cetera, he was not really making much money. He felt quite exploited and was planning to get out of the industry. My guess is—I could be proven wrong—that the number of Uber drivers on the road will decline. Hopefully, the economy will pick up as the industry picks up. I believe that the taxi industry has a bright future, but I fully support the provision of hardship funding to those who are in serious need. As the member for Mandurah said, we are dealing with families. Real people are involved; it is not about just facts and figures; we are dealing with people. I believe that \$20 000 for every plate owner will be a very welcome relief for plate owners and drivers, if they are driving. For those who lease plates, licence plates have already gone down from \$13 000 a year to \$1 200 a year, I think it is. For them, there has already been a major improvement in their financial situations. Plate owners are the ones who are suffering at the moment. I believe that the \$20 000 grant, which is available to everyone who owns a plate, will be very welcome and very helpful. For those who are in a real financial crisis, the special needs hardship fund will be very helpful as well. As time progresses, there will still be the opportunity for further action to be taken by the government once we see how things settle down.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [10.42 am]: The member for Southern River followed my speech the other day—I gave a very passionate speech on another issue—and he referred to me as the member for hot air. Today, I liken the member for Southern River to a character in *The Wizard of Oz* on the yellow brick road where the Tin Man is searching for a heart; I liken him to the straw man who is searching for courage. When the going gets tough, he does a Paralympics job of hurdling over the Bar of the house out of the way so he does not vote against the government on an issue that is very important to the people of Western Australia. Today, it is the taxi industry. The member for Southern River will not vote against this bill; he will vote with the government like a lot of the sheep.

I may not be able to speak as passionately as the member for Mandurah—I have a bit of a throat problem at the moment—but I do feel as passionately about it. Many people from the taxi industry have come to my office to

see me. Some of them feel absolutely devastated by the actions of this government. I do not blame just the Minister for Transport; I think he has a very difficult job. The problem is the Premier, who has overspent the credit card by billions of dollars, and a Treasurer who is trying to address that situation. I have been here for 24 years. I have seen industries deregulated, including the milk industry. I think milk vendors were paid fairly and squarely for the fact that their industry was deregulated. They were given back virtually the money that they paid for having the right to be able to go on a milk round. In certain areas, the fishing industry was deregulated. They were happy with what they got. Recently, we saw the, what was it —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Potatoes!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We recently saw the classic case of the Potato Marketing Board. They are still growing potatoes, yes, but the people who were part of that scheme were paid good compensation. Why do we treat our taxi owners any differently from potato growers, or the people who used to drop off the milk—I used to have milk delivered to my home every day—or the people in the fishing industry? Why can other states and territories treat their taxi industry people fairly and squarely, yet, in Western Australia, we cannot do that?

A classic case came into my office. I will not mention names because I do not think it is appropriate. It was a family situation and other people were involved as well—about half a dozen people. There was the wife of a man who had bought a taxi plate just a few years ago—I think three or four years ago. They paid nearly \$200 000 to the government to change his licence from a peak-period one to an all-day licence with no restrictions. He could act as a taxidriver at any time of the day or night. They paid a few dollars short of \$200 000—let us say \$200 000. Quite frankly, the government was acting like a franchisor. It was selling something that was a promise and a wish—something that would happen in the future. We cannot say that it sold them a taxi plate, because that is worth about 20 bucks. It was selling them the right to be able to continue their business, which was a regulated business then. Now, it is being deregulated. To offer the people who paid \$200 000 just a few years ago \$20 000 is nothing but an absolute insult.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): I am really sorry, but you must stop clapping—you must.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Madam Acting Speaker, the people in the public gallery obviously feel very passionately about this. They are affected financially. Their families are affected financially. It is not just about the people who are here; it is also about their families and the people who are paid wages to drive some of their taxis when they are not driving them. Many people drive their own taxis and when they are not driving them themselves, they sublease them to other taxidrivers so that they can earn a living.

It was a long time ago now that the group first came into my office; I think it was last year. I told them, “Let me make it quite clear that I’m always in favour of competition.” They said, “So are we, Mr Johnson; we’re in favour of competition too, but there has to be a level playing field.” I absolutely agree with that. There should be a level playing field. At the moment, there is not a level playing field. Other organisations—Uber and others—are just doing what they want. They do not pay any of the sorts of fees that our taxi plate owners do and they do not pay the rates, yet they can get away with picking up people wherever they want and all the rest of it. It is not just in WA; it is worldwide now. However, for many, many decades in WA, we have had a regulated taxi industry, so we have seen exactly where they were going. Some taxidrivers are not the best in the world. You get the odd rude one, like you get the odd rude politician. Many people in here have been very, very rude, particularly to me because I am an Independent now! Members opposite laugh and the Premier growls and gets grumpy. He called me a grumpy old man the other day!

Mr C.J. Barnett: Well, you are.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Premier is a grumpy, arrogant old man!

Mr C.J. Barnett: I know.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Premier is the most arrogant person I have ever met! Ask any of these people in the public gallery what they think of him. They cannot stand him! That is why we will be saying, “Bye-bye, Premier” very soon. I am not quite sure whether it will be the Minister for Transport or the Minister for Police who takes over. It could be the Minister for Corrective Services, but my money is on the Minister for Transport. The power broker in the other house wants the Premier’s sidekick, the Minister for Police, but I think most of the Liberal Party members actually do not.

I must get back to the bill, as Madam Acting Speaker is instructing me to. I will get back to the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016 because that is what we are talking about today. We are talking about the arrogance of not only the Premier, but also the government. It is arrogant to bring a bill like this, which has gone through cabinet, to the house. It would not have gone through cabinet if the Premier had not approved it. Nothing goes into cabinet

without his personal approval and nothing comes out of cabinet without it. I know; I have been there and done it for four years. I know how it works. I do not necessarily hold the Minister for Transport responsible for this. He has to do what he is told. The person who is responsible is the Premier of the state. The buck stops with him. He is always glad to say that when something happens, but it stops with him today, in my view, which is why he will not be the Premier for much longer. I do not think he will be here by the end of this year—not as the Premier, anyway. I think we will all be saying goodbye to him. However, that is another story, and I am sure we will talk about that a million times.

I will be voting against this bill. This bill is not fair on taxi plate owners, taxidrivers and other people in the taxi industry. This bill does not provide fair compensation. We as a Parliament should not treat the people in the taxi industry in a different way from how we have treated other people who have been in a regulated industry. A young lady came to see me in my electorate office. She came with her father. They were taxi plate owners, with two separate businesses, and a third one as well. She bought her taxi plates about three years ago, before Uber came on the scene. Her husband was a fly in, fly out worker up in the boom area of the north west. He was doing okay, but they decided that they needed to find something to do for when the boom finished. She paid \$200 000, give or take a few dollars, to buy her taxi plates. She had to take out a bank loan to do that, and she put up her house as guarantee for that loan. What is that taxi plate worth today, in real terms? I am told that taxi plate owners have had a 50 per cent reduction in their business because of Uber. However, it is not all about Uber. There are other players in the market, and there will be more players in the future.

We should do the right thing as a Parliament and reject this bill. The member for West Swan has put on the notice paper some amendments to this bill. I support those amendments, because they will provide some fairness for people in the taxi industry. They deserve some fairness. They work all hours of the day and night. They have to put up with a lot of crap, with people attacking them, punching them or kicking them, or doing run-offs without paying their fare. The way this government is treating these people is absolutely appalling.

I will not talk for much longer because other members also want to talk on this bill. I want to make it clear that if the government does not accept the amendments that the member for West Swan will be putting forward, I will certainly be voting against this bill. Those amendments will go some way towards redressing the unfortunate and unfair situation that the people in our taxi industry have been placed in. They are tremendous people. They are very hardworking. They have invested their hard-earned cash in the taxi industry. Many of them have had to borrow the money. The young lady who came to my office was about eight months pregnant. She was very concerned that she and her husband would lose their house if the situation did not change.

This government has acted as though it is a franchisor, and it has sold the franchise to the franchisees—the taxi plate owners—for \$200 000. The taxi plate owners cannot on-sell their plates for anything like that amount. They would be lucky to get \$20 000 for their plates these days because of the competition that is coming into the market and the uncertainty about the future. We as a Parliament have an obligation and a moral duty to do the right thing by all the people in Western Australia. I swore an oath of office, not just to the people in my electorate, but to all the people in Western Australia. It was not to the Liberal Party—never in a fit. It was to all the people in Western Australia.

Mr I.C. Blayney interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What did you say, member for Geraldton?

Mr I.C. Blayney: I said you were quite happy to use the Liberal Party's name to get elected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I was not—no. I would not have the Premier's corflute anywhere near me. On election day, the Liberal Party wanted me to have his corflute at all my polling booths. I refused. I said that the people in my area are going to vote for me, not for him, and they did—my margin went up enormously.

Mr P.B. Watson: We are talking about a serious issue, member for Geraldton.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Not to him—to him, it is not.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, you know better than that! No yelling across the chamber.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I think I have criticised the Premier and certain people in this chamber enough for today. I am sure they will get more criticism today in question time and at other times. I will never resile from my job as a local member of Parliament to do what I think is right for the people in my electorate and for all the people in Western Australia. I will always stand up for them before any political party, whether it be the Liberal Party or the Labor Party. I will vote according to what I think is the right thing to do, and according to my conscience. I will be voting against this bill today because I truly believe that the people in our taxi industry are being treated extremely unfairly by this Premier and his government.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [10.54 am]: Madam Acting Speaker, I note that I am the lead speaker for the opposition on the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016. I wish to outline the Labor Party's case on this bill. This has been

the worst handled reform in this state's history. The Minister for Transport and the Liberal coalition government have let down Western Australian families and small businesses. They have ignored the plight of these people, who have been paying taxes and fees and have been participating in our community for years upon years. This government has deregulated the taxi industry, without any consultation. Two months have passed since that deregulation, and only now are we debating this bill. This government has made mistake after mistake and caused disaster after disaster. I know the Minister for Transport gets offended when we say things in this place. However, my concern is not for the minister's ego. My concern is for the families in Western Australia who are struggling because of what this minister has done and because of the hypocrisy of this government.

I want to go through the hypocrisy of this government. Over the last decade, Labor has tried to make some changes to the taxi industry and provide a lifeline for the future. The government has talked about the value of taxi plates. However, for over two years now, the government has allowed the deregulation of the taxi industry. The income and livelihood of many taxi plate owners and drivers in Western Australia has diminished significantly. I have met many taxi plate owners and drivers. I do not know who the member for Southern River speaks to. I swear that every time he talks in this Parliament about the people he speaks to, he seems to speak to people that no-one else can ever find. The member for Southern River speaks to people who always welcome the government's decisions. I have not met one person who welcomes these decisions.

The hypocrisy is that government members sit in their electorate offices and say they support the taxi industry, yet when they come into this place, they fail time and again to stand up for taxidriver. Liberal backbench members have great power on this issue, because ultimately they can drive the government to make better decisions. However, they fail time and again to do that. They sit in their electorate offices as big, proud individuals and say they are going to tell the Premier this or that and they will fix this, yet in the party room in this Parliament they fail to deliver. I am sick of hearing from people who say they have talked to a member of the Liberal Party and they have said they are going to do this or that. I know that is not true. However, those people took them on face value. Those members then come into this place and abandon those people as soon as the Premier looks at them. That happens again and again. This will be yet another example.

The taxi industry is a bit uncoordinated. There are a lot of different players—plate owners, taxidriver, management companies and dispatch companies. The taxi industry has not employed a massive public relations firm, as other people in industry have done, and it has not employed Liberal lobbyists, as other people have done, and, as a result, the Premier has not listened to them. However, they are real people who are struggling to make ends meet. This government has abandoned those people and has deregulated the industry without putting in place a proper reform process. It is as simple as that. The government has pitted individual against individual. It has allowed anarchy. The government has failed to govern some laws of the state. I respect anyone's right to come to Western Australia and try to change the existing law. I respect that right, but I do not respect people who come here and do not abide by our laws and who, through political contacts and public relations and lobbying firms, operate outside the law and get their way. That is what the government allowed to happen. The government has told the rest of the world that WA's legislation is irrelevant, because people who come here and do not abide by the laws get their way. The government's compliance activity was non-existent. When there was a major threat it did not act properly; we all know that. If the government had done better on compliance early on, we would not be in this mess.

Members opposite can chuckle and be offended. Government members sat by for two years and let this happen; I honestly do not know how they sleep at night. I do not know any other minister who would have allowed this to happen. Having let someone come into Western Australia—I do not care who they are—who has ignored our laws, the government has basically told the entire community that our laws do not count. What precedent will this set? I think anything goes. The government has created such a bad situation that it has pitted taxidriver against taxidriver, and taxidriver against Uber driver. It has created a dog-eat-dog system with no minimum standards and wages. There is a new rule out there for those who drive people around—it is dog eat dog. Yes, we are the Labor Party and we believe in some form of fairness and regulation. I do not believe that people should be able to do whatever they want. Communities and societies do not survive like that. Not every house can be turned into a business, which is basically what the government is allowing. Ultimately, the government has abandoned the concept of fairness.

As I said, it has been two years since this issue first arose. The government let it go and now we have come to this. The government allowed people to operate outside the law. The government said last December that it was going to change the law. It brought in legislation in May, it deregulated in July and now, two months later, it is looking at transition assistance. To tell you the truth, I have never seen anything like it. We, the community, have let the government get away with it. We tried to hold it to account, but ultimately we let it get away with easily the worst-handled reform in the state's history. I cannot imagine a Labor government getting away with what this government has done. We were crucified for our properly thought-out reform process. This government has basically abandoned Western Australian families.

I will go through the history of some of these issues, because they are pretty important. I looked for the last time there was a taxi amendment bill. One of the last times was in 2003, which is when the Labor government at the time introduced the concept of leased plates. At the time the Liberal Party said —

... the industry is concerned about the government's intention to compete with it as it may influence the value of current plates. That is a very genuine concern. Taxi operators are also concerned about their future earnings. The Opposition holds the same concern.

The Liberal opposition voted against a bill that created leased plates because it was worried about the potential impact it would have on plate values, but now it is saying that plate values do not matter. On the issue of plate values, I will talk about two distinct steps. First of all, the government basically allowed Uber into the place unregulated, which immediately impacted the value of the plates. Of course it did, because a regulated environment with the strict regulation of costs and numbers inherently drives the value of a plate. The government allowed that decrease in value and then it decreased the annual lease costs from around \$13 000 to \$1 000. That had the second impact on the value of the leased plates. One just has to stand back. In a situation in which a person has a privately owned plate and earns X thousand dollars per annum, and they are competing with those who have government-owned plates for which the lease cost is \$13 000, if that lease cost is wiped out from \$13 000 to \$1 000, the value of the privately owned plates is automatically wiped out. It just makes sense. Why the government did that, and how it did it, is beyond me. All that has done is exacerbate the problem for private plate owners. It has had a very significant impact; it is probably the most significant impact. I do not understand why the government did that. Sorry, there was an Economic Regulation Authority report that referred to it, but surely the government could have thought it through a bit more and understood the implications of it. The ERA report into microeconomic reform —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Which was rejected by the government.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, it was entirely rejected. But even on the issue of compensation and taxi deregulation, the ERA even contemplated the concept of compensation for plate owners when it stated —

... deregulation of the taxi industry should take place even if the Government chose to provide full compensation to taxi plate owners.

Even the ERA had contemplated the point that there was a lot of value left in plates.

I will continue with the history of this issue, because it is important to see how we have come to this point. I will talk briefly about the history of Uber in WA. In August 2015, the minister was briefed about the uberX launch. At the time, the department made a number of points, which we got through a freedom of information request. The documents show some of the key points made about uberX. One document states that uberX had indicated that it was likely to launch in Perth irrespective of the illegalities. It states that the Department of Transport strongly suggested that Uber should at least ensure that its drivers have an F extension. It was likely to launch, but it had not provided a specific date. It also refers to compliance and how it needs to be improved. The document states that it is a highly resource-intensive compliance process. I do not think the government poured enough money into compliance initially. The government met with Uber on 29 August and basically said—this was its key mistake—that it was looking at having an interim operating agreement. Briefing notes from the agency state that Uber would be working outside the law, but the government contemplated having an operating agreement with the department.

In another key document, the minister asked the department to work on scenarios that had been discussed. Those scenarios were about allowing Uber to operate. Uber prepared a draft media statement in October and then it all began. The minister finally realised that he had to do more and that Uber was operating outside the law. During the months of August and September, the government's lack of activity allowed Uber in and allowed it to operate outside the existing law, which is fundamentally the most significant problem. As I said, anyone has the right to lobby government to change laws, but to operate outside the existing law, using Liberal Party or, let us say, political party contacts —

Mr C.J. Barnett: What contacts?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What contacts? I will go through them.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Liberal Party contacts?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes. I will go through the articles and the commentary about that in a minute.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes. That will be good

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Premier—honestly!

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The government allowed Uber in, even though it knew that it would be operating outside the law. I will go through some of the articles. This was all before I became the shadow spokesperson, so I was not aware of what was happening. However, an article in *WAtoday* reads —

Tom White is chairman of the Liberal Party's policy committee in WA and until last week was also senior policy adviser to Education minister Peter Collier.

This week, he started a new job as Uber's "demand manager" in Perth, but has not stepped down from his policy position ...

This is what was reported. On 11 July, Paul Murray said —
Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Members!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo! Please, I am not going to have this descend into interjections.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine! I have just asked people not to interject across the chamber and you continue to do so. I want to hear the member for West Swan without interjections.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: On 11 July, Paul Murray went through all the contacts and connections between the lobbyists for Uber and the government; the office of the Minister for Police; Road Safety—he went through it all. These articles were written at the time by Western Australian journalists who made a connection between what was happening within the Liberal Party and the rise of Uber.

In July last year when I became the shadow Minister for Transport, I was immediately approached by some taxi plate owners who showed me their situation. They had bought plates for \$300 000 in March 2014. When you go through all their costs for the stamp duty that they paid, the cameras in their cars and the inspection fees, it came in early 2014 to over \$330 000. They were operating within a government regulatory environment. Many of these costs were due to government regulation—and that is the basic point. The government fees alone in that transaction were \$27 000. We took up their case straight away. We immediately called in August 2015 for the government to act with some compensation and assistance for the taxi industry, but nothing happened. A green paper was launched but that process ended up being pretty much a sham. Many of the contributions made in the community consultations were ignored. On 14 October, we moved a motion in here to assist taxi plate owners and the taxi industry. The minister at the time said —

I am ... aware that the clock is ticking and I want to provide solutions and certainty ... as quickly as possible.

Since then, nothing has happened. In December last year, a day after the New South Wales minister announced a deregulation process, the minister put out a media release to basically announce deregulation. It was again one of those situations: it was announced in December, yet no legislation came forward for another six months. That was another hit on the taxi industry. When governments announce deregulation, normally the process starts immediately so that people are not left with the understanding that there will be deregulation, yet there is nothing to make it happen. They were basically left in no-man's-land for another six months until May this year.

In May this year the government brought in and announced the two tranches of legislation—the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016, which we have in front of us, and another more general change to the taxi industry. By regulation, the government deregulated on 4 July. In the meantime, many families and small businesses have been impacted over years because of the way in which this government has handled the process. This comes from a Liberal Party that purports to support small business and hardworking families. This is a true test case, and the government has let them down. This debate sometimes goes to the quality of a person's last taxi ride versus the quality of another ride. This to me is about fairness and the policy challenge that lies before us. This government has failed to address the policy challenge presented to it, and, now, two years down the track, this government has created a dog-eat-dog world out there. It has given no respect to the people who have invested to help create a taxi service; this government has actually let them down.

I want to go through some key points about where we are at with all these issues. I want to talk about the impact on the value of plates. We heard from government that from 2012 to 2014, the value of plates in WA ranged from \$280 000 to \$290 000. In 2015, that figure dropped to \$220 000, and in 2016, it dropped to \$163 000. Post the new set of regulations, I do not know what that figure is, but given that a person can lease a government plate for \$1 000 a year, the value of private plates would be pretty much next to nothing. That is the only analysis that can be drawn from the fact that a government plate can be leased for \$1 000 a year. This government has overseen a dramatic reduction in the value of these plates. Many people bought plates at the height of the market and some bought them earlier on. The government must understand that it has severely impacted their ability to not only make a living, but also cover the basic cost of running a taxi.

I want to talk about the concept of a level playing field. The whole desire behind this legislation was to create a level playing field, which is surely not being created because not everyone who provides a taxi service has the same requirements. For example, cameras are costly and are required by some parts of the industry, but not by others. The concept of a level playing field does not exist. This government has not created a level playing field. It has basically created a race to the bottom in relation to the wages and conditions of people working in that industry. This government has set no minimum standards and no minimum wages. If that is the case, it is anarchy; there are no rules or regulations that apply to everyone. Why has the government chosen the taxi industry to have no minimum standard when the rest of us do? I do not know. People have said that the new competitors in the taxi industry provide a better service. If I were driver who is not government regulated and need not pay taxes or fees, I could provide everyone with a bottle of water. If a driver does not have to pay any of the taxes and costs, of course he can have more flexibility. The other point is about surcharges and the shortage of taxis on a Saturday night, which is because drivers cannot surcharge. If everyone thought that they could make 100 bucks a trip, they would all be driving on Saturday night. That opportunity was not allowed at the time. Of course, if you allow people to charge whatever they want, we will get more cars on the road. Again, it comes back to that concept of a level playing field.

I will now talk about rank and hail work. The figure put forward by the minister was that 60 per cent of the work undertaken by taxis is rank and hail, and that that work will be exclusive to taxis. That analysis has a couple of problems. First, other competitors set up their own temporary ranks with one of those flashing signs at major sporting events and other key areas. The other issue with rank and hail is that an app is, in effect, an instrument to hail. A person can hail a taxi physically by hand or by using an app. When a group of taxi plate owners took on the government in its enforcement of the legislation, the Supreme Court said that the concept of ride sharing that Uber put forward does not exist; it is a taxi service. The rank and hail concept comes with enormous fees, and taxidriver are not getting the same volume of business at ranks by any stretch of the imagination because people use either electronic hailing system or an alternative rank. Another case that I see when I go to the rank—I still use taxi services—is that drivers pull up in front of the rank and pick up people. This whole concept of rank and hail being such a major benefit does not exist. Again, that is an argument that has been put forward by the government.

The issue outlined by the member for Hillarys is the example of the government selling plates in the last five years. Again, that is something that the Premier has never acknowledged, but the government was selling plates just a few years ago. The government collected that money but is now saying that those plates are not worth anything—that is basically what the government is doing. The government is basically taking \$200 000 from some Western Australian families.

That is some of the history and facts that led us to this point. I was going to use the example of Mandurah, but I think my colleague the member for Mandurah outlined that pretty well. I will go to some personal examples. Last week, we met Desta about his situation of trying to cover the costs of the borrowings for that plate. He has been working hard in Australia for 18 years. His wife has been working in a factory collecting and saving money to buy a plate. With very young children, they are now unable to cover their costs, and the banks are moving in. There were other examples highlighted at the meeting last night at the WA Italian Club. These people have been working hard. They have worked hard, in many cases in factory jobs working long hours, to get the money together to buy their plates, but now they cannot earn a living.

I want to talk about Peter who lives in my electorate. He came here in 1946 from Romania. He worked hard, bought a plate and loved his job. One of the issues I want to raise is that there have been a lot of owner-drivers who have performed a spectacular service for us in not only the tourism community, but also the general community. They are people who have been proud as taxidriver. They love their job because they love meeting people and they like talking about WA. Peter is such an example. Tourism WA named Peter taxidriver of the year in 2008 and he was again a finalist in 2009. Do members remember the extraordinary taxidriver campaign the government ran in 2010? Peter was a finalist and was part of that campaign. The government was very happy to use people like Peter in its tourism campaigns. It saw the benefit that taxidriver brought to the tourism industry by having friendly, outgoing demeanours and knowing a lot about WA. The government was happy to use those taxidriver then, but now, only a few years later, the government is abandoning them. People like Peter are working hard trying to make ends meet and they are finding it difficult to do so.

I have received many emails, but I will not read them all out because I am conscious of the time. I will just read one that was sent to me and another member in this place. I will not say who it is from, because I did not seek their permission. It states that this particular taxidriver had woken up that morning at 3.30 am. The email was sent at 10.27 am and he had completed only four jobs in the last seven hours for a return of about \$70. He said it was a mental trauma and a too familiar situation every day. They are working 12 hours a day, bringing home \$200 gross and then having to subtract GST, tax, mortgage payments, interest, maintenance insurance and registration—the list goes on. He said that the government is basically creating a situation that is unsustainable in the longer term. He made the point that people want to be able to see their families for some hours of the day and to participate in their community.

As I was saying, I think it is incumbent upon us to make sure that we have a sustainable taxi industry into the future. It is like everything—we want a taxi industry into the future, but it has to be sustainable and there has never been that concept. The thinking has been, “What’s the cheapest fare we can get today?” But we all know we have to think about the longer term. We want a taxi service for the longer term. We want people who see this as a career to be able to participate in the longer term. The government is taking that away. Taxi driving cannot just be a part-time job someone has when they have nothing else and they are watching a bit of TV and the kids are looked after; it has to have some element of full-time sustainable professionalism. This whole idea that it is going to be so random that at any time of the day anyone could be driving any vehicle does not make long-term sense to me. Some sustainability has to be brought into the industry.

I want to talk about Uber and what is happening to many of the drivers. We have seen the takes from many of the Uber drivers. As I said, I have nothing against Uber drivers; they are out there trying to make a living too. But I do have a problem with a multinational company that takes 25 per cent of their income and is not contributing to the cost of our roads. All of us, all taxpayers in WA, have built WA roads. Do we just allow any company to come in and use those roads and pay pretty much no fee whatsoever? This is just a transfer of wealth from WA taxpayers to overseas—that is all it is. Uber drivers use their own cars. Are they getting paid for depreciation to cover the long-term replacement cost of those cars? No. Again, it is a wealth transfer from the individual driver to a multinational company. Uber is not paying its fair share and that is why I have a fundamental problem with it. Ultimately, we all have a responsibility to pay for the roads we use and to make our community a better place. There has to be some obligation and responsibility that everyone out there providing the same service is paying in the same way. We are seeing a transfer of wealth from WA taxpayers to elsewhere. That is how I think about it as an economist, but I know that for many individuals it is just about what service they can get at that point in time, and that is fair enough. We live in a very consumer-oriented society. But from a government perspective, from a regulatory perspective, we need to step back and know that we always have to balance the cheapest option with the most sustainable longer term option that can protect the interests of all the players involved and those of the wider public. That is our job. We cannot just say that someone is doing something better today and therefore we think it is a good idea. We have to step back and look at what we believe is more sustainable over the longer term, and that is what I believe we should be doing.

I will wrap up soon, but I want to outline Labor’s position on this issue. We have been watching it with complete dismay for many years. I did not want to go over this part of history again, but Labor tried to deregulate the industry back in 2005–06. That was rejected by some parts of the taxi industry and by the conservative side of politics. If that had happened, we would not be in this mess.

Mr P.T. Miles: Brian Burke was involved.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Pardon?

Mr P.T. Miles: Your lobbyist was involved, I understand, to your members back then.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think the Liberal Party was involved in rejecting it; it voted against it.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Let us not descend into interjections again, members.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Anyway, so we were there, but that is old news.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is probably relevant news.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Yes, that you voted against deregulation, yes, that is very relevant news.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That we had a proposal that the Liberal Party rejected that would not have created a mess like this.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Your lobbyist was involved.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Like the Liberal Party’s lobbyist?

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the Premier want me to read through everything? Okay.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Premier wants me to read through all the accusations that have been made.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Leader of the Opposition, I am on my feet. Premier! Members, I am going to start calling people. I am on my feet, which means you are silent. I have said a couple of times since I have been in the chair that I do not want this to descend into interjections across the chamber as it just causes havoc and it makes it extremely difficult for Hansard to record. The member for West Swan has indicated she is wrapping up soon. I want to hear what the member for West Swan has to say; she has the call. Please desist from the interjections.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will read a couple of paragraphs from a Paul Murray article, in which he refers to Eacham Curry, stating —

Curry worked on the 2008 Liberal election campaign that brought Colin Barnett to power.

He was rewarded with several appointments as chief of staff in various Barnett ministries, including transport, before moving seamlessly into his role as a lobbyist in 2013.

Until recently, Curry was responsible for representing the illegal ride-sharing business Uber in its dealings with the Barnett Government.

Anyone trying to understand the latest strong endorsement for Uber from Barnett, and more lately Police Minister Liza Harvey, needs to know this background.

Even though Transport Minister Dean Nalder labelled Uber “not a legal service” Mr Barnett this week said his government would find a way of “accommodating” it.

Asked about reports that the Department of Transport was putting private investigators on Uber’s case because it had been blocking government inspectors, Harvey said she also supported the company.

“The community appear to have welcomed Uber, so we need to make sure they are operating in a safe regulatory framework,” ...

Uber was operating against existing laws and not paying any of the licence fees to use our roads but the Minister for Road Safety was welcoming Uber. The article continues —

“My concern in this area ... is that the vehicles ... are safe ...

However, that simply ignores the fact that Uber has been operating in WA unlawfully for a year and Mrs Harvey, also the Road Safety Minister, has no idea whether the vehicles are safe, nor if its drivers are ...

She has no idea whether they are breaking the law. I could keep going but I think it is pretty clear. As I said, we could have made a lot more of this, but we are looking at the future and what we need to do to support the taxi industry today.

We do not believe that a grant of \$20 000 is enough. I think everyone understands that. We will be moving some amendments to address that. We also think that the voluntary buyback scheme should be supported and instituted as soon as possible. The minister has left it too long. For two years, he could have been developing a policy that made economic and financial sense for everyone involved, and he has not. He created a \$20 000 assistance and hardship fund, which is not enough. He should also be out there trying to support the industry in the longer term. More assistance needs to be offered because the reality is that once this bill goes through today, nothing will be presented by this minister until the next election. No further assistance will be given. We believe that more assistance is needed and the government should be providing options to allow people to sell their plates to the government now. People need genuine help. They need a path forward and they need more assistance. The sum of \$20 000 is simply not enough.

If the minister is keen, I am willing to negotiate a higher assistance package in this chamber today. If members of the backbench want to come to me and explore a better assistance package right here and now, I am very keen to do so. For us to just throw up a number, only for it to be rejected, will not be good enough. If people want to talk to me, I am keen to negotiate another number—more than \$20 000. That is an option for everybody. If not, we will move an amendment to the bill. Let it be on everyone’s head if they knock that amendment down. Members go out in their communities and say that they support the taxi industry when it is clear that they do not. They have an opportunity to do something about it in this place. I am willing to be responsible about the number but plate owners need to be offered more than \$20 000. That amount is simply not enough to allow for the proper restructure of the industry. I am offering the government that option. There will be other speakers. If any member from the other side, whether it is the member for Belmont or the member for Southern River, is keen to be the negotiator to try to get a better package for the taxi industry today, I invite them to come forward and we will do whatever we can to get a better package. We in the opposition do not have the numbers to do it by ourselves. We want a better outcome. Today is the opportunity to do so. We are simply running out of time —

Mrs G.J. Godfrey: Do you support the proposed levy?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I support a better package. The government has not put a levy on the table. How much will it be and when will it be implemented? The government has had two years to bring forward a policy. I want plate owners to be offered more assistance. How those opposite fund it is up to them. The government has had two years in which to do this. It could have put forward five different well thought out options. It has nothing. As I said, I am willing to compromise and get some greater assistance on the table. Today is our chance. If the legislation is passed today and plate owners are offered only \$20 000, that is it. At the next election, I know that we will have different policies. I think ours will be far more favourable to the taxi industry. I am not willing to wait the extra six months if we can offer the taxi industry a better package now.

In their heart of hearts, I think some members in this place want a better package. I am willing to negotiate more than \$20 000 but government members have to come up with a compromise. This is their chance because if they do not, that is it until after the next election. I say to the minister that the offer is on the table. We have said 100 times that \$20 000 is not enough. Today is the day to sort this out. He has let it go for two years. He has let deregulation happen by stealth for 18 months and deregulation proper for two months without a proper reform process. He has been caught out time and again. He has failed the people who have supported him. This is the issue. These are the people who were supporting him in 2008. I know that for a fact. They were helping him hand out how-to-vote cards. Those people were supporting him and the Liberal Party and he has let them down. It has been two years.

I can hear some of the discussions that the minister is having from across the chamber. I know he said that he would have some more discussions, but where and when and how is not clear. The minister can change the figure of \$20 000 easily by moving an amendment to this legislation. We need it on the table now because this is the time to do it. As I said, it is crazy that the minister allowed deregulation and he brought this legislation into this house in May. I understood that it was meant to be passed by 30 June but it never appeared until this week. That is because we went out and got support for families. I had to ring the office of the Minister for Small Business to try to get the Small Business Development Corporation to support the family that it was meant to be supporting in their negotiations with the bank. After three phone calls, I got a call back. This is the situation we have. The minister said that the Small Business Development Corporation is meant to be assisting these taxi plate owners, yet we have to try to sort these things out every day of the week.

This is our offer. We want more assistance for taxi plate owners. We believe today is the day. Because the minister has handled this matter so poorly, this issue will not be resolved by the election. I thought it would be. Quite frankly, the idea that the minister would announce deregulation in December and not have the package sorted for the next 14 months is again beyond me. I did not think we would be in this situation but we are. The taxi industry is hurting. The Labor Party wants a better package for the industry and we are asking the minister for his support.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [11.38 am]: I will point out that the member for West Swan has indicated that there will be a couple of extra speakers. This gives the government or backbench members of the Liberal–National coalition an opportunity to talk to the member for West Swan about what the final outcome will look like today. This is the one and only opportunity to get this legislation, the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016, right. After today, it is too late. After the last two years of waiting for something, it comes down to today. What will the Minister for Transport do? Will he improve the package today, because we are going to vote on it today, or will he not improve the package?

Is this all there is? Let us get it clear: if the minister goes out today and says to people, “Oh, well, we’re going to change things; we’re going to improve the package later on; just wait to re-elect the Liberal government”, that is not to be believed. If the minister were genuinely interested in improving the package he is offering to the community and to taxi plate owners, today is the day; for this legislation there is no tomorrow. The minister has had two years to get this right, and this is the package he has presented to us—not a different package, this one. The minister has to tell the truth today and say what the package is. Liberal–National backbenchers keep telling us they can do anything they want in this chamber. Now is their opportunity to come over here, speak to the member for West Swan, say what it is that they would like to see in the amendments, and negotiate the terms of the amendments so that we can get an outcome today, not tomorrow, and not on 12 March 2017—today. If the minister has a plan for something more than he has told us about until now, now is his chance, not tomorrow, and not on 12 March—today. This is the time for him to be honest with the people of this state. He could be honest for the first time in this debate today; this is his opportunity.

As I understand it, there is about \$27 million on the table for the taxi industry transition, of which there is about \$20 million for compensation and \$6 million-odd in the hardship fund. Yesterday we discussed the fact that there had been a \$114 million blowout on Ord stage 2. Five times more than what is being made available to the taxi industry was spent, and it was spent not on the actual Ord River scheme, but just on the blowout on the Ord River scheme. It is not as though the government does not have plenty of money to splash around when it wants to. In final numbers, \$2 billion went on the Perth Stadium and \$500 million, in round figures, on Elizabeth Quay. The government splashes around plenty of money when it wants to; what about the taxidrivers?

Let us be honest here: we all know that most taxidrivers have voted Liberal for a long time because they see themselves as small business people, and the Liberal Party, along with its supporters at 6PR and elsewhere, was in the front line against the Labor Party's deregulation plans in 2005–06. What did the Liberal Party have to say about this prior to the 2008 election? A press release from that election campaign states —

Western Australian taxi patrons are entitled to expect that if a taxi is booked it will attend, or if a taxi is called for will attend within a reasonable time. To achieve that, Government must first create a viable operating environment for taxi owners and drivers.

That was a Liberal Party election commitment in 2008. What is its story today? Is it free market, devil take the hindmost? It sells a plate to private owners for \$200 000, and today it gives them \$20 000 compensation. The same press release also states —

A Liberal Government will return the ownership of taxi plates currently owned by the Government to the private sector.

That is what the Liberal Party said. Under the paragraph heading “A Fair Return”, the same document states —

The Liberal Party in Government will seek to ensure that taxi operators receive a return on investment that is attractive and that encourages operators to further invest in the industry. To achieve this, the Taxi Advisory Board will regularly review taxi fares to ensure they are adjusted appropriately and in line with key economic indicators.

It is important that taxi fares remain affordable whilst providing a fair return to operators;

The Liberal Party was very happy to shed crocodile tears on behalf of the taxi industry, but today is the minister's chance to make a difference to the future of many people's lives.

In 2013 there was no hint in the Liberal Party's election commitments of the deregulation that it has now implemented. I quote from the Liberal Party's 2013 transport policy, which states —

While the Liberal-led Government has made progress in consultation with the taxi industry, there is still more to be done. As part of further implementation of our Taxi Action Plan a new occupational licensing system for taxi drivers will be introduced that will provide a penalty point system for all WA taxi drivers and a probation period for new drivers.

What did we get instead? We had deregulation and Uber drivers, who do not have to follow the same rules as taxidrivers.

A couple of years ago a taxidriver from Langford came into my electorate office, and he had been fined for wearing black jeans instead of black trousers while driving his taxi. I talked to him about it and he explained that it was actually the second time in a short period—about six weeks—that he had been fined. He went out to the airport on a Friday night and Department of Transport inspectors were out there, going down the taxi rank, because they knew that every time they went to the airport they would get at least a couple of drivers who were in technical breach of taxidriver rules, and one of the rules is that they cannot wear black jeans; they have to wear black trousers. They fined this taxidriver and risked his continuing capacity to drive—because if he does not pay his fine, he will lose his licence—for wearing the wrong type of trousers. Now the government has deregulated the taxi industry and allows Uber drivers to turn up in anything they want to wear. How is that fair?

The government says that it is returning rank and hail for the taxi industry and that Uber will miss out on that. I have the Uber app on my phone; I must say, I have never used it in Perth, but I used it when I was in America. I have just opened up the app, and I can tell members that there are now eight uberX cars within 500 metres of Parliament House; I can see them all on this Uber app. The idea that retaining the rank for taxidrivers gives the taxi industry an advantage is simply not true; it is incorrect. There is no value for the taxi industry in that because the user of Uber can see where the uberX, UberBLACK and uberXL vehicles are at any time, simply by opening up the app, so that is not a valuable benefit for the taxi industry.

I also remind members that Uber is a \$US70 billion company; it is not some small business, like taxi owners. I have no beef with Uber drivers; many of them live in my electorate, just as many taxidrivers live in my electorate. I do not have any problem with them; they are trying to earn a living and that is what people do—they find the alternatives and have a go. The problem I have is with the way in which the government has allowed this to develop.

I am sure that many Liberal backbenchers have had meetings with taxidrivers in their electorate offices, as I have. Recently I was talking to taxidrivers from Lynwood, Queens Park and elsewhere in my electorate, and one of them pointed out that he had only recently bought his plate and that he and his family had used a mortgage on their house to buy the plate. Because the value of the plate has now collapsed, the bank is saying, “Well, your loan is not fully secured anymore”, so he may end up losing the house he lives in because of the falling value of the plate. These changes are directly impacting on ordinary people in our suburbs, and I am sure there are many such people in the electorates of every suburban member. Another one of the taxidrivers gave me

a table—a little Excel spreadsheet he had done up—that compared the positions of a private plate holder, a government plate holder and somebody who might be competing with them through a ride-hailing service.

He points out that the cost of his licence as a private plate owner is about \$24 000 a year when he pays the interest on the loan that he took out to buy the plate. A government plate holder pays roughly \$1 000 and the Uber driver pays \$60. They all pay \$210 in annual administration fees. In registration fees he is paying \$745, as is the government plate holder; the Uber driver pays—according to this little table—\$600. He is spending five grand on his specialist taxi car insurance, which would be the same for the government plate holder, but an Uber driver may be paying, say, \$700 or \$800 for their insurance. They all have to have their car inspected for \$93 a year. Taxidriver each have to pay \$55 for an annual camera inspection, but there is no camera in a ride-hailing service vehicle, so there is no fee there. He has to pay about \$6 000 a year in repayments on his car. An Uber driver probably pays half that.

The taxi is on the road full-time, so he is paying probably five grand a year on maintenance. The Uber driver is probably driving only at certain times of the year so he would probably get away with about two grand. The taxidriver needs \$10 000 worth of camera equipment in his car; a ride-hailing service driver does not have to pay for such equipment. This taxidriver worked out that his daily running cost is about \$144 a day compared with about \$80 for the government plate holder and about \$20 a day for the Uber driver. In that space between those costs is the amount that the multinational company Uber takes, which is 25 per cent off the top. It would be good for the minister to explain to us the goods and services tax implications for this multinational company. Is it arranging its affairs to make sure that it pays the GST that is paid by the taxi industry? If the business of the Uber driver is turning over less than \$75 000 a year, the Uber driver will not pay any GST. As I understand it, the Uber corporation is arguing that its service is being provided overseas and it, therefore, does not pay GST to the commonwealth government. I might be wrong on that, but that is as I understand it. If the minister could explain that in his reply, that would be helpful.

This is a shambles. It is interesting that the minister's agency is prosecuting Tony Galati for having grown too many potatoes when he has just deregulated the potato growing industry, yet, as I understand it, he has not prosecuted anybody for breaching the rules regarding taxis. It would be interesting to know why the minister's agency is prosecuting people for breaching the rules regarding potato growing, but is not prosecuting anybody for breaching the rules regarding taxis. It would be helpful for the minister to explain why he and his agency are enforcing the potato growing issues, but not enforcing the taxi driving issues. What makes potatoes so special that he has prosecuted in the potato industry but he has not chosen to prosecute in the taxi industry?

Let us face it, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr N.W. Morton), as I am sure you are aware, taxidriver are prosecuted constantly for wearing the wrong trousers, and that is unbelievable. I wrote to the former Minister for Transport a number of times about a constituent in Langford and all his problems with wearing black trousers and being fined. I will not go into it, but there was a whole series of problems with the Fines Enforcement Registry. He almost lost his licence even though he paid the fine. It has a huge impact because if a taxidriver loses their licence, they lose their income. I point out that one of my constituents from East Cannington spent \$185 000 on a plate in 2001 and \$295 000 on a plate in 2010. He has been in Australia, from India, for 26 years and he has worked hard and built himself a life, but now his investment in taxi plates will be worthless.

I make the point that it is not as though the Liberal Party has been silent on this issue. The Liberal Party actively supported the continuation of the regulation of the taxi industry. When an alternative was on the table, the Liberal Party chose to resist that alternative.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Liberal Party resisted it. I was very interested in what the member for Wanneroo said, and perhaps he will participate in the debate. He made some sort of snide remark when the member for West Swan pointed out that these Liberal Party apparatchiks have been lobbying the government and getting the inside track on behalf of Uber to make sure that Uber's interests are taken into account. The member for Wanneroo talked about what happened in 2005–06 and who was lobbying on either side of the debate then. He indicated that Brian Burke was lobbying against deregulation. The member is right. Brian Burke and the Liberal Party stopped deregulation because, as we remember, the Labor Party did not have the numbers in Parliament, because we have never controlled the upper house. The conservative side of politics has always been able to prevent legislation getting through. I understand that the member indicated that Brian Burke and the Liberal Party stopped deregulation of the taxi industry at that time, and that is what happened. We are making that point. Brian Burke helped the Liberal Party to stop the deregulation of the taxi industry when the Labor Party made the proposal, and now these Liberal Party apparatchiks have been crawling all over the Minister for Transport and his office to lobby on behalf of a \$70 billion American company to deregulate the taxi industry. The big criticism of the Liberal Party in 2005–06 was that the Labor Party was not providing a significant enough compensation package to the taxi plate owners. What do we have today? There is effectively no compensation; \$20 000 is barely an insult.

I want to make a point about the hardship package. What a disgrace. A media adviser would have come up with the hardship package, because that allows the minister to go on radio and say, “Well, we have a hardship package, so if somebody’s in exceptional circumstances and is in hardship, they’ve got a hardship package”. But, of course, effectively, everybody who owns a taxi plate will suffer hardship, because most of the taxi plate owners are ordinary folk. They are not rich people; they are the sort of people who live next door to all of us who live in the working class parts of Perth. Those people’s houses are on the line. It is not their investment. Like so many people in small business, they have effectively put their house on the line to make a living. Therefore, all of them are in hardship, and \$6 million shared across all the taxi plate owners is about 600 bucks each. But it is enough for the minister to go on radio and say that the government has a hardship package and so people do not have to worry about everybody losing their houses. The fact that the hardship package does not help anybody is beside the point because the minister is able to go on radio and use it as the fig leaf to protect him from the fact that, unlike people in other industries, he is not providing proper compensation to the people who are losing out.

I have another example of an individual taxidriver who has talked to me. He migrated from Malaysia eight years ago with his wife and two kids. He spent \$290 000 of borrowed money three years ago to buy his taxi plate. What is the government going to do for that constituent? There is also a taxidriver in the electorate of Mr Acting Speaker (Mr N.W. Morton) who pointed out to me that he applied for a government-owned plate, but he was 12 days short of having been in the industry long enough at the time the plates were being offered to be given a lease plate. Instead, he spent \$300 000 two years ago to buy a plate—his plate will now be devalued, and, basically, totally written off. These are the actual stories of real people, and they need action. The member for West Swan made clear that if the government has a better package and if members of the Liberal–National Party coalition backbench have some proposals to discuss, today is it—not tomorrow and not on 12 March 2017; today is it. We are going to see, today, where they really stand.

I will finish with another example of a taxidriver who has spoken to me. He left Ethiopia 14 years ago, when the place was at war with Eritrea so that Eritrea could break away. He spent three and a half years in Kenya. He moved to Australia and met his wife here. His wife works in a childcare centre. Six years ago he bought a house in Queens Park, and two and a half years ago he spent \$300 000 on plates. He paid about \$10 000 in stamp duty on those plates to the state government, and \$7 000 of other expenses. He had been working in the taxi industry for two and a half years as a driver. He had to borrow \$317 000, because of course he had to borrow the money for the stamp duty of \$10 000 he paid to the government, and there was \$7 000 of other fees and charges that the government levied on him; 100 per cent of that \$317 000 was borrowed from the bank on a second mortgage. As I say, there is potential for him to lose his house as well as his plates. The \$20 000 compensation will be 10 months’ payments to the bank for his loan. His loan is over 30 years and he has been paying it for two and a half years, so he has 27 and a half years to go on his loan. He is asking what he is supposed to do for the next 26 years and eight months, until the end of his loan repayments. The \$20 000 will cover him for 10 months, but not beyond that. He is saying that if he is not going to be compensated the \$317 000 the plates cost, he would like \$12 000 a year—\$1 000 a month—so that he can continue to make the payments on the plates. I point out to the minister that this is the real story of a real person who lives in Queens Park in my electorate. How will the government’s \$6 million hardship compensation help my constituent? What in the government’s plan gets him off the hook? If the government simply gives him \$20 000, he will lose his house—he will lose his house! There is no other outcome for him.

Think about this: when the lobbyists for Uber were offering free trips to the Liberal Party state conference where the Liberal Party was debating whether it would support —

Mr M. McGowan: Were they?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes.

When the Liberal Party was debating whether it would support the deregulation of the taxi industry, where were the interests of my constituents that I have outlined today being considered? When the government was compensating potato growers for the deregulation of the potato sector and industry, where was it considering the needs of people in the taxi industry? The minister sat in cabinet and approved \$114 million to be spent not on investment—but this is on the blowout! This is the money the government spent because it did not manage the project properly, not the underlying money. There was a \$114 million blowout on the Ord stage 2 scheme. Why was the government able to do that, but not adequately compensate the people of my electorate who are going to lose their house if they are not given a proper level of compensation?

Mr R.F. Johnson: And in my electorate.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is the case, apart from people in the western suburbs and a few other places where taxidrivers generally cannot afford to live. I am sure some people have taxi plates as a third-line investment. They have \$1 million in shares, million-dollar houses and a couple of taxi plates, but they are not the people I am worried about. I am worried about people who drive taxis and have invested in taxi plates. They might have bought a second taxi plate because that is the industry they understand. They understood the finances and

economics of the taxi industry, but they do not understand the finances and economics or have any inside knowledge to invest in other things in West Perth or whatever; this is what they knew. The rules have changed, particularly, as I say, after the Liberal Party put its arm around the taxi industry in 2005–06 and said, “We don’t want deregulation.” In 2008 the Liberal Party said that the Labor government had not done it right because the Labor government was interested in deregulation, and the Liberal Party was going to stop it. In 2013, when the Liberal Party said it was going to introduce a new licensing system for taxidriviers, nothing about deregulation was mentioned. It is not as though taxi deregulation is a new thing. Going back to the 1980s, reports have been done by the Productivity Commission and other places about the taxi industry; it is not as though this is a new topic. What is new is that a \$70 billion US company has come in and used technology to change the way we order a taxi. That is what has changed. It is not the need for deregulation. What has changed is that the Liberal Party, having spent all those years with its arm around the taxidriviers, is now hiding from them.

Today is the day, minister. If the minister wants to do more than \$20 000 a plate, today is the day to tell us—not the 12 March promise. As the Premier keeps saying, we should not listen to people’s election promises; it is the vibe. Tell us what the government is going to do today.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [12.07 pm]: I think some of the speeches on this issue have been very good and I do not intend to speak for a long time, but I want to put a few points on the record.

First of all, I welcome along to Parliament today the members of the taxi industry who are here to listen to this debate on the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016. Naturally, it is an issue of great concern to them because it is their businesses and homes that are at risk. I find the flippancy with which some members of this place and some members of the community treat this issue of the livelihoods and the property that people have invested in disturbing. I find it disturbing that there is so little understanding, empathy or sympathy in regard to this issue amongst some people in our community.

As with all members, people have come into my electorate office and talked to me about what has gone on. I have talked to taxidriviers. A gentleman came in a month or two ago to explain to me his family situation, and I think this is the overwhelming experience of the taxi industry. The family are migrants. They came to Australia, brought whatever savings they had and looked for an opportunity. The migrant experience, both here and internationally, is often that people go and invest in taxis. If people get into a taxi in the United States, they will often find they are driven by migrants. If people get into a taxi in Britain, they will often be driven by migrants. People will have a similar experience here. People have saved up and come to this country. The skills or qualifications they may have from their homelands are often not recognised here and they may have language difficulties, but they have a willingness to work hard and put in a lot of hours and a desire to better themselves and their families and thereby provide opportunities for their children. We often find this to be the case, as with the gentleman who came to my office; he is a university qualified civil engineer. His father had bought a taxi plate and that was the livelihood for the family when he was growing up. Now the family is in difficulty because of events that are beyond their control. We find this to be the common experience; these people came to this country and looked for an opportunity. This is where the flippancy and lack of empathy of some people comes in.

We hear from some people, “Well, it’s just business. Things happen in business; sometimes it goes well and sometimes it goes badly. That’s risk and business involves risk.” They say that therefore sometimes people invest and they do well, and sometimes they invest and they do badly—that is the fundamental of a market-based economy and a free enterprise system. That would be a legitimate argument but for one thing. I think this is lost on some people. When people invested in the taxi industry, it was a regulated market—it was regulated by law in an act of this very chamber in which we are standing. People therefore came to this country as migrants and invested in the taxi industry on the basis that it was the law that their competitors were defined by an act of Parliament. They invested all their savings and all their income and borrowed against future earnings on the basis that the taxi industry was a market that was regulated by this chamber—by the Parliament of the land. A lot of people around the world, including here, look to the government and think if the government has said what the situation is and what the laws are, they can rely on that. People therefore invested based on that reliance on the law. The argument that it is just free enterprise or just the market—like it or lump it—does not work when the market is regulated by a law of Parliament. What is more, the law has significant penalties for companies or individuals who breach that law. All the people who invested therefore understood that although they paid a premium for a plate to drive their cars around to pick people up and take them to another destination, that premium was based upon a set of laws they could rely on.

Over the last five or six years, it turns out that technology has, to a degree, overtaken that situation. If it was not a regulated market or if people invested on the basis of a market that was not regulated, I would agree that technology moves on and things change. Once upon a time, we riveted ships. These days, they are welded. All the riveters no longer have jobs. Things change as time goes along. However, the taxi industry is a regulated market by law of this Parliament; therefore, there is an obligation on the state to resolve this issue fairly for the people.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Particularly when people paid the government up to \$200 000 —

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was coming to that.

The member for Hillarys told the story of a family in his electorate who, three or four years ago, paid the government a couple of hundred thousand dollars—a couple of hundred thousand!—for a plate, and the compensation to be returned by the government is \$20 000. Seriously? How is that fair on small business people who rely upon the law? They did not pay the money to another plate owner; they paid the money to the state. In effect, the state has ripped off these people to the tune of \$180 000. For me, as I said, if it was not a regulated market, it would be one of those things. Time moves on and markets change. It would be unfortunate, but that is the society we live in. However, it is not. It is a regulated market and, therefore, considering there is an act of Parliament to regulate the industry and the number of plates, there is an obligation on the state to do the right thing by these people.

I know that it is a tricky issue, but that is what ministers are paid for. The Minister for Transport has been at the centre of much controversy lately regarding his own ambitions for himself. As a minister in a government, we had Hon Alannah MacTiernan as the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. She loved controversial, difficult issues. She loved to get in the middle of them and understand the issue, and then come up with an innovative solution. That is what she loved. She did not see her role as coming into Parliament and reading out a list of roads that she might be building or resurfacing. That was not her role. That is what this Minister for Transport seems to think is the role: the department delivers a list of roads and he comes in here and reads out the roads that have been built. That is not his role as a minister. As a minister, with the opportunities presented by having executive control of the agency, his role is to use his imagination, cleverness, ability and power to resolve issues. That is what it is. This does not resolve the issue here today. Anyone can tell the minister that if a family loses \$180 000 by paying the state over the last few years, that does not resolve the issue fairly. The Australian way of doing things is to treat people fairly—I think it is anyway. I think that is what defines us. I am pretty sure that in other countries around the world, it would just be bad luck. But that is not the Australian way of doing things; the Australian way is fairness for people.

The Minister for Transport is in the heart of controversy. He seems to be in the paper every day with his leadership ambitions and his knowledge of polls and all the rest of it that he has been up to, including his chastisement by the Premier and his threats to be sacked. The role of the minister is not about him. He seems to think it is all about him, but it is not. It is about fixing issues like this. These people deserve a decent outcome. The Taxi Amendment Bill 2016 will not deliver a decent outcome.

The opposition will move some amendments. The shadow Minister for Transport, who has that capacity to throw herself into the middle of an issue and try to work out solutions, was there last night when the taxidriviers had a meeting in North Perth. She is not afraid of going to these things. She talked to the taxidriviers and has been working away at resolving their problems. We will move some amendments today to try to resolve this issue. Despite all our requests for government members to come and speak to us, we have seen members in the media—I think the member for Belmont and the member for Southern River—saying that they are on the side of a fair resolution for taxidriviers. I expect not one member opposite will cross the floor to support us. I expect not one member opposite will talk to the shadow minister or cross the floor to support our amendments. The amendments are very, very simple and straightforward and achieve a great deal more fairness in this bill. I expect not one member opposite will support them. However, if that is the case—if members opposite are not prepared to put their vote on the line or sit on the other side of the chamber from the Premier and have him look at them, and know they are voting against his resolution—they cannot then go out and tell taxidriviers that they are on their side. Government members should not pretend that they are on their side, because they are not.

We have heard about the potato growers' issue. For the last five years or so, I have been calling for a reform to those laws. I am pleased that that has happened. I note that the Minister for Transport is also the Minister for Agriculture and Food and I note that the 70 potato growers received a very significant compensation package. Virtually, all those potato growers live in safe Liberal or National Party electorates.

A government member interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: They do. They all live virtually to a person in safe Liberal and National Party electorates. It is fair to say that the potato growers of WA are a reliable voting base for the Liberal and National Parties. They got fair treatment. Of course, the potato industry had to be deregulated because the system was ridiculous. As a member of Parliament, I have been saying that for 15 years, but as Leader of the Opposition, I have been saying it for five years. Thank God it has been fixed. The government gave them fair treatment. They have their land and the opportunity to grow whatever crops suit their land and expertise, but they still got fair compensation. Why does the government have different arrangements for and a different attitude towards taxidriviers? I understand that there are a lot more taxidriviers than there are potato growers, that they do not all live in Liberal Party electorates and that a lot of them are not members of the Liberal or National Parties, but they deserve fair treatment because that is the Australian way of doing things.

As I listened to the member for West Swan, I saw the Premier sniping at her under his breath. I will tell members what that tells me. It tells me that the Premier has been here a long time listening to members of the opposition and sometimes that annoys him. It also tells me that he has a tired bunker mentality.

Mr J.H.D. Day: You're making it up.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the House of all people is the most tired. He looks as though he is asleep half the time.

Mr J.H.D. Day: I am lulling you into a false sense of security!

A government member: You'd better watch for the sucker punch, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will not be nasty to the member for Kalamunda. But it is true. When there are controversial issues, governments that have been in power for a long period get in a bunker and think that they are right and everyone else is wrong, but eventually everyone else gets them. That is what is happening here, because the government is not prepared to listen to these people and it is not prepared to treat them fairly. That is what is going on here. The government should treat them with a bit of fairness. It should listen to the amendments we put forward and actually do something for the decent, hardworking people who invested in this industry on the basis of its regulated market. The government was elected in 2008 on the basis of supporting that market. I will not dwell on the issues that the members for Cannington and West Swan raised, but there were moves to deregulate the industry. Do members opposite know what compensation was offered by the state Labor Party in 2006? It was \$230 000 per plate or thereabouts. Do members know what the Liberal and National Parties did? They said that that was not good enough. Do government members know what expectations taxidrivens have of the government?

Mr J.H.D. Day: The industry was short-sighted to oppose it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the House told them to oppose it.

Mr J.H.D. Day: I did not.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There you go; talk about leading with your chin. Talk about sucker punches over there—whatever your name is.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: Nice.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know who said it. It was one of you. I am not wearing my glasses and, to be fair, the three of you—in fact, the four of you—all look the same. In fact, the five of you look the same!

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: To be fair, I am not wearing my glasses and I swear that the five members from that corridor along are quintuplets!

Mr J.H.D. Day: It is a pity the industry opposed it at the time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The industry opposed it, but it opposed it because people such as Dan Barron-Sullivan, who was Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party at the time, met industry members on the front steps of Parliament House, told them to oppose it and said that the Liberal Party would give the industry a better deal. That is what happened. The Leader of the House can disown that and shake his head. I can see he is doing that from exasperation about how bad that was and how wrong Dan Barron-Sullivan was, but it was his party that did it. We offered them \$230 000, but the Liberal Party said that it would give them a better deal and now it is offering them \$20 000. What does the Leader of the House think they think of him? I think they were mistaken to not have supported it and I think they now think that they were mistaken to not have supported it. Of course they should have supported it. But they were given assurances of a better deal by the Liberal Party if elected; it was elected and now look at what it is doing. Honestly, this issue has become a travesty over the last few years. It is a travesty that the Minister for Transport sat there dithering about this issue during that time. He does not know whether he is—I was going to say something or a shiver—Arthur or Martha. He should immerse himself in the issue, come up with a decent solution that is based on fairness and understand that there are serious morality issues in the way the government is treating people in this industry.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.26 pm]: I rise to make some brief comments. I am always reluctant to do so after the member for Cannington and before the member for Armadale because I usually find myself feeling totally inadequate because of the information and facts and figures that they provide. I want to make a couple of observations.

A lot of taxidrivens live in the seat of Kwinana, particularly in the area of Bertram in the east of my electorate. I know this because for the first time in my life, I know I will always be guaranteed a cab to Perth Airport on time and ready to go. I am always the first job of the day. Taxidrivens never fail to mention the difficulties they are confronting as a result of what is, on the one hand, a significant digital disruption to their industry and, on the other, the ineptitude of a government whose failure to respond appropriately to that disruption has left them facing significant financial losses and lost opportunities.

The Leader of the Opposition presented very well the dilemma that they currently face. A lot of people in the community, particularly those of the philosophical ilk who sit on the other side, say that having entered the

marketplace, they have to wear the impact of change in that market. That is what happens when people go into business; they make an investment and they live or die by the wisdom of that investment. Essentially, they have to take what comes in market changes. But, of course, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, this is not an ordinary market. This market was essentially artificially contrived through government regulation and laws, and people invested in the market on the strength of those laws. They invested in a process that would protect them as operators of cabs. They made an investment in the industry on the basis of the laws in place at the time. They cannot be accused of not seeing what was coming. Essentially, the value of their investment was upheld by the strength of the provisions of the law. They paid a premium for that, which is why taxi plates became so expensive; they were protected from the risk to which people in other markets would otherwise be exposed. The decision by plate owners was a particularly rational one, and now that the rules have changed, they rightly feel aggrieved. The rules have changed because the government of the day refused to enforce those rules.

When Uber came along, the Minister for Transport sat on his hands and allowed the situation to deteriorate whereby the deregulation from that digital disruption became so unstoppable that it would not matter what laws we passed; people would continue to flout those laws and undermine the investment that people had made based upon government regulation and laws. In effect, the taxi legislation took away the risk associated with other competitors coming into the market and a premium was paid because the risk was alleviated and mitigated by government regulation. It created a false market but a market upon which people should rightly have made investments because they always assumed they would have a Minister for Transport that had the bottle, the backbone and the capacity to stop people simply coming into the marketplace, ignoring the laws that were in place, and undermining and completely demolishing that market. There was a positive obligation upon the Minister for Transport to do one of two things: one, he should have prosecuted those Uber drivers and forced them out of the industry to bring it back to that regulated environment—obviously that was always going to be a difficult task—or, two, he should have acted more swiftly to protect the investments that these cab drivers had made and move the industry on to a new footing. But of course we did not have a minister who did that; we had a minister who dithered, sat on his hands and simply watched the situation. Now we have what is essentially a crisis. Cab drivers have made investments that are now almost worthless and they made those investments on the basis of loans that they now cannot service, and that all rests at the front door of this minister.

We are in a time of change right across all our industries. The transport industry will not be the only industry to be confronted by digital disruption. The health industry and a whole range of areas will ultimately face significant disruption as a result of the advancement of digital technology. It is not surprising that people get blindsided from time to time because of that disruption. That disruption will go to the very highest level of the service industry. We have seen it impact upon banking and we will see it impact upon the legal service. As I said, the health system will be almost unrecognisable in a decade in terms of what will happen in that space. There is an obligation on people to move swiftly to make sure that the regulations and the laws that regulate these industries are appropriate and that the right things are in place to make sure that those markets do not fail once they move to the new digital age. One of the minister's defences is: "How could we have seen this coming? This is a significant change to the industry. We are not bringing this legislation in late. We have got onto this on time." The minister's office knew exactly what was going on and it chose to do nothing about it—well, not everyone in the minister's office. A few of his staff saw what was going on and they acted on that opportunity quick smart, yet the minister himself sat on it and did nothing at all.

The other day my attention was drawn to an article back in May 2016 in which a Chris King had launched his move into the Uber-based transport market with a significant investment into that area. He was looking to take advantage of the deregulation of, and digital disruption to, our taxi industry. Mr King saw the opportunity that was coming for him. Mr King says that there was a great opportunity and he saw it. Why did he see it? Why did he feel that he had the jump and was able to make this bold investment of \$60 million to establish Uber-related services right across the country? Mr King launched the company, and the articles states —

It was a risky move for the former WA ministerial officer, with Uber still unregulated in most states.

"It was still a grey area of the law," Mr King said. "I had a gut feeling, I've worked for the Minister for Transport and State Treasurer.

"Knowing that the taxi industry needed to be fixed up, Uber provided a good opportunity for politicians and bureaucrats to fix the system.

"You've got to take a risk to earn the reward right?"

There was some insight going on in the Minister for Transport's office and some of this staff saw the opportunity that was coming along as a result of the Minister for Transport not acting on what was obviously going to be a significant change to the taxi industry. While the minister did nothing at all and watched people's investments burn as the value of their taxi plates reduced, some of his former staff who saw this stuff happening and must have chatted to him about it thought that this was a great opportunity, so they got out and got in to what was fast becoming the rogue market of cab-related services. Although some of the minister's former staff are doing quite

well out of this thank you very much, the minister did nothing at all. Now he has the audacity to come forward with this legislation and this hopelessly inadequate offering to the cab drivers of Western Australia. They invested in good faith upon the legal framework that was in place and in the belief that the government of the day would protect the industry because it was underpinned by government legislation. The opportunities that came with that investment are now disappearing in front of them. The value of those plates is going through the floor all because of the hopelessly inadequate response from the Barnett government.

As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, Labor had a package or a solution to what was obviously coming on the horizon. As the minister at the time, Hon Alannah MacTiernan brought that solution to the table. As the Leader of the Opposition so appropriately pointed out, that was opposed at the time by the Liberal Party. We can now see what a generous and adequate package that was to alleviate the industry of what is now an almost irretrievable situation. I hope that the Minister for Transport provides some explanation to the chamber when he makes his reply speech about why we have taken so long to reach this point in time. We want to know why the compensation that has been put on the table is so inadequate and why the minister's government cannot provide a better package for these cab drivers that provides justice so that cab drivers living in the outer suburbs of Perth such as Bertram receive an appropriate package and we can ensure an orderly transition of this industry. As demonstrated to me by the representative from Uber, I know that there are sod all Uber cars in the outer suburbs of Perth. This is a very real issue. If we allow the whole market to be picked off by these entrepreneurial opportunists who come in and cream the best of the market, the inner city transport opportunities, the transport facilities for people living in the outer suburbs will be inadequate.

I know that the shadow Minister for Transport has some amendments that she will bring to this legislation, and I want the government to reflect carefully on those, because we are the ones who have been talking to the industry. The member for West Swan was the one who was at the meeting last night. We are the ones who have listened to the industry and we are the ones who have heard the industry. We want to make sure that we provide some justice to the industry.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armada) [12.40 pm]: I also rise to contribute to the debate on the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016. As many people in the public gallery know, a number of taxidivers in the taxi industry are very concerned with what is being proposed in this bill. I will get on to this a bit later, but I suppose one has to ask how the minister reached the figure of \$20 000 and what he honestly believes taxidivers can do with that to recoup the incredible loss that has resulted from the way the industry is developing now. Is it a form of compensation? Is it an adjustment compensation package? Is it supposed to be compensation for wrong done by the government or someone else? Is it just trying to distribute wealth of \$20 000 from the government to taxidivers even though they might have paid \$200 000 for their plates? What does that \$20 000 seek to do? Reading *Hansard* from last night, I noticed that the minister had an interesting exchange with the member for Gosnells. He was talking about the \$20 000, how much the plates cost and trying to elicit what that \$20 000 was meant to do. The minister was saying that it was an adjustment assistance grant.

Mr D.C. Nalder: He was saying that was what we determined as the value of the plate.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, and I know the minister said that it is not. There is no way that is the value of the plate and that is quite clear. But the question is: what is it? It was interesting that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the package put up by the state Labor government with Hon Alannah MacTiernan as the transport minister, which was rejected by the industry at the time—obviously in hindsight it regrets that now—and the Liberal Party, the current government. It seems absurd that the Liberal Party was opposing a compensation package of around \$200 000 and yet now it supports a package of \$20 000. The member for West Swan has put out an offer; has she received any offers yet?

Mr J.E. McGrath: Haven't heard.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Has the member for South Perth not heard?

Mr J.E. McGrath: I haven't heard from the member for West Swan yet.

Dr A.D. BUTI: She spoke, but the member was not in the chamber. The member for West Swan —

Mr J.E. McGrath: Hang on, I have been in the chamber all morning. The member for West Swan has not told the minister what her recommendation is.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Excuse me, the member for South Perth has not been here all morning. The member for South Perth is misleading Parliament.

Mr J.E. McGrath: I sat through the member for West Swan's speech. Are you blind? I have been here all morning.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Did the member for South Perth not hear what the member for West Swan said?

Mr J.E. McGrath: The member said she would move an amendment and she was willing to talk to members on this side about what that might be.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Exactly.

Mr J.E. McGrath: She hasn't spoken to any of us and has not paid the minister the courtesy of telling him what the —

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member for South Perth, you say I am blind; maybe you are deaf. What the member —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): I understand it was an interjection and I understand the member will respond to it. I am just putting a pause between things so we can keep them on a civil basis.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member for South Perth, it was quite clear, in plain English, from the member for West Swan. She made an offer for members of the government backbench to come and see her, not for her to go and see them—for them to come and see her. If they want to do it, that is fine, but do not blame the member for West Swan. She put the offer to them. If they do not want to take it up, they should not take it up.

Mr J.E. McGrath: I would have thought that the protocol would have been —

Dr A.D. BUTI: You know a lot about protocol, especially barbecue protocol. You know a lot about leadership barbecue protocol. Member for South Perth, I do not want to take any more interjections from you because they are just ridiculous interjections. The member for West Swan made a very interesting offer that is very rarely made in this chamber. If members of the backbench do not want to take it up, that is fine. It is not up to the member for West Swan to go around chasing members of the backbench. She is the alternative transport minister. If you want to speak to the member for West Swan, speak to her.

Mr J.E. McGrath: Go back to university; you've got no idea.

Dr A.D. BUTI: About what?

The ACTING SPEAKER: We are pretty clear on that point, so let us stop the interjections across the floor. We are clear on that point now; we understand what was said. Let us move on to the next part of the debate.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for South Perth got out of the wrong side of the bed this morning, definitely!

Mr J.E. McGrath: I'll be speaking on this later on anyway and I want you in the chamber when I speak.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I beg your pardon? Do not try to direct me, mate! Who do you think you are?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Dr A.D. BUTI: The only contribution you have ever made —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I am on my feet. I am just going to take a few moments.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am just going to stand here until you are all calm, you are all collected, you all know where you are heading and you are directed. Are you ready? Does the member want me to stand up again, because I will stand up as quickly again?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is a shame that the member for South Perth interjected on this incredibly important issue. I was mentioning that no-one had taken the offer from the member for West Swan. I do not want to continue with this because it is just a waste of time on such an important issue, but I will just say one thing to the member for South Perth. I have been here for six years and his contribution to this Parliament has been minimal. For the member to tell me to go back to university—member, I may have gone to university, but I also grew up in Armadale. I am not a person who does not know about what happens to the taxidriver who comes in to see me, who has invested their life savings and their family's life savings into an industry regulated by the government on a certain representation, and is now being offered \$20 000. That is what I know, member for South Perth; I have some idea. I look forward to your contribution, but I will decide whether I am here, because certainly none of your other contributions in the last six years I have been here have been worth listening to. If you want to speak, you speak. The point is that the member for West Swan has made an offer to members of the backbench and if they want to take it up they can, but if they do not take it up, backbenchers should not go out to their electorates and say they are standing up for taxidrivers, because those taxidrivers, the media and the Labor Party will make sure that we tell the electors of the backbenchers' electorates that they have not supported taxidrivers. They have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in this industry and what is the government offering? It is offering \$20 000. What a joke. We will be interested to hear the minister tell us what that \$20 000 will do. We are led to believe that it is an assistance package, but where is that going to go? What is \$20 000 to someone who has invested a couple of hundred thousand dollars? This is an incredibly difficult issue, I understand that, but this government introduced this legislation in May and it has waited until now to bring it on. These taxidrivers are living in a period of incredible uncertainty. The offer by the member for West Swan remains. The Liberal Party always seeks to consider itself different from the Labor Party because its members are free and they can vote on matters of conscience—they can listen to what they think is right. But they do not do it. It may only be a conscience vote in name, because no members of the Liberal Party actually do it. If they are really being honest in saying they support taxidrivers, they will come to the member for West Swan. It is absurd for the member for South Perth to expect the member for West Swan to go chasing backbenchers; they know who she is.

Mr J.E. McGrath interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not taking your interjections, so be quiet.

The member for West Swan has said that she is open to members of the backbench going to her. If the minister wants to see the member for West Swan, I am sure that she will have a discussion with him. There are no problems there. I do not think the minister requires the assistance of the member for South Perth on this matter. It is quite incredible that the member for South Perth, who sold out the racing industry—he basically sells out most people and hardly ever contributes to debates in this place—is suddenly fired up. He usually spends more time in the dining room. What did he have for lunch? Did he have something that fired him up? He is certainly really going at it today. In six years, I have never seen him like this. It is quite amazing. I thought I would be the last person to fire up the member for South Perth but for some reason I fired him up, which is quite interesting.

Mr J.E. McGrath interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for South Perth is so righteous. What contribution has he made?

Mr J.E. McGrath: You've done nothing in six years in this place.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Member for South Perth! Member for Armadale!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Coming from you, that is a bit rich.

The ACTING SPEAKER: You are both called. I am on my feet.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 5721.]

LEONORA GOLDEN GIFT

Statement by Member for Kalgoorlie

MS W.M. DUNCAN (Kalgoorlie — Deputy Speaker) [12.50 pm]: I am honoured to be the patron of the Leonora Golden Gift, which is held over the long weekend in June. Now in its fourteenth year, Australia's richest mile running race attracts international standard athletes to share in a \$50 000 prize purse. The Shire of Leonora is the main sponsor and organiser of the gift, which attracts thousands of people to the town.

I offer my congratulations to official event organisers Charlotte Huckerby and Gavin Prime, assisted by works manager Dan Yates, deputy CEO Tanya Browning, CEO Jim Epis and all staff members. They also organise horse races, the Leonora Art Prize, entertainment, fireworks, markets, kids' attractions and the finish of the two-day Goldfields Cyclassic. Other major sponsors were Red FM, Outback Parks and Lodges, Lotterywest, the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, Gold Fields–St Ives, Eventscorp, the Department of Sport and Recreation, Cameco, BHP Billiton and royalties for regions.

Cash-strapped athletes highly value the gold nuggets donated by Minara Resources and St Barbara Ltd and the \$6 000 first prize for the elite mile. Peter Bol pipped Jeff Riseley, both Olympians, in what was a historic first win in the event by a WA athlete. Three time runner-up Bridey Delaney took out the women's elite race. The star of the event was young nine and a half-year-old Eastern Goldfields Little Athletics competitor Caylon Seelander, who won the Moneghetti medal, along with a \$1 000 cash prize, to recognise his outstanding performance. Young Caylon has won gold and silver in regional and state championships and has all the potential to be off to the Olympics one day to follow in Cathy Freeman's footsteps! Locally born and raised Kiara Reddingius won her fifth consecutive 120-metre sprint, much to the delight of the crowd.

PARALYMPIC GAMES — EQUESTRIAN TEAM

Statement by Member for Maylands

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [12.52 pm]: On 11 September in Rio, three Paralympic debutants will join Sharon Jarvis to make up the 2016 Australian Paralympic equestrian team. Jarvis will lead teammates Emma Booth, Katie Umback and Lisa Martin on the equestrian arena at Deodoro Stadium.

Australia has won nine medals in equestrian events at the Paralympic Games—three gold, one silver and five bronze—since the sport was introduced in Atlanta in 1996.

WA-based Jarvis, who has limited strength and movement on her left side as a result of bone cancer, has been training for eight years, after narrowly missing out on a medal at the Beijing 2008 games. This year she will be competing with horse Ceasy, a Dutch Warmblood mare, when she competes in the grade III class. She says, "I want to show cancer sufferers and survivors that anyone can achieve great things, and I particularly want to show everyone in country WA that they can get there too."

Twenty-five-year-old Emma Booth, a paraplegic, will be riding her 13-year-old Danish Warmblood, Zidane. Emma says that she has earned the right to compete at the top of her sport, which is amazing and exciting.

Forty-four-year-old Lisa Martin, who will be riding her horse First Famous, is relishing the opportunity to compete in Rio, along with Katie Umback, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis 10 years ago.

PARKERVILLE CHILDREN AND YOUTH CARE

Statement by Member for Swan Hills

MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills) [12.53 pm]: Over the past 113 years, Parkerville Children and Youth Care has been protecting and caring for the most vulnerable children and youth in our community. Many of these children and youth have suffered chronic histories of multiple abuse and display a range of trauma-related behaviours. Parkerville Children and Youth Care provides a therapeutic environment that utilises a range of professional services to children in their care and offers valuable outreach services and programs to the wider community for children, young people and families in need. The rich history behind Parkerville Children and Youth Care sees the organisation still connected to the original site founded by Sister Kate and Sister Mary. With many of the original buildings still standing, the out-of-home care team that works with the children and carers is located in the old school building. Part of the grant of \$232 000 received recently from Lotterywest will see the historic school renovated.

The grant awarded by Lotterywest will also go towards establishing a south west service centre for its therapeutic family services programs. South West Therapeutic Family Services provides a school-based support service in eight local schools in the area and provides a specialist psychology service for children, young people and families who have experienced abuse and trauma. The school-based support service program already works with more than 800 children. We thank Parkerville Children and Youth Centre for its many years of care for some of the most disadvantaged in our society.

EQUAL PAY DAY

Statement by Member for Fremantle

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle) [12.55 pm]: Today is Equal Pay Day and I want to take the opportunity to remind the Parliament that, notwithstanding the persistent nature of the gender pay gap in this country, our response should not be to give up and put this issue in the too-hard and impossible-to-resolve basket, but to redouble our efforts until real change is achieved. The national gender pay gap is currently 18 per cent, a figure that has not changed markedly over the last two decades. Shamefully, the gender pay gap in Western Australia has consistently been markedly higher than that—currently 24 per cent—and has not improved significantly over the last twenty years.

One of the legacies of the federal Gillard Labor government was the passing of legislation requiring reporting by employers on a number of very specific measures in relation to women's employment, because what matters is measured. The resulting data, collected by the federal Workplace Gender Equality Agency, was released earlier this year in cooperation with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre. It is very instructive and worth taking note of. It includes the beginning of a close analysis of rich source data, which looked at 12 000 employers and four million employees. The analysis has, for example, brought to light that at a key management personnel level, women can expect to earn \$100 000 per year less than men, and even less again when bonuses are taken into account. These figures are alarming, but there are some helpful trends that can help us close this shameful gap. More women on governing boards, for instance, can have a positive impact on narrowing the gender pay gap, so this practical measure should be implemented as a matter of priority.

EDNEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Statement by Member for Forrestfield

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [12.56 pm]: On Wednesday, 29 June 2016, I attended Edney Primary School in High Wycombe for a flag-raising ceremony along with my federal colleague the member for Swan, Steve Irons, MP. The school has invested in a further three flag poles, giving it a total of four flag poles, so that it can display the Australian flag, the Western Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Edney Primary School flag. It was my great pleasure as the state member of Parliament to present the school with a Western Australian flag.

The flagpoles are situated around the school's Anzac memorial, where the school comes together each year to remember the sacrifice of those brave men and women in combat on Anzac Day. The memorial will now have the four flags flying above it. It was great to see the students organising and running the flag-raising ceremony and to see the pride and enthusiasm from the students and the wider school community about finally having the four flags flying within their school grounds.

During the flag-raising ceremony I had a chance to address the school community and talk about the significance of flags: that they give us a sense of belonging and that they represent the ideals and beliefs we want others to see in us. Given that it was during the lead-up to the Rio Olympic Games, I also used the notion of all of our athletes uniting to represent our country under the Australian flag and, as such, representing all Australians. Therefore, there was an expectation that they would represent all Australians in a way that upheld the ideals and beliefs that were close to the hearts of all Australians. Similarly, with their school flag now flying within their school grounds, there was an expectation that all members of the Edney Primary School community would

aspire to the ideals that were represented by the school flag—things such as the school's values. I congratulate all at the school involved in the development of the four flag poles, and I hope the flags continue to fly proudly over the school grounds for many years to come.

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

Statement by Member for Mirrabooka

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka) [12.58 pm]: This week is National Child Protection Week, which emphasises that all children in our community have a right to feel safe and protected. The many events held in communities, such as one being held in Mirrabooka this afternoon, recognise the hard work of child protection staff who are devoted to children's wellbeing. It is therefore disturbing that we heard today from concerned workers who came to Parliament House to present a petition to the Legislative Council. Holding red hearts on the steps of Parliament House, members of the Community & Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association stood together to highlight the needs of children waiting for the government to care for them, as some 667 children sit on the waitlist for a Department for Child Protection and Family Support caseworker.

The petition presented to Parliament signed by almost 1 000 people opposed the \$40 million cut in funding to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. The workers alerted the Parliament to the increasing number of children requiring assistance over the last five years, at a time of reduction in funding, which escalates the risk for the most vulnerable children in this state. The workers at Parliament today spoke of workers becoming distressed, to the point of tears, worrying about the children they have not been able to assess because of the excessive workload placed upon child protection caseworkers.

The petitioners called on the government and Parliament to honour their commitment to the most vulnerable Western Australian children by providing enough resources to ensure that every Western Australian child at risk has a direct caseworker; committing to the ongoing funding of preventive programs to reduce the number of children being taken into care; ensuring that all Department for Child Protection and Family Support employees have a safe, fair and reasonable workload; exempting the DCPFS from budget cuts; and not privatising services delivered by the department.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CONSTITUTION AND ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2016

624. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Premier:

I refer to the legislation that has been passed in the other place to allow for two more members to be added to the Legislative Assembly.

- (1) Why, with so much other legislation still outstanding, including the Loan Bill that is needed to be passed by the end of October so that our nurses, police and teachers can be paid, is adding another couple of politicians to Parliament seriously a priority of the Premier's government?
- (2) Why is adding two more politicians a priority above dealing with the state's crippling debt position?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

- (1)–(2) If I am correct, I think that the bill for two more members of Parliament was introduced into the upper house by the National Party. It is not a priority for this government at all, but there is a point of view about representation for the state, and the state is growing. It is something that might be considered by the Parliament not for the following term of government, but for maybe the one after.

Mr M. McGowan: Is it your position?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I just said that it is not a priority.

Dr A.D. Buti: That's not what we're asking.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not care what you are asking, pal. It is not a priority of this government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is not a priority of this government. It is a bill introduced by the National Party. The upper house members have passed it. I do not expect that it will be debated in this chamber during this year. In terms of priorities of legislation, yes, there are a number of bills on the notice paper, as there always is at the end of a parliamentary session. Today we have the opportunity to pass the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016, and I hope we do. When we have in the upper house a Labor member of Parliament speaking for, I understand, six hours—a six-hour speech!—the Leader of the Opposition is not serious about passing legislation. There was a six-hour speech by one of your members!

CONSTITUTION AND ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2016

625. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Is the fact that the Premier's Liberal colleagues in the upper house have voted to support this legislation, which he appears not to support, not further evidence that he has lost control of his own MPs?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

For goodness sake!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: At least there is a good game of footy on tonight. That is all I can say about today, if that is the quality of the opposition's number one question about a piece of legislation introduced by our alliance partners and that upper house members voted in favour of. I see no circumstance in which it will be debated in this chamber, and the Leader of the Opposition thinks it is our priority! Our priority right now is to get the taxi bill through. Is the opposition going to support that today? We have allocated the whole day to the taxi bill. Is the opposition going to support it today or is it going to stand in the way of people receiving a \$20 000 payment?

PROJECT SEA DRAGON

626. Mr I.C. BLAYNEY to the Minister for State Development:

Can the minister please provide the house with an update on Project Sea Dragon?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I would be delighted, member for Geraldton. The member for Geraldton comes from an area that has a strong fishing base. It is a great pleasure to highlight to the house another very important project that will diversify and broaden the economic base of Western Australia, with a particular focus on the Kimberley. The Seafarms Group Project Sea Dragon is a potential \$1.8 billion investment into the north west of Western Australia and across into Darwin. The plan is for 120 jobs initially, expanding up to 700 jobs, so it is a major investment in Western Australia—indeed, in the Kimberley. The project will involve a number of towns in Western Australia. The actual quarantine and founder stock facility will be located in Exmouth. Some more breeding stock will be located in Darwin. The primary hatchery will be just across the border from Kununurra at a station called Legune, where the tiger prawns will be grown. They will then be transported to the feed mill and processing plant in Kununurra, broadening the base of Kununurra from not only agriculture, but also to aquaculture, and then it will be exported through Wyndham. Potentially, there will be 700 jobs in that area in the Kimberley and also in Exmouth and the Pilbara. It is expected that Seafarms will produce 100 000 tonnes of tiger prawns and export those to the Asian market. We are very well placed for that. All members in this house know how well we are positioned to export to the Asian region.

The Department of State Development has given this major project status. Hopefully, the investment decision for this very important project for the Kimberley will be made by the end of 2016. It is just another project that the Liberal–National government is supporting to diversify and broaden the state's economic base and create jobs for Western Australians.

HOUSING — PILBARA — MACRO REALTY DEVELOPMENTS — MINISTER FOR HOUSING

627. Mr F.M. LOGAN to the Minister for Housing:

I refer the minister to his admission in this place last night that he had met with Macro Realty investors on maybe, and I quote, "two or three" occasions.

- (1) At any of these meetings did either the minister, Ms Veronica Macpherson or any other attendee raise the importance of closing BHP Billiton's Kurra camp?
- (2) At these meetings did Ms Macpherson or any other attendee suggest that the closure of the BHP Kurra camp might support or help the development of the Newman estate project?

Mr B.J. GRYLLES replied:

- (1)–(2) I stood up in this Parliament and made a substantial contribution to the debate about the closure of Kurra camp. Kurra —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Just answer the question!

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington.

Mr B.J. GRYLLES: The Kurra camp was a construction camp for BHP in the expansion of its mining activities in and around Newman. It was a very poor quality camp. It has no lawn; it has no trees. It is essentially

square-box dongas with plastic chairs and a tin for a cigarette outside the door. In my view, for a modern community in Western Australia, it was disgraceful. When we have reports like the one done by the member for Eyre about the mental health of fly in, fly out —

Mr D.J. Kelly: Just answer the question!

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: You have asked the question. I will answer it, mate.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the first time. I do not need a running commentary on everything that happens here.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I was talking about mental health. This facility would have affected the mental health of the people who lived there because of its quality and design. Kurra camp was never designed for an operational workforce, and I welcome the fact that BHP made the decision to shut it; I welcome the fact that it did that. I spoke about the Kurra camp numerous times in the Parliament. I spoke about it on the radio and on TV, and I continue to advocate that that camp lease should not be extended. I raise the issue of camps and the FIFO workforce at just about every meeting that I have. I raise it at just about every meeting that I have. I cannot confirm what I discussed with someone at a meeting months ago; needless to say, I am always on the record about FIFO workforces and camps.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, you have asked a question; let the minister answer the question.

Point of Order

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Mr Speaker —

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I have not finished, mate.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No, you sit down. I am making a point of order.

Mr B.J. Grylls interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Just sit down.

The SPEAKER: Member for Pilbara, there was a point of order there. I call you to order for the first time. Member for Cockburn, do you want to raise a point of order?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I do want to raise a point of order. I have asked two simple questions, which the member continues to say he is trying to answer, but he has not made any attempt to answer any of them. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to direct him to answer the questions.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Cockburn, you have had your point of order. You have had a lead-in time, minister, and now you can move on to the questions.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I am on the public record opposing the extension of the lease on the Kurra camp in all forms.

HOUSING — PILBARA — MACRO REALTY DEVELOPMENTS — MINISTER FOR HOUSING

628. Mr F.M. LOGAN to the Minister for Housing:

I have a supplementary question. On how many occasions, either as minister or as a member, has the minister met or spoken with Ms Macpherson, and what other encouragement or support did he offer her?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS replied:

As a minister, I have had one conversation with Ms Macpherson, when she called me to say that she would take down the YouTube video, as the member requested me to do. That has been the only contact.

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

629. Mrs G.J. GODFREY to the Minister for Child Protection:

This week is National Child Protection Week. Can the minister outline to the house what the Liberal–National government has been doing to protect the most vulnerable children in our community?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL replied:

I thank the member for Belmont for the question, because I know that she is a strong advocate for all the people in her community, particularly children. As the member said, this is National Child Protection Week—a very important week in our community, not just for one week in the year, but throughout the year. I have to say that this government has a very proud record of what it has done in child protection since this Liberal–National

government has been in alliance. Can I say also that this government, and indeed this Premier, is the best friend of this sector. Over the period between 2008–09 and the present, we have increased funding by 83 per cent—thank you, Treasurer—into this sector, to make a difference to these children who are in vulnerable positions. That is an amount of \$642 million. In addition to that, not only to the department, there has been an increase of 117 per cent in funding to the non-government organisations whom we partner with, and who make a positive contribution in this area. That is a significant difference. Also, we have made a sizeable increase in the number of case load workers in this area, because we believe that that case load management area is critical, and I am very pleased to say that we have been able to achieve that. Our case load management averages about 12 cases per case load worker. That is the lowest in Australia, and very much near the lowest throughout the world. We are the envy of the world in this area, and this government has made that difference. This government only has made that difference. An amount of 15 cases has been set by the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission as what it recommends is acceptable, but we work on 12, so we are below. We are proud of that, and we will continue to do that.

I have to say that in this week, National Child Protection Week, I actually have not heard much from the opposition at all. I have not heard a word. I am sorry—a petition was tabled in the upper house today about the unsustainable workloads. Twelve is the lowest in the country—but wait, there is more. The other part of the petition was the failure of the national government to fund the child protection system. That is what the petition was today. That is all the opposition has said during National Child Protection Week.

I would like to read a couple of things, because some of the people in this chamber were not here in 2007, and I think they need to understand what it was like for the child protection system in 2007. I am quoting from articles by a couple of very astute journalists for *The West Australian*.

Several members interjected.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I am happy to wait.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. You have two minutes to finish your answer, minister.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I am very happy to mention this. Jessica Strutt, on 8 March 2007, wrote —

An independent report has recommended a complete overhaul of the beleaguered Department for Community Development after finding the child protection system is on the verge of collapse and the community has no confidence in the State Government's ability to protect vulnerable children.

Can I quote another one? Paul Murray wrote, on 13 March 2007 —

Premier Alan Carpenter's response to the Ford review came with no suggestion of remorse or apology for the Government's appalling performance over the past six years which has been, in the main, a mixture of wrong-headed ideology, denial and political bastardry.

...

In fact, the Ford review notes that many people —

Several members interjected.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: The opposition cannot handle it.

The SPEAKER: Members, thank you. Member for Cannington, I do not want you to start commenting on the notice paper. Thirty seconds, minister.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Thirty seconds, thank you. I will speak very fast, but I really want this message to get through.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the first time. Thirty seconds, minister.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: To continue —

In fact, the Ford review notes that many people submitted that the department had lost its focus since 2001—the year Labor came to power in WA ...

It had lost its way completely. The system needed to change. Guess what? We have changed the system, and we have made a difference. Our children are the best protected they have ever been, and we will continue to do that.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, I had to let the minister finish, because I gave her 30 seconds. If members want to quote from documents, we want short, succinct quotes. We do not want long quotes from documents.

ORD–EAST KIMBERLEY EXPANSION PROJECT

630. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Minister for State Development:

I refer the minister to yesterday's Auditor General's report into the Ord–East Kimberley development plan.

- (1) Did the minister or his office receive an advance copy of the report; and, if so, when?
- (2) Did the minister or his office receive an offer of a briefing from the Auditor General prior to the report's release?
- (3) What notification or advice did the minister receive from the Department of State Development about the response from that agency contained within the Auditor General's report?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. My recollection is that I was offered a briefing. My director general gave me a heads-up, and I had a briefing note from the agency.

ORD–EAST KIMBERLEY EXPANSION PROJECT

631. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Minister for State Development:

I have a supplementary question. In light of the fact that the minister knew nothing about the report yesterday, in the 24 hours since the release of the report, has the minister read it; and, if so, what does he intend to do about the litany of mismanagement identified in that Auditor General's report?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I am delighted to answer that very silly supplementary question. I said yesterday that I had not read the report. It is a very detailed report; I had two hours. I have since read the report, and I have adopted some very useful recommendations that will be implemented.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time.

ELECTRICITY MARKET REVIEW

632. Mr J. NORBERGER to the Minister for Energy:

Can the minister please update the house on the progress of the Liberal–National government's electricity market review, and share what reforms have been made?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. As he will remember, when we became the government in 2008, we inherited a lot of problems, including in the child protection system, but energy must have been one of the worst. The Labor Party undertook reform—if it can be called that—that, if anything, left the system as a basket case. When we came into government, the previous government had noted that electricity prices had to rise by 10 per cent a year. The whole purpose of the reform was to reduce electricity prices and to stop the subsidy growing. As I said, what has happened is that the electricity price has gone up by 70 or 80 per cent and the subsidy per annum has gone up from \$60 million to \$450 million.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Indeed, since 2009–10 we have put in \$2.2 billion to subsidise the consumption of electricity. That is the mark of a failed reform. We have undertaken a whole series of reforms, every one of which, by the way, they have resisted. We have put Synergy and Verve back together again. That has helped them to concentrate on driving efficiencies in the system. Since we have done that in the last two years and in the forward estimates, we have saved just shy of a billion dollars in subsidies that would have been either borrowed or otherwise.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the third time.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We have also undertaken a raft of other reforms, including in demand-side management, about which the shadow spokesman for energy first said, "Take the assistance away." Now, after he visited the major provider of demand-side management in Boston, he has come out and supported the retention of demand-side management and the high prices. I wonder why he did that. He must have done a Sam Dastyari. He has done a 180-degree flip.

We have also done a whole range of reforms, including driving major efficiencies in Synergy and Western Power. Western Power reform should save every individual household \$300 a year. That is reform. If they were in government, we would have had another large debt. The next series of reforms —

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough! Leader of the Opposition, I have been very lenient on you.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He is trying to obscure his failure.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, thank you.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He is trying to obscure failure.

The next reform, which is in a committee in the upper house, the Legislative Council, is to move the regulatory regime for electricity and gas to the Australian Economic Regulator. That is absolutely vital and important. They are agnostic on it—at least the shadow Minister for Energy is. It is vital for a range of reasons. As all local members know, when a business tries to attach to Western Power's network, there are large costs and large delays. It is particularly important for renewable energy. The move to the AER will reduce the cost and red tape and allow particularly renewable energy to attach to the grid significantly. The people opposite want to move to a renewable energy-focused development, but without going to the AER, it will not and cannot happen. I hope they support that through the upper house. So far it has been stuck there. The head of the committee should come out in two weeks' time. I hope they support it through the committee. I trust they will support that through both chambers of Parliament, because without it, all their cries or promises to move to a renewable world will fall flat. It cannot be done without a move to the AER.

We will undertake a range of other reforms to the system. We will lay them out over the next three or four months. That will show that we, unlike they, know how to reform the energy sector for the benefit of consumers rather than being a cost to taxpayers.

WESTERN POWER — PRIVATISATION

633. Mr W.J. JOHNSTON to the Premier:

I refer to the Liberal Party's plan to sell Western Power proposed in this year's budget.

- (1) Does the Premier support selling only 49 per cent of Western Power?
- (2) If so, what impact would selling only 49 per cent of Western Power have on the government's future budget plans?
- (3) What other sale conditions is he willing to accept?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

- (1)–(3) It is well known, and it was announced in the budget, that the state government was looking at a number of privatisations and legislation. The report has come out in the upper house on Utah Point. We hope we can proceed with that. I think we are very close to getting broad consensus in the racing industry on the sale of the TAB. I think most people would think it is not appropriate in a modern world for governments to own betting agencies. There is a difference of opinion between the Liberal Party and National Party on Fremantle port. We are looking at some assets. I think the energy sector in the Pilbara is an asset that we are looking at. Yes, Western Power is something that has been examined. I have said very clearly that we will not proceed with either the full or part privatisation of Western Power before the next election. However, we are doing some work on it and we are examining that. I do not know where the member's 49 per cent figure has come from. I presume it has come from out of the atmosphere. No such decisions have been made.

WESTERN POWER — PRIVATISATION

634. Mr W.J. JOHNSTON to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Would selling only 49 per cent of Western Power impact the government's future budget plans?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

I would think that selling one per cent of Western Power would impact on our future budget plans. No decision has been made. I do not know where the member's 49 per cent has come from. It is news to me.

TORNDIRRUP NATIONAL PARK — THE GAP AND NATURAL BRIDGE PROJECTS

635. Mr G.M. CASTRILLI to the Minister for Environment:

I understand that The Gap and the Natural Bridge projects, which were funded by the Liberal–National government, were recently recognised for excellence by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. Could the minister please update the house?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury for the question. I am pleased to advise that the Torndirrup National Park improvement project, of which the showpiece is the redevelopment of the lookout at The Gap and also the Natural Bridge near Albany, took out the top award at this year's Australian Institute of Landscape Architects WA chapter awards as the outstanding category winner of the year.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Magnificent!

Mr A.P. JACOB: Well done to the team, and well done to the Department of Parks and Wildlife design team in particular. This project also won the award for excellence within the tourism category. The Gap project features two new, world-class and, importantly, universally accessible lookout structures, with connecting paths, new picnic areas and a gathering area, world-class interpretation and, of course, a bigger car park. It was funded by the Liberal–National state government with \$6.1 million in redevelopment money, the culmination of five years' work and investment through the Department of Parks and Wildlife and the royalties for regions program. Since opening in April this year only, more than 200 000 visitors have already gone through.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I wonder if the member for Albany has gone there.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes. In fewer than six months, 200 000 visitors have already visited this new attraction.

That is not the only gong the state government won. In addition, the \$40 million Fitzgerald River National Park improvement project won the parks and open space award. That was a jointly funded program between the state and commonwealth governments. It was again a five-year project that involved the reconstruction and sealing of 40 kilometres of all-weather, two-wheel drive access throughout the Fitzgerald River National Park. Those improvements mean that for the first time in the Fitzgerald River National Park's history all main recreational sites and campgrounds on the eastern side of the park can be accessed via all-weather bitumen, and it also greatly improves dieback management within the Fitzgerald River National Park.

I would really like to congratulate the Parks and Wildlife team, including those who supervised the construction, and the Albany construction team members and the landscape architecture design team. It is an outstanding result to pick up not only Fitzgerald River National Park, but also take out the top gong for the new lookout at The Gap in Albany, one I predicted it would win when I opened it six months ago. It is clearly the standout landscape architecture design program for this year.

I am also pleased that Elizabeth Quay received a landscape architecture award in the urban design category.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They would hate that!

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is another state government gong.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Well done, Minister Day.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Well done, Minister Day! The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects clearly believes it is the best urban design project to have been done in recent years.

That is not all. Importantly, Fiona Stanley Hospital received the award for excellence in the civil landscaping category. That is four top gongs at this year's landscape architecture awards. The winners of the state awards are now eligible for recognition at the national level in October 2016.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Right, thank you very much. If the member for Albany is happy, I am happy. Let us move on.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you, Mr Speaker. With a strong showing at this year's state awards, I look forward to updating the house on our projects at the national awards in October.

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — LEAD CONTAMINATION

636. Mr R.H. COOK to the Treasurer:

I refer to the revelation that high levels of lead were found in the drinking water at the new children's hospital and the Treasurer's claim that it is not uncommon for issues of this nature to arise on the building sites of complex projects. Can the Treasurer please inform the house of any other building projects in WA that have lead in the drinking water and asbestos in the ceilings, and what is being done to determine the extent of the contamination in the current project?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. Yes, there were not high levels of lead but excessive lead was found, not in the drinking water but in the water system in the Perth Children's Hospital. The member asked what other recent ones there have been similar to this—Fiona Stanley Hospital.

Several members interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Let me finish. During the testing period for Fiona Stanley Hospital—before it was a hospital and when it was still a construction site—they found lead in the system.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Let the minister finish!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: They addressed it; they found the source and solved it, just like we will.

Mr R.H. Cook: What was the source?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am not the engineer. You people have specialist knowledge in sewerage systems—you go find it! The member asked me what other building has asbestos in the ceilings—Willetton Senior High School. Many high schools do. Many buildings do.

Mr R.H. Cook: When was Willetton high school built?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The member just asked me a question and I am answering it. We test the systems. When we found the asbestos, we asked what was the best and safest way for workers and others to remove the asbestos, and we are doing that. We have searched the building to find out if there was any more inadvertent asbestos in the system. We checked and there is not. We are addressing the problem. We will have it addressed in a timely manner without any additional cost to the state, before it becomes a hospital and before we take possession of it. We address the issues; we do not sit back and whinge and whine to the media and everything else—we get things done.

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — LEAD CONTAMINATION

637. Mr R.H. COOK to the Treasurer:

I have a supplementary question. Can the Treasurer give us the details of any other new building projects that actually have asbestos contamination? When did the government find out about the lead contamination at the new children's hospital and why did it not inform the public at the time?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

There are a couple of issues. I can remember that we spent a lot of money in Esperance. What did we spend? We spent \$30 million fixing up Labor's mess. That was lead. It was not just killing the birds; it was also threatening the lives of children in the area. We addressed that. We know the danger of lead. We identified the problem and we are solving it.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mr P.T. Miles: It was Alannah!

The SPEAKER: Members!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It was Alannah. The lovely Alannah; she is back.

Mr C.J. Barnett: The next Labor leader!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Uh-oh. Is she going to be the next shadow transport minister? Oh God! Keep her away from Esperance.

Mr F.M. Logan: What about asbestos in the children's hospital?

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, please.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We are resolving that. There is no asbestos in the children's hospital; there is a big construction site that will be a hospital that has some problems. We will resolve it. We will open the hospital and all the public of Western Australia can come and see the magnificent facility we have built for the children of Western Australia. We will put a placard there: "We built; they whinged. We built; they undermined." That is the contribution of the Labor Party. Do you think they would be able to do what we have done? Not a chance!

HEALTH — DECOMMISSIONED MEDICAL EQUIPMENT — AFRICA

638. Mr M.H. TAYLOR to the Minister for Health:

Can the minister please update the house on the decommissioned medical equipment and vital supplies from our hospitals that are benefiting African communities?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

Not only is this government doing outstanding things here in Western Australia, but also we are very keen to assist internationally in developing countries where we can. It is the case that since 2010, Western Australian hospitals have donated thousands of items of medical equipment to African countries, including Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somaliland. This has been done through the Department of Health's Global Health Alliance WA program, which has coordinated the donation of equipment that is assisting hospitals and people in less privileged nations to deliver and improve their basic healthcare services. This has been a program of a lot of interest to the Premier and also my predecessor, the member for Dawesville, both of whom have visited Zambia—in the case of the Premier, in 2014, and in the case of the previous Minister for Health, in 2015. Only a couple of months ago, Hon Helen Morton also visited the main hospital in the capital of Zambia, Lusaka, to see how this donated equipment is making such a difference. Items that have been donated include crutches, dressing trolleys, hospital beds, neonatal incubators and operating tables, which would be worth millions of dollars if purchased new.

This program for the donation of equipment has been made possible as a result of the \$7 billion redevelopment of the Western Australian hospital system by this government. The fact that much new equipment is being acquired, including for the Perth Children's Hospital, Fiona Stanley Hospital and Midland Public Hospital, has meant that a lot of equipment—for example, from Swan District Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital for Children when it is decommissioned—is able to be made available to assist in this international effort. In this context, prior to opening the Africa Down Under conference yesterday, the Premier visited Princess Margaret Hospital for Children with the Zambian High Commissioner, Mr George Zulu, and showed him the electrocardiograph machine that will be one of a number of items that will be shipped to Zambia, neighbouring countries and non-government organisations when PMH is decommissioned. I understand that this made the news on Zambian television last night. I have not seen it as yet, but it is certainly spreading the good work that is being done in Western Australia through our health system and under the leadership of the Premier to assist internationally in this very important way.

It is also important to appreciate that through the Global Health Alliance WA program there is an international effort to provide a boost to capacity of the local nursing and midwifery workforce in Tanzania, for example. Courses are delivered by Western Australian nurses and midwives on a voluntary basis via the community service leave provision, which allows Western Australian health staff to take a period of paid leave to perform charitable community work. So far, 178 clinicians have used the community service leave to volunteer in developing countries, including with the Australian Doctors for Africa organisation. I also make reference to the organisation Health Hope Zambia, which is very much involved in receiving the equipment that is being donated by Western Australia. I congratulate everybody who has played a role in this program, including the Premier, my predecessor the member for Dawesville, and all the staff in the Western Australian health system who are making this very important contribution to improving health care in Africa.

SYNERGY — DISAGGREGATION**639. Mr W.J. JOHNSTON to the Minister for Energy:**

I see today that after eight years of the Liberal and National Parties running the electricity system, the minister has announced that he has a plan to split Synergy.

- (1) Is it true that after being energy minister for three and a half years, the minister now knows what he wants to do with Synergy?
- (2) Having amalgamated Synergy as the first thing he did when he became minister, why is the minister now proposing to split Synergy again?
- (3) After three and a half years of developing his plan, on what date does the minister plan to split Synergy in two again?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

- (1)–(3) The member has been shadow Minister for Energy for as long as I have been Minister for Energy and he still does not get it. He has a hard time reading a newspaper article. When someone asked him the other day what his plan was for the energy sector, he said, "Why are you asking me? I'm a high school dropout. I don't know. I just go ask the Public Utilities Office." That is what he said.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, please.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Willagee, I call you to order. Minister, I want you to address the questions that have been asked through the Chair. Thank you.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I have not said that we are splitting Synergy. The newspaper article does not say that we are splitting Synergy. It does not say that. So, the central point of the question is false.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Are you—are you doing it?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No. The article did not say it. I did not say it. Where did he get it from? Made it up! So, for the rest of the questions, if the starting point of the question is false and baseless, how am I supposed to answer the rest?

SYNERGY — DISAGGREGATION

640. Mr W.J. JOHNSTON to the Minister for Energy:

I ask a supplementary question. I will read the minister's quote out of today's *The West Australian*—I am quoting him. It says —

“Whether it's splitting Synergy up or allowing private competition, ...

So, is the minister going to split Synergy up?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

The point that the member is missing is that we are committed to full retail contestability. Are you? That is the point. The question is: how do we get there? I said that the quote is quite accurate. Whether or not we split Synergy up or allow other ones to come on and compete with it, we are going to allow competition in what is currently the franchised market. We did not say that we are going to split up Synergy. That does not say that; it does not say that. So how the member can jump to that, I do not know.

Several members interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: They do not like it, do they! They do not like it! They went out and totally made a mess of the energy sector. We are systematically fixing their mess, and all they can do is make up stories that are not in the newspaper. They are hopeless.

The SPEAKER: That concludes question time.

ENVIRONMENT — COCKBURN SOUND — DISCHARGE

Question on Notice 5252 — Answer Advice

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [2.41 pm]: Pursuant to standing order 80(2), I ask why question on notice 5252 to the Minister for Environment, which was asked on 16 March, remains unanswered.

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef — Minister for Environment) [2.41 pm]: I will find out and get back to the member.

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

Department of Parks and Wildlife — Prescribed Burning Targets — Personal Explanation

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef — Minister for Environment) [2.42 pm]: I rise under standing order 148 to correct the record. On 19 May 2016, I informed the house of the introduction of new performance and reporting measures which were developed and implemented for the Department of Parks and Wildlife's prescribed burning program and which better reflect the outcomes and residual risks associated with fire management. As part of the department's data review for the annual reporting process for 2015–16, an error was detected in the spatial dataset that underpins reporting around one of these new measures, namely —

The area of prescribed burning completed in three zones at defined distances from the interface between populated areas and natural lands.

The annual prescribed burning target for the department's three south-west forest regions is 200 000 hectares. A portion of that annual prescribed burning target was allocated to three land management zones—A, B and C. Previously, the targets for each zone were reported as 20 000, 40 000 and 140 000 hectares respectively. The corrected targets are 20 000, 70 000 and 110 000 hectares respectively.

WATER CORPORATION — ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION BRANCH SALE — RCR TOMLINSON PROJECTS HANDOVER

Question on Notice 5607 — Answer Advice

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean) [2.42 pm]: Pursuant to standing order 80(2), I ask the Minister for Water why question on notice 5607, which was asked on 30 June 2016 and is about the contractual relationship between the Water Corporation and RCR Tomlinson, which is the company that bought the privatised construction division of the Water Corporation, has not been answered.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water) [2.43 pm]: I have actually signed that, so it should be with the member very shortly.

**MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD — PORTFOLIOS —
2014–15 ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE FINANCES — LEASES**

Question on Notice 5595 — Answer Advice

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [2.43 pm]: Pursuant to standing order 80(2), I ask the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Transport why question on notice 5595, which was asked on 30 June 2016, remains unanswered.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [2.43 pm]: I will follow up on that. I am not sure, and I will get an answer for the member as soon as possible.

TAXI AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [2.43 pm]: I rise to continue my remarks on the Taxi Amendment Bill. I hope that during the lunch recess, the member for South Perth was able to catch up with the member for West Swan—who I think sought him out—and put his views. One of the interjections from the member for South Perth was, “What would you know?” I will tell the member for South Perth what I know. I know about the taxidriver who came to see me. He used to live in the electorate of Kalamunda but has moved to Armadale due to family circumstances. He told me that he paid between \$150 000 and \$170 000 for his taxi plates. He said that he is now a broken man financially. This government is offering taxidrivers such as this man only \$20 000. Member for South Perth, regardless of whether someone went to university or did not go to university, or whether someone went to primary school or to high school, I think most people would believe that \$20 000 is not a fair adjustment package or compensation for a person who has paid up to \$170 000 for his taxi plates.

The member for Cannington talked in his contribution about “it’s the vibe”. Of course, that brings up the movie *The Castle*. *The Castle* was about how the government had taken property on unjust terms. This is not related to this Parliament, because we are a state Parliament, but the Australian Constitution states that the federal Parliament is not able to take a person’s property on unjust terms. “Just terms” does not mean market value. It refers to what is fair and reasonable. I do not think anyone on the government side of the house would think that \$20 000 is fair compensation for a person who has paid \$170 000 for some property. Taxi plates are a form of property. They are not real property, such as land, but they are personal property. They are a chattel. The government is not demanding that that property be given back. However, with the arrival of Uber into the market, the government is saying that it will take that property back from taxidrivers. It is not a compulsory acquisition; I understand that. However, many taxidrivers have no choice but to give their property back to the government. Taxidrivers bought those plates in a market that was regulated by the government. The government now wants to give them back only \$20 000 for their plates.

I hope the Minister for Transport in his response will provide the rationale for why he has come up with that figure of \$20 000. I have read the minister’s second reading speech, and I do not think the rationale has been made out. I am sure the minister will provide the rationale. However, I do not think the minister will be able to argue that that is fair compensation. It is not. Taxidrivers have paid \$170 000 or \$200 000 for their taxi plates, and the government is going to give them \$20 000. That is not fair. The minister may say that he has made that decision because of X, Y or Z. That will then be on record and we can debate it. However, surely the minister will not be able to make the argument that that is fair compensation.

The taxidriver who came to see me now lives in Armadale, but he formerly lived in Kalamunda. Kalamunda is a nice part of the world, Minister for Health. The minister should also have recognised me when he talked about Zambia, because I was on the original charity bike ride that raised \$300 000 for the hospital.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Well done!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thank you very much, minister. That is very gracious of you.

By the end of my conversation with this taxidriver, he was crying. If taxidrivers own property that is worth \$200 000, but, due to circumstances in the industry, that property is taken away from them and they are given compensation of only \$20 000, that will not assist those taxidrivers who rely on the income that they can generate in the industry.

I do not know where the member for Southern River gets off. I really just do not understand him. I may not agree with the minister, but I understand the minister when he speaks, even though I may not agree with his rationale et cetera. But I think the member for Southern River is in cloud cuckoo-land because he comes up with rationale that just does not make sense. He talks about taxidrivers who say they are doing really well. Since Uber has become a reality in the Perth market, I have not come across a taxidriver who believed that they were doing well. Since Uber has become a reality, no taxidriver that I have come across in Perth is doing well. This same taxidriver originally from Kalamunda said that his income has been reduced, depending on which week, by

between 40 to 60 per cent. His income has reduced from 40 to 60 per cent, and he still has additional costs with a reduction of income. The best the government will do is give him \$20 000 for something that was worth from \$160 000 to \$170 000 when he purchased it. He purchased taxi plates from a government under government regulation and agreed to the government conditions.

I will be interested in receiving the minister's response. I will be interested to know whether the member for West Swan has received any takers from her offer to negotiate a better deal for taxidrivers. I know she has sought out the member for South Perth, who was very keen before lunch to speak to the member for West Swan—if she sought him out—and I think I heard it over the Parliament House public address system.

Mr J.E. McGrath interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You were working in your office at 10 minutes to two o'clock?

Mr J.E. McGrath: I went to my office; I was on my way back when I got the phone call.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay. I am sure the member for West Swan is prepared to go outside and talk to the member for South Perth now!

Mr D.A. Templeman: He was hiding behind his Merc!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016. It is not a bill that will provide any relief to taxidrivers that is considered to be fair. Although we will not necessarily expect the government to come up with a compensation package relating to the market value of the cost when drivers purchased the plates for \$170 000 to \$180 000, it cannot be seen to be fair compensation or adjustment to receive only \$20 000. When that is contrasted with what potato growers received when their market was deregulated, the Labor Party championed deregulation of the potato industry. The so-called free enterprise party over the other side was behind the eight ball when it came to that.

A government member interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not know whether it was the member for Murray–Wellington who interjected, but his government, before the last election, was not supporting the Leader of the Opposition's call for the deregulation of the potato board.

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: He was not! The member came after —

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Murray–Wellington, you are not at the football yet. Let this member continue.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The compensation the potato growers received is interesting when compared with what is being offered to these taxidrivers, who had their income reduced by up to 60 per cent and are being offered this pittance of \$20 000. It is not just, and it is just not fair.

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.54 pm]: I rise to make what, in the words of the member for Armadale, might be one of my brief contributions to this place. The member for Armadale got a bit upset earlier today, but I felt that he was attempting to pre-judge me before I had had a chance to speak on this issue with the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016. I want to make a couple of points. I became very upset when a lot of our members in this chamber, a lot of backbenchers, were being pilloried for misleading taxidrivers who had come to our electorates and were told, "We will support you; we will fight for you on this issue because we believe you need to be looked after." We went to our party room and convinced the minister. I must say that in a couple of meetings with the minister's agency, the people there were very disinclined to look at a levy because they felt it was going to be too difficult—and we said, "Minister, if we don't do something for these drivers and do not bring in a levy, it is going to be difficult for some of us to support what our government is trying to do." Bear in mind that backbenchers do not control the government. The government is controlled by cabinet, but we get a say, and in our party room, we do speak. We have a lot of very vocal discussions on a lot of matters. I do not know what happens in caucus, but we have a say in our party room. I am looking forward to hearing what the minister will say later. However, I do recall as follow-on from that meeting, the member for Carine asked a question of the minister in this place about a levy, and the minister informed Parliament that the government or his agency would be looking at some kind of levy. Most governments in Australia have looked at levies. Some have gone straight through and implemented them; others have problems with them. One of the biggest issues is how to collect levies. We did not care about that. We said to the minister that we want a levy, and we want to help those people who have been to our electorate offices.

I refer to my background. I am from Fremantle. I grew up in Fremantle when a local, Vodanovich, ran the taxi company. I have grown up with taxis all my life. I support Swan Taxis. I am a customer of Swan Taxis. I would

not even know what an Uber car looked like, and I support the local industry. Drivers who pick me up regularly know that I am a supporter of Swan. I am also a supporter of people I know who started out with nothing; they were young people with families who started out driving for a cab owner. They worked 17 to 20 hours a day sometimes to try to eke out an existence to be able to save enough money to one day buy a set of plates. Once some bought that first set of plates, they were lucky enough to buy another set of plates. They bought those plates in the regulated industry where they knew that there were fees and charges put in and they could get a guaranteed return on their investment.

I want to tell a story that I raised in the party room about a constituent of mine who lives in Waterford. He is a Lebanese migrant. This guy was born in 1949 and he came to Australia in the late 1960s. He spent the first 12 months in Sydney, and then he came over and he worked up in the Pilbara. His first job in the Pilbara was as a kitchen hand. As his knowledge of English improved, he decided he wanted to be part of the general workforce on the mine, and he was able to do that. He continued to work in that industry for many years until he got to a stage in which he had saved enough money to start investing. He and his wife looked at shares and other investments and decided they would start investing in taxi plates, so they bought taxi plates. Over time, they bought six plates between them. The plates were bought over a 15-year period starting from 1995 until 2010. They were bought for between \$180 000 and \$270 000. Like a lot of investments, people do not just get the cash and buy a house or an investment property, or buy a set of taxi plates; these people have to borrow money. They used their home as collateral to make this investment, which was going to be for their retirement or their superannuation. They now find themselves in a very vulnerable position. As I said before, when they first bought their taxi plates they knew how much their investment income would be and what their turnover would be and, if they leased their plates out to a driver, they would get that return. Now they find themselves in a very vulnerable financial position. They are retired; they were hoping to become self-funded retirees but they still owe \$700 000 on that investment. The \$20 000 they will get for each plate—I think it is up to five plates—will not go anywhere near repaying the debt they have accrued. They might even have to sell their house.

As members of Parliament we represent constituents from all walks of life. We have all been approached by people such as this gentleman. We said that we would do our best to get them the best possible deal. The Minister for Transport finds himself in a very difficult position. We are not the only state having problems. The Victorian government wants to bring in a \$2 levy to try to get some funds to compensate cab plate owners but they are having problems with the opposition. The opposition is saying it will be too difficult to do. I had forgotten that former minister Alannah MacTiernan offered to buy out the plates for \$220 000 to \$230 000 but the plate owners did not accept that. But that was before Uber. It was a different world back then. Those drivers probably thought their plates would be worth a lot more than that. They went up to \$300 000. We live in a different space now. The world has changed. No government is going to be able to stop Uber. When I travel in cabs, I ask cabbies, “How is it going?” They tell me it is very tough out there. They say, “We might get two jobs in a whole shift.” The world has changed; it is a tough world. I do not think Uber drivers should be picking up off ranks, which is illegal. Taxi ranks should be somewhere where drivers at least have the protection of getting patronage that they are entitled to from those people. As the member for Cannington pointed out, every bit of the footpath on which a Uber customer stands is like a rank because they just call a cab to where they are.

Another story that I read at the weekend, or the weekend before, was about a young cabbie with a family who has taken out a loan to buy taxi plates and the bank is now worried that he has not been able to make any loan repayments. This was raised by another member today. As I recall that story, he said if he could get the \$20 000 now, it would be a big help. He would at least be able to go to the bank and say, “Here is a payment and give me more time.” The Minister for Transport is trying to pass this bill in Parliament today so that we can give those drivers \$20 000 for up to five taxi plates, but I see that as a starting point. I spoke to the member for West Swan today and she said that the opposition wants one of two things: a voluntary buyback, number one, or a compensation payment. I would support a voluntary buyback because not all owners want to sell their plates. I support a voluntary buyback, but none of this can be achieved unless we have a levy to raise the money. As a user of cabs, I would be happy to pay that levy. The people in this industry have given so much to the Western Australian community over the last 50 to 60 years as a regulated industry that we owe it to them to do that. I discussed that with the minister today and the minister knows the view of government members. I am interested to hear what the minister says when he responds. I know that a few other speakers from our side want to say something too.

We agree with the member for Armadale on this. We also want an outcome. We know that \$20 000 is not a lot to help most plate owners, but we have to find the best way through this. If this legislation is not passed today, at least give \$20 000 per set of plates now—straightaway. It is the minister’s job to sort out where we are going in the future. I am calling on the Minister for Transport and my government to come up with a better deal for taxidrivers and taxi plate owners.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [3.05 pm]: I, too, would like to say a few words about the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016. I would like to express my support for the taxi industry. About 30 members of the taxi industry

recently visited me in my office to speak about their issues. Prior to that, I have been dealing with members of the taxi industry in various forms for over 12 months and have been liaising with the Minister for Transport and the minister's staff for well over 12 months about this issue. As a matter of fact they were probably scared to cross me in the corridor on many occasions because I kept chewing their ears off about this and I thought they might take out a restraining order against me! Luckily, that did not happen. When I looked at what was happening with Uber, I did a little bit of research. I found out that Uber has invaded the whole world. It has entered every country around the world. Obviously, they are now in every Australian state. I wondered how all the other states and other countries were dealing with this. Like Western Australia, I could see that they were also struggling to find an answer. They were struggling to deal with a multinational company that has new technology and a new way of working. We had an antiquated system that had been broken for a long time. For many reasons there had not really been a holistic approach to the industry. I looked to see what all the other Australian states were doing. When I saw we were offering a \$20 000 adjustment package and a hardship fund of up to \$75 000, I did not think that was anywhere near enough. To be honest, like the member for South Perth, if that was the only thing the government was putting on the table today I would not be supporting the bill. However, I am conscious of the financial position of many people in the taxi industry and I am conscious that that \$20 000 plus—potentially \$75 000—is at least a starting point. But it is nowhere near enough.

Interestingly enough, I looked at the legislation that was introduced in New South Wales on 2 June 2016. The minister there made a statement that the package they were offering is one of the most generous packages in the world. When I looked deeper into it, what is NSW offering? They are offering \$20 000 per plate for a maximum of two plates, as well as a hardship fund.

Mr D.C. Nalder: And the value of their plates.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: And the value of their plates. I thought, “And that’s the most generous in the world!” I was shocked to even see that. When I look at what is happening around Australia —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Every single government is in this position, member for Bassendean. I think the member needs to understand what is going on around Australia. We find ourselves in this difficult position. New South Wales is offering a levy. I thought a levy sounds like a good idea. It is a good way to get some money back into the system and then be able to compensate people appropriately. I do not know what an appropriate level of compensation is, but I know that the industry has suffered a lot and that the value of plates has gone down a lot. I believe that that assistance should allow plate owners to adjust to whatever the changes are. I do not know what that figure should be—it might be \$50 000, \$100 000 or \$200 000—but we need to work through that. The Minister for Transport has said that he will get his department to look at how we introduce a levy and work through what an additional assistance package might be. My understanding is that the assistance package is not about people giving their plates back; it is about keeping their plates, running their business and still working in that environment but getting a reasonable amount of money, whatever that is. I have been working very hard on that front and have made a commitment to all the people I have spoken to that I will work within this government and with members on our side of the house to make sure that people get a fair deal. I think all we are looking for is for people to get a fair deal. We need to work through what that is. This Taxi Amendment Bill does a couple of things. It provides for \$20 000 to be given right now. It will also give people the opportunity to apply —

Mr D.J. Kelly: Today?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: As soon as it gets through the system, yes.

The member for Bassendean does not have to treat it like a joke; this is a serious issue. He was trying to make it a serious issue and now he is joking.

Several members interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: The bill includes an option to provide \$20 000 plus up to a \$75 000 hardship amount. I have said to people that I would like them to have access to it as soon as possible. I do not want to hold up this bill and be mucking around with ifs, buts and maybes and arguing with the opposition about what should or should not happen. I think plate owners need this money now; they need to get it as soon as possible. I think also that it is not enough. We need this levy. We need to put more money in the coffers and make sure we make that adjustment to whatever it is. There are a couple of players here. We are talking about new entrants to the market in people who have paid a lot of money; recent arrivals to Australia who have started their own business; people who have owned plates for up to 50 years and passed them from generation to generation; and people who treat their investment as their retirement fund. There are many people in different situations. Some are in financial hardship today. Some may not be in financial hardship; however, their assets have been eroded quite considerably and that will affect their retirement. A lot of factors need to be taken into account concerning who needs to get what support and how quickly they need to get it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Excuse me, members! It is getting a bit loud.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It is not an easy issue. I have tried to get my head around it. In the taxi industry, there are dispatch services, management companies, plate owners, drivers and those who lease the plates. Those are five groupings. From what I understand, over a long time, to a large degree, those groups have operated independently, not as a united body to represent their best interests. When most people think of the taxi industry, they think of Swan Taxis. Swan Taxis does not own taxi plates but most people in the community do not know that. I think of it as, effectively, a dinosaur Uber giving out jobs and charging people money for that. To the best of my knowledge, Swan Taxis has not reduced its rates since this has happened. It is the major player in this industry and the people who have made them very rich over a long period are now suffering. This peak company, which has been getting wealthy on the backs of each and every one of the taxi plate owners, has not cut its fees and rates to help them out, but plate owners are cutting the rates they charge management companies so they can survive, so drivers can survive and so that plate owners can survive. It is a disgrace for Swan Taxis not to be doing more to try to help and take a more proactive approach in representing the industry. I am not an expert, but I have learnt a lot over a short time and I am very, very disappointed.

A lot of people who have recently bought plates may be familiar with all the rules, regulations and laws and the traps out there, but no-one has said that they were not buying something that involved risks, as there are in every investment. Obviously, this industry has been subject to a lot of government regulation and control. As we can see here today, when the government sticks its nose in business and tries to control people, businesses and industries the way it has here, and as it has with other entities in the past, things can go pear-shaped. It is always best for the government to walk away when it can. My view is to let the private sector, individuals and small business operators run things and let us look at how we can assist with rules and regulations.

People talk about the government selling plates, and I have information to that effect. The last time that happened was in 2011. The amount was not \$200 000, member for Hillarys; it was about \$130 000 because peak-period plates were converted to full plates and they paid the difference. Maybe it was before.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It was about \$190 000-odd.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Yes, but \$56 000 or thereabouts was given as a credit. I do not want to go into the details, but the bottom line is, yes, overall it cost about \$200 000 to get a plate. They might have bought the peak-period plate 10 years ago but they had to pay an additional fee to convert it to a full-period plate. Yes, I believe the government needs to very seriously take that into account because, if in 2011 we were allowing people to do that, we should have been giving them better advice and saying, “Maybe you shouldn’t be converting your peak-period plate to a full-time plate; maybe that’s not the smartest thing to do at the moment because the industry is going through a bit of a transition and we don’t know where it will end up so it might not be the smartest investment.” Obviously, the department does not say those sorts of things. I feel genuinely sorry for those people. The cousin of a good friend of mine recently bought a plate for \$345 000 in, I think, 2014. When he told me that, my jaw dropped. Mind you, everyone in his family’s jaw dropped as well because he did not tell anyone; he just went out and did it. I think the advice from everyone at that stage would have been do not do that. But he did not know; he was in the industry and thought it was all okay and made that investment. I feel very sorry for people like that. I do not think people should have to go through what plate owners are going through, especially financially. I know lots of people—family and friends—who have invested in businesses that have gone pear-shaped, whether it be through their own fault, competition or regulatory change, and I have seen them lose a lot of money and their lives go back a lot. I have felt that pain. In my former life at the tax department, I have discouraged people from investing in certain businesses, saying, “I wouldn’t do that if I were you; I think you’re taking a bit of a risk and I don’t think the reward is there for the risk you’re taking.” People do not listen; they want to try it themselves and later on we feel really sorry that we could not convince them properly that it was not the right decision. If it is close family, we feel even worse. I feel the pain and I feel genuinely sorry for each and every one of those affected.

As a member of government, I have learnt in this job that nothing is easy, unfortunately. Everything that is important to the community is important to us as members of Parliament. But trying to work through the bureaucracy and the legislation and priorities and arguing backwards and forwards is complicated. No doubt people on both sides of the house strongly support each and every one of those in the gallery and want to see them get the best possible outcome. How we get there has not been an easy process to this point. Between now and whenever there is a resolution, there is still a bit of pain to go through, unfortunately. I do not know whether there is an ideal solution. I hope the future of the industry turns out to be bright and plate owners end up going into bigger and better things down the track. I cannot say whether that will happen but that is my hope because we need the taxi industry; it is important to this state. It has done a great job for many years. People tell stories about bad taxi rides, but no-one tells the stories about the bad behaviour of passengers and the abuse and the hard time they give drivers and how they provoke them with what they say and do. To be honest, I would not do their job; it is a difficult job. They deserve all the recognition in the world for what they do, and what they are going through here today does not make it any easier. Although technology and the world are moving at a rapid pace,

unfortunately in a lot of cases, government and bureaucracy are part of a slow dinosaur. It needs to build up momentum, and that has been shown over many years. I know we argue with the Labor Party that it should have done this or that and that we say to them that when they were in government they did not do anything. We argue that backwards and forwards on different issues. I know that members opposite have talked about wanting to do a buyback, but I am not sure that they introduced any legislation into Parliament. I am pretty sure that a bill did not go through the lower house. I understand that Labor Party members say they wanted to do this but did not get support from the industry or the Liberal Party, and because it was not going to pass in the upper house it did not introduce it in the lower house. I searched *Hansard* and also got staff to look for it, but we could not find anything. The staff could not find what members opposite were talking about. The Labor government should have introduced it and pushed it through the lower house, and if it did not go through the upper house, so be it, but it would have been on the record. I did not find that. It may be that the 2005 legislation that the member for West Swan referred to did happen, but I could not find it in *Hansard*.

Several members interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I tried to find it and I asked the staff to help me, but they could not find anything and that is disappointing. I do not know what the member for West Swan has on her agenda, and obviously the member for South Perth mentioned buybacks and an increase in the compensation package. I do not have an issue with increasing the buyback package once the levy is introduced and it starts generating some funds. As I said, if that ends up being \$100 000, \$200 000 or \$300 000, I do not really care what the figure is—the more money we can generate, the better. If the community is getting the benefit of cheaper fares through Uber or whatever other company and if that provides a different service and the taxi industry morphs into something different, that is an opportunity for taxidriviers. It has obviously galvanised the industry to talk to each other and to work more closely together to understand that they can collectively make a difference and try to achieve a better result. Taxidriviers need to continue talking to each other to try to make sure that whatever the future is that they are dictating that future and it is not being dictated to them by Swan Taxis or anybody else, and that plate owners are dictating what that future is. At the same time, members in this house need to make sure that we support taxidriviers and give them financial assistance to help with whatever hurt the introduction of these new technologies has brought into the industry. The fact that the government has not been able to move quickly enough to give the industry that support means that we need to do better. I have no doubt about that. We need to move faster and become more agile. At the same time, I encourage taxidriviers to still talk to their local members of Parliament and to understand that we all want to do the right thing and look after them, but it is never simply black and white as some members opposite would have them think. I am not sure that the opposition, if it were in our position, would do anything different. In the past they have not done the things that we have done, but they are criticising us for taking so long to do them.

I reinforce the fact that taxidriviers have my support and my ear. They can visit me at any time. I can see Athan in the public gallery, whom I have met on numerous occasions. My door is always open, Athan, as it is to everybody. I do not think I have ever knocked back meeting with anybody, and I have opened doors for other meetings that maybe had not been easy to achieve prior to talking to me. I think all of those in the public gallery can see that I have tried to be as genuine as I can in my support.

Mr P.C. Tinley: Are you Pontius Pilate now, mate?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It is not Pontius Pilate; it is a serious issue and I have been working on this for a long time.

Mr P.C. Tinley: You just washed your hands of it.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I am not washing my hands of anything. The member is treating this as a joke!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Member for Willagee, thank you.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It is ridiculous, member!

Ms S.F. McGurk: Actions speak louder than words!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That is right, and I have been working on this for a long time. How long has the member for Fremantle been working on it? Five minutes!

Ms S.F. McGurk: And what have you done?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I have done a lot, actually, because the situation has changed a lot compared with where it was, and I have been supporting lots of people. I am not going to take any more time. I need to finish up, because we want to try to get this through today by five o'clock. I believe that the opposition Whip said it will get through Parliament, so hopefully we will get it to the upper house. The sooner it gets through, the sooner the people in the industry will get some financial assistance from this Parliament and this government. I thank you again for coming in today.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Members of the gallery, you are most welcome to be here, but you are not permitted to speak out.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The ACTING SPEAKER: Security! I understand, but you are not allowed to speak in the Parliament. We welcome you here, but if you speak again I will have to ask security to take you out.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [3.24 pm] — in reply: I firstly acknowledge that this has been a tough amendment and very tough changes that the industry faces. It has not been easy, but it is a phenomenon that has occurred right around the world. It occurred in a lot of places before it occurred in Western Australia. Therefore, I thought it would have been far easier for us to look at what other jurisdictions were doing to find guidance on the way through and forward. That has been one of the difficulties. There has been some criticism today about the time it has taken the government in Western Australia to tackle this issue. I can share with members that every jurisdiction in Australia has struggled with the same issue. I have had a look at when uberX first entered each state and when the first lot of policy reform was announced in each state. I can say that in WA the bill took 20 months; in New South Wales, it took 20 months; in Victoria, it took 32 months—if it gets going in January 2017—in Queensland, it took 28 months; and in the Australian Capital Territory, 12 months. That is not to make an excuse. I would love to have come out with a raft of changes and been able to do that immediately and to help people find a way through this but, as I said, it has not been easy. The government has the responsibility when it is spending taxpayers' money to make sure it can justify any action that it undertakes.

I have had various meetings with respective transport ministers in other jurisdictions—both Liberal and Labor transport ministers. When we get together to discuss issues like this, we put politics aside in those types of forums and we sit down and share with each other how we are trying to deal with the issue. We share cross boundaries, because we do not need to be political when we deal with other states and we try to help each other to find resolutions. This has been quite difficult, and we have looked to each other as to what we are implementing. Western Australia has had an advantage over other states in that a certain percentage of our plates are licensed off the state. Every other jurisdiction said, “Boy, we wish we had taken that step and had a similar situation.” For Western Australia to have been able to withhold over 400 licences out of the marketplace is something the other states would dearly have liked to have done as well.

In this process I want to clarify a little about this bill, because there has been a lot of noise today that would suggest that the \$20 000 payment is our assessment of the value of the business. It is not. A few members have acknowledged that the government has been looking to do a lot of other things to try to make this process easier, more equitable and fairer for everybody. That in itself has been challenging because we found ourselves at the forefront of this, from a global perspective, trying to find a more equitable way to deal with it. From a compliance perspective there were claims made today that we have not done anything. I have not updated the house recently on this, but members would know that I announced that 29 Uber driver were being prosecuted, but the number of Uber drivers being prosecuted at this point is in excess of 40. That in itself has been difficult because we have no laws available to us to lean on to prosecute the dispatch service. We have had access only to the drivers of the vehicles. That has been in itself a challenge for us to undertake. Then we saw activities in which our enforcement officers within the department were basically black-banned from accessing the services, and we had to get private investigators involved to try to enforce the law.

As an individual, was I happy with the way that Uber entered the market in Western Australia? I was not at all happy. I have never ever caught an Uber vehicle, and I do not intend to, because I struggle with some of the values of the organisation. I do not like the way it entered the market. I have only caught taxis in Perth and I intend to continue doing that.

When the government looked at what other jurisdictions were doing with allowances and we tried to look at a way through, we found that a lot of jurisdictions had introduced a \$20 000 payment similar to the one we have introduced, but they are using a levy to collect and fund that payment. We are not looking to do that. We are looking to get that money without any impost on the consumers of taxis. We also did not want to restrict it. I think New South Wales has restricted it to two licences and I think South Australia is similar. South Australia's payout is \$30 000, which is a bit higher, but it does have a levy. Under our laws, there is a maximum of five licences, and we wanted to make sure that operators could get the \$20 000 for all five.

We asked how this was fair and how we were to look at it. This is where we had to track the volume of taxi fares flowing through. We have continued to monitor that, and I stood up in this house in May and shared the data, after considerable pressure. The member for Carine has been one of the loudest advocates in the party room for us to consider further amendments. We continue to monitor the data. We have been monitoring data about the total taxi fares across the industry, and I have been looking at it. I have it here, and I am happy to table the report. It shows me the total volume of fares in the taxi industry on a quarter-by-quarter basis since 2012, split

between dispatch and rank and hail. In 2015, when we were trying to work through an appropriate measure, the reduction in taxi fares was around 15 per cent. When we were looking at pulling 20 per cent of the taxis out of the industry, the \$20 000 figure was not representative of the impact on the industry.

We saw that the industry needed to change. I know that the majority of taxidriviers and operators are genuine, honest, hardworking people. However, the problem we had was that if there was a bad apple, and that did occur from time to time in the industry, the whole industry wore it, because we had no brand or identification—a taxi was a taxi. We saw discrete values placed on various aspects of the value chain. We have dispatch, we have a licence, we have the operator of the vehicle, we have a driver—to keep it in simple terms—and we have a customer. Within the taxi industry itself discrete values have been placed on these. We have seen a company such as ComfortDelGro, over a number of years, exit from driving and operating vehicles and move back to just being a dispatch service. It takes very little responsibility or accountability for the quality of the vehicle or the competence of the driver. What comes into the marketplace has been left to government regulations and individuals to decide. Successive governments, irrespective of politics, have tried to tackle improving the quality of drivers and to regulate the industry, and we ended up putting more red tape into the system and creating more roadblocks against the industry operating in a fair and effective manner.

These things have made it difficult. The entry of Uber and other such companies around the world into the marketplace, and the demand from the community for a better standard of service, is where this nexus is. In politics that makes it very difficult. Around Australia, the states are split between Liberal Party governments and Labor Party governments, and each one has been trying to tackle the same issue. Politics aside, when a government is trying to work through these changes, and the community is demanding a better standard, that government has to listen to that demand and work out how to transition to that and get that outcome for the broader community. We have been faced with a situation in which broader communities are demanding a level of change.

This bill is the start of the reforms. The aim is to make it a very simple bill so that it does not require huge amounts of debate, because we want to get the payment out there as quickly as we can. We also said that the major part of the reforms will come in the second tranche. They have been well underway for some considerable time, and I have a deadline to receive those reforms by the end of November this year. The difficulty, given that this is an election year, is whether we can get those reforms into Parliament in time. If we are realistic, we are going to struggle to get that second tranche introduced, which looks at a lot of issues to do with creating a level playing field. It looks at the additional issues that I mentioned in May about how we can potentially generate additional funds for the industry, and I would really like to achieve that outcome. I do not have a set number in mind, but, as a government, we need to work out what that number needs to be so that we can justify it to the broader community.

This bill is about the transition allowance. It frees up the market so that people can own more than five taxi plates, so we can potentially allow the demand to increase. It is a simple change to the legislation. A lot of the other reforms require substantial changes to the legislation, because it is not acceptable that only drivers and operators of vehicles are held to account for the quality of service being delivered. We need to make sure that dispatch services, all the way through the system, are accountable for the quality of service that is delivered. When I look at ComfortDelGro, Swan Taxis or Uber, I see dispatch services. They need to be held to account for what they are doing. The lack of law that exists in just about every jurisdiction around the world to deal with dispatch shows that there is a massive flaw in the current act. We are looking for massive changes to that act, but we want to simplify it at the same time. If we can get the industry to take ownership of the delivery of a quality service and a quality customer proposition, it means that the government can reduce the red tape and make it simpler for people in the industry to operate. The delays at the moment in getting people trained up to drive taxis is impeding taxi operators, licensees and so forth from making sure that their cars are running.

We are looking to do a number of reforms, and we have been engaging with the industry. Today there was criticism that the government has not engaged and consulted with the industry. I heard the member for Mandurah, and was I a little bit disappointed in some of the commentary? Yes, I was, because I and my office have met with Mandurah Taxis in excess of 70 times. The broad discussion has been around whether, in the future, Mandurah should remain a regional taxi service or become part of the metropolitan area taxi service. The company agrees that that is the debate that we need to have. We have been talking that through with the company and trying to understand the consequences of those changes. At the moment, the rest of the metro taxi services cannot operate in the Mandurah area, and Mandurah Taxis cannot operate here. Mandurah Taxis wants the benefits of being part of the metropolitan area, but wants also to retain the benefits of being a regional service. We often see that in Mandurah across a number of issues. That is one of the challenges that we face.

As I said, the transition allowance of \$20 000 is really just the first step, and we need this bill to go through to enable us to access funds from the taxi industry development account pool that exists today. Without that, we cannot make that payment. That is why this bill is going through. The hardship allowance, as we have talked about in the past, does not require the bill to be passed, but it does require due process to be established and

independent bodies formed to oversee this process so that it is separate from government as an independent authority that can oversee it and ensure that people are treated fairly, equitably and in a transparent manner in a way that they can understand.

As I flagged yesterday, we have been working to make this happen as quickly as possible. Again, would I have liked it sooner? Yes, I would have. We would have liked it sooner. It does not matter what side of politics people sit on, we all would like to get this out there. I have asked the department to proactively mail out, and not just put it on its website, to every taxi plate licence holder a letter to explain how to make an application for hardship. That is scheduled to be in the mail tomorrow so that by Monday, or early next week, over 1 000 licence holders will receive a letter from the Department of Transport that details the hardship fund and how drivers can apply for and seek assistance. As I said, it is about more than just the \$20 000.

The members for Carine and South Perth raised the matter of special consideration. In May I mentioned in this house that we had compared the number of fares in 2014 with the number of fares in 2015 and found that they had reduced by 15 per cent. That occurred not entirely as a result of the introduction of Uber and the reforms. We have found that since 2012, some two years before the introduction of Uber in this state, the number of fares reduced. However, we have seen a dramatic decrease, and I have the figures here. In 2013 there was a 3.8 per cent reduction compared with 2012, and in 2014 there was a 3.5 per cent reduction compared with 2013. In 2015 there was a 15 per cent reduction and, as I said, the number of taxis in the marketplace reduced by 20 per cent. However, since that point in time, which is what I declared in May, it had been pretty flat throughout 2015, and it dropped again in January, February and March. We are not sure whether that was a spike or whether it was going to be consistent. We saw it continue on that new platform throughout April and May. That is when we made the call to take another look at it.

If we to look at other jurisdictions, what we are doing in this state is more generous than what New South Wales is doing. I will take New South Wales in isolation. What has happened in New South Wales is that its economy has turned up. As Uber has come into the market, the number of taxi fares in that state has increased, whereas in our state the number of taxi fares has decreased. That change in the number of fares is a result of the changes occurring in the economy of the state. This is why it is difficult for governments to decide whether to step in. When economic factors are at play, governments must question how much of that is due to economic factors and how much of it is due to reform factors, so they have to try to work through that and identify what factors are at play.

We took another stance, and I did that with the help of the members who sit behind me in this chamber and a few members from the upper house. We had many meetings with policy advisers to debate this matter. I had to find a way that I could justify to the broader community why and how we would intervene to provide more. The basis on which we came up with that was to identify the value of discrete parts of the value chain in the taxi industry. We are moving to a system in which the value will not be in the discrete plate or licence, but the opportunity to generate revenue. We know there will be a transition period. We are trying to identify something as the industry transitions from one that has been valued on a discrete “I hold a licence; it’s worth X and I can generate this income,” to one that is going to be about those who generate a superior customer proposition to establish brand and value in their businesses. That will take time. We have to support the industry through that time. We have to start to think that through because the business still exists. We know that there were still about 2.1 million fares in the last quarter of 2015 versus 3.2 million or 3.3 million fares in the last quarter of 2014. In fact, the last quarter of 2014, after Uber started, was better for taxis fares than the quarter before it. I am not sure why. Perhaps it was an anomaly in the numbers. A large number of taxi fares are still being generated.

Mr J.E. McGrath: What about the first quarter of this year? Minister, do you have that figure?

Mr D.C. NALDER: It was 2.1 million in the first quarter of this year, when it dropped dramatically from nearly 2.6 million in the first quarter of last year. When the numbers first came out we wondered whether that was an aberration or whether it was a new plateau. We are finding that it is a new plateau. We know the state’s economy has eroded further. We also know that is due to the impact of the reforms. We saw what I believe was predatory pricing from Uber, which I do not believe is sustainable, and that had an impact on the industry.

We have said that because the industry is going to have to transition, we need to identify a mechanism to support them. This is where the potential for a levy comes in and why we have to identify what that amount will be, because their ability to earn an income still exists today. We know that those who continue to operate without identifying themselves either as a corporate or a cooperative, and without creating a brand which allows people to identify them as delivering a greater quality of service, will struggle relative to those who do. Apart from every taxi plate being worth exactly the same, in the future we will start to see different values within the business because there will be those who deliver a better service.

We have to allow a period of time for people to adjust. That is what we have not done. If there is a shortcoming in the \$20 000 and the ability to deal with that right at this point in time, it is because we have to work out how we articulate that and identify what that should be. It is not just a matter of drawing a number on an envelope

today and saying, “We will give you this amount,” because the taxi industry still exists and the opportunity to generate income still exists. However, the business in the future will be valued differently from the way the business is valued today. We are in that transition period and that is creating a problem for some people who are ready to exit that industry right now versus where they were five years ago. That is how the different hardship allowances and different things we are bringing into it will help people. Would I have loved to do this a year ago and roll it out? There is no question about that. Do I like to see people and businesses suffer? I do not like that at all. I see it across more areas than just the taxi industry in Western Australia at the moment. It is a tough environment. We know the medium to long-term prospects for Western Australia are very strong. We know the future for this state is very exciting. There will be opportunity for people to prosper and grow small businesses in this state. I recommend that we work hard to find ways to offer support for a long period of time. I believe the onus is on us to communicate that well before the end of this year so that people are clear about what we are trying to achieve.

Unfortunately, that is where politics has come into play. The opposition is going to propose some amendments during the consideration in detail stage. I have not seen any of those amendments.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Do you want them now?

Mr D.C. NALDER: If the opposition were serious about this, instead of playing politics, it would want to give them to me now.

Mr W.J. Johnston: What is wrong with that?

Mr D.C. NALDER: This is what I mean by playing politics in this issue. We want to get a payment to people as quickly as we can. We need to seriously work through how else we can support the industry financially. I do not believe tabling last-minute amendments today is taking that seriously. I have always said that there are two tranches to this. This is where it is interesting. I have put the department on a deadline by the end of November, and they are working to that and they are advising me. The indications that I get at my regular meetings is that we will have that information.

Mr W.J. Johnston: The end of November!

Mr D.C. NALDER: Unfortunately, the member for Cannington did not hear the earlier part of my speech and now he is going to start to interject. We want to make sure that we work through this process carefully. If the opposition does not like it, and if the opposition has a better process and a better approach, we are six months from an election. That is the reality. All I have heard today is criticism of me in this role and of what I have not done and what I should have done. What I have not heard from members of the opposition is any solutions or how they would deal with it. Labor jurisdictions around Australia are grappling with the same issue. We have all been working on it. Our state has actually been in advance of the majority of states with the timeline within which we are dealing with it. Is it as quick as I would like? No, it is not. If Labor members are serious and do not like what we are putting up or the further steps that we are going to take, they can take that to the election and say that they have a much better deal to put on the table. At the moment, all they are doing is whipping up emotion. They are trying to say that I am failing in my duties, failing to care about taxidrivers and failing to work through and identify solutions that will allow this industry to move forward. I have a responsibility to the broader community of Western Australia. I do care for taxidrivers. I do care for the taxi industry. I do want to ensure that they are successful into the future. When I bring in amendments, I have to be able to justify them for that broader community. That is what I am trying to do. That is when I rely on the input that I get from my colleagues, which will really challenge the status quo on what has been presented today.

I have tried to explain in simple terms why we have delivered what we have delivered. The \$20 000 has never been compensation for the value of the plate, because we see a future for, and value in, the business moving forward. What we have is a transition. I will table this report, which shows the number of fares by taxi on a per annum basis, not a quarterly basis. It shows the change, but it also looks at what is happening in the economy. It shows that there is a correlation between the number of taxi fares and what is happening in the economy. It does show that the number of fares has fallen faster than the economy, but it also shows that the economy has had an impact.

[See paper 4504.]

Mr D.C. NALDER: We want to get a \$20 000 payment out to these people as quickly as possible. Between now and November we want to finalise the second tranche of works, which will require substantial legislative change. In that legislative change we will be looking at greater accountability of dispatchers, irrespective of their origin, and a lot higher penalties for breaches of the act. We will be looking to create a level playing field across the marketplace. We will be looking to ensure that a rank and hail system still exists, so that if people walk out of a hotel or off an aeroplane and want to catch a taxi, those taxis are clearly identified and they have the ability to do that. But if people want to go onto a phone app and call up a service because they find that more convenient, we are going to allow them to do that. We want the taxi industry to be seen as the superior service and one that

can play in both spaces. We identify that the \$20 000 is just the first step. Other things will be worked out and worked through and, in November, we will identify what additional support we need to provide to the industry. We will have the hardship allowance out tomorrow, so people will start receiving it early next week. The Small Business Development Corporation is providing training sessions, so I was alarmed to hear that someone opposite needed to intervene, because I have been getting reports that it has been undertaking sessions with segments of the industry already. What I am hearing is positive feedback. We will continue to work alongside the industry. We will continue to monitor it. I look forward to tabling further information before the end of the year, or at least making public further information before the end of the year. I encourage the Labor Party to support this taxi bill at this time so that we can get this payment out. If members opposite do not and if they believe they have better policies to present to the industry or the broader community, I encourage them to do that, because we will have an election in six months' time. The reality is that it is unlikely that that legislation will be passed before we enter the next Parliament, so I encourage them to engage and put forward their recommendations rather than just trying to do a bit of political grandstanding, as I have seen today.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Leave denied to proceed forthwith to third reading.

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1 put and passed.

Clause 2: Commencement —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The minister mentioned the hardship assistance and that letters were going out on Monday. When will the hardship assistance funds be available, and what will be the maximum amount paid to each plate owner?

Mr D.C. NALDER: To clarify, the letters will go out tomorrow, not Monday, so I am expecting people to receive them early. The maximum amount on an individual level is up to \$75 000 or \$79 000 depending on the criteria they meet. This is being done through an independent process. We need to wait until we get all the claims in to really get a better understanding of what is going on. We are actually going to leave this open for a considerable period. My view is that we need to understand the urgency of some of the claims that are coming in to determine how quickly we can get those funds out. Our desire would be to get them out as quickly as possible. They will be eligible to start applying for it from next week. We need to get a sense of the scale of it and what the issues are and so forth to really be able to define it. We have an independent person to do that. My endeavour is to make payments as quickly as possible.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is the \$6 million that has been allocated just a provisional amount? For example, if more than \$6 million is needed by people who meet the eligibility criteria, will the government spend more than that \$6 million?

Mr D.C. NALDER: The initial analysis suggests that \$6 million will be adequate, given the current situation with the number of licences that we have and particularly when we look at it on a relative basis with other jurisdictions. Our intent is that that is an adequate amount, but we really need to wait and see what comes in and to look at it. We need to be able to identify those who have been impacted by the reforms and to work through that process. We believe that it is an adequate number at this time. If we are proven wrong, at that point we will need to reconsider it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the minister have a copy of the eligibility criteria and could he table those criteria?

Mr D.C. NALDER: What we have wanted to do is allow discretion at this time. This is a hardship fund and there may be circumstances that we have not considered. We have not wanted to have parameters that are too tight that would potentially rule out somebody who should be considered. It will be in the letter explaining it to people. It will encourage them to go online to apply and so forth. We will be providing pretty broad parameters, because we want to make sure that we do not rule out people who should otherwise be covered. We are not specifying that at this point. According to the additional notes that I have just been provided with, it will be based on social security thresholds. The qualification criteria will be whether people are being impacted. It is a hardship fund. It is looking at the impact on people's financial position—whether it is putting people in strife with bank repayments or in being able to meet a certain living standard. We are looking at using the social security thresholds as a base. As I have said, an independent process has been set up to assess this. We do not want the parameters to be too defined, because we want to make sure that we capture everyone who is impacted.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does that mean that the minister will be looking at aspects such as the income that is generated by the particular plate owner in a given year?

Mr D.C. NALDER: Yes. From a financial hardship perspective, we need to ascertain and have some governance and some rules around that. We are looking initially at using the social security thresholds as the baseline for how we interpret that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What are the social security thresholds?

Mr D.C. NALDER: I do not have those figures at the top of my head at the moment. I used to know them off by heart in a previous role. Therefore, I would have to take that on notice if the member would really like to know, but it is public information that can be sourced.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I do not want to delay the house, but I am trying to get a picture. Is the minister saying that it is the income limit under which people would otherwise be eligible for social security payments?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Before the minister responds, I am wondering whether that is germane to clause 2 or whether it should be dealt with further on in the bill, but I am happy for the minister to respond.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I will answer it now. There will basically be an income and assets test, and from there they will be assessed according to the eligibility criteria. It includes things such as dependants. We need to take into consideration an income and assets test to determine whether a person is eligible. As I have said, it is defining the hardship and making sure that we have something that can be substantiated.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I have a question about London cabs, which is a specific trial that the government initiated. Do London cabs fall under any of the provisions of this bill and under the hardship criteria?

Mr D.C. NALDER: No, they do not. They are all lease based; they are not privately owned. This is for privately-owned plates.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Given that the drivers of London cabs are paying up to \$20 000 a year to the provider of those cabs, is any analysis being undertaken of the financial hardship being experienced by London cab drivers?

Mr D.C. NALDER: No, we are not looking to pick them up in this bill. There have been discussions with a lot of London cab drivers and other people who are involved, and a lot of those have been dealt with in-house with the company. That is the advice that I am receiving.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3 put and passed.

Clause 4: Section 17 amended —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What is the impact and significance of this clause?

Mr D.C. NALDER: The purpose of the amendment is to remove the five-plate cap. If there are people in the taxi industry who currently have five plates and are keen to step into the industry, we want to allow them to expand the number of plates that they have currently.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the minister believe that this would lead to greater corporatisation of the taxi industry, whereby major players may buy out some suffering individual plate owners or owners of a small number of plates?

Mr D.C. NALDER: This issue has been raised in earlier debates, and we are working with the Economic Regulation Authority around the ownership. We have flagged with the industry in the consultations that I have had that we would be looking to step in if a particular company did acquire a large number of taxi plates. We are relying on the ERA to provide information about what is a satisfactory number.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is the minister saying that the intention is to allow for corporate ownership? Is that what the minister is seeking to achieve?

Mr D.C. NALDER: No, it is not what we are seeking to achieve. We are seeking to remove the restriction under which people can own only five plates. If people who are currently in the marketplace are happy to buy more than five plates because they believe they have opportunities, we do not want to restrict them to five plates. We want to ensure that if there is potential to increase demand, that can be facilitated. That is what this is about. I have asked the department to work with the ERA to put some parameters around that. There are consumer laws and safeguards that protect against monopolistic behaviour. I want to make sure that we articulate that clearly. We separately want to encourage either corporatisation or cooperatives. However, this is not necessarily designed to facilitate corporatisation. It is designed to remove the restriction and thereby enable people who are restricted at the moment to step in and help increase the demand in the industry.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The minister has said that it is not intention of this clause to provide for the corporatisation of plates and that he intends to get the Economic Regulation Authority to consider this matter. As I understand it, this provision will come into effect on the same day as every other clause in the bill. Clause 2 provides that the rest of the act—that is, everything except sections 1 and 2—will come into operation on a day fixed by proclamation. Is the minister saying that this clause will be proclaimed on a day that is different from the day on which the rest of the clauses are proclaimed? The minister has said that he is waiting for the ERA to give him the advice that he is seeking. Therefore, the minister must be saying that this clause will not be proclaimed until after the minister has received that advice. If that is not the case, the removal of this clause would appear to allow for corporate ownership of taxi plates.

Mr D.C. NALDER: No. However, we are not looking to hold back corporatisation, either. We want to make sure that we do not end up with a monopolistic situation. We do not want that. The commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act provides a safeguard mechanism. We will also have the advice of the ERA. We have notified the different corporations and have said they if they wish to pursue a corporatisation of a percentage of the —

Mr W.J. Johnston: What corporations?

Mr D.C. NALDER: We have talked to a number of them, such as ComfortDelGro. Some existing operators of vehicles are acting as a cooperative and would like to consider different ways of operating. We have indicated to them that they need to continue to work alongside government, because if they go too far and want to buy a significant number of plates, we will be looking to pull them back.

At this point, this is really designed as a simple legislative change that allows and facilitates an increased opportunity, so if people are willing to step in, they can do so. We would like to see that increased demand opportunity to hopefully push up prices.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am interested in the member for Cannington's specific question. What companies asked for removal of the "5"? It seems a bit strange. No-one asked for it?

Mr D.C. NALDER: No-one has asked for it. I have taken it on advice from the department when it was looking at a number of changes and what we will do in stages 1 and 2. The concern has been that some people are willing to, but they cannot actually buy because they are currently capped at five. Some have done them in different entities and all these sorts of things, but we do not see it as something that will create a problem at this time from a corporatisation aspect. But if people who are currently in the industry would like to expand beyond their current limit of five, it is a simple process that we can do. It is a simple change in the legislation right now. It is something that we believed was simpler to do right at this point in time.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5: Section 24 amended —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I ask the minister for an explanation about this clause.

Mr D.C. NALDER: It is very similar to the previous one, but it actually allows the transfer of plates across. One was around the limitation; the other was around being able to transfer it. It is that second element. It is pretty much the same as the previous clause.

Clause put and passed.

New clause 5A —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will move an amendment so the minister can have at least a few minutes, and I am sure the member for Cannington will back me up to give the minister more time. I move —

Page 2, after line 14 — To insert —

5A. Part 3AA inserted

After section 30I insert:

Part 3AA — Eligible owner taxi plates buy-back

30II. Buy-back agreements for taxi plates

The Director General may enter into an agreement, on such terms and conditions as the Minister approves, with a person who is an eligible owner of taxi plates for the payment to the person of an amount of compensation for the surrender and cancellation of the taxi plates that are the subject of the agreement.

The proposed amendment is not too prescriptive. I sought a lot of guidance from the Clerk of the house about this. It gives the minister the ability to start a voluntary buyback process. There are two issues about this and the whole issue of compensation. Does the minister believe the government needs a greater role, whether it be direct compensation or through a buyback, and how will it be funded? The opposition wants a voluntary buyback mechanism. It is something that even the member for South Perth put forward. How it is funded and the mechanisms put in place to fund it are subject to the minister's negotiations and analysis. The proposed amendment provides the minister with the ability to do it. I do not think it is out of the question. It does not rule anything in or not, but it gives the minister the ability to do so. We are not trying to be sneaky with the amounts or anything. It gives the minister the power to do so. We used some of the provisions in the existing act. It allows the minister to set up a mechanism to do so.

I have said on many occasions, as have members on the government side, and even the minister would admit, that it has been too long in coming. We are today debating just a transition payment that in essence should have been made available before the transition happened. We are now debating a \$20 000 payment. The minister has

said that he is doing this urgently. The minister introduced this legislation in May. The opposition has been waiting for it; it has never held up this legislation. We have made an agreement to facilitate this legislation today. We have never tried to hinder the progress of this legislation because we wanted to make sure that we were active in the debate and putting forward ideas. We believe the minister has waited too long and acted too slowly. It has been two years. The minister is now offering a minor amount of assistance to transition when people have already been exposed to the costs of transition. They are already feeling the impact. The minister may say that something is technically not correct with this amendment. Fair enough—the minister can amend it over the weekend and bring it back, or he can have it looked at in the upper house. There are many ways to do this. I do not think this is out of the question. The proposed amendment supports what the minister's own backbench has said. It is not too prescriptive. It gives the minister some flexibility, but it kicks off the process.

The minister has told us that this is the first tranche and we have to wait until 30 November to see his plan. The state election is coming up. Whatever happens, it takes a couple of months for Parliament to resume. The delays will be enormous. We do not think that the minister has the ability to act—or he has not created the ability to act quickly enough. Honestly, I sought advice from the Clerk until about an hour ago to make sure this amendment was as sound as we could make it. We do not believe it is a tricky thing. Frankly, it is up-front. I will let the member for Cannington speak to the amendment, too. It provides the ability to have a voluntary buyback. It allows the minister to start that process. As I said, the minister may want the weekend to think about it. Do not knock it out of hand. We believe it is the right thing to do. It gives the minister the option to work on it.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I would like to highlight what this does not do. The minister challenged the opposition during his reply to the second reading debate by asking, “What is your solution?” He said that his solution will be known in November. Let us understand that. The minister is saying that he wants to see the opposition's solution before the minister gives us the solution! That is actually the reverse of normal practice. Normally the government explains its agenda and the opposition replies to it. That is the ordinary practice. This proposed amendment allows the minister, when he comes back in November, to outline his plan and to implement that plan immediately, rather than him saying that he will wait until after the election before implementing his plan. That is all we are doing. We are not saying pay 7 000 people \$20 000 and we are not saying pay 7 000 people \$200 000. I must say that when the minister introduced this bill in May I thought that this was his plan, but today we find out that this is not his plan. This provision states that in November, when the minister has finally, after all these years, worked out exactly what he wants to do, he can implement his plan the moment he comes up with it. The moment the minister works out what it is that he wants to do, we want him to implement that plan immediately. We do not want him to delay his plan for one day after he works out what it is. The moment he works out what it is, he should implement it. This clause allows him to do that. It allows the minister to work it out—not me, not the member for West Swan and not even the member for Hillarys; just the minister sitting at the table. He can determine the provisions to buy back a plate. We are not specifying it. We are not telling the minister what to think; we are just saying think! That is all we are asking him to do. We are asking him to make a decision and to implement the decision that he makes. Let me make that clear: I am not telling the minister what to do. When he gets to November and, after all that time, finally works out what is a good thing, according to the Liberal Party and him as minister, he should implement it immediately. This clause allows him to do it. This clause allows the minister to do exactly what he promised to do in his second reading reply.

The minister accused the Labor Party of being political during his second reading reply. This is not a political clause. This is a clause that facilitates the minister's plan—whatever the plan is—and the moment he tells us what it is, and, in fact, the moment he works out what it is, he can implement it. He does not have to come back and ask the Labor Party's approval. He does not have to come back and ask the Parliament's approval. He does not have to do anything. Just get on and make a decision. As I said, when the minister introduced the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016 in May, I thought that that was his solution to the taxi problems that are being caused by the introduction of ride sharing. I thought that that is what it was and what I thought he said in his brief ministerial statement at the time and in the second reading speech. But apparently that was not correct. I am relaxed about that and I am not trying to make a political point about it; I am just making the point that this clause allows the minister to implement his own decision the moment he makes it, rather than it causing any further delay.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I, too, rise to support this amendment. I have enjoyed all of the contributions of the debate, but I support this amendment because it is particularly about giving flexibility to the minister to take into account the particular situations and circumstances of taxidivers. I want to talk about a constituent in the area of Mirrabooka that I represent. He purchased restricted-area licences about six years ago for \$210 000. I understand that he will get compensation of only \$6 000, which absolutely does not give him capacity to be able afford those restricted licences. This amendment means that the minister can look at the circumstances in each case. I have heard of situations in which taxidivers were told by the taxi plate owner they had been working for that they either had to buy the plates now or they will not have a job as the owner was going to do something else. Drivers felt they had no choice. The owners had an idea of what was coming. The taxidivers felt that the government

would do something and take some action. They kept listening and thinking that something would happen. They bought the plates in good faith with a view to sustain their livelihoods, financial independence and financial security, and now they are in a situation of having compensation that does not take in account their circumstances. This amendment gives the minister flexibility. The other Liberal members of Parliament stood up and said, “It is a difficult situation, and you know we have talked to them; we understand all these different things.” This amendment gives those people a capacity to plead their cases to the minister in terms of particular circumstances of taxidriviers with their plates and the compensation required. It is an absolutely necessary amendment to make the bill fair, reasonable, flexible and capable of meeting the needs of taxidriviers in this state.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: This should be no surprise to anyone. Obviously, the issue of a voluntary buyback has been discussed in the party room. Letters were sent by members of a committee to most members of Parliament and to the minister with some options, including not specifically but generally this one. I would be surprised if the minister came to Parliament without this type of option on the table and without considering it. As I said, this is not meant to be tying the minister up to any particular detail, but it gives the government the flexibility to get on with it. Honestly, there is no excuse that we are here in September debating transition assistance after Uber came into the marketplace in October 2014 and deregulation was announced in December 2015. Two months after it has been completely deregulated and people are struggling to make ends meet, we now start the process of assistance. This is not the right way of going about it. As I said, if the minister wants a weekend to think about it and come back with a better amendment, fair enough; we will accept that. If the minister wants to move a better amendment in the upper house, we will accept that and withdraw that amendment. But we want this amendment considered and we want this house to vote on it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have just seen the amendment, and I agree with the comments made so far. Up to now, we have been discussing, not on this amendment, the payment of adjustment assistant grants. That is the \$20 000 for the unrestricted licences and \$6 000 for the restricted taxi plates. This amendment deals with some of the areas that government members have brought up. The members for South Perth and Carine have said that they really want to do something for taxidriviers—the owners in particular. I do not want to see them in a situation in which their homes are being foreclosed on by the banks because they simply cannot make enough money. What we are looking at here with the adjustment assistant grant is if they are reduced to going to Centrelink to ask for some social welfare payments, that is when they will be assessed for those adjustment assistant grants. This amendment outlines a buyback scheme. I would have thought everybody wanted that—everybody. I think the member for South Perth wanted that; I think the member for Carine wanted that. They are not looking my way so I do not know whether they are going to say yes or no. As I understand it, they are asking for something that would help the taxi plate owners with a buyback assistance system.

Mr A. Krsticevic: It does not actually have to be buyback, but I still think that they can still keep their plates in the future and that the assistance package can be increased through the levy, raising additional funds, because I still think the industry is viable and a lot them still want to stay in the industry.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: There is nothing along those lines that is in the bill that we are looking at today. The amendment moved by the member for West Swan is very reasonable. When I was the minister, I would have loved to have had the authority to make decisions like this—I really would—without having to go to cabinet, without having to get the emperor’s permission and all the rest of it, or even going through the departments. It would be a wonderful position to be in—to have authority from Parliament to make a decision that will help a huge number of people in our community. This is a very good amendment put forward. It does not constrict in any way the minister to a limited amount. It gives him the opportunity to look more closely at this. We are talking about bringing this back in November. We have six sitting days in November. That is all. There will be a stack of other legislation on the notice paper and other stuff will be brought in that certain ministers will want to get on the notice paper and hopefully debated before we rise before the next election. We have six sitting days in November. I do not think that that is enough time to simply bring that back then and expect this Parliament, this house, to approve something that the minister may want to come up with. This amendment gives him the authority, the opportunity, to come up with something that he thinks is fair. I have got faith in this minister; he is a very reasonable person. If he can convince the Premier and Treasurer, that is fine. They are the stumbling block, let me tell members. Our debt is going up by \$15 million every single day. I do not know whether members realise that—every single day the state debt is going up \$15 million—yet here we are arguing over really just a few million dollars to help out our taxi owners. It is time that we actually help them. We should not be here to hinder them; we should be here to help them. This amendment will certainly give the minister the opportunity to do that. I believe that the minister should stop and think about this. The member for West Swan made a good point, and I agree with her. Let us not rush this through today. Let us come back on Tuesday. Let the minister have time to think about this amendment, and if he wants to come back with something else on Tuesday along these lines or something that is better or almost as good, I would be more than happy to listen to reason. But what is before the house at the moment without this amendment, is nowhere near adequate to satisfy and assist our taxi plate owners. It is not enough to assist them, and they need assistance. People in my electorate

are looking to lose their homes. Young families with young children are looking at losing their homes, because of the way that the industry has gone down, because of the unfair competition that has come in. I urge the minister to either accept this amendment or defer it and come back on Tuesday with something that is equally as good, almost as good or even better.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Taxidriver, I appreciate your interest in this matter but you have been reminded a number of times today that you are not allowed to make any noise. If you persist, I will have to ask security to remove you all from the chamber. I welcome your presence but please do not clap; that is not appropriate in this forum. Thank you.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I would like to make a few points in response to what has been said. As I said in response to the second reading debate, we do not like to see anyone hurting through this period of reform. We are trying to do things as quickly as possible. Other jurisdictions such as New South Wales brought out the concept of the levy but it still has not worked out how to do it. No-one has worked out how to do it. NSW announced it before we indicated we wanted to consider it. One of the issues is the funding mechanism for this reform. We do not have adequate funds at this point in time to underpin that activity. Although comments have been made that we have taken a long time because this was tabled in May, this is the ninth day of sitting since May. Although it may be considered a long time —

Ms R. Saffioti: No; it's not.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Since the last day of sitting, before the winter recess, we are in our third week.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It's not since May; we sat all through June.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Sorry; I take that back.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Since the winter recess, when we said we would get on with this, there have been nine days of sitting, so we have not mucked around since the winter recess in getting to this Taxi Amendment Bill. Although it might sound like a long time, the bill has been sitting there since May. Why, if members opposite are really serious about this issue, have I had these amendments for five minutes? Why were they sitting down with the Clerk only a couple of minutes ago to try to work out whether we could do this?

Mr W.J. Johnston: We don't have hundreds of public servants to write stuff for us.

Mr D.C. NALDER: If there had been consideration of this over a long time, I would have thought the prudent thing to do would be to engage with me and my office to give it some serious consideration.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mirrabooka, you do not have the call, sorry.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mirrabooka, I call you for the first time. We need to have some order in the place.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I think the member might need to hear everything I have to say because it will put the matter into context. The principle of this amendment sounds simple, but it exists in the Taxi Act 1994 for the multipurpose taxi class. It is covered in seven pages and eight clauses and achieves the same outcome. The opposition is seeking to include a simple paragraph like this and achieve what is under division 3 part 3 of the Taxi Act 1994 for the multipurpose taxi plate buyback. The opposition is trying to achieve what is in eight clauses over seven pages of legislation. To achieve the same outcome with four and a half lines would be very difficult. I add also that a buyback is one of the proposals we are considering at this time. We are trying to define whether it is the best choice or whether others would be simpler and easier to implement. We are trying to finalise a policy that is under consideration right now so that it can be converted into a bill and be part of the major transformation of the Taxi Act. The bill before us provides a simple process to allow us to access the funds sitting in a pool right now and distribute them to people as quickly as possible. From tomorrow, every owner of a taxi plate will be sent a letter advising them how to apply for and access the hardship fund. We need to get that done as quickly as possible. I do not want to delay this any longer than we have to. We have acknowledged there has been a greater downturn in taxi fares this year and that Western Australia is facing an impact that is not being faced by other states, in that our economy is in a tougher position than those of other states and that is leading to a reduction.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I would like to hear the minister continue his explanation.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Thank you, member for South Perth.

We would like to make sure we get these results. Would I like to introduce the full legislative changes as quickly as possible? Yes, I would. Would I like to have done it before now? Yes, I would. I do not disagree that we all would have liked that. But we are required to make major changes to the legislation. It needs to be considered carefully. We need to bring other elements into the legislation. This part needs a lot more consideration than it has been given. As I have said, section 30A of the Taxi Act contains the provisions that are in the amendment but it is over seven pages and eight clauses. We would therefore find it difficult to support this amendment at this point in time. However, as I said, it is a policy consideration that is underway now. Processes are in place to fully evaluate that and we are looking to finalise that and ensure it is in tranche two of the legislation before the end of this year.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I want to take issue with some comments. The minister said that we have been tardy. He announced these reforms in December last year. He has had eight months and has the support of thousands of public servants and he could not bring in legislation that contemplated a buyback. As the minister said, there is existing legislation. He has entire departments at his disposal and he has brought in legislation that will allow the provision of \$20 000 and remove the capacity for a five-plate cap. That is all he has done. The minister announced these reforms on 18 December, and we are debating in September a piece of legislation that he could have developed in a week. It has been eight months and we have heard about the backbench raising the issue with the minister and having multiple meetings. He was talking to his backbench, holding party room meetings and contemplating this and that. A voluntary buyback was discussed. We are here now and the minister does not have a provision to facilitate that. If the minister thinks it needs more work, we will come back and debate it on Tuesday. If he wants to replicate the seven pages of the act under the MPT provisions, we will support it. But do not come in here in September, after announcing it in December 2015, with simple legislation that could have been drawn up in a week. As I said, apparently all the backbench have had detailed discussions with the minister on these issues, so why does he not have some options? It is not good enough. There is an election in six months. The minister said that he will bring in legislation in November when the house will sit for six days. On 30 November, he will leave peoples' lives in limbo for years. By the time this is dealt with, it will be three years since the government allowed Uber to operate. By the time this is dealt with, it will be over a year and a half since he announced the reform. If he thinks he can do better—I have no doubt with all the department's resources he could do better—we will come back on Tuesday and let him do better and we will debate it, support it and pass it as soon as possible, but do not reject the whole idea because this will give the government the flexibility to start the process before the end of the year, otherwise he will not be able to do anything. He will keep peoples' lives in limbo for more years and more months. I do not think anyone deserves this. People want certainty and they want it now.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Taxidrivens, I do not want to have to evict you, but if you continue this conduct I will have no choice. It is the standing orders of this Parliament and I expect you to adhere to them.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Can the minister clarify the situation with the act? Does it already have something in place?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I think the minister has already outlined that there is something in the existing act that covers what the opposition is moving.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am giving the minister the call because we have had two lots of questions, and I think it is appropriate. You can be next, member for Hillarys.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am responding to both questions. The Taxi Act includes “Multi-purpose taxi plates buy-back”, if that is what the member is referring to.

Mr J.E. McGrath: Yes.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Basically, that provides for a similar situation, but the advice I have is that it is not as simple as just installing the wording contained in the amendment. The same section in the current Taxi Act covers seven pages, with eight sections. This issue requires greater consideration than the opposition has suggested. I am answering both questions on this. The government has that under consideration now, but it will be done as part of the second tranche. We do not want to hold up this bill. We want to get out this \$20 000 payment. Members opposite are wondering what I am looking at because I can see them frowning; on this side I can see nodding heads. I am saying that this is one of the things we are considering, but to do it effectively requires a lot more than the opposition has suggested at this point in time. The opposition says that this is taking too long. As I pointed out before we started consideration in detail, last year I was criticised for not putting things on the table and giving

people a direction before we got the information and the work done. Now I am being criticised because I gave information earlier and then had to get the work done. Whereas a year ago I was being criticised because I should have at least told people and given them an indication of where we were going.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am just stating a fact. I understand the politics of it. Right now we have to get this through as quickly as possible. It has to go to the upper house. If we hold the bill back here, we will delay when it can be heard in the upper house and when we can get the payments out. The government does not want to do that. It wants to get that money out as quickly as possible. We then want to work through this over the next eight weeks to finalise all the things we are working on. It is not just a payment to them; it is making sure that we create a level playing field and that we have the teeth to bring under the regulations on-demand transport, dispatch services and all these sorts of things. A big body of work is going on. This requires greater consideration as part of that larger body of work that is underway. The government acknowledges that it wants to do more than it is currently doing. When the government made the decision about the initial outcome, it anticipated monitoring the impact on the industry. We saw in 2015 that the number of taxi fares had declined by 15 per cent. The government removed 20 per cent of licences out of the market; no other jurisdiction could do that. We saw that the payment we would be making would assist with the transition whilst they changed their business practice and understand that the value of a business will be not in a discrete licence, but in the quality of customer proposition and the quality of the business they run. What we have seen since January is a further erosion of taxi fares. We know that a large element of that is economy and that an element is the reforms. We are saying that in the transition, because of the state of our economy, we need to provide greater support to the industry. We know that the future is bright and that the growth prospects for Perth and Western Australia are very strong, but we face economic headwinds at the time we are doing this transition. We need to consider that properly and make sure that we get it done properly as part of the broader body of work that is happening with changes to the legislation. I would dearly have loved to finalise it all this year. I have said in this house, and I have said it for some time, that the reality of getting this bill through, considering what is on the legislative agenda, was near-on impossible, and I would say it is impossible now, but we still want to make the government's intention clear to people. I am happy for that to become a future debate, but I want to make sure that people get that payment as quickly as possible; we want to get that \$20 000 a licence out as quickly as possible, and get this legislation passed.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I do not discount anything of what the minister just said, but all this bill before the house will do is give adjustment assistance grants to taxidrivers very, very quickly. There is nothing to stop that happening if this bill is passed today. The government can do that and send the payments out on Monday, or whenever.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Do you mean the amendment, member?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am talking about the assistance grants.

The ACTING SPEAKER: We are talking about the amendment.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am coming to that, Mr Acting Speaker.

I say to the minister that this amendment does nothing to curb the assistance grants going out tomorrow, if that is his wish. The amendment gives the minister the authority from this chamber to do whatever he likes. It states —

The Director General may enter into an agreement, on such terms and conditions as the Minister approves ...

If the minister does not approve it, that is his decision, but he can approve it. If we take the minister at his word—I would like to do that; I really would, because I think he is a man of his word—there is nothing wrong in accepting this amendment. It gives the taxi owners some hope that there will be some sort of buyback scheme. We did that for milk vendors, certain fishermen and the potato growers. We gave them all a buyback scheme, basically. What we are doing today is purely to enable the payment of an assistance grant. There are a lot of taxidrivers who are on the bones of their backsides at this stage; they are not doing very well and there are some who could lose their homes. This bill will stave off that situation for perhaps six months, if we are lucky. But this amendment will give the minister the authority to immediately look at a buyback system, which is what the member for South Perth intimated he wanted, and what the member for Carine said he thought was a good idea, and what members on this side of the chamber, including me, think is an excellent idea. We need to help the taxi owners. They need to see from this chamber that we are honest and we will do what we say we will do. This simple amendment will do that. It will show the people who are interested in this subject today that we mean what we say and we will carry that through.

If the minister wants to accept this amendment, he can alter it if he wants to; I do not see that as a problem. It is such a simple amendment that I really do not see why he would want to alter it. The minister does not have to act on the amendment if he does not want to, but it will give him the authority to move one way or the other. He can look at it.

The government can sit more weeks if it wants to. We sit for six days in November; we are getting up in the middle of November. We used to sit until the middle of December when I first joined this house 24 years ago. We used to earn our money then. We would sit until the middle of December. Now, the government wants to go home in the middle of November. That is disgraceful when the government has important legislation it needs to deal with. To me, this is very important legislation. We should not be leaving this chamber in the middle of November until we have done this justice. We are not doing this issue justice today. We will do it some justice if we accept the member for West Swan's amendment. I urge members to do that. I urge the minister to do it as well. The minister can accept the amendment and we can pass this bill today. The minister can go away and send out assistance funds to those taxidrivers and those taxi owners who desperately need some assistance. The minister would at least give the rest of them some hope that there would be some form of buyback scheme. That is what they want, and what I think members on the government side of the chamber also want. It is wrong for the government to take \$200 000 from people for a taxi licence and then renege on that and make it worthless, and simply say, "Well, if you get into real hardship, we will give you 20 grand, but don't come back and ask for any more after that!" I know that people in my electorate would love to sell their taxi plates back to the government and get their money back, pay off the loans they have taken out on their homes and get on with things, perhaps in a different industry. We must treat these people fairly. We must not treat them unfairly.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: To prevent myself getting called, I will tell the Minister for Transport what ministers who take on leadership issues do. I will tell him about the experience we had with the Public Health Bill. It was a very important bill, and many people were interested in those issues. The bill had some major amendments. The minister at the time, Hon Kim Hames, was able to take those amendments, and the advisers were able to speak to the amendments and make a determination. We were able to make amendments to the bill that built and improve the bill, and took into consideration the community it was supposed to deliver to. That is what a minister who is doing their job does. The Public Health Bill had been around for years, and the amendments often came on the same day as a result of discussions about how the bill could be improved, and they were debated and passed. If they did not have the technical precision, that was fixed in the other place, and came back to us and was accepted. They were fixed to make it a good piece of legislation.

As the members for West Swan, Hillarys and Cannington have said, this buyback agreement addresses the concerns of many in the taxi industry. This is not a binding situation for the minister; this is about giving him flexibility. The minister should just show some leadership and say to his advisers that we are going to make this work, because this is what the taxi industry wants to see us do. He should want to be a leader in this area, and stop making excuses for the delays. He should stop saying, "I really mean well; please let me do this", and show that he means what he is saying. He can show that by accepting this amendment, which gives him the flexibility. It does not hold him to it, but it gives him flexibility to take into account the case that I raised of this constituent. He bought a restricted area licence six years ago for \$210 000. There is no way that a compensation payment of \$6 000 will give him the financial security he needs. He needs the capacity to take his circumstances to the minister to ask for a buyback agreement, and the minister needs to be able to consider that as well. That is what this amendment does.

I have seen that happen in this place; it is not impossible. I moved an amendment when the then Minister for Planning, the Leader of the House, brought in legislation for development assessment panels. I put up a hand-written amendment from the floor, and it got through.

Mr P.T. Miles: Woo hoo!

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes, woo hoo! I am saying that I am nothing special; I am ordinary. The minister is the man who is supposed to lead. He is paid the big bucks to lead, and we are saying he should give himself the flexibility, keep good faith with the community, show that he means what he is saying, and deliver to the community.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The amendment moved by the member for West Swan is simply section 30B(1) of the Taxi Act, word for word, referring to multipurpose taxis. There is so much more that requires consideration in this matter. This is a last-minute consideration; it has not been thought through properly. As I have said, the government wants to get this payment out to people as quickly as possible. All the other aspects that are going to slow down this initial payment will be put into the second tranche of reforms, where we are doing the major reforms, and that includes looking at ways—I have explained this over and again—of getting a greater amount of money out to taxi operators. It is as simple as that, but it will require us to have a funding mechanism, and we do not have that today. If this type of power is provided, it is expected that it would be used; Parliament expects it to be used. That means if this amendment goes through, a taxi plate owner can make an application even though we are not necessarily ready to take it. A lot more work is required on this, and we have said we are undertaking that work. We want to make sure that we look after people effectively. We want to get this initial payment to them as quickly as possible, and we need it to go through the houses. We all agree that it has been tough out there for them. We need to get payment through as quickly as possible, and that is why we are standing by the bill that we have before the house and not accepting any amendments at this point.

Division

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

Ayes (16)

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

Noes (31)

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

Pairs

Ms M.M. Quirk	Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr B.S. Wyatt	Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr C.J. Tallentire	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr P.B. Watson	Mr W.R. Marmion
Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr V.A. Catania

New clause thus negatived.

Clause 6: Part 3A inserted —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: My colleague the member for West Swan will have more questions, but I want to ask some questions. We are dealing with the adjustment assistance grants provision, and I want to know whether this is the limit of the adjustments that will be granted to taxidriviers.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Yes. It will be a one-off \$20 000 payment at this point in time. As I said, there will be other measures. Under this assistance grant, \$20 000 will be the cap per licence, but it will not be restricted to the number of licences as in other jurisdictions.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What other assistance grants will be available for taxidriviers?

Mr D.C. NALDER: We have just spent a long time talking about why we are working through this. Due to the further downturn and erosion in the economy and in the number of fares this year, we will consider introducing another scheme to potentially allow for a levy and buybacks or other types of schemes. I look forward to being able to share that with the broader community very soon.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: During the second reading stage I highlighted the concerns of Mandurah Taxis with their lack of access to the scheme. I would like a response to that.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The member must have missed my response that detailed that during my reply to the second reading debate. We have held around 70 meetings with the Mandurah Taxis to discuss what will occur there. That company is considered to operate in a regional area. How that company entered the market and got access to plates through expressions of interest was different from what occurred in the metropolitan region. At the same time there has been an open discussion conceptually about whether or not they should be considered part of the metropolitan region or whether they should remain part of the regional area, which prevents other taxis entering the market and taking fares from that company's space, and vice versa. They have been very productive discussions. A decision has not been made either way. It has been more about consulting and working through the matter to reach a common understanding. As I said, at this point, because of the nature of the Mandurah market and the way those drivers have accessed plates et cetera, drivers for Mandurah Taxis will not be considered eligible for compensation like metropolitan drivers are. If they were to become part of the metropolitan area, that may be reconsidered, and that is part of the discussion we have had with them today.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Does that mean that at this stage drivers for Mandurah Taxis will not be considered to be eligible for this compensation package unless they opt to be included in the metropolitan taxi scheme? Is that what the minister is saying? Is there any capacity for Mandurah Taxis to maintain its country status but be eligible for the current scheme on offer?

Mr D.C. NALDER: We are saying that we need to consider that Mandurah is potentially different from other regional areas because it is now pretty much part of the inbuilt suburban area of the metropolitan area. We have discussed with Mandurah Taxis what that would look like, and those discussions are continuing. At this point in time, as regional players, drivers for Mandurah Taxis will not have access to the \$20 000 payments. However, as part of tranche 2, that will be considered. We want to work with them on whether Mandurah Taxis will remain as a separate entity and to be treated separately or whether it should be incorporated into the metropolitan system. At the same time, whilst they do not have access to that, we have given them access to the Small Business Development Corporation because they are facing the same competitive pressures as metropolitan companies are facing, but their drivers have not made the same payments that metropolitan taxi plate holders have made. That is why they are not in there at the moment, but it is something that we have indicated we are prepared to consider as part of phase 2. We want to work closely with them and it will require further consideration by both parties at this point.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How many eligible owners will the minister be writing to about the hardship fund? How many actual owners are there?

Mr D.C. NALDER: There are 1 035 plates. I was going to say 1 035, but because some are multiple, it is less than that. There are 868 owners for 1 035 plates.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How many of those owners have approached the Small Business Development Corporation or other government agencies to seek advice and assistance?

Mr D.C. NALDER: We have not been provided actual numbers; all we have are anecdotal numbers. Apparently information about who approaches SBDC for training and assistance is confidential, but there is anecdotal evidence that a number of taxi plate owners have approached SBDC. I cannot provide a specific number.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Can the minister tell us exactly how the minister arrived at the figure of \$20 000?

Mr D.C. NALDER: As I said in my reply to the second reading, the \$20 000 was never about determining that as the value of a plate. It has been determined as an adequate amount to support taxidriviers through a transitional process through the reform. We have acknowledged, and I have also said this in this house, that we have seen a greater erosion in the number of fares this year; therefore, given the time that it will take from a transition, we want to revisit that and look to another scheme. In so doing, we need to determine funding mechanisms for that.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: When was the \$20 000 figure conceived?

Mr D.C. NALDER: I would need to come back to really quantify that. I understand it was when we announced it in December last year.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What I am getting at is that \$20 000 is not appropriate or enough. I think it was conceived early when the minister thought he would have legislation—tranche 1, let us say—through by 30 June, and he would have the second tranche into the Parliament by the end of this year. It was probably there to cover a few months' transition. It is now clear that this \$20 000 is not only meant to reflect the past two months but also to cover probably at least another 10 or 12 months. The minister has said that \$20 000 is not enough and his backbenchers have told him that \$20 000 is not enough, but there will not be another amount until after the election because the legislation does not provide for a further buyback; there are no other powers. People are going to suffer for another 10 or 12 months; the minister has admitted that \$20 000 is not enough for an adjustment or compensation mechanism. That is the point. I think when it was conceived it was going to be the intermediate step—a step to cover a few months while we got the proper big round of legislation ready. It is clear now that this payment is the only thing that will be available to taxidriviers until probably July, August or October next year. That is the fundamental problem with this figure. When it was conceived, it was probably appropriate for a few months, but now it is not enough because the legislation has been delayed and the second tranche will not be through until post the state election.

Mr D.C. NALDER: No, that is not true. I shared in this house—I tabled the report—that when we looked at the 2015 data to understand what was going on in the industry, it showed that the number of fares in the taxi industry in the metropolitan area had reduced by 15 per cent. We had removed 20 per cent of the taxi plates out of the marketplace. From the impact of what was occurring in the industry, we did not see the need to necessarily support people because that should have indicated that there was enough opportunity for people to continue to operate. In the first quarter of this year, we saw another substantial decrease. That raised concerns as to why that was occurring. We thought that looking across that 12-month period would give us a good understanding of what was happening. What we also saw was that people would need to adjust and that there would be competitive pressures. The transition period was always going to be a good two to three years or even longer—four to five years. This transition amount was really designed to help people through that period of adjusting their business practices to be more focused on building their brand and recognition for the quality delivery of customer service.

When we looked at it, it had nothing to do with the impact on taxi fares and what was occurring in the market, but we have seen further erosion, which meant that the impact was bigger than the 20 per cent of taxis that we removed from the marketplace. That is why we are looking at other measures to try to support them. We acknowledge that it is tougher out there at the moment than was envisaged. It is fair to say that we did not envisage the economy going where it has gone. We did not forecast that taxi fares would drop by the number that they have dropped in 2016. Everything was set up based on what had happened in 2015. We now have more relevant data of what is occurring today. We have acknowledged that we need to provide further assistance to taxi plate holders, and that is what we are endeavouring to do.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am surprised by that contribution from the minister. As I understand it, the minister is a former banker and he would understand something that is much more fundamental. There are two issues involved in this matter. The first is the issue that the minister addressed, which is the income of each individual driver and participant in the industry. The second issue, which is not related to the income of owners, is the asset value of their investment. The problem here is that we have devalued the asset value of their investment. That is what needs to be compensated. It beggars belief that a former banker does not understand the difference between asset value and income, because they are separate issues. Let us understand what has happened here. I explained in my contribution to the second reading debate that a particular gentleman had moved to Australia from Malaysia and had borrowed \$300 000 to buy his plate. Now that the value of the plate has collapsed, the bank has gone back to him and has said that he does not have adequate asset backing for his borrowings and that he has to repay the loan. His mortgage is part of the loan, so he will lose his house. That is the problem we are trying to address. The minister is talking about an adjustment payment to keep people in the industry because their income is doing this and that. Who cares? That is an important issue—I do not want to say “who cares?”—but that is not the real problem. The real problem is that the asset value has collapsed. The minister is a banker; he knows that. If, when he worked at the ANZ bank, a client of his had had their asset value massively reduced, he would have called that in. That is what he would have done, because that is what bankers do. Banking is a zero-risk game. Banks lend money because they have asset backing for it. If the asset falls below asset value, they call in the loan. That is what they do. That is what is happening right now to taxi plate owners in the industry. It is not some theoretical or political statement; it is just a fact. There are people in the gallery right now watching the minister who are in the exact position that I have outlined. Look up there. They are looking at the minister right now.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Do not clap! That is exactly what has happened. They are being asked by their bank how they are going to repay their debt—they are being asked that right now. As I explained in my contribution to the second reading debate, \$20 000 will cover them for 10 months of loan repayments. That man looked me in the eye in my office and asked, “What is the minister’s plan for the end of that 10 months?” The minister said that he will deliver his plan in November. What is it? What is that plan? Why can he not tell us? Two years after the Liberal Party conference passed a resolution that it was going to support the introduction of Uber in Western Australia—remember, that was the Liberal Party conference where Uber gave free trips to and from the conference for delegates attending the conference —

Ms R. Saffioti: Really?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes. What is going to happen to my constituent who is being told by the bank that he does not have adequate asset coverage for his loan and that he needs to repay the loan? The \$20 000 does not get him out of that, because the asset value of his plate has collapsed. That is the issue. The minister is talking about income. That is a very important issue—if I get some more time, I will explain that—but that is not the real issue. The real issue is that we have ordinary working folk in this state, many of them migrants, who have their houses on the line on the basis of the asset value of a regulated plate. When they paid \$300 000 for the plate, they gave the government \$17 000 in fees, including \$10 000 in stamp duty. That asset value is now effectively zero. That is not being addressed. At some point the minister has to tell us what his plan is, not just for the income component but also the asset value component.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I really appreciated a lecture on banking from the member for Cannington. He is a very smart guy.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I’m a high school dropout.

Mr D.C. NALDER: He is a very smart man. He would also understand that asset values are actually determined from income streams. That is how banks assess it. I understand that change is occurring in the industry. I acknowledge that we have a period where we have gone from an asset class where the value was determined by scarcity of supply and a regulated market. I get all of that. We have not changed the income stream. It is ultimately the income stream that drives the asset value.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Listen to me. We have to go through a transition. It will no longer be that every plate will be worth the same amount. The ones that deliver a better quality customer service will have plates that are worth more than the ones who just continue to operate the way they have always operated. That is the transition as the industry changes. What we have to do is to pick up the pieces of what is in between. We have assessed it on the data that is available. That data showed that the actual number of taxi fares reduced by 15 per cent over 2015. We withdrew 20 per cent of the taxis from the marketplace, so the ability to continue to earn income to meet mortgage payments still exists. But what we have seen this year is a further erosion of that. It was pretty flat through 2015, but in the first quarter of 2016 there was another serious drop. We acknowledge that that is creating greater pressure. We are trying to work through that. We cannot just go out and grab another 400 or 600 plates. We are looking at a number of different issues and at how we can achieve a fair environment for them. We are working through that process. We do not want to hold up getting this \$20 000 payment to them as quickly as we can once the bill goes through this house and the next house. The member and I both know that the bill has to sit for a period between the houses. I want to get it through so that I can get the money straight out. We have the funds sitting there. We need the legal mechanism to allow us to give them that money now whilst we continue to work on it. The member for Cannington is saying that that \$20 000 will last for only 10 months. I am saying that I want to get that \$20 000 to taxidriviers as quickly as possible while we work through the right model that we should adopt. We have seen this additional change and erosion in our economy. I am saying that not all of what is happening in the taxi industry is because of the taxi reform. The change in the economy is responsible for a large proportion of the drop in demand. I have been told anecdotally that in the small charter vehicle market there has been a 70 to 75 per cent reduction in what is coming through from the airport. There is an impact right across the economy.

If we strip out the reforms, we are not here to necessarily pick up when there is a downturn in the economy and a business is impacted. Businesses are struggling because of the downturn in the economy. We are saying that reform is taking place. We want to recognise the downturn in the economy and provide an amount of money so that taxidriviers can survive during this transitional period. I am hopeful that the economy will turn around soon and taxidriviers will benefit from increased fares and get a bonus at the end of the day. Therefore, when the member talks to me about asset values and income values, trust me—I do know how it works.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You're wrong.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am not wrong. The asset value is derived from the income.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What a silly contribution! The minister forgets that the reason the asset value was high is because the market was regulated. The moment the government got rid of the regulation, the asset value fell. The value of a taxi plate was never driven by the income generated from the plate. It was driven by the future value of the plate. Everybody knows that. That is the whole point of the damn regulation. The asset value had nothing to do with the number of trips taken. The asset value fell because the regulation was removed. There was a scarcity value—that is the economic term for it. The number of plates was restricted, and that pushed up their value. That is exactly what the Liberal Party said in 2005 when it opposed a taxi plate buyback. The Liberal Party came into this chamber and voted against it. In fact, when Alannah MacTiernan introduced leased plates, the Liberal Party came into this chamber and voted against the legislation. The Liberal Party said at the time that the reason it voted against the legislation was that it would increase the number of taxi plates and thereby reduce the scarcity value of those plates. The Premier was part of that. The honourable Minister for Health was part of that. Sadly, the member for Hillarys cannot run away from the history. They all did it.

The minister's assessment of what is happening is not true. It is wrong. There was a scarcity value. What happened is that the moment the government got rid of the scarcity value of a taxi plate, the value fell. It had to fall. That is what the deregulation did. The minister should read the Productivity Commission report from the 1980s. The minister should look at the assessment of what happened in New Zealand when it deregulated its taxi industry. That is what the whole argument was about. The minister should read the ERA report that was commissioned by the former Minister for Transport. Those reports make it clear that what was holding up the value of the taxi plate was the regulation. The regulation created a higher value for the plate. The extra fees for taxi travel went to the owner of the plate, not the drivers. What the minister has put is a ridiculous argument. It is saying that the drivers were the ones who were benefiting from the scarcity of plates. That is not true.

Mr D.C. Nalder: I did not say that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is the implication. If the minister is saying that the value of a taxi plate was driven by the amount of income that drivers received, all the taxidriviers would be living in Cottesloe. It is ridiculous, minister. The value goes to the plate owners. I am sure there are many times when members have taken a taxi and the driver has said they do not own the plate but are paying for a lease. All the value went to the plate owners. That is what pushed up the value of the taxi plate. That is why nobody wanted to be a taxidriver, because they could not get any money out of it. They worked for 12 hours and went home with 200 bucks! What the minister has said is not true. The minister's position is wrong. What happened is that the value of the plate was in the restriction in the numbers. The moment the government deregulated the number of taxis, the value of

the plate fell. We all know that. That is exactly what the Productivity Commission said. It is exactly what the Economic Regulation Authority said. It is exactly what happened in New Zealand. Everybody knows that. It is not as though I am a genius. I am a high school dropout. That is what the Minister for Energy tried to say today. I am not an educated man. I am just an ordinary guy. Yet, I read stuff. I do not have 100 000 bureaucrats working for me, as the minister does. That is how many public servants there are. I do not have 100 000 people telling me what to say. I just read stuff. I read that, and I know what it says. Everybody knew that it was not the taxi charges that drove the price of the plates. It was the scarcity value. There was a scarcity value because the number of plates was restricted. The value of the plates has now collapsed, because all the Uber cars are effectively taxis—they just do not need to have the plate. That is what has forced the value down. That is why my constituents and every other member's constituents are in trouble.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I will make a quick comment, and then I think we have probably all had enough on this. The member actually answered his own question. The member talked about restricted values. I have here a report that says there are two million taxi rides a quarter. How many additional taxis can enter the marketplace today?

Mr W.J. Johnston: An unlimited number!

Mr D.C. NALDER: No.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Of course that is the situation.

Mr D.C. NALDER: No. If someone wants to operate as a taxi —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr D.C. NALDER: No-one can pick up those fares other than taxis.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Of course they can.

Mr D.C. NALDER: This report is about taxi rides. The SCV market has been there for some time and the taxi market has been there for some time. We capture all the data for taxi rides. There are still two million taxi rides a quarter. We have actually reduced the number of taxis by 20 per cent. In order to be able to pick up rank and hail, which in the latest quarter accounts for 53 per cent of fares, people need to drive a taxi. So there is still a business opportunity there. However, I acknowledge that right now, the value, based on the way it was always interpreted in the past, has changed. We are saying that there is an industry going forward. It is not the case that there is no industry. We want this business to continue. Therefore, we need to help the people in the industry. The value of their business going forward will be based on the quality of the customer service they can deliver and on establishing a brand that attracts people to them. That is what it will be about. It is a change. We do not want to buy the industry and not have an industry. We want an industry in which people want to catch taxis and can be confident about doing that. Some of the member's arguments do not make a lot of sense. I acknowledge that a transition and a transformation of this industry is taking place. I have no problem with that. I understand that what used to be considered the value does not exist today.

Mr W.J. Johnston: That is right.

Mr D.C. NALDER: However, what I am also saying is that those who continue and succeed will get value back in their business based on —

Mr W.J. Johnston: That is not true.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Any business that can generate an income and has a brand and develops goodwill and delivers a great customer service proposition will have a value. That is what this is about. We are trying to help the industry move on from where it is today, because people in the community are voting with their feet and saying they want to transition to a new arrangement. We are trying to help the industry through that transition. We have determined the first payment based on the depreciation or the drop in fares. There are still fares out there. There has been a 20 per cent reduction in the number of taxis in the marketplace, yet fares are still going through for rank and hail. There is still a business opportunity there. No-one else can drive those taxis unless there is a licence for them. There is still value. How it is determined and how that goodwill is determined within the value is different from what it is today. I know that, and always will.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The minister does not seem to get this. I am not objecting to the \$20 000 transition payment—nobody on the Labor side is. The minister could increase it, but nobody is objecting to that. We are asking why the rest of the losses are not being compensated. The minister just made a silly argument that rank and hail taxis can develop a customer service business case. It is ridiculous because the rank and hail cab is the first cab on the rank. There is no value in being the number one taxi on the rank because whoever is the number one taxi on the rank gets taken. That is just so mind-bogglingly stupid that I cannot believe the minister actually said it! As the minister said, people are voting with their feet—they are using Uber. I have kids who use Uber. I am showing the chamber my phone with all the Uber cars lined up, including one in the driveway of Parliament House. Customers can choose amongst the taxis based on its rating, but they cannot choose the taxi

based on its rating because it is at the front of the queue. The minister said rank and hail—that is the front of the queue! Customers get into the taxi that is at the front of the queue. The minister said that 53 per cent of rides are taken without regard to which driver it is. Where is the value in the customer service? It does not seem to make any sense. There seems to be an undressed member in the house.

The SPEAKER: Do not worry; we will let him off this time, member for Cannington.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: He is setting the standard for the chamber, Mr Speaker. Very good. I remember when the Premier used to get upset about the former member for Perth —

The SPEAKER: He has been told to put his tie on.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: — coming into the chamber in Chinese shirts that had no capacity for a tie.

The SPEAKER: He has been told to put his tie on.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Excellent, Mr Speaker. I would not want the standards of the Premier falling even further.

The minister said that a business can be created and the future value will be the customer service. At the moment all the value in the fixed asset in the industry—which is not the car; it is the plate—has collapsed. Who knows what will happen? The most important amendment for the minister is not the clause we are dealing with at the moment, clause 6; it is clause 4. I reckon the minister is saying that corporate owners are going to be able to develop a pattern of travel that people are going to reward and that the value is going to be in corporate ownership. That is what I reckon is happening here. At the end of the day, when the minister comes back to us in November, there will be no reflection of the loss of the asset value for the owners of the plates today; it will all be about, “There’s 22 per cent of this and there’s 14 per cent of that.” It will not be about the suffering of ordinary voters. Ordinary voters who suffer because of a change to the regulatory framework will not be compensated. I reckon that is the direction the minister will go. He will say, “Oh, well; these corporate owners are running around buying up these plates at a cheap price and they’re going to create all this value in the future.” That will be the minister’s answer. That is why I asked the minister before what was fair compensation. It is a question that he has never answered because we know what he is doing. That is why the minister does not even want the power that we offered him to award compensation later because he does not want to offer any compensation for the loss of the value that will see a number of constituents from my electorate lose their houses.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I wish to make a further point. The analysis that the minister has provided does not incorporate Uber. His idea that if someone wants a taxi service, they can only use a taxi nowadays is completely false. The Supreme Court judgement stated that Uber is a taxi service. His exclusion of the other 2 000 to 3 000 cars on the road is completely false. That is the key point, which is what the member for Cannington talked about—that is, the loss of value of the plates and the impact that has on people trying to service their plates, particularly when people have borrowed against their homes. If people borrow against their homes and the value of their plate diminishes to next to nothing, their homes are at risk. I have seen the banks signing up to value and undertake activity in relation to people’s homes. In many instances, people have had to leave their homes. The minister is not properly reflecting the loss of the value of the plates.

WA Labor supports a voluntary buyback. That is our policy position. That is what we are keen to do. We are very frustrated that the government did not accept that amendment or consider it for the upper house or consider it over the weekend because we believe that is the way forward. We think that the corporatisation of the industry will not work in the longer term. The whole idea that the value of the plates is determined by the customer service that any particular taxi gives is quite flawed. If 60 per cent of the income of the taxi is generated from the rank and hail system, as the member for Cannington outlined, how is that premium developed if a taxi is the first, second or third vehicle on a rank? I think that idea is false. This whole idea that somehow every taxi will retain hundreds of thousands of dollars of value because of the service its driver gives when any person can jump into any car down the road that is less than nine years old and deliver the same service without paying additional costs is false. We were very, very keen on the buyback position but that has not been sought or approved. We invited the minister to take this away for the weekend and then bring it back into the upper house. We think that is the way forward.

As members know, the taxi plate owners were organised. They put forward some ideas to a lot of the members of Parliament in this place. One of their ideas was a compensation package of up to \$162 000. That relates to the amendment that I would like to move. The impact of Uber on the taxi industry has been to the tune of about 50 to 55 per cent. That means that the value of those plates has been significantly impacted. I seek leave to move my two amendments together.

Leave granted for the following amendments to be considered together.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I move —

Page 4, line 16 — To delete “\$20 000” and substitute —

\$162 500

Page 4, line 17 — To delete “\$6 000” and substitute —
\$50 000

As I said, I was willing to enter into negotiations. We believe that a grant of \$20 000 is not enough to cover up to a year’s assistance. I was keen to negotiate a number to get it through this house. The government was not keen to negotiate. This figure was put forward by the committee. We believe that taxi plate owners have suffered significant hardship and, as the member for Cannington has outlined, significant loss.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The minister will not tell us what he thinks is a fair amount. In fact, he has criticised the Labor Party for not specifying what it thought was a fair amount. The member for West Swan made a very generous offer during the second reading debate. She said that any member of the government could come to her and say what they thought was a fair amount. She said that the minister could come and discuss with her what he felt was a fair amount because we did not want to restrict it. If the minister had said that \$100 000 was a fair amount, we would have had to consider that. If he said that \$250 000 was a fair amount, we would have had to consider that as well. We wanted to ensure that the minister and all the Liberal Party members of this chamber were not restricted in debate about what is a fair amount by us saying what we thought the minimum was. As the member for West Swan said, we did not want to get involved in politics; we wanted to let the government backbenchers come to a reasonable position.

That is an unbelievably generous position for the member for West Swan to take. But at the end of the day, the government has put the Labor Party in the position of having to specify an amount and the amount in this amendment is the specific amount that we think is a fair reflection of the value loss on the plates. It may well be that many plate owners think this is not enough but we cannot have just any figure; we have to have a reasonable amount. The member for West Swan moved an amendment that would have allowed the minister to make his own determination. He could have made any determination without having to come back to the chamber and having to ever debate it with the Labor Party. He could have had that right but he did not want the right to give more reasonable compensation to taxidriviers, so we are doing it. We are saying \$162 500 is a minimum amount that should be given to taxi plate owners due to the loss of value during this transition period. As the minister explained before, there is nobody in this chamber who knows what a taxi will be worth in the future but we do know what it will not be worth. There will never again be a scarcity value from taxi plates because, as a matter of fact, in accordance with a Supreme Court decision, every car that meets the criteria is now a taxi. The idea that rank and hail somehow makes a taxi plate more valuable is, as the minister explained, wrong. As the minister explained, the future will be about customer service and all those things; that will drive value—exactly as the minister said. The loss of value that has happened now is permanent and that is because we have gone from a scarcity value to an actual value. Given that the number of taxi plates would only ever increase within a series of parameters, the value of taxi plates was always maintained because owners knew they could sell it on to someone else, but now they cannot do that, except to the vultures in the corporate sector, who will pick up the plates at a low price to create value out of the sweated labour of future taxidriviers.

Mr D.C. Nalder: That’s not right.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is fact, minister.

Mr D.C. Nalder: No it’s not.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is just a fact.

The SPEAKER: Okay; well, you can respond.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is it not interesting? I have met a number of Uber drivers both here in Perth and in America when I was on holiday with my family a couple of years ago, when my daughter was living in San Francisco. None of those drivers were rich people, but Uber is worth \$70 billion. Who gets the value out of Uber? It is not Australia; it is not Uber drivers; it is an American company that is worth \$70 billion. It does not own a single car anywhere in the world but it is worth \$70 billion.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will be brief because of the time. I do not have a problem with the amendment but it is not an adjustment assistance grant, which is in the bill. The lines to be deleted are known as the adjustment assistance grant. It seems to me that this amendment is more like a buyback scheme amount to assist people who have lost a tremendous amount of asset value in their licence plates.

It does not matter whether it is one way or the other. At the end of the day, I want to see our taxi owners, our taxidriviers, our plate owners, to be dealt with in a fair and equitable way. At the end of the day, there is going to have to be some sort of buyback scheme, like we did with the milk vendors, like we did with the fishers, and like we did with the potato growers—people involved in those restricted and regulated industries. We are going to have to do something like that for these taxi plate owners. We have to be consistent, in my view. We do not have many other industries that are regulated like the ones I have mentioned and like the taxi industry. Other than to point out that I do not believe that this is necessarily an adjustment assistance grant—it comes under that

particular part of the bill—I think in many respects this could be looked at as part of a buyback scheme. I wish the minister had accepted the amendment that was moved earlier, because if he had done so this amendment would not have to have been moved. That would have given the minister far more leeway to deal with the assistance grant and the buyback scheme; whatever he wanted to do. He would have been given that authority by this house. For that reason, I support this amendment because I think it goes some way—not completely—towards being fair to our taxi plate owners, and that is what I want to see here today.

Division

Amendments put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (16)

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

Noes (28)

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

Pairs

Ms M.M. Quirk	Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr B.S. Wyatt	Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr C.J. Tallentire	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr P.B. Watson	Mr W.R. Marmion
Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr P. Papalia	Ms M.J. Davies

Amendments thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 7 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.

Third Reading

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [5.51 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [5.51 pm]: Given the time, I will make a short contribution. The opposition believes this bill is woefully inadequate and that \$20 000 is not enough. Opposition members have said a number of times in this place that we do not believe that the reform has been handled well and that, basically, the minister is creating more uncertainty for those 900 private plate owners and the taxi industry in general. The opposition believes that there has not been enough research and analysis to gain knowledge of the industry. That has been borne out during consideration in detail.

The government is trying to develop a dream industry, which does not exist, and we will see a lack of sustainability in the industry in the long term and a dissipation of the professionalism and pride that many taxidivers, particularly owner drivers, have shown over many years. We will have a corporatised industry with people moving in and out of the market very quickly, trying to make money out of people rather than contributing to a long-term sustainable industry.

As I said, the opposition will not delay this bill. I note that as soon as we heard that the government wanted to bring in this bill this week and on this day, the manager of opposition business facilitated that with the Leader of the House. In no way has the opposition ever delayed or tried to stop debate on this bill. The opposition facilitated the passage of this bill through this house in one day. The opposition allowed the third reading to proceed straight after consideration in detail, which is quite unusual. The opposition has facilitated this bill, even though we think \$20 000 is not enough.

The minister has stated that by 30 November he will outline the government's plan. The opposition will outline its plan, and both the government and the opposition will take these issues to the election. That is where we are at. The minister has been Minister for Transport for two years. He has had a lot of time and a lot of resources to deal with this issue and he has not provided any answer or solution to the industry; he has just created more uncertainty. This issue will be taken to the election. I had assumed that the government, with all its resources, could have facilitated a strategy well before now. That has not happened. As I said, the opposition is disappointed. The government has not done enough and the bill does not provide real certainty for many industry players.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [5.53 pm]: I will be brief also because I can see the time and I know that members probably want to get off tonight, and I do not blame them. I am not going to the football match, but I know that some members would like to.

I refer to what was discussed in consideration in detail. It is very regretful that the Minister for Transport was not prepared to accept the first amendment put forward, which would have saved us an enormous amount of time, because the second amendment would not have been moved and it would have given the minister the authority to deal with this very serious but sensitive issue.

The minister said that he will bring this issue back in some form in November. Mr Speaker is fully aware that we will be sitting for only six days in November. On those six days, standing orders normally go out the window. Standing orders will be suspended and things can come and go. Bills can come from the other place, and we can send them to the other place; we do not need to do all sorts of things that we would normally need to do during the rest of the year. We could be debating this bill again or a revised bill of some nature, I presume, on the taxi industry at about 12 o'clock at night on the last sitting day in the middle of November. We could be debating this bill at one o'clock in the morning. That is not appropriate. I suggest to the Leader of the House that we should be sitting at least one extra week in November. To get up in the middle of November is almost unheard of. I think it is a dreadful reflection of the management of this house.

This is a very poor bill. It may not be to some people, but to the people in the gallery, if they are still here, it is an extremely important bill. To the people who have come to my office time and again—some of them are possibly going to lose their homes—it is an extremely important bill. They are looking for some sort of buyback scheme and recompense for the money that they paid out. If they paid out \$200 000 for a taxi plate, they are looking to get some of that back. The income stream has lessened; I know it has. I talk to taxidrivers. My son uses a taxi all the time because he is a fly in, fly out worker. Quite frankly, about 25 000 to 30 000 jobs have been lost in that industry and at least 15 000 of those workers would have used taxis to go to and from the airport to fly up north. Those jobs have been lost now and that loss impacts on the taxidrivers, because very often it is so expensive to park at Perth Airport that FIFO workers often use taxis. It is very true.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

MR R.F. JOHNSON: People come from the member for Mandurah's electorate to do fly in, fly out work and at the end of the day they are better off getting a train up to Perth and then a taxi from Perth to the airport than paying an exorbitant amount in parking fees. It is a great shame that the minister did not accept the amendment. I think it was put forward in good faith. I do not think it was a political stunt whatsoever. I did not want to be involved in a political stunt. I think the amendment would have helped and would have given the minister the authority to deal with this very serious and very sensitive issue.

I will not speak for much longer. I will be talking with people in my electorate and others in the taxi industry. They visit me regularly and they were hoping that some good outcome would come from what we have been discussing all day. Virtually all day we have been discussing this bill to try to give some sort of assistance to those people who are hurting in the taxi industry.

Some members may suffer at election time because of the government's stand on this issue. They may suffer because there are 2 000-odd taxis out there, so about 20 000 people will be affected through the ripple effect, from taxi owners, taxi plate owners, taxidrivers, their family and friends. An enormous number of votes will be swirling around at election time. I think that the taxi industry will remember today very well, and it will remember how it has been treated by the government. I do not think it will be remembered as a very kind way of treating these people who are now in this serious financial position through no fault of their own.

It is a great shame that the government did not accept the amendment. I think it should have done. I think it would have paved the way for a lot more beneficial discussions in the other place. I assume the opposition may well move an amendment along these lines in the other place. I assume the Labor Party will do that. It will not get it through because the Liberal and National Parties have control of that house like they have control of this house. It will not be like that forever and the taxi industry will remember today and the future and the way certain people and certain parties have treated it.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [5.59 pm] — in reply: I rise to close debate on the Taxi Amendment Bill 2016. I appreciate the opportunity to pass this legislation, so that we can make payment of \$20 000 to members of the taxi industry as quickly as possible. This is a major transformation in the taxi industry. It is an issue that all jurisdictions around Australia, if not the world, have been battling. Irrespective of which political side they sit on, every state government in Australia has struggled to find a way forward for the industry and the broader community. Labor and Liberal governments in the east, and this government, have been working to find a way forward that ensures that all participants in the industry can prosper.

We acknowledge, with the further events that have occurred in the industry this year, that the \$20 000 is not the be-all and end-all. It is an interim payment that we want to get out there as quickly as possible while we are working towards further adjustments and support. As I said in my reply to the second reading debate, all taxi plate owners will be sent a letter tomorrow outlining the hardship allowance that is available, to pick up those who find themselves in unfortunate circumstances. We need to make sure that we have a safety net for people in that environment.

I wish to resolve further opportunities and issues, and I appreciate all those who have participated in this debate. I reiterate that the Liberal–National government is not stopping here in its support for the taxi industry. This is merely another stage in a major transformation of the industry. We want all participants to be successful. All the way through this we have not said that this is intended to corporatise the industry. We have said that there are opportunities for corporates and also for cooperatives. We want to encourage taxi plate owners to get together to form cooperatives so that they can establish brand, goodwill and superior customer propositions.

Western Australia is expected to grow quite strongly in coming decades, and we see a need for the on-demand transport sector. We wish everybody the very best, and we wish to continue to support them. We will continue to work over the next two months to finalise proposals that we wish to make to the industry, but we also have to be able to justify to the broader community how we utilise taxpayers' funds. It is not a simple solution. If it was so easy, other jurisdictions would have been able to do it by now. Our state has moved faster than the majority of states in Australia on this issue—although it is not as quick as I would have liked—to deliver better solutions for the people in the taxi industry, and I believe we are delivering a more generous outcome than pretty much any other state in Australia. Members on this side deserve credit for that, despite the pain and the issues that the industry confronts. We commit to continuing to work with the industry to try to find the best solution and the way forward, and we commit to coming up with additional financial support for the industry. We look forward to sharing that with the broader community in the coming months.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS

Returned

1. Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015.
2. Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill 2013.

Bills returned from the Council with amendments.

CONSTITUTION AND ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Receipt

Bill received from the Council.

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland): It has been brought to my attention that the Constitution and Electoral Amendment Bill 2016 may be in breach of section 46(1) of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899. I will consider this matter and make my ruling next Tuesday, 13 September 2016, immediately after question time.

House adjourned at 6.03 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

LANDS — COOLCALALAYA STATION PASTORAL LEASE**5815. Mr P.C. Tinley to the Minister for Lands:**

I refer to the Coolcalalaya Station Pastoral Lease, and ask

- (a) can the Minister confirm that the Coolcalalaya Station pastoral lease has not, and will not be renewed
- (b) if so, for what reason was this decision taken and by whom
- (c) is the Minister aware that the current leaseholders have worked to restore the condition of this land in recent years
- (d) is the Minister mindful of the fact that Coolcalalaya Station has become a tourist attraction which has generated an economic return and employment in this region
- (e) will the Minister review and reconsider any decision not to renew this lease, and if not, why not

Mr D.T. Redman replied:

- (a) I can confirm that the Coolcalalaya pastoral lease expired on 30 June 2015 and was not renewed on 1 July 2015. As a result, the land has reverted to unallocated Crown land and has been since 30 June 2015.
 - (b) As Minister for Lands, I made the decision not to renew the Coolcalalaya Station pastoral lease as the lessees were unable to meet the conditions of renewal.
 - (c) I am aware, that the former lessees of Coolcalalaya Pastoral Station intended to rectify those impacts caused by a 4 Wheel Drive Adventure Park.
 - (d) I am mindful of the fact that the Murchison Offroad Adventure Park is a tourist attraction, however the 4WD activity was not permissible under the pastoral lease or the licence issued under section 91 of the Land Administration Act 1997 that was granted for the former lessee's to vacate the property.
 - (e) No. The lease was not renewed on 1 July 2015 due to non-compliance. It is not possible to renew the now-expired Coolcalalaya Station pastoral lease as it does not exist.
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