

Ms Sheila McHale; Mr Jim McGinty; Ms Diana Warnock; Ms Megan Anwyl; Mr Ian Osborne; Mr Alan Carpenter; Mr John Kobelke; ;); Mr Bob Bloffwitch; Mr Mark McGowan; Mrs June van de Klashorst; Mr Clive Brown; Mr Fred Riebeling; Mr Colin Barnett

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Amendment to Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS McHALE (Thornlie) [2.42 pm]: Prior to the taking of questions without notice, I spoke about the difficulties being experienced by people in my electorate because of the severe under-resourcing of the Police Service. I talk now about the difficulties that are being experienced in the Cannington police district, which covers all of my electorate, with the exception of a small portion that is in the Fremantle police district. It is recognised that the Cannington police district is the worst-resourced of the six police districts in the metropolitan area and is clearly under-staffed. That is evidenced by the leaked document about the number of calls to the police emergency number that were not answered, which reveals that 26 per cent of all calls to the Cannington police district were not answered. Those calls were from people in distress and needed an urgent police response. I have said in this place previously that the residents of Thornlie and districts tell me almost daily that they need more visible and well-resourced police on the ground. They have not been getting that under this Government. The Cannington Police Station has one police officer to 1 300 people. That is the worst ratio of police officers to population in this State, which is totally unacceptable to the community of Thornlie. We will deal with that matter when we are in government.

That lack of resourcing gives rise to additional problems. When police officers are on annual or sick leave, extraordinary stress and pressure is placed on the remaining police officers. Many of those officers are beginning to give up, and we are losing experienced and skilled police officers at an alarming rate. I understand that the rate of attrition of police officers is about 34 a month and that about 35 police officers are being recruited each month. However, the net loss in practice is more than just numerical, because in replacing those police officers who are resigning, taking early retirement or changing their careers because they have received insufficient support, we are losing the wealth of experience, knowledge and maturity of those police officers, and that cannot be compensated for by merely saying that 35 new police officers are coming on board.

One problem being experienced in Thornlie that goes to the heart of the under-resourcing of the Police Service is the lack of response by the police to calls being made by some of the residents about properties that they believe are being used for drug dealing. I understand from conversations with Homeswest that this agency also has informed the police about a number of properties that it suspects are being used for drug dealing, and that the response from the police has been that it does not have the resources to deal with this problem. I have informed the police also about a number of properties where drug dealing is alleged to occur. To date no action has been taken to the satisfaction of the residents of my electorate. People who have good reason to suspect that drug dealing is taking place in a property expect a response from the police. I also expect a response from the police on behalf of those residents.

It is of great concern to hear that because of the recent suspected murder of a person in Dorothy Street, Gosnells, police resources have been diverted from the investigation of alleged drug dealing in a number of these properties. I am not criticising that investigation, but when we hear that the overtime budget for the Cannington police district has been blown because of that investigation, we need to wonder at the level of resources that the Cannington, Armadale and Gosnells Police Stations have at their disposal. It is clear that the level of funding for basic activities such as overtime is totally inadequate.

If the effect of one investigation, albeit a serious investigation of murder, is to use the overtime budget for the following six months, as I understand the case to be in the Cannington district, we have very grave problems. It is no wonder that the residents cannot get the police to attend when they contact them regarding a home burglary or some other offence. The resources are not available for the police to respond adequately. I regularly work with a number of police in the Cannington district who are committed to their jobs, the district, and the residents. They are not being supported by the policies of this Government.

My electorate has a problem with the number of allegations of drug dealing. I have not been able to get a satisfactory investigation of the allegations to date. It is putting enormous pressure and strain on the law-abiding citizens of my electorate who now want action. They are at their wits' end because they feel, month after month, year after year, that they complain about particular properties and individuals but no action is taken. One has to wonder what is going on.

I hear that the motivation of the police in the Cannington district is low. There is an insufficient number of police officers to do the work expected of them by the community. I believe that the rate of long-term sickness among police officers is on the rise because of stress. When one hears about long-term sickness with police officers, there must be severe problems. Police officers are not the sort of people who would succumb to the

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pressures of their work unless the pressures are becoming intense and unbearable. I believe that we need to ask the rank and file police officers what their working lives are like. We do not get the true picture from this Government when we ask questions. We are given the impression by the Government that things have never been rosier, yet the exact opposite is true, especially when one hears the accounts from the police officers.

Detectives are under the hammer because of the sheer number of violent offences. Their time is stretched which leaves insufficient resources to deal with the many other offences that are occurring. The situation is not good enough. It is a very grave situation that the overtime budget for the Cannington district has been spent and that there will be no more funds until December.

My contribution to this debate is on behalf of the constituents of Thornlie for whom a sense of security is paramount. They have every right to expect to live in a secure community and that the Government will ensure resources are sufficient to staff police stations so that response times decrease and the officers are able to work overtime if required.

MR MCGINTY (Fremantle) [2.54 pm]: If one is to invest wide-ranging powers with enforcement agencies such as the Police Service, there is a duty to ensure the integrity of the agency and that it is free from corruption. That is potentially the case in Western Australia as we prepare to enact extensive confiscation legislation which will confiscate criminals' assets in three circumstances: Unexplained wealth, criminal benefits, and assets belonging to drug traffickers. Earlier this week the Government indicated that it did not understand its legislation. The front page of *The West Australian* yesterday carried an article about a brawl between the Director of Public Prosecutions, Robert Cock, QC, and the Attorney General, Hon Peter Foss, QC. Unfortunately, the Attorney General got his own legislation wrong and has misled the public of Western Australia. Among other things, he said that the legislation will deal with people who have dealings with criminals in joint investments or with banks which allow a criminal to take out a mortgage over a property that might be associated with money obtained through criminal activities as follows -

lending institutions . . . knowingly turned a blind eye to criminal activity.

It puts people on notice that they have to be very careful when dealing with people who they should have reason to believe have tainted money.

That is not what the legislation states. The legislation contains no such qualification and the Attorney General, in ignorance, has misled the people of Western Australia about the legislation. Under the Criminal Property Confiscation Bill that we will debate in the near future, any property that is wholly or partly derived or realised, directly or indirectly, from the commission of a confiscable offence - that is, one that carries a maximum penalty of two years' or more imprisonment - will be confiscated in full. That includes offences such as fraud, stealing, tax evasion and misrepresentation. There will be no provision in the confiscation Bill to protect an innocent co-owner of property, nor will there be any provision to protect any other person who has an interest in the property. The onus of proof will be reversed and the property will be presumed to be derived from crime unless the owner can prove otherwise. I advise the House of a few examples of the way in which that provision may operate and the reason that we need absolute integrity within our enforcement agencies.

Two people, one of whom has derived his money from theft, fraud, tax evasion or something of that nature, may purchase a house. The other owner of the house could lose his entire interest in the house when it is confiscated automatically. That person may be innocent but the provision will allow for automatic confiscation of their property. The bank, as a mortgagee, may also lose security if any money provided by a purchaser of a house is tainted. The provision will hit financial institutions which may or may not know that the money which they have accepted is tainted. Any person who uses property as security when the property was obtained in part with tainted money may lose that property. Any transaction that involves money or property being used downstream from a tainted transaction will cause the property to be confiscated without compensation to the business, corporation or co-owner.

There will be no provision for discretion by the courts. Confiscation will be mandatory for all property derived, to any degree, from a crime. Furthermore, there need not be an arrest, conviction or a suspect because the onus of proof is reversed so that the owner of the property will have to prove that it was not derived from the proceeds of crime. The absence of a prosecution or a conviction will not be a barrier. The message from this legislation is threefold and clear. Crime in Western Australia will not pay; investors must beware of any joint venture or undertaking of a personal or corporate nature. If someone else's money is tainted, co-investors will lose their money as well. Thirdly, lenders must beware. This applies especially to banks and other lending institutions, for which the message is given: "You will lose security and money unless you can prove that borrowers obtained all the money lawfully." It is very tough legislation. It is supported because it puts everyone associated with business and financial transactions on notice that they will be penalised if they deal, even inadvertently, with

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anyone whose money is tainted. The Attorney General was wrong in what he told *The West Australian*, and therefore the public of Western Australia.

This legislation will be fully retrospective and will apply to every event which has occurred in Western Australia as far back as is practical. The onus of proof will be reversed. Wide-ranging powers will apply to confiscate assets of innocent bystanders. The confiscation will be mandatory because no discretion will be left to the courts and it will not be conviction-based. Indeed, one will not need a suspect, let alone a convicted person.

I touch now on the way the legislation will impact on the bankruptcy laws as they apply in Western Australia. I issue a loud and clear warning to the Bond family: This legislation will overcome the shortcoming in Australia's bankruptcy law so that it can be used against the Bond family members, who were the beneficiaries of the Bond family trust and today own a significant amount of the money which passed through Alan Bond's hands as a corporate high-flier during the 1980s. Members will be aware that federal bankruptcy law in Australia today generally overrides state law. That would be the case with the state Criminal Property Confiscation Bill which we will debate in the next week or so; however, the Bill was drafted cleverly so it does not conflict with the federal bankruptcy laws, which can be overcome and defeated here in Western Australia. Therefore, transactions otherwise protected under federal bankruptcy laws will be robbed of that protection in Western Australia.

Transactions under bankruptcy law fit into four categories. First, any transaction in the ordinary course of business is completely protected. A trustee in bankruptcy cannot undo such a transaction to recover money spent by the bankrupt at any stage if it was part of the ordinary course of business. One can go back six months to undo a transaction under bankruptcy law if it was a preference transaction. The trustee can undo preference transactions not entered into in good faith in the six months prior to the declaration of bankruptcy. Classically, a person in that situation does business when it was known that he or she could not meet debts and was headed into bankruptcy. The trustee can undo those transactions. The third category is that a trustee in bankruptcy can go back two years to undo any property settlements that occurred. Finally, any transactions entered into with intent to defraud can be undone over the previous five years. That is the scheme of things.

I now look at the way the confiscation legislation will open up something which the Bond family thought was closed to them. Their assets will be able to be seized and confiscated by the State, although not by the people owed money by the Bond Corporation. Those time limits to which I referred will no longer protect bankrupts in Western Australia because the legislation will be fully retrospective. Also, it will place the onus on those who own or control property to prove that they obtained the property lawfully; that is, they acquired the property for value, and it was not simply given to them lawfully. One must perhaps go back beyond the previous two or three transactions in which it was acquired lawfully to the original transaction. Alan Bond's trustee in bankruptcy, Bob Ramsey, was unable to seize the vast bulk of Bond's wealth that he housed in the Bond family trust because Bond was not a named beneficiary of those family trusts. The beneficiaries in a general sense were Eileen Bond, Craig Bond and John Bond. As Alan Bond was not a beneficiary of the Bond family trust, the wealth was quarantined from the bankrupt trustee. The confiscation legislation we will deal with in the near future will enable that wealth to be seized by the Western Australian Government. I say beware to Eileen, Craig and John Bond, and maybe to Alan Bond, particularly now he has a flash house on the beachfront in Cottesloe, as this legislation will enable an easily obtained freezing order to apply to their assets. Unless each of them - namely, Eileen, Craig and John, and perhaps Alan - can prove that they originally acquired that property for value, it will be automatically forfeited to the State. Anything acquired with that tainted wealth will also be confiscated in full. If the Bond family mansion in Dalkeith or the Fairlanes bowling rink were sold, and the proceeds of the sale were used to acquire other property, that downstream property will also be seized by the State. It is important to bear in mind these ramifications of the legislation.

In case members are under the impression that with Mr Bond's putting of this money into a family trust the payment out of the family trust to the beneficiaries of that trust was a lawful payment to Eileen, Craig or John Bond, that is not the case. A lawful payment to Eileen, Craig or John Bond as beneficiaries of the family trust is not enough to satisfy the measure. They will need to prove - with the onus on them - that the wealth was not previously tainted before it came out of the family trust. Incidentally, a conviction for fraud for \$1.2b, as was the case with Alan Bond, is taken as conclusive proof that the wealth was unlawfully taken. Given that the onus will be on the Bond family to disprove the tracing of the \$1.2b through to the property indirectly, it will be forfeited to the State. This legislation stands to gain a windfall if the measure is exercised to its fullest extent against some of the major corporate fraudsters who operated in this State and managed to hide behind bankruptcy legislation to keep money within the broader family and to prevent it being seized by creditors. That is exactly what Alan Bond did. The Bond family must prove that it lawfully acquired the money. It will not be sufficient that it received it lawfully from the family trust.

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The legislation will be fully retrospective, and the courts will have no discretion. Once an application is made, the court cannot determine on merit that the measure should not apply in the circumstances involved. No discretion whatsoever will be provided for the court as it will be a mandatory provision. Confiscation of those assets must occur if the condition precedents are satisfied. No conviction will be required. When a conviction is involved, it will be taken to be comprehensively proved.

My final point is that it does not matter how innocent a person might be. It does not matter how innocent Eileen, Craig or John Bond might be. If the assets have at any stage found their way through the Bond family trust down into their personal or corporate assets, they will lose those assets under this confiscation legislation. Therefore, it is easy to see that this legislation can be used as a very powerful weapon to pursue the Bond family in Western Australia. Equally, it can be used against every other citizen and corporation, innocent or otherwise. For that reason, if we are to give to the law enforcement agencies in this State - the Police Force and the Director of Public Prosecutions - such extreme powers, there must be absolute integrity in our crime enforcement agencies. That is the reason I support this legislation today. Whether it be the powers given to the police regarding streetwalkers in the prostitution legislation that we debated late last year and earlier this year, or whether it be in this confiscation legislation, every bankrupt will know that he or she will not be able to hide behind the provisions of the bankruptcy legislation, as has been the case in this State in the past. It angers people in Western Australia when those who have robbed, by fraudulent means, thousands of people in Western Australia, and perhaps internationally, of enormous amounts of money declare themselves bankrupt and continue to live the high life, and their families continue to have tens of millions of dollars which were the proceeds of that crime.

This legislation will be able to be used against the Bond family. In fact, it would be perverse if the Parliament passed legislation like this and it were then not used. However, it will apply to not just the Bonds; it will be everyone - every corporation that has at any stage transgressed the law of the land. If a car dealer makes a misrepresentation of the value or roadworthiness of a car, that is a criminal offence that, as a misrepresentation, carries a maximum penalty of more than two years' imprisonment. The assets of that used car company or new car company can then be seized because the money is tainted. By passing on that money through the family trust or through the corporate structure, at every level of that corporation that money is exposed to seizure by the State, as well as anything acquired with it. Even if only \$1 of that tainted money is spent on acquiring an asset that might be worth a quarter of a million dollars, the entire quarter-of-a-million-dollar asset is frozen and confiscated by the State. There is no handing back the balance and taking only the crime-related money; its operation is absolute, with no discretion by the court.

I raise this matter in the context of the amendment to the Address-in-Reply moved by the Leader of the Opposition to say to members of this House that what we will do with the confiscation legislation will give remarkable powers to the state law enforcement agencies. Those powers will be used to dramatically increase the amount of money seized from people who commit crimes, some of which are quite minor. Those moneys will be seized and taken from those people. There will be a dramatic increase in the money coming into the coffers of the State as a result of the passage of the confiscation legislation. If a car dealer makes a misrepresentation, his assets are at risk. If Alan Bond thinks he can rely on the bankruptcy legislation to pass his fraudulently gained money onto his family, which he was able to get away with it in the past, he will not be able to do so in the future. I cannot think of a single corporate arrangement or business that will not to some degree be subject to this legislation. Therefore, we need a Police Force which is beyond reproach and which cannot be questioned, because we will give enormous powers that will very much affect both guilty and innocent people in this State.

MS WARNOCK (Perth) [3.14 pm]: My colleagues the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Fremantle and Midland have ably outlined why the Government should call a royal commission and why the Government has been ineffective in removing a whiff of corruption which surrounds some - I repeat "some" - members of the Police Service today. Because the Opposition believes that a clear majority of Western Australian police officers are honest and hardworking, it is even more important to clear the air to remove any taint that might affect that hardworking majority. That is why the Opposition continues to pursue the Government on this royal commission.

In my few comments today, I turn to a more down-to-earth and perhaps prosaic aspect of policing, but one that nonetheless is important; that is, police resourcing. Members of this House would have to have had their heads in a bucket of sand for the past few months not to know that this State has a growing and serious crime problem and, just as importantly, a growing problem of fear of crime. Here I instance headlines like "Street War", which have been fairly common in newspapers lately and part of television coverage every evening. This sort of coverage has occurred under the eight-year term of a Government which came to power in 1993 trumpeting an

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absolute determination to be tough on crime. I remember that its campaign was so hairy chested, one half-expected stocks to be set up in Forrest Place. More seriously, the Opposition has consistently asked this Government to increase police resources. As someone who is concerned with crime prevention through a Safer WA committee - I have been involved with that committee for several years - I have consistently heard local police loyally say that they do their best, although it is obvious that they do not have the resources to protect people in the way that those in this community, quite properly, expect to be protected. I expect police to say that when asked about resources. However, it is clear to me from the growing crime rate in certain areas - I admit that in other areas the crime rate has fallen - that the resources are not there.

Like most members of this House, I attend many community meetings. At such a meeting this week it was obvious to me that the Perth area has problems with over-stretched resources. Because of headlines similar to the one I just mentioned, "Street War - Triads, videos incite violence", and so on, and because of the well-known problems with crime in Northbridge, I am constantly told that the Perth area is extremely well policed. However, in a discussion at a community meeting this week, it was obvious to me that in the large Perth area, which covers more than just Northbridge and the inner city, those resources are over-stretched. Yesterday in this House the Government talked about all the new police stations that have been opened over several years. However, if in opening these new stations police officers are taken away from other areas, thus weakening the resources in those other areas, it is simply robbing Peter to pay Paul. It does not work as a way of managing police resources, or indeed the resources of any government department in a State. It is not good enough. I am sure that most members of this House find in their own areas that that is exactly the situation. Although new police stations may have been set up, which we all applaud, if they are not properly resourced, or if in setting them up resources must be taken away from somewhere else, clearly that will not please those people in the other areas.

At the meeting that I attended this week, to which I referred a moment ago, I found that there were traffic problems, for example, in the Perth district. Resources had been drained because government needed them for prostitution patrols in Highgate. Obviously, I support that patrol, which is an important matter. We have all seen extensive coverage of those issues on the television over the past several days. Therefore, why are more police not being provided to deal with this task? Why are police resources taken away from other areas in order to be put to this very important new task? We need police on the streets, for example, to solve problems arising from street soliciting. However, it does not mean that we do not also need them to look after traffic problems which, although they may sound trivial in comparison with serious crimes, are not trivial to people who are worried about those traffic problems. I believe, from what I heard at the community meeting this week, that we have lost up to 20 traffic police in the Perth district, which covers Vincent, Subiaco, Cambridge and various parts of the City of Perth. No longer are night shift traffic cars staffed and operating on these very busy roads; that is simply unacceptable. That area was promised last year that no cuts to services would occur when it lost two traffic police from that same police district covering the Town of Vincent. Now it will lose 20 police who were intended to look after the Perth district. The existing police at suburban stations in that police district are already under pressure having to monitor school traffic zones and a growing inner city residential area. Members should believe me - incidentally, both sides of Parliament support this - when I say that when we properly draw people back to the inner city, we obviously need greater policing for that inner city area, as all kinds of small and large crime situations have arisen which call more on police resources.

Only a few weeks ago the Premier said that there are sufficient police numbers; we now discover that we have lost 20 from our area while the population, and obviously the road use as a result, is increasing. The cut of 20 police that became obvious to me at that community meeting this week will obviously affect service and response times in the area; that particularly concerns me as it is my electorate and the area for which I am responsible. As I said, all members are aware of serious crime problems, but it is equally important to people

who live in those suburban streets not to have their streets turned into speedways. They want to see proper traffic policing in the same way they want to feel safe in their own homes. If police are taken away from one area to go elsewhere, the area will not be covered. As a local member, this concerns me a great deal. Only a visible, active police presence is likely to deter dangerous driving and local crime, and every member in this House wants to see that in their areas.

This Government has now been in power for more than seven years. I believe it could increase police numbers tomorrow. It has been talking about increasing numbers for some time, no doubt stimulated by the Opposition leader recently making such a commitment after the next election. We want to see those numbers increased now. We certainly do not want to see areas robbed of important police personnel because new police stations have opened up or other areas such as street soliciting have claimed the attention of police. All these issues are important and resources should be available for them, but they simply are not.

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I turn briefly to another subject which concerns policing about which I have spoken many times before; that is, the problem of crime and anti-social behaviour in Northbridge. It is clear that many of the traders there, let alone the visitors who come into that entertainment area, are dissatisfied with the behaviour of some people who hang about there - not everybody, quite clearly, but a sizeable minority - who disturb people who go about their lawful business or who visit Northbridge to enjoy themselves. Some people are actually afraid to visit Northbridge, not only because of the sensational coverage in the local papers, but also because they have formed the impression over time that it is an unsafe area to enter. I find that both depressing and reprehensible because it means that the resources that have been needed in that area for some time have not been provided by the Government. If it is not the Government's responsibility to provide them, I do not know whose responsibility it is.

I have frequently spoken to senior police officers, as I attend many community safety meetings and so on. Most members of Parliament in the course of their workday activities would speak to many police. I have spoken to a number of senior police officers about this issue and they assure me that the precinct I am speaking about - the Northbridge area - is very well policed. Some police have told me that it is the best policed area in Western Australia. They are loyal public servants and I would not expect them to say anything else. However, it is clear from regular complaints from traders in the area and regular stories in the local papers that the situation is unsatisfactory and that this so-called tough-on-crime Government has simply not provided the much-needed resources and leadership. I do not for a moment suggest that daily operational matters are the responsibility of a Government; they are the responsibility of the Police Force. However, if the resources and the leadership are not there, clearly the job will not be done properly.

I believe many of the traders in Northbridge would obviously be Liberal supporters rather than Labor supporters. However, it has certainly not stopped them taking a very tough stand on crime and anti-social behaviour in the city. They are not happy and my impression is that they intend to convey that view to the Government in no uncertain terms. I have mentioned this matter many times previously in this House. Before I sit down I would like to draw attention to a recent story in *The West Australian* of 2 August which refers to a street war between young gangs. As a former journalist, I can understand the reason for this coverage. In some ways as a member of Parliament I regret it as it perhaps gives a wrong impression of life on our streets in Western Australia. Nonetheless, it reminds me, as somebody who has been concerned about the policing of this area for some time, that the Asian police squad, which was formed several years ago to work underground and to deal in a background way with this kind of activity and prevent it happening, has been disbanded or its resources scattered here or there. I hope that the squad will be reformed as I am sure the fact that it has been disbanded is something about which the Asian community and the possible victims of these street wars will be extremely unhappy.

I therefore call on the Government to increase the resources to police and to take seriously its responsibility, which it assured us it would when it was elected in 1993, for being tough on crime and to properly resource our Police Service.

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [3.28 pm]: I shall make some comments in relation to this amendment, specifically the aspect of police corruption which some esteemed members of our community believe to be a problem. I am always interested when I hear the Minister for Police say that it is only a fairly notorious criminal and the Opposition who are calling for a royal commission. However, today's media statements have been made by the chairman of the standing committee which oversees the activities of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Hon Derrick Tomlinson, who presented to this Parliament some years ago, I think in 1996, a report which detailed very gross breaches of proper activities by police. When someone like that says that a royal commission into police corruption is inevitable, the police minister should upgrade his rhetoric, as many senior and leading members of the Western Australian community have made statements about the problem of police corruption.

That is not to say that any member of the Opposition is critical of the Police Service as a whole. We all have a great deal of esteem for the dedication shown by police officers. I have great regard for the difficult job they do. Often they carry out the extremely difficult duties that other government agencies will not. All police officers, particularly those who have been in the service for a long time, can reel off anecdotes about the areas in which they have had to work, whether it be attending rather messy suicides, dealing with bereaved families or coping with child welfare issues. Police officers have a difficult job. It is those police officers who work so hard that have their integrity impugned by the actions of a few. Therefore, it is necessary that we get to the bottom of what is happening in Western Australia.

I have no trouble admitting that I am a Victorian. I came to this State to work in the legal profession almost 20 years ago. At that time, the view was that Western Australia was somehow quarantined from the type of organised corruption that occurred in other States. This view is still prevalent, especially with organised paedophilia. The perception is that Western Australia is somehow different and does not have the same problems as do many other States. I have never understood that philosophy. I understand people are parochially

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proud of the achievements of this State; however, it is naive of them to wear blinkers and assume that Western Australia is not exposed to the same types of corruption as are other States. It is necessary to work out an effective framework to get to the bottom of these matters.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has created some real problems. It is a secret commission. Presumably some members of Parliament have some knowledge of what is occurring, especially Hon Derrick Tomlinson, who says that a royal commission is inevitable. Some members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission would know what goes on, but I and many other members of Parliament do not. The view of the legal profession, with which I still have involvement, is that the fact that so few charges are successful and so few disciplinary charges - let alone criminal charges - are laid by the commission does not augur well for its success. I do not believe that the answer is to increase its powers, which is what I think the commission and its chairman will call for. Some of the chairman's statements border on being overzealous. His comments about detectives and long lunches brought discredit to the Police Service. For someone like Mr O'Connor to make those statements indicates that another agenda is afoot.

The Government is hell-bent on holding a law and order debate. We know the Government does not want to talk about health, education, crime prevention or any of the other areas at which it has failed so badly; however, it has looked at the polling and has decided it could do well with law and order. The debate this Parliament will have on the Criminal Property Confiscation Bill will be a farce. The Bill will introduce some incredibly strong powers for non-conviction-based forfeiture, which is fine. I was a member of the Select Committee on the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, which recommended those laws in 1997. Recommendation 40 of the interim report said that non-conviction-based forfeiture legislation should be introduced for drug trafficking. I signed my name to most of the recommendations in the final report, which was tabled in August 1998. Recommendation 38 of that report asked the Attorney General to rush through non-conviction-based forfeiture laws for drug trafficking. It is now two years after the committee's final report and two and a half years after the interim report. The committee, on a bipartisan basis, specifically requested that those things occur. Members of this Parliament will need to think again if they believe that meaningful non-conviction-based forfeiture legislation can be introduced when the Police Service is corrupt, particularly in the area of organised crime; that is, drug trafficking and prostitution.

It is worth revisiting the November 1997 and August 1998 reports of the Select Committee on the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, in which it made some lengthy recommendations about the powers and resources required by police. The Western Australia Police Service does not have sufficient undercover police officers or the appropriate expertise in law and accountancy accountability. Those factors are vital in eradicating the types of organised crime about which we are talking. Western Australia does not undertake sophisticated operations. One of the key issues raised by Operation Red Emperor is that, to a large degree, the criminals have better resourcing and technology than the Police Service, which is of major concern. One of the main questions asked by the community is why organised criminals are so far ahead of the Police Service all the time. There are two answers to that, and one relates specifically to police corruption. If members of Parliament are not yet aware that a large numbers of tip-offs are made to the Mr Bigs of organised crime and that there is a lack of resources and willingness to apprehend those criminals, it is about time they woke up. It would be a sheer nonsense to pass the Criminal Property Confiscation Bill when corrupt police tip off the very criminals the public wants caught about the types of operations to which the Bill refers. It is important to note that New South Wales, which has had some success in this area, has established a Police Integrity Commission that is accountable to the Parliament and has a clearly defined policy of employing police officers from outside its jurisdiction. Those are vital elements of an effective anti-corruption mechanism. Western Australia has not gone down that path and is experiencing major problems. Strengthening the powers of the Anti-Corruption Commission is not the solution. The Anti-Corruption Commission has been a dramatic and expensive failure. A proper debate is needed about what the Anti-Corruption Commission is trying to achieve.

Based on the needle and syringe statistics, my electorate of Kalgoorlie has a higher-than-state-average level of drug use and much dealing in illicit drugs. The police do not seem to have the power, will or resources to deal with the problem. The number of drug-related apprehensions and convictions has fallen, despite clear evidence that illicit drug use is increasing. The resourcing issue is pertinent to Kalgoorlie-Boulder. When the police have utilised undercover operations, people have been caught. However, if undercover operations are not used, the ability of the Police Service to infiltrate organised crime is minimal. There were no bikie gangs in Kalgoorlie-Boulder when I became the member for Kalgoorlie in 1996. Two chapters of organised, criminal, outlaw motorcycle gangs, as they are known, have since established themselves in the area. That situation is replicated across the regional areas of Western Australia. There is a great deal of consternation among those who live in the regional areas of Western Australia where this has occurred. I suggest that the lack of police resourcing has directly contributed to the ability of those outlaw motorcycle gangs to establish a presence in country areas.

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Anyone who lives in a country area knows that the visibility of particular members of the community is high. It is harder to hide when one is living in a small country area, yet these gangs appear to flourish.

As to police resourcing, one of the key issues of the Delta reforms announced in 1996 was to make the Police Service more accountable and more responsive to community needs. For that reason, a great deal of encouragement and support was given to the Police Service decision to locate a commander in the city of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. The recent decision by the commissioner was to abolish the whole central region, where the commander was based in Kalgoorlie, and to merge it with the largest police area in the world, the northern region, where the commander was based in Port Hedland. The merging of those two regions resulted in an area of 2.39 million square kilometres, to be serviced by one new commander. Guess where that commander lives. Of course, the new commander lives in Perth, and that will really help him get insight into the needs of regional centres and their communities.

The decision to amalgamate those regions is really an admission of failure by the Police Service. The 1996 Delta rhetoric was about being responsive, yet in a letter from the commissioner to me dated 4 August the commissioner states –

The changes are consistent with the “Delta” philosophy, which guides the purpose and direction of the WA Police Service and places great emphasis on devolvement of responsibility to the districts as being the key mechanisms for service delivery to the community.

So we are now expected to believe in what I would have thought was fairly ridiculous rhetoric. I have publicly called this decision idiotic because that is what I believe it is. The commissioner would have us believe that the country areas will have more power by moving the commander to Perth. According to the commissioner, that will equate to more power. What will actually happen in my region is that a district superintendent will have responsibility for 12 police stations and a much larger area. He will have increased responsibilities that will detract from his ability to become a part of the community. Although he lives in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, the fact that he will be moved away altogether will be a great loss to our whole region. The existing commander, Commander Baleschin, is fairly popular among the goldfields community because he has been seen to get out and about, he is not frightened to get his hands dirty, and if he sees an offence being committed, he will take some action and arrest the offenders.

There is a great deal of dismay about this decision. There is no doubt that this decision has been made as a cost-cutting measure in the context of a Police Service that is absolutely crying out for extra resources. As the Leader of the Opposition said earlier today, in real terms there has been a decrease in the Police budget if we take into account increased population and inflationary costs. In his media release dated 4 August 2000, the Commissioner of Police said –

Ultimately the changes should result in associated cost savings.

So the commissioner is at least up-front enough to say that cost savings will result from this action. We all know in country areas that these changes are driven by cost savings, but we do not have confidence that they will improve the Police Service that is available to people of regional areas. There was a big rumour that Geraldton would score the commander's office and his five staff – that has not happened – and no doubt the member for Geraldton still has problems attracting police to his area, as have I. We have a police station that is severely hampered –

Mr Bloffwitch: We just want our commander in Geraldton, instead of Mandurah where he is at the moment.

Ms ANWYL: Good luck to the member for Geraldton, because I do not think he will get very far with that.

Mr Bloffwitch: I think I will.

Ms ANWYL: We will see. Anyway, my commander will be based in Perth and will have responsibility for 2.3 million square kilometres. He may as well live out at the airport in Perth. I do not know whether a house is being built for him at the airport. The commander will have to cover an area of 2.3 million square kilometres with 52 police stations. How it can be suggested that that is an improvement is beyond me, but no doubt the Minister will make a statement at some stage.

The police in my area have severe resourcing problems. I called a meeting in the suburb of Adeline last week. More than 100 people concerned about crime issues attended that meeting. The police officers who attended were very open and said, “We can't get there.” The officer in charge of the police station in Kalgoorlie-Boulder actually suggested to the media that it might be a good idea if he had some council-employed private police. He made it very clear to the meeting and on radio that there were gross difficulties in servicing the needs of the community.

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I will explain some of the places I am being told by my constituents that police cannot get to, which include places where offenders are actually inside their homes. They are trying to get call-outs to fires. There was an incident last week in which approximately 40 young people pelted an attending fire engine and the fire officers with missiles. The police are having difficulty getting to those sorts of calls. There have been examples of offenders standing in the street with clear evidence that they were involved in some sort of offence; for example, holding a bag containing takings from a taxi. Several hours later a young officer attended. In one case the officer said, "We have had about eight calls in relation to that alleged offender today." These are the sorts of things that are going on. What is the Government's response? It is to move the commander from our area and say to the new commander, "We will give you the two biggest policing districts in the whole world" will merge them and give you a new one and we will site you in Perth and you will have 2.39 million square kilometres to deal with." This is at a time when single officer police stations and Aboriginal communities are calling out for a permanent police presence, and the Government is a million miles from coming to grips with all of that.

We definitely need a proper inquiry into police resourcing. If we cannot resolve the issue of corruption, we can forget about any legislative response to drug trafficking and the like that plays havoc with people's lives in Western Australia.

MR OSBORNE (Bunbury) [3.48 pm]: I shall speak against the amendment proposed by the Opposition. As I read the words, it seems to me that in at least three key respects the amendment is flawed. The Opposition's call for the establishment of a royal commission will not necessarily have the outcome that the Opposition seems to believe it will. I believe the Opposition secretly does not believe what it says when it says a royal commission should be established in Western Australia.

Ms Anwyl: Do you think it should?

Mr OSBORNE: I will speak about my beliefs on that. The second matter that came to my attention is that the implication in the amendment that we do not have an effective Police Service in Western Australia. I intend to argue against that. The third statement in the amendment from the Opposition refers to a growing crime rate in this State. That is not true and the evidence does not support it.

On behalf of my electorate of Bunbury, I can speak specifically about the so-called rising crime rate. However, before I do I will refer to an article in *The West Australian* on Friday, 4 August written by Anne Burns. In the beginning of the article she refers to what we may see in the next month; that is, an unprecedented level of cooperation between the Opposition and the Government.

Mr McGowan: Is that the one that says you are going to be the next leader?

Mr OSBORNE: I rang the journalist about that.

Mr McGowan: Before she wrote it?

Mr OSBORNE: It was Roger Martin. I said that I could not work out to whom he talked, because my mum died in May. I was trying to work out who thought I had a chance. We had a laugh about it and we agreed that it was a bit of filler for Monday. No, the article to which I am referring was written by Anne Burns and was in last Friday's *The West Australian*. As I said, she referred to the climate we are now coming into ahead of an election, in which both major parties in this State will be engaged in competition to outdo each other in the field of law and order. She concludes those opening remarks - they are reflective of the remarks made by the member for Perth - by saying that we must distinguish between the actual incidence of crime and the fear of crime. The article states -

The climate of fear in Perth, dished up in a daily diet of sordid and graphic crime detail, has created a political environment ripe for the plucking despite the fact that the crime rate is going down.

The Minister for Police has made the point many times in answers to questions without notice that the statistics show that the crime rate in Western Australia is going down. That is also the case in Bunbury. There is a public fear that the south west region is in the grip of a crime boom, but the figures I have from the Police Service indicate that that is not supported by the facts. The problem is that the issue of crime is an emotive one, but the statistics show there has been an overall downward trend in crime in Western Australia. Those figures are also reflected in Bunbury. The figures show that in the past 12 months in the Bunbury district, there has been a general decrease in the number of crimes of damage, while the number of reported sexual assaults, burglary other than domestic burglary, motor vehicle theft and graffiti has not changed. Over that 12-month period, there was a slight general rise in home burglaries, drug offences and, in January, when the population of the south west region practically doubles because of the holiday season, there was a significant increase in the number of stealing offences.

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Mr Carpenter: Some crimes have declined while others have increased.

Mr OSBORNE: In general there was a decrease. The increases in burglaries during the holiday period can be explained by the increase in population. If members look at it over 12 months, they will see that there has been a general decrease.

We must also be cautious of radical monthly blips in the figures. For example, sexual offences are recorded at the time they are reported. They might refer to an incident which happened several years or several months before. Because the database in Bunbury is quite small, the release of one offender who goes on a rampage would create a significant increase in the number of offences reported in one month; for example, in June 2000 the figures for assaulting a police officer rose from two in May to eight in June as a result of one street disturbance. Although there have been some monthly increases and decreases in the figures for the Bunbury district, the general figures show that the incidence of crime in Bunbury is under check or is declining. I am not downplaying the seriousness of criminal activity; nor am I downplaying the impact of those crimes on the victims. However, we need to understand that our police are doing a remarkably good job. Although there are some bad police officers, overall the police officers who serve us in this State are honest people who try to do a decent job. My father used to say that sheep get like shepherds and shepherds get like sheep. That means that if a person spends enough time with certain types of people, that person tends to become a little like them. Maybe that happens in this place as well! That is a problem faced by the Police Service. Police officers are in regular contact with criminals, and some of those -

Mr McGowan: Don't say that to your National Party colleagues.

Mr OSBORNE: In some cases it reaches the point at which one cannot distinguish between them. It is not just a matter of becoming a little like them; they become indistinguishable. The fact remains that across the entire Police Service in Western Australia, we are served by an outstanding group of people. There are some bad apples in that barrel. However, we should not allow a few disreputable individuals to colour our perception of the entire service in Western Australia.

I referred to the impact of crime on victims, and I take the opportunity to refer to the recent matter involving Peter Lenane, who was recently convicted of manslaughter in Bunbury. A deputation from the south west came to Parliament House yesterday. Those people said that one of the things Parliament must do - with the support of the Opposition, I hope - is make legislative changes to the Criminal Code. I am a supporter of the changes that have been suggested to broaden the power of home owners or occupants to take action to defend themselves against an intruder. We must amend the test of what constitutes reasonable force from an objective to a subjective one, so that we do not have a situation in which an occupant goes to court and, with the benefit of hindsight and evidence brought to court, it is proved that what was thought to be reasonable force employed by the occupant was, in fact, unreasonable. We must amend the Criminal Code so that the judgment made by the occupant at the time of the intrusion is what is tested by the court process. We must change the definition of "home invader" to that of a person who the occupant reasonably believes is a person who is committing an offence or is going to commit an offence. We must also change that section of the Criminal Code so that the definition of "dwelling" is extended to include the boundaries of the property and other buildings in that area. The Lenane case has created an outrage in Bunbury, because a very popular and law-abiding man was caught in a situation which escalated out of his control with which he had nothing to do. An intruder on his property attacked him and, in a most unfortunate sequence of events, the intruder was killed. The upshot is that Peter Lenane, a highly respected Bunbury resident, has now been convicted of manslaughter. I have said to the media in Bunbury - I repeat it to the House - that if we make changes to the Criminal Code such that it appears that Peter Lenane would not have been found guilty of manslaughter, I would support any application he might make to the Government for a pardon from the conviction which has been made against him. I raise that aside to the debate because it is a current issue.

Mr Kobelke: I take it that you will support the amendment.

Mr OSBORNE: No, and I am in the process of explaining why I do not support the amendment. It does not refer to amendments to the Criminal Code.

Mr Kobelke: The second part regards the effectiveness of the Police Service. It allows you some latitude to speak on that, as have other members. We would be interested to know your views on the part regarding the royal commission.

Mr OSBORNE: I will move on to the royal commission issue as I mentioned it in my opening remarks. The member for Nollamara's amendment also implies that the Police Service is under-resourced, and I will make a couple of general comments about that. Under this Government, capital and recurrent budgets for the Police

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Service have risen dramatically. I know the Minister for Police has presented these tables to the House before, and I present them again. They show clearly that under the coalition Government, expenditure on recurrent budgets has grown from about \$270m to about \$395m. They are approximate figures as I read them from the graph. That is the order of increase which has been made to recurrent budgets. Similarly, the increase in capital budgets from the time we came into government in 1993 has increased from about \$9m to \$45m.

It cannot be fairly argued by any reasonable person that this Government has done anything other than significantly increase the money and resources that have been made available to the Police Service. The other general point I make about resourcing the Police Service is that the Government must be wary of continually responding to demands from one or other sector of the community for more money. That is a game that has no end point. We must make a judgment as a Government. If the Opposition ever comes into government it will have to make the same judgment about the resource requirements. We cannot continue to throw more and more money into something like the Police Service. Not only would we run the risk of having so many police in the service in Western Australia that we receive an adverse reaction from the public, but also we would ignore the real responsibility that any department has to manage the resources available to it. There comes a point at which the Government must say to the Police Service that it should manage within the resources given to it. It cannot keep coming back to the Government saying it is too difficult and too hard and the Government must give it more money. The Government has made a fair effort to give the Police Service in Western Australia increased resources. It is a concomitant responsibility on the part of the Police Service to manage those resources effectively.

In support of that argument, it is not just a matter of more police and more money. The introduction of new technology, for example, access to DNA technology, will provide twenty-first century high-tech solutions to the Police Service that will massively increase its ability to combat crime in Western Australia. I am convinced that as soon as that technology becomes available to the Police Service in Western Australia it will have an impact on the clear-up rate for crime in this State greater than at the time of the introduction of fingerprinting technology. That is another way in which the effectiveness of the Police Service can be improved without simply throwing more resources at the problem.

The other point I make is about community involvement in the improvement of community safety. Many members on this side and on the other side of the House are involved in local Safer WA committees. I am involved with my local Safer WA committee and I am also privileged to be involved in the Safer WA Council. The community can be involved in that initiative to reduce crime in Western Australia.

I will now get on to the issue of royal commissions. As I said in my opening remarks, a royal commission would not necessarily have the outcome that some people believe. It is popular for Oppositions and some sections of the media to call for a royal commission. Royal commissions provide the media with a daily diet to supply fodder for their front page. We all know the way the media operates in this day and age. The cost of producing a newspaper is in no way supported by the price the purchaser pays for the newspaper. The advertiser pays for it. The purpose of the front page of the newspaper is to attract readers. It is not to sell news to the readers, but to sell readers to the advertisers. The more explosive, dramatic and sensational that front page can be, the greater likelihood the passerby will pick up the newspaper and read the front page and then look at the advertising.

Mr Kobelke: Are you saying that corruption is not a major issue in Western Australia?

Mr OSBORNE: I am saying that we must be aware that the media love the idea of a royal commission because it will supply them with a front-page headline every day. From that point, calls from the media are specious. Oppositions love royal commissions too, because a royal commission does their work for them. It provides a real thrashing around and a pig's breakfast, and with any luck something will fall out of a royal commission that will be fuel for an opposition argument.

The reality of royal commissions is that they have two major outcomes. The first is that we do not get many prosecutions from them. The Wood royal commission into the New South Wales Police Service resulted in only one prosecution of a police officer. That was on a matter that did not relate to its investigations. The reason is obvious. People mentioned at a royal commission whose stories appear on the front page of the newspaper can argue in court for years to come that it is impossible for them to be get a fair trial because the possibility of a fair trial has been prejudiced by coverage given to the royal commission. The history and the facts are that royal commissions do not result in many prosecutions.

The second result of royal commissions is they generally recommend the establishment of a high-power investigative body. That body already exists in Western Australia - the Anti-Corruption Commission. Members in this place know the history of the ACC. It was established with the powers of a royal commission. It is designed to be above politics. Its focus should be on where corrupt activities exist and how they should be

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rooted out. The very important thing about the ACC is that it has the powers of a royal commission and a special investigator with coercive powers. That enables the ACC to deal with any allegations of corruption, including police corruption. I have run past the time I was going to talk about the nature of the ACC, but my point stands: The ACC has the powers of a royal commission. It is fruitless for the Opposition to call for a royal commission when in effect one is already in existence in Western Australia through the existence of the ACC.

I conclude my remarks on the amendment moved by the Opposition by saying that on the three counts I identified at the outset, the amendment is flawed and we should reject it. Firstly, the establishment of a royal commission suits only the Opposition and certain sections of the media. A royal commission will result in no prosecutions and the existence of the ACC makes the appointment of a royal commission redundant. The amendment implies that we have an ineffective Police Service and I disagree. We have an effective Police Service that is adequately resourced by this Government. We have other alternatives to simply throwing more resources to the Police Service, such as the use of new technologies and good reliance on initiatives like Safer WA. The third element of the amendment I reject is where the Opposition talks about a growing crime rate. That is not supported by statistics. For that reason alone this amendment should fail.

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [3.57 pm]: I support the amendment. For anybody who has followed or been involved in politics in Western Australia for more than a couple of years, it is almost amusing to hear the arguments coming forward from the Government against the value of a royal commission. I have only to cast my mind back to the late 1980s and early 1990s and the beginning of this Government's reign. I can remember those selfsame people, who are now saying that royal commissions achieve nothing, day after day, week after week and year after year doing almost nothing else other than demanding that a royal commission be set up. To somehow assert that the Wood Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service was ineffective or produced no good result because there was an absence of huge numbers of prosecutions is incredible. It reflects poorly on the calibre of the people on the other side of the Parliament that they should make such ridiculous remarks about the value of royal commissions. Royal commissions play valuable roles, and whether prosecutions flow from them is neither here nor there. The public has a right to know that when there are misdemeanours inside government, there will be thorough and competent investigations into those misdemeanours. We are now faced with a situation like that. Very serious allegations - probably the most serious kind that can be made - involving murder, drug dealing, the compromise of secret police operations - which go right to the heart of the Police Force are being made by members of the Police Force and are being described as not worthy of adequate investigation.

I want to reflect upon a couple of things that were said in this Chamber yesterday; firstly, the response to the Address-in-Reply by the member for Joondalup. The response is an interesting document to read in any case for the completely dishonest way it represents the arguments about drug law reform and so on. Putting that aside, however, the member for Joondalup concentrated heavily in his speech on the impact in South Australia of drug laws and how they had led to organised crime moving into South Australia. The fact is that outside this little theatre of the absurd, outside of this Chamber, the public debate yesterday was not about drug-related organised crime in South Australia; it was about drug-related organised crime in Western Australia. Everybody except the member for Joondalup was talking about drug-related organised crime and corruption in the Police Force in Western Australia, yet we had a strangely encapsulated bizarre performance when a member wanted to talk about what was happening in South Australia and relate that to other matters in Western Australia.

For that member's information, part of the *Four Corners* program on Monday night which sparked the debate we are having now included an interview with Detective Sergeant Peter Coombs by *The 7.30 Report* in Perth in 1994. I recognised the interview because I did it with Mr Coombs. The interview was at the time of the trial of Bruno Romeo. Bruno Romeo was Australia's number one most wanted man. He was the biggest drug runner in the country and the head of the Australian mafia; and Peter Coombs caught him. Peter Coombs, the Western Australian policeman who is now out on suspension, caught the number one mafia boss and drug runner in Western Australia. He caught him because Romeo was involved in a huge drug growing operation - not in South Australia, for the information of the poor old member for Joondalup who is prepared to say anything to get re-elected, and even to compromise the lives of people who are using heroin; Bruno Romeo was involved in Australia's biggest drug growing operation here in Western Australia - not South Australia. The organised criminals are not in South Australia; they are in Western Australia. Every night on the television in the past few days there has been evidence of it. Bruno Romeo, a former eastern States' criminal now resident in Western Australia, had his drug growing operations in Western Australia. He had a huge crop growing in the station country, another huge crop in the wheatbelt and a third near Gingin; and Peter Coombs caught him; that is the reality. Organised crime is not everywhere else; it is here in Western Australia.

Mr Baker: The point I was making is that it is going to get much worse under a Labor Government.

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Mr CARPENTER: Australia's number one crime boss and the thugs who were working for him were operating in Western Australia until Peter Coombs caught them. They all went on trial at the same time. I sat through the trial and watched them all get put away. It does not happen elsewhere and not here; it is happening here in Western Australia. That is what the Government and both sides of this Parliament must face up to. Organised crime is here with us now and has been happening for a long time; it did not start in 1994 or 1995. Romeo's operations had been going on for a while before Coombs managed to arrest him. Organised crime has been going on in Western Australia for a long time.

I invite those members who have been resident in Western Australia for more than 20 years to cast their minds back to the 1976 royal commission into prostitution in Western Australia, better known as the Spike Daniels Royal Commission. I suggest that members read that royal commission report and make a judgment, applying the standards we have today, on whether Daniels was right about what was going on and about the scenarios which were being played out. Those scenarios included murders which have never been solved, such as the Shirley Finn murder; the murder of a woman whose body was washed up on Cottesloe Beach after allegedly being thrown overboard from a policeman's boat; and the incredible involvement by police in the prostitution industry in Western Australia. Members should look at the names of the police who were involved then and see where those police ended up in the Police Force. Organised crime has been going on in Western Australia for a long time.

That brings me to the second element of yesterday's debate, putting aside the member for Joondalup's quite bizarre contribution. What Minister for Police in any country in the world can brush off allegations of serious police corruption? These are allegations of murder, massive drug running industries, and every other element of organised crime. How can it be brushed off on the basis that it happened in the past? I got up in the past this morning. Everything cannot be judged on the basis that it might be happening at this moment or in the future, and if it is not it is not important. If people have been murdered in Western Australia by organised criminals and have been using links to the Police Force, there must be an investigation into it. The *Four Corners* program on Monday night made those allegations. The Minister for Police, in this House yesterday, said that "Furthermore, if we are to deal with corruption in any group, particularly the police, we must have systems in place that deal with it now and into the future, not an examination of the past." Can anybody believe that a Minister for Police would say that we do not need an examination of the past? It is unbelievable, but it happened. Not a word was printed in the media that that was the attitude of the Minister for Police. No minister worth his salt should be able to get away without some questioning or scrutiny of that type of remark which reflects the minister's attitude. That attitude is borne out of a fear of calling a royal commission because he does not have the guts to stand up to the police. That is one of the problems that all ministers of police face. They cannot front up to the police and say, "Listen, pal, I want to investigate what is happening in your Police Force and I want a royal commission." This police minister does not have the guts. If he were sitting over on this side of the Chamber, he would be screaming for it.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson was right: It is inevitable that such a royal commission will take place; it is only a matter of when. When it does, there will be ample material for it to investigate. On the *Four Corners* program an accusation was made that a former police sergeant, Mr Shadgett, had accessed the police computer mainframe and obtained details of a police protected witness. At the time that witness was being squirrelled away in Queensland because he was wanted to give evidence against people who are accused of being the organisers of major crime syndicates in Western Australia. That witness was killed either by his own hands or by someone else's. The *Four Corners* program made the assertion, via some of the police officers who had been involved in the program, that Petrelis, the protected witness, may have been murdered as a result of the information that came off the police mainframe and was given to organised criminals. What kind of Government does not take that accusation seriously? That incident took place five years ago, not yesterday. It is not the fact that the Government has not had time to investigate. On Monday night, former or current senior police were on television saying that they were concerned about the fact that former sergeant Shadgett had taken that information about the protected witness and given it to organised criminals. Lo and behold, Shadgett gets an opportunity to appear on television and says he has never been questioned about that matter in five years. He denied having done it, but he said that he had never been questioned about the matter. As I recall, the Minister for Police said today that Mr Shadgett had refused to be interviewed about it.

So what should we do? Should we just let it go because it was five years ago? A policeman is alleged to have given information to organised criminals which may have resulted in the murder of a prime witness against them. Are we to believe that it does not matter because it happened five years ago and we now have a new Commissioner of Police? It is a disgrace. It cannot be allowed to continue. There should have been a royal commission into the Police Service some time ago, but there were probably other matters which were more deserving of investigation by a royal commission, and the energy and commitment of that form of inquiry was

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directed elsewhere. In particular, I refer to the WA Inc royal commission. There should have been a royal commission into the Western Australia Police Service in the early 1990s. There certainly should be one now. I believe there should be a royal commission into every Police Force every 10 to 15 years. That would be far more beneficial than a continuing committee of inquiry such as the Anti-Corruption Commission. It is far more beneficial to have one-off investigations in which evidence is brought into the open, witnesses are forced to give evidence and that evidence is accessible to the public so that it can see what is going on. We should have that type of inquiry here.

The Minister for Police should be transferred to another portfolio. He has made clear his position that he does not believe there should be a royal commission. The Premier has abrogated his responsibility by stating that he will have a royal commission only if the Commissioner of Police recommends it. How likely is that? Has there ever been a Commissioner of Police who has stated that his organisation is stuffed full of crooks and that a royal commission is required? Of course there has not been, because that would be the end of the Commissioner of Police. The Premier is the leader of the State, not the chairman of the ACC. The Minister for Police should remember that his role is not to protect or defend the police or cover up corruption within the force. His role is to protect the public. The Minister for Police's role is to protect the public interest and to make sure that the Police Service also does so. This Minister for Police does not understand that and he is not fit to hold the portfolio. He should be given another portfolio, although Health should not be given back to him.

The suggestion that we should not have a royal commission because it would be retrospective and would deal only with matters that are long past does not wash. We have just heard the member for Fremantle describe the implications of one of the most powerful pieces of legislation that has been introduced into this Parliament. The legislation is retrospective in its effect. It could go back forever. Why is retrospectivity permissible for that legislation, but not for a royal commission into the Police Service? The man who wrote the script for *Blue Murder*, the ABC television series which exposed a lot of the corruption in the New South Wales Police Service, could come to Western Australia, read the report of the 1976 Royal Commission into Prostitution, speak to people like Peter Coombs, Les Ayton and others, and recognise a very similar scenario being played out in Western Australia. There are severe problems with police corruption. There are untested allegations that people have been murdered as a result of police corruption in Western Australia going back 25 years. The allegations have never been fully tested. We know - and the member for Joondalup is trying to make political mileage from it - that drug running and drug dealing is a major issue in Western Australia. When it comes down to trying to do something to nobble the people involved and the police who allegedly protect them, some members put up their hands and say that we should not do that because it has happened in the past.

Peter Coombs nabbed Australia's biggest drug dealer through an operation in this State. There are various views about Mr Coombs. I understand that he is presently under suspension from the Police Service and there are allegations that he has not done the right thing. When I see him on television, raising accusations of high-level corruption within the Western Australia Police Service, I listen to him because I know what his history as a policeman is. Even if he is wrong and he is making it all up, that is something that should be investigated as well. If six senior Western Australian police officers have been involved in an operation and somehow or other they have all done the wrong thing and are now on the outer - and the criminals are still getting away - then that is worthy of a royal commission. It is unfortunate that we are entering an election period and the Government has not got the bottle to do what it should do. The minister is a weak man and does not have the courage to do what he should do as a member of Parliament and Cabinet. He should call a royal commission into the Western Australia Police Service because all the evidence demands that should happen.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [4.26 pm]: I am astounded that members of the Government feel they can stonewall on such a serious issue and that it will just go away. The Government has been trying to do this for at least five or six years. It has been saying that there is no problem and there is no need for a response. There might have been a stage six or seven years ago when it was seen that the Opposition and a few malcontents were trying to embarrass the Government by applying pressure for a royal commission to be held. That is no longer the case. There is so much public evidence from a range of people that the issue cannot be denied. There is a major issue of police corruption within the State; however, this Government does not want to know about it. This Government wants the matter to go away. To me, that is totally unbelievable. To understand the situation one has only to look at *The West Australian* of Monday, 24 July 2000, which carried a large headline "Mr Bigs Go Free" with a subheading "Top judge pessimistic about drug war as kingpins escape justice". I quote the first three paragraphs -

THE Mr Bigs of the WA drug world are getting away with it and the outlook for cutting down the illicit trade is bleak, according to the State's top judge.

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Acting Chief Justice Geoffrey Kennedy told a drug action conference at the weekend that big-time drug dealers rarely came before WA courts. Only the lower level dealers and addicts were seen.

"At this stage one can only be pessimistic about the prospects of eliminating trading in drugs," Justice Kennedy said.

The article refers to the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Robert Cock QC, who is quoted as saying –

"I can confirm that most people charged would not fall into the category of Mr Bigs," . . .

We have a situation where the chief legal officer and the DPP say that this State has not been effective in catching the Mr Bigs of the drug trade. We all know that the drug trade is worth megadollars. It is a huge, illegal industry. Where there is a huge, illegal industry there is corruption. We have here an indirect acknowledgment that there is corruption in Western Australia. This Government does not care. It is a Government that wants the problem to be covered up. In other words, it is a Government which is soft on corruption. There is no other way that it can be put. I am not saying that the Government is corrupt; the Government simply does not have the fortitude to do the right thing to try to clean up corruption in this State. This is not an issue that has just cropped up and about which the Government intends to do something. The Court Government has been in power for over seven and a half years, and a large amount of that corruption has come to light only since the election of this Government. There is no evidence that this Government has increased the amount of corruption because, as the previous speaker said, there is evidence of its existence in the 1970s. However, the situation is that prior to the election of this Government there was not a lot of evidence of corruption.

I served on the Select Committee on the Official Corruption Commission, and it tried to find evidence of corruption. That committee was established because there was a lot of talk of corruption in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A royal commission which cost in the order of \$15m found no evidence of corruption. That royal commission did not look specifically at police; it looked at the whole of government and its activity. If the evidence of corruption had been clear, the royal commission would have traced that back to the police or whoever was involved in it. That is not proof that there was no corruption. All I am saying is that back then there was not a huge amount of evidence of corruption that could be easily obtained; otherwise the royal commission would surely have brought it to light.

Mr Baker: Before that royal commission was called, though, there were all sorts of allegations regarding corruption, weren't there?

Mr KOBELKE: Allegations had been made. A royal commission was called. It had every resource available to it, and it could not find evidence of corruption. That does not mean it did not exist; it means that it had not come close enough to the surface for the royal commission to get hold of it. What has happened since the election of this Government? There is an incredible amount of evidence of widespread corruption.

Later I will comment on that official corruption committee. It certainly sought to find evidence of corruption. In the committee's report, it found that there was only low-level corruption. There was no evidence of endemic or major corruption. Again, that does not mean it did not exist; however, there was no proof or clear evidence of it. What do we find since 1993 and the election of the Court Government? The issue of corruption has come up again and again in the public arena. Government members might say that that is because the Opposition is much more effective now and is able to bring matters forward. I do not think that is true, because a lot has been done by the media. Corruption has been brought forward because it exists. One need only remember the Sinatra's bar affair. It was clear that things were going on in the Police Force which were quite wrong and which involved corruption. This Government wants to cover up the Argyle diamonds affair – an issue involving the stealing of millions, if not tens of millions, of dollars worth of diamonds. Time and again, the company had to pay the police to investigate because the police did not want to look into the matter. The officer assigned to that matter did not want to try to find that diamonds had been stolen. That is clear evidence of corruption. A large amount of that has come out through the courts and through what has been made public.

There was the Petrelis death. It was raised in this Parliament months ago that there was a problem involving access to official records of the police, which could have led to someone killing Mr Andrew Petrelis. Today, with the tabling of the report, we find that the matter still has not been investigated. It happened five years ago. It was raised in this Parliament months ago, and there still has not been a start to an investigation of that issue. Why not? If there is prima facie evidence that a murder potentially flowed from illegal activities in the Police Force, a Government that wanted to do something about corruption would have ensured a thorough investigation took place. The report tabled today and the news last night suggest that there has been no thorough investigation

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into that matter to try to ascertain whether there were illegal actions and to prosecute those involved. That smacks of a cover-up and of corruption.

There is also the issue of prostitution. The Government has failed to act in an area which clearly involves corruption. The bikie gangs run the brothels in some areas. For years, prostitution has been known to be associated with corruption, yet this Government does not want to do anything about it. It does not even have a policy on brothels. Again, that is clear evidence that the Court Government is soft on corruption; it does not want to deal with it. It is not only the chief law officer and the Director of Public Prosecutions who have indicated that progress is not being made, but also the Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Mr Terry O'Connor, QC, who gave evidence to a parliamentary committee and also said outside the Parliament that there is widespread corruption in certain parts of the Police Force. It is not just the Opposition that is saying it; the evidence is staring the Government in the face, but it wants to deny it.

In the 10 pages of the Administrator's speech, there was not one mention of doing something about police corruption. This Government is soft on corruption. It is not willing to take the action necessary to try to stamp it out. A royal commission is needed. That is the only way to bring out into the open what is going on and, through that, restore confidence in our Police Force. That is what is needed for the overwhelming majority of our Police Force who are honest, hardworking officers and whose position is being undermined by the continual raising of stories which bring the good name of our Police Service into disrepute. A royal commission is essential to bring the facts before the public to clear the air and to help the Police Force get on with the important role it plays. However, this Government does not have the strength of character required to take the step to call a royal commission. Therefore, the public does not know who are the good cops and who are the bad cops. Everyone sees stories in the media. There is enough fact in the stories to make one realise that something is going on. How can members of Parliament or general members of the public know who are the good police and who are the ones who are corrupt? One cannot distinguish. The matter is far too complex. The only way it can be dealt with is to have a proper royal commission which will investigate these matters and bring them out into the open.

In the report of the Legislative Council's Select Committee on the Western Australian Police Service in June 1996, Hon Derrick Tomlinson said that a royal commission into the Police Service was needed. He was a member of the Government who chaired a select committee of this Parliament, and he made it clear then, over four years ago, that a royal commission was needed to try to clear up the matter. However, the Government wants to shove it under the carpet and hope that nothing will happen before the next election. From that evidence, clearly this Government is soft on corruption.

The response of the Minister for Police also confirmed that. It is nonsense to say that it is in the past. How does one make any sense of that? If someone was corrupt yesterday, last year or five years ago and is still in Perth running corrupt operations, will he tell us what he will do tomorrow if we talk to him today? What a nonsense! The way to get to that corrupt person is to discover what he did last year or five years ago and have him put into jail. He cannot be convicted for something he will do tomorrow; he can be convicted for something he did yesterday, last year or five years ago. A royal commission will look into that. For the Minister for Police to say that royal commissions only look to what has happened in the past is a nonsensical statement. He is so bereft of any real defence of the Government's failure to deal with the situation that he grasps at the stupid idea that we cannot look into the past and says that there is no benefit in doing so. If it is in the past and it is an offence, people can be convicted and locked away so that they will not continue to perpetrate those sorts of offences and continue their corrupt activities. That is why we need a royal commission.

The minister also suggested that the only people who want a royal commission are Opposition members and Mr Kizon. As I already indicated, Hon Derrick Tomlinson wants a royal commission. The Police Service and former deputy commissioner Les Ayton want a royal commission. Again, the minister has to deceive people by stating untruths because there is no defence of the Government's position. A royal commission is needed, and only that will help combat corruption in certain parts of our Police Service to ensure that we have an effective Police Service that will get stuck into this State's unacceptably high levels of crime.

This Government has one of three reactions when clear evidence is presented of major corruption in the Police Service. The first reaction is to deny the reality, and we have seen that from the Minister for Police. He is living on another planet and says nonsensical things. That has happened time and again. The second response is to pass the responsibility to someone else. The Premier said the Government will establish a royal commission if someone says that it must. The Premier and his ministers are responsible for governing this State. If there is a major problem of corruption in the Police Service - there is ample evidence of that from senior government officers - it is the Government's responsibility to set up a royal commission. It can seek advice on these matters from all sorts of people, but it is not the call of the chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission or the

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Commissioner of Police; it is the call of the Premier and his Cabinet. They are trying to duck that responsibility. In that and other instances there is an attempt by the Government to shift the responsibility, and it fails to live up to its responsibility to govern this State. The third reaction is to pretend to do something, such as set up a committee or inquiry with limited terms of reference, to keep everyone quiet for a few months until a report is made. That has happened time and again.

Today, the report by Mr Len Roberts-Smith, QC, on the "Review of the WA Witness Protection Program" has been tabled. Again, the Government set up this inquiry when evidence came to light of the death of Mr Petrelis, and the fact that his cover had been blown, probably by the release of information from police. The Government tried to cover up the issue and denied there was anything of significance; but when its cover-up had failed and it could no longer deny the significance of the issue it set up a committee to review the situation. What has the Government done to track down the potentially corrupt officers who may be involved in this matter? One of those named indicated on a television program either last night or the night before that he had not been approached by an investigator. Clearly, the setting up of this inquiry was to take off the heat and try to get this to go away by pretending to do something. All the while, the Government was being true to form; it was being soft on corruption and was not ensuring some form of investigation into those officers took place at the same time as investigations were made into the general structure of the Police Service's witness protection program.

This Government has been doing this from day one. I served as a member of the select committee inquiring into the Official Corruption Commission. The report of that committee contained recommendations for reforming and updating the OCC. The pressure went on in 1996, following the establishment of an upper House committee, when many allegations of corruption surfaced and there was evidence of apparent corruption, and the Government tried its third ploy, which is to look as though it is doing something. The Government changed the name of the Official Corruption Commission to the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the legislative change contained the recommendations in the committee's report.

The Government was so involved in playing games that the key ministers responsible for this area did not even read the legislation. The ministers who said that they would establish the new Anti-Corruption Commission, which would solve the problem, did not read their own legislation. It was simply a con job. I know they did not read the legislation because it clearly stated that a standing committee of the Parliament would work in conjunction with the ACC. When I raised that matter in debate in this place, the minister handling the Bill said that the Government would not agree to it. It was clear that the Government had no intention of setting up that standing committee; it was only after repeated motions by the Opposition over 12 months that the Government established the committee. If the Government did not want that committee to be established, it could have removed that provision from the Bill. It would have been a minor change to the wording, but the ministers responsible had not read the Bill with enough care to know that it provided for a standing committee of the Parliament and that the Government was not keen on the idea. We know that the change of name from the Official Corruption Commission to the Anti-Corruption Commission was simply window-dressing. The Government had no commitment to tackling corruption; it simply wanted to take the heat off by making it look as though it was doing something.

When a Government is clearly soft on corruption and does not have the fortitude to take up a serious issue, the problem festers and grows. There is more and more evidence of it. Currently we have no way of knowing whether corruption in the Police Service is at the same level that it was when this Government came to office or whether it has increased. However, the public signs of corruption are far more evident, and because of that the Government will not get off the hook by denying the realities and making fake moves to pretend it is doing something.

The corruption in the Police Service in this State must be tackled as a matter of priority, and a royal commission is the only method of doing that. If this Government does not take some action, at the next election the people will make sure a Labor Government is in office. A Labor Government will establish a royal commission to clean up this matter in the Police Service, and make sure this State has an effective Police Service in which people can have total confidence. It will result in a reduction in the crime rates and not the spiralling crime rates that have occurred under this Government. It has failed totally to deal with this major issue and as a result people are being attacked in their homes and there is a lack of public safety on the streets.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result –

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 9 August 2000]
p110c-141a

Ms Sheila McHale; Mr Jim McGinty; Ms Diana Warnock; Ms Megan Anwyl; Mr Ian Osborne; Mr Alan Carpenter; Mr John Kobelke; ;); Mr Bob Bloffwitch; Mr Mark McGowan; Mrs June van de Klashorst; Mr Clive Brown; Mr Fred Riebeling; Mr Colin Barnett

Ayes (19)

Ms Anwyl	Mr Brown	Mr Carpenter	Dr Constable
Dr Edwards	Dr Gallop	Mr Graham	Mr Grill
Mr Kobelke	Ms MacTiernan	Mr Marlborough	Mr McGinty
Mr McGowan	Ms McHale	Mr Riebeling	Mr Ripper
Mrs Roberts	Ms Warnock	Mr Cunningham (<i>Teller</i>)	

Noes (26)

Mr Ainsworth	Mr Baker	Mr Barnett	Mr Barron-Sullivan
Mr Board	Mr Court	Mr Day	Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames	Mrs Hodson-Thomas	Mrs Holmes	Mr Johnson
Mr Kierath	Mr MacLean	Mr Marshall	Mr McNee
Mr Minson	Mr Omodei	Mr Osborne	Mrs Parker
Mr Prince	Mr Shave	Mr Sweetman	Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst	Mr Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)		

Pair

Mr Thomas

Mr Tubby

Amendment thus negatived.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [4.51 pm]: I will take this opportunity to make a few remarks about education and, in particular, literacy and numeracy. This week in Western Australia, children in primary schools are undertaking the year 5 literacy test as part of the national benchmarking program. Some controversy surrounds that testing. Members on this side of the House support it, but it is unfortunate that not enough follow-up occurs as a result. That calls into question the value of the testing. There is little point in children being diagnosed with a problem if no remedial action is taken. There is little evidence in our schools that, as a result of these national tests, specific actions and programs are being targeted at children with literacy or numeracy problems. That is the weakness of the current system. Regardless of Dr Kemp's rationale for introducing the testing - I believe it was purely a political decision - there could be some benefit if remedial action were taken as a result. That does not happen.

I support the minister's view that the results of the tests should never be made public and that individuals and schools should not be identified. He also pointed out that in some schools around the State the tests are a complete waste of time. We saw a photograph of the minister at a remote Aboriginal community school and the accompanying article stating that the minister agrees with the principal, who had decided not to test his students because there was no value in doing so. The problem with that stand - I believe it is correct - is that one must also consider the other circumstances in which they have no value. Perhaps we would be better served by providing resources for children clearly identified as having English language literacy problems without their undertaking the test.

In support of the test, the minister said this week that parents welcome the results. I dispute that. I have one child in year 5 and one in year 3 who have both done the test. I knew very well that they had no literacy problems. Most parents know whether their children have these problems. It is much more likely that parents of children whose results fall under the benchmark figure will be distressed because they do not get the required remedial support for their children. I have raised in this Parliament previously the lack of sufficient resources for language development centres around Perth and the excessive demand over supply for places in those centres.

Mr Barnett: You will appreciate that we have recently increased the number of places.

Mr CARPENTER: The minister will also appreciate that there is still a large unmet demand.

Mr Barnett: Yes.

Mr CARPENTER: As policy makers, government members know - members on this side also know as policy watchers and formulators - that unless we address these literacy and numeracy difficulties at an early age, generally by eight years of age, we are unlikely to resolve them later. The children with problems will go on to experience huge difficulties at school and subsequently when they seek employment. The focus must be on the first few years.

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The value of testing at year-5 level and producing results at the end of that year must be open to question. As I have said, once the problems have been identified, they must be acted upon. The potential value of these tests is that they identify children who need remedial work. They also send a clear message to politicians and policy developers that this area needs close attention. The Government is not doing as much as it could. As a result, children are suffering educationally and will suffer further when they seek employment and progress through life.

The Education Department has developed programs, but they are not well resourced. The most critical resource is teachers who know what they are doing and how to deal with children with literacy and numeracy problems in those early years.

It is interesting to note how resourcing changes from pre-primary to year 1. In pre-primary, classes have about 20 students, a full-time teacher and a full-time aide. That situation changes in year 1. The maximum class size is about 27 students, who have one teacher and an aide for half an hour a day on two to four days a week. The resources are diminished by almost half and the number of students is increased by about one-third.

Only 10 or 15 years ago, educationalists and policymakers did not understand the importance of focusing so heavily on those first few years of schooling, but now we do. I am always willing to give credit where it is due, and I commend this Government's development and extension of kindergarten and pre-primary programs. These programs provide opportunities for children with learning difficulties or literacy problems to be picked up earlier. However, we need to do much more than we are doing at the moment.

The State Government delivers education to about 70 per cent of children in Western Australia, therefore it must shoulder an immense direct responsibility and get its education policy right. It is my view that at state government level education is the one area of government activity which can provide profound and long-term changes, hopefully to the better, for the quality of life of individuals in the community. Other areas of state government activity address things on a more immediate basis, but education equips people with skills they will be able to use for their entire lives, so the State has an incredibly important responsibility in this regard.

As we know from the results of those tests that are now done on years 3 and 5 – most people who are in education would have been aware of this before – anywhere between 15 to 30 per cent of children are not meeting those benchmark levels. There is a major issue to be dealt with; it is not simply a policy area that is important to a small number of children. We are talking about a very significant slice of our population.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that 44 per cent of 15 to 65 year olds in Australia have poor literacy skills and can expect to experience some or considerable difficulties in using printed material which they encounter in their everyday lives. It is a legacy of Australia's undervaluing of education for a very long time that such a high percentage of people in our community do not have proficient literacy skills. In Western Australia, as I have said, on average about 20 per cent of girls and about 25 per cent of boys at any age will have literacy and numeracy standards which do not meet the national benchmarks. Those figures are considerably higher for indigenous children and children from backgrounds with a language other than English.

When I accessed the ABS figures on the number of people in Western Australia who come from households in which a language other than English is the first language, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics nationally, I was very surprised to find that 22 per cent of all students in government schools are from language backgrounds other than English. At a conference I went to two weeks ago in Western Australia I was told that the figure was closer to 28 or 29 per cent. We begin to understand why many of these students, whose first language may not be English, and children with backgrounds other than English, have difficulty attaining the benchmark standards for literacy and numeracy. I will come to that issue in a moment.

I am talking about this issue against a background where only 50 per cent of Western Australian students reach high school graduation level. That is hard to believe but it is a fact, which is outlined in the budget papers year after year. In Western Australia, only 50 per cent of our students reach high school graduation standard. We have a major educational deficiency and we have to do a lot of work in general terms, but specifically we must do some very detailed and highly resourced and intensive work on those earlier years. I bet that the 25 to 30 per cent of students who have literacy and numeracy problems identified by year 3 will fall into that category and will not reach high school graduation level because they will drop out of education as they cannot achieve well enough. Not all of them will, but the overall majority will become alienated with the education process; they will stop wanting to go to school and they will get out of education as soon as they can.

The experience that is starting to develop in Western Australia is that no matter what programs we offer at the other end in years 11 and 12 – the Government is expanding the vocational education training programs – those students still will not stay because they have already made up their minds by the time they are 12, 13 or 14 years

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old that they hate school and want to leave. We can offer them anything in years 11 and 12 but that will not make any difference. By that time, in many ways, they might be, one can argue, making that decision for themselves; but the fact is that they are coming up through a system that is not supporting them sufficiently and is not doing them justice. We must change our whole thinking about it. Educators now know that and they now know that they must get the first three or four years of schooling right, otherwise they are really up against it. At policy level we must realise that fact and concentrate on it.

When this matter of literacy and numeracy is raised for debate in Parliament and so on, the minister often reels off the programs – I do not know about “often”, but on a number of occasions when I have raised the matter the minister has reeled off the programs which are in place to deal with the literacy and numeracy shortcomings. They are there, too, it is true, but the fact is that when one looks at how much of a resource those programs get, one can see why they are not doing the job one would like them to do.

I will give one example. The minister often uses the literacy net program as his response to my questioning about whether we are doing enough as a result of the benchmark testing. The literacy net program for pre-primary to year 3 is funded to \$100 000 for our entire education system. That is nothing; it is not enough. Even English as a second language, which at \$900 000 is funded at a much higher level, looks insignificant when one looks at the number of children who are coming from backgrounds where English is the second language in something like 29 per cent of homes.

I will mention the next matter briefly because I know another speaker wants to talk about it. The Parents as Partners program is another one that is under-funded. It is my view that involving the parents in the education of their children is absolutely critical to the success of that child and education. Many of the children who come to school presenting problems with literacy and numeracy, who do not come from a language other than English background, come from impoverished families, families who do not have access to reading resources, and maybe those in which the parents themselves have low level literacy skills and so forth. We need to involve parents much more in the education of their children. The Parents as Partners program, which was started under the First Steps initiative in Western Australia, is funded to the level of only \$10 000. It is virtually non-existent in terms of its funding. If we were serious about this issue we would have a very close look at that program and fund it properly. I will leave that issue at the moment.

In brief, there are at least five critical things we can do to address this issue of literacy and numeracy in addition to what the Government is already doing. There are some good programs. For example, the Government is trialing the reading recovery program which has been quite successful in other States. A small trial, which is an intensive remediation program, is going on in Western Australia funded to the level of about \$70 000. There are other things we can do.

Dr Gallop, the Leader of the Opposition, in his speech earlier today said that the Labor Party had committed something like \$20m over four years to various initiatives. The first of those was to get more teachers, educators and specialists into the classrooms to help the children who have difficulties. That is the most critical thing. It should not be any old person, nor anyone who can read a comic, but someone who has a bit of expertise, because they have to know what they are doing. First of all, if a child has a literacy problem, they have to understand why. There may be a whole raft of reasons - it might be intrusion of dialect, it might be a physiological learning problem, it might be something to do with their sociological background at home and so on - but the teachers and the people who are trying to deal with that problem must know why that child has a problem. It is not good enough to have someone sit there and read them stories. The person must understand literacy and numeracy. Many people in the community have that skill.

It is extremely expensive to provide huge numbers of additional new staff to schools. We need to be able to fund the schools to increase the number of teaching hours that they can provide to individual students. For example, we can provide an extra allocation of money rather than an extra person to a school, so that school can increase the number of hours a person is already doing or free up some of its skilled staff to do this specialist work. We do not have to create 150 new positions; we just have to fund it to that level. We need to fund at least another 100 people into classrooms to help teachers deal with children who have literacy and numeracy problems. I did not just dream this up. After visiting most of the areas in this State including the Kimberley, the mid west, the Pilbara, the south west and around the metropolitan area, it is apparent that we must put literacy and numeracy specialists back into district offices. We need specialists and not teachers who know a little about the specialisation. These specialists are expert at remediation, in literacy and numeracy and can professionally develop the teachers who are in the schools. We have 16 school districts. We must get at least a couple of specialists into each district office - some offices might need two and some three. The sole function of these specialists would be to address literacy and numeracy problems in schools. They are not there to provide relief teaching for the manual arts teacher. The funding for the 100-odd extra teaching positions would be designated

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for the literacy and numeracy function and would not be used to provide relief for the music teacher. That is what the Reading Recovery program has done in New South Wales and in other places. Under the Reading Recovery program expert educators in district offices go to the schools and professionally develop the teachers who are then able to carry on those programs with the children who need help.

The third thing we must do - the Government is moving in this direction already, and I support the direction - is to have smaller class sizes, particularly in those first few years. Arguments have also been put for reduced class sizes in other years. The minister has referred to the transition years in high school. We must get class sizes in years 1, 2 and 3 right down. The aim of the current program is to reduce class sizes to 24 by 2004. That is the right thing to do. That is a reduction of around one a year. We must go well beyond that and get those classes down to 20 in the first three years. We must continue to fund that program to reduce class sizes in subsequent years. I was interested to see that in Victoria teachers were threatening industrial action over the size of classes. There were more than 21 students in the class! The class numbers were up around 24 and teachers were ropeable that they had to deal with so many kids. Western Australia needs to move forward in the reduction of class sizes as a matter of urgency. This is not for the sole benefit of making life easier for teachers. The benefit is to dramatically increase the amount of time each student receives from the teacher on a one-on-one or small-group basis. It is important not for the teachers but for the children, although it makes life more bearable for the teachers and enables them to impart their expertise more efficiently.

As I said briefly, we need to develop a much stronger partnership with parents. At the recent conference of the federal Labor Party the shadow federal education minister outlined initiatives to get parents more involved pro-actively in their children's education. That is easier said than done, but we must make the effort. The benefit is not for the parents, but for the kids. If we can make serious inroads into literacy and numeracy problems in primary schools, within 10 or 15 years we will see a great benefit flow to the community and to the Government. It would reduce expenditure in other areas such as juvenile crime, in the provision of social services and so on. It is worth making the effort and spending some money for the long-term gain that will be achieved. It does not require huge funding. Again, I know it is easier said than done, because we will find that parents, for one reason or another, will be reluctant to get involved. Often their reluctance relates to their difficulty with educational institutions based on their experience at school. They feel inadequate and put up all sorts of defence mechanisms and barriers against involvement in their children's education. They often devalue education because of their experience in school and it manifests in their relationship with their children's education.

There is not much point in providing a Parents as Partners program that attracts parents who are wonderfully keen and excited about their children's education. That is because nine times out of 10 - not always, but most of the time - those children will be doing well anyway. We must pro-actively target the parents of children who are struggling. Simply sending home a graph once every couple of years which indicates a child is not reaching the benchmark is the wrong way to go about it. That reinforces the negative factors that people feel about education. If their children are failing, somehow they feel that they are failing, or they take it out on the school. We must put in place programs and encourage parents to get involved. Their own literacy and numeracy skills can be improved, but more importantly their children's skills can be improved. The entire future of that child might depend on what happens in those initial two or three years.

Another point we need to address in the education system is the skills of teachers. No criticism of teachers is implicit in this. It is a realisation that the ground rules have changed and we must focus on those skills in those years. We must produce teachers who can cope with the requirements we have now. We should introduce teacher registration. As I have said before in this place, we need a college of teaching - a professional body for teachers. Teachers can have a controlling interest in that body, which would also involve tertiary educators of potential teachers. The body would direct those tertiary educators as to what skills they need to impart to the people who are going through their courses and to their graduates. Unfortunately, too many graduates coming out of the teacher training programs of tertiary providers do not have the skills they require for the environment they are moving into. They do not have the skills to provide remediation in literacy and numeracy and all the different variations children might present with. They certainly do not have the skills to deal with whole schools or classes of children who might come from a language background where English is the second, third or fourth language the children speak. In some remote Aboriginal communities children may use several Aboriginal languages. English is just another language to them. It is the language they use at school. Teachers are not equipped for that. We must concentrate heavily on the professional development of teachers in the system at the moment, and just as heavily on the potential teachers who will go through the training institutions. As a part of that we need in a sense to colonise the skills of teaching English as a second language into the broader teaching community. At the moment we specifically train people to teach English as a second language. We need to impart the skills that are required for teaching English as a second language to all our graduates, or as many as are needed at primary school level. We need to be able to mainstream that skill of teaching English as a second

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language. We can do that only by directing - I do not know whether we can force this - or strongly encouraging the teacher training institutions to ensure that is a requirement for their primary teaching graduates. They need that skill to take out into the work force as teachers.

The Government currently spends very large amounts of money on education. I agree with people like the Minister for Education who say that we have a world-class education system; we have, but not everybody is benefiting from it as they should be. People come from overseas to study because they recognise that our high schools can provide a level of education that they cannot access at home. At the same time, however, we have huge numbers of children in the system who are not getting the benefit from the system that they should be. Something must be done about that for economic, social and other reasons. With the knowledge we now have, we must specifically target those early years of education up to years 3, 4 and 5. We must tailor literacy and numeracy programs for older students and adults. The minister has adopted the Opposition's target of a 90 per cent retention rate for year 12 students, which is what we should be aiming for. Currently we have only a 60 per cent retention rate. We should aspire to attain a target of 100 per cent of our children to be equipped with adequate literacy and numeracy skills - nothing less. A lot of work must be done to ensure that that comes about.

Amendment to Motion

Mr CARPENTER: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but regrets to inform Your Excellency that education in Western Australia continues to suffer as a result of the low priority, lack of attention and leadership accorded to this vital area of public policy by the current State Government

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [5.21 pm]: I will make some remarks in support of the amendment as moved by the Opposition's spokesman on education, principally in reference to my own electorate and the needs thereof. I support the remarks of the member for Willagee. In saying so, I am cognisant that the state average figures for retention of students to year 12 are a long way from the figures that students in my own electorate enjoy.

Although we hear of a state figure of a 60 per cent retention rate, the figure in my own electorate is much lower. In the last recorded year, the retention figure for boys was 29 per cent. Only 29 per cent of year 8 boys make it to year 12. That is disgraceful for an electorate which has one of the highest per capita incomes in Australia. There has been a sharp decline during the term of this Government in the number of boys who have stayed at the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School until year 12. All members should be concerned at the clear patterns which show that the rate for girls remaining to year 12 is climbing, but the rate for boys appears to be declining across most electorates. Let us remember that the state average would mean an increase in the retention rates for many country areas should we be able to quickly achieve that. The number of girls who are remaining at school in my electorate has marginally increased. For many reasons the figure for the retention of boys remaining to year 12 has sharply decreased to 29 per cent.

It is not surprising that this Government has trouble with issues like school retention rates; it cannot even get the basics right. It cannot even properly manage the issue of school cleaning. Over the past couple of months I have been contacted by a number of concerned parents from just about every primary school in my electorate. Since the Court Government brought in a scheme whereby long-standing, dedicated school cleaners were made redundant or sacked, we now have a system of contract cleaners throughout schools which has led to a number of serious problems. Some parents have approached me about preparing a petition that is currently circulating to present to Parliament. They have taken the initiative because they feel that their children's health is being threatened by substandard cleaning. That is a reflection of two things: First, the Government's obsession with privatisation. The Government took a school cleaning system that was working well and privatised it. Secondly, it reduced the number of hours available for the cleaning to be done. The fatal flaw is that although some checks and balances are built into the system, it appears - parents and teachers tell me - that every time an inspection is to be conducted, the contract company that employs the cleaners is given advance notice of the day the inspection is to take place. Bemused teachers and parents assisting at the schools watch the cleaners carry out more than their normal hourly duties to get the school up to scratch. Of course, there is a sharp decline once that inspection has taken place.

Another classic example of a very effective program being damaged by a minister with an obsession with privatisation is the Vacswim program. Only this morning in my electorate I was pleased to be present at the launch of the surf lifesaving cadets by the Minister for Youth. The minister made the comment that country and inland schools were being encouraged to participate in the surf lifesaving cadets even though they do not have an ocean to swim in, because the number of people drowning in inland areas is statistically high. I used to be a

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lifesaver when I was a young person so I have always followed it with interest. In my electorate the imposition of Vacs Swim has meant that the number of people involved in these lessons has decreased. I am sure that members can remember the number of Government backbenchers and, in one case, a frontbencher, who delivered petitions against the privatisation of Vacs Swim in this place. It would appear that either a lot of government members were unhappy with the privatisation, or they were too silly to realise what the petition said - I am not sure which. There has been an overall decline in the number of people who are learning to swim.

The standard of school cleaning has dropped and the numbers of school children engaged in Vacs Swim has dropped. Those issues are peripheral to the core business of education, which is to instil numeracy and literacy. If the Government cannot get those simple things right, what hope does it have with the issues of literacy, numeracy and retention generally? We are all concerned to see that retention rates have dropped to a degree. In my own electorate, because of the general decline in commodity prices and the changing labour systems of the larger mining companies, the numbers of apprenticeships have dropped by almost 50 per cent; that in itself is a cause for concern. One Kalgoorlie man whose children attend a boarding school in Perth remarked that at the time he was going through the local high school most of the young men went into the Western Australian School of Mines and did tertiary degrees of one kind or another. Last year only about five local school children from year 12, both boys and girls, had the prerequisites to enter the Western Australian School of Mines, and that is a major problem. The future of the Western Australian School of Mines would demand that a good number of local children go straight from school to obtain tertiary degrees in that institution, and that is not happening at the moment. The mining industry is a traditionally male-dominated area of employment, and if only 29 per cent of boys stay to finish year 12, that will cause some problems.

If they can afford to, some people will choose to have their children educated at a boarding school in Perth, which does not bode well for the future of education in the goldfields generally. Although we are fortunate to have one high school and one secondary college, when I discuss these issues with each school, both of the secondary school principals express major concerns about the level of literacy of the children from primary school. Whether it is a Government or non-government school, there is a major concern at the poor literacy level for many students. One has to ask oneself, given the emphasis that is placed on secondary education, whether perhaps more emphasis should be placed on primary education. From time to time the Government makes rhetorical statements about early intervention and the need to focus on young children. For example, the Building Blocks program was announced in the last budget. When one removes the rhetoric and seeks the fine print of what the Government is prepared to deliver, one finds that each family will get one visit from a child health nurse. That is hardly the sort of early intervention that sociological and psychological experts are calling for, let alone the sort of intervention that is required in the primary schools. Only last year, through my involvement with the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School, I discovered through the two specific remedial programs available, Fast Track and the youth support program, the school had identified 60 students who were in urgent need of remedial assistance. There are funded places for less than 40 of those students. The remaining students will miss out on the help that they need. The Education Department has to look at more flexible funding formulas. I was pleased to hear the Minister for Education say during a recent Cabinet visit to Kalgoorlie-Boulder that he was looking at more flexible ways of delivering extra teachers to the schools with complex discipline problems. It is not just a question of discipline; it is a question of educational need. Many of the educational needs will be complex. We have to be prepared to provide extra teaching resources for children with special needs, such as children from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal children, children with disabilities and those who are homeless or who have accommodation problems.

Truancy is another issue that is not being dealt with under the present system. It is an issue in some of the towns in Acting Speaker Sweetman's electorate, which has resulted in the implementation of significant programs, particularly in the Carnarvon area, in which extra resources have been allocated to the issue. There has been some success. Some of the truancy issues have been detected and remedied. In my electorate I believe there is still only one full-time truancy officer for the entire goldfields-Esperance region. That is complete nonsense. I have recently been involved with a number of constituents in the Adeline area who are experiencing difficulties. Many of the difficulties are caused by young people of secondary school age, although there are some of primary school age. A group of 30 to 50 young people are causing the problems. Many of the problems are occurring during school hours. They are the times at which the children should be at school. If they are not at school they should be subject to some form of supervision by the Education Department. Even when children are suspended or excluded from school, the department has a statutory obligation to provide alternative programs. A new youth engagement program starting in Kalgoorlie-Boulder will provide some specific casework management focus on individual students, particularly those who have been suspended or excluded from school. It is a new initiative.

Something that is of great concern to me is the Ministry of Justice's funding cut of \$130 000 in March 1999 to the automotive workshop program. That program specifically picked up young people who had come into

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contact with the criminal justice system or were perceived to be at risk of doing so, many of whom had literacy problems. The young people were placed on accredited learning programs to try to get them back into the school environment or into training programs and apprenticeships in the automotive industry. Since March 1999, when the funding was cut, not one dollar has been spent in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, notwithstanding that the area has the highest lock-up rate for juvenile detainees of any regional centre in the State. Kalgoorlie-Boulder has significant rates of offending.

It appears to me that the Education Department is not the leader in the field in combating truancy. It seems that it is the Police Service which has taken it on, particularly in some of the smaller towns in the goldfields. In towns like Leonora, the Police Service is pushing for more responsive and efficient truancy services.

Mr Bradshaw: It probably saves the police from worrying about break-ins if the students are back in the schools.

Ms ANWYL: There is no doubt whatsoever that the highest levels of offences occur in the school holidays and that police have an ulterior motive in becoming involved, which is to reduce the number of offences occurring. I find it sad that the Education Department does not take the lead because, at the end of the day, the children who are supposed to be at school fall under the direct responsibility of that department. Teachers are often hamstrung in what disciplinary measures they can take. One of the by-products of the decision to split the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School into two campuses - one for years 8 to 10 and one for years 11 and 12 - is that the previous practice of sending destructive students into a higher class for a period or a day is no longer an option. The campuses are situated several kilometres from each other. Year 10 teachers have informed me of their frustration at other year 10 students being sent to their classes in a vain attempt to discipline them. It does not work because experience shows that a student put into a new class will play up to the other students in the class and is disruptive. It is no longer an answer to the problems that the students cause. Teaching staff are on restricted formulas and there are no extra teachers available to supervise destructive students. It is a problem that will mean that the year groups in Kalgoorlie-Boulder which were split will require extra resourcing to solve the problems.

Parents who decide to relocate their families to Perth for educational reasons or who choose to send them to boarding schools tell me that one of their key concerns is that disruptive students have a huge impact on the students who want to get on and learn. This is a problem with which we have to come to terms. I have no doubt that some teachers breathe a sigh of relief when they see problem students truanting. If I were standing in front of 25 students, I would feel very challenged. It is little wonder that truancy is not followed up by the schools. It is the responsibility of district officers to have clear policies in place about truancy and to have the staff do something constructive about high levels of truancy. The responsibility for initiating adequate truancy programs should not fall on the Police Service. The initiative should originate in the Education Department and I think it a great problem that it does not.

In summary, there is a real problem in that retention rates have fallen so dramatically. I come back to the most recently available statistic for the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School, where some 29 per cent of boys stay on to year 12. That is not good enough. It is my hope that the senior campus that will be built will address part of that problem. It could be the most beautiful building in the whole world, but if the campus is not properly staffed and does not have the resourcing needed to ensure adequate literacy rates, it will be a hollow development. If I remain member for Kalgoorlie for a significant time - I am not talking about after the next election only; I mean for a significant time after that - my hope is that large numbers of students from the goldfields will enter the Western Australian School of Mines and complete tertiary education. I want the aspirations of students generally in the goldfields lifted so that rather than looking at short-term job prospects, they will aspire to tertiary degrees and have some security of income as a result.

MR BLOFFWITCH (Geraldton) [5.41 pm]: I will speak on this subject because the situation with the high school in Geraldton is different. It is totally integrated with the technical and further education college. When I say "totally integrated", I mean that the TAFE college has changed its hours to fit in with the school hours. Consequently, although a number of the students going through to year 12 are enrolled at the high school, they are now completing TAFE courses. To give an example, a student in year 8 can study accountancy. By the time he finishes year 12, he can be a fully qualified accountant. That is an attractive proposition. Many students are undertaking computer studies, general accounts or bookkeeping. The system is working very well.

However, there is a problem with truants in the Geraldton area. The reason many of those truants do not go to school is that they have no confidence. They have no confidence because in many cases they cannot read or write. If a child is in year 8 or year 9 and is not able to read and write, he feels absolutely lost in the classroom. He feels that there is no future for him. He cannot participate in what is going on, so it is a difficult situation.

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More remedial teachers are needed to help those students. There was a mentor program in Geraldton for students who could not read and write. A teacher would take one of those students and teach him to read and write on a one-on-one basis. When the teacher was confident that the student could cope he would accompany the student at school for the first three months. The teacher would sit with the student during the school day. Those teachers have told me that the effect on the youngsters was amazing. For the first time they could participate; they could read and write. Consequently, they got back into the mainstream, and within three months they were happy to continue. These are the types of kids who are becoming interested in taking courses at the TAFE college to try to further their education. The system is working extremely well. It is a pity that more high schools do not try to integrate their students with the TAFE system, because TAFE colleges offer a wide variety of courses, whether they be horticulture, engineering or accountancy. There are many people whom the TAFE colleges can train and put through their courses.

In the primary schools, obviously there is not that integration, and there are some problems. Children with disabilities have been encouraged to go to mainstream schools. I have no objection to that. However, when those children go to mainstream schools, sufficient resources should be provided so that the schools can cope with those children. If a child has spina bifida, cannot walk or has a lot of trouble talking, it is hard for him to participate in the class. At least a couple of extra helpers are needed to assist those children, particularly when they cannot go to the toilet by themselves and so on. Normally it is left to volunteers. At least one extra teacher should be made available in that situation. When a teacher is made available, there should be, if possible, a volunteer who helps the teacher and who learns from the teacher about the proper way to cope with those children.

At the end of the year I go to all the schools to present awards and so on. In general, the education provided by those schools is of a very high standard. The children are bright. We should direct our attention to the 4 or 5 per cent of children who do not turn up for school each day. What will we do with those kids? If we do not do something with them, they will end up breaking into houses, stealing motor cars and committing other crimes. It is in our interests to do something about those youngsters to make sure they get a chance to learn. Nothing enthruses a young kid more than being able to participate in the work the class is doing. The worst thing that can happen to a kid is to feel lost in the class and to have no idea what is being talked about in mathematics or English, for example. He will become completely disenchanted and say, "What's the point of going to school? What's the point of being there? I can't understand what's going on. I'll take the day off." When that happens, we must identify those children and do something about the situation. They must be given extra instruction to try to get them back into the school system. If that does not happen, that is when problems with our juveniles start. They are the kids who are not at school and who are shoplifting and wandering around the malls in the regional towns, abusing people, etc. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that steps be taken to help those kids along the way.

The testing that is being carried out is excellent. The tests reflect on not only the students, but also the teachers. That is a good thing. Teachers should be tested to ascertain how well they are performing, how well they are teaching their class, and the methodology they are using to achieve their results. For too long there were no tests. When there are no tests, who is to know whether the kids can read, write and do mathematics and are good at it?

I know children learn trigonometry and other such subjects at an earlier age today, and I think it is essential that they have a good grounding in and knowledge of mathematics to enable them to complete their education. Otherwise, they will become disenchanted and lose the plot. When young people lose the plot, they often end up in jail. They are the kids who end up in the criminal justice system, and that is the last thing we want. Much more time could be spent identifying these young people, and trying to get them back into the school system so that they have a chance in life.

I recognise that the mentoring system is very expensive with a ratio of one teacher to one student, and it is not the most efficient system in the world. However, in Geraldton there is a group in which two teachers look after eight or nine delinquent children. Every day they teach them to read and write, and try to raise their mathematics skills to a certain standard. It is an excellent program that works on a reward system. For example, the children are told when they return to school that if they attend every day for a certain period, the following weekend they will be taken on a fishing trip. In general, the kids perform. If four of the children attend and get the reward while another misses out because he did not attend school one day, he knows what he must do in the future to enjoy the rewards. The work is done by Marcus Harold and Brendan Blechynden, and the results have been tremendous. Two or three other people are involved and they help with the weekend trips and the reward side of the program.

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There is always the argument that children who get into trouble should not be rewarded. However, unless they are given an incentive, they will not go to school every day. Why should they? The situation changes when they are provided with a reward for their attendance. It works, and the kids do a very good job. In the majority of cases, these young people are Aboriginal. They seem to get lost in the education system. Often it is because they have not attended school regularly. Marcus and Brendan raise their level of education and in most cases have been very successful in persuading these children to attend school full time. The young people I have spoken to in this program have said they feel good about going to school now because they understand what the teacher is saying and can participate in the classroom activities. The biggest danger is when kids cannot participate and do not have a grip on what the teacher is talking about, because they become totally disenchanted and decide that the easiest course is not to go to school. Somehow we must get them back into the education system. The program in Geraldton is working very well. When kids do not attend school, eventually they are rounded up and sent to Marcus and Brendan, who do a good job in turning their behaviour around. It makes all the difference in the world to these kids to be able to read the comics and books they could not read previously, and it is great to see their satisfaction at what they achieve. In general, we are doing a great job with these kids. I notice that the member for Willagee is shaking his head.

Mr Carpenter: It is not enough.

Mr BLOFFWITCH: We are doing a great job. Each time a group of children returns to school, another seven or eight children on the delinquent list go into the program. This is the type of thing that should be done throughout the State to give these kids a chance to succeed. I have been surprised at the number of Aboriginal students at the local TAFE college. They have had a good grounding in their primary school and can understand and follow the text, therefore, they decide to do courses, for instance, on horticulture. They want to learn how to grow produce and they do a three-year course at TAFE. They learn not only how to grow melons, grapes and so on, but also how to survive in the big wide world. They are taught how to make business plans and keep accounts. They are very good courses. We should be promoting these courses and encouraging kids to do them. If we do, there will be far fewer problems with young people breaking the law, and more will succeed in the education system.

The Geraldton program should be expanded. At present only two teachers run the program, but eight or 10 teachers would probably be sufficient to cover all the children who need help. Within a three-month period, all the children having difficulty could be back in the school system and have a fighting chance of getting on with their lives. That is the approach to use in the education of these kids. We must find the funds to give them a chance to be successful. I am very pleased with the success achieved in Geraldton, and the way these kids are progressing through primary school and high school. My only reservation about the program is that it is not quick enough.

Some young people probably are never included in this program because they are in a detention centre, and that is another problem. When they are in those centres it is a golden opportunity to teach them basic literacy skills. I know there are teachers in the detention centres, but we need the best possible teachers in those institutions because the kids in those centres are at the highest risk. Those are the kids who can cause enormous damage to society. Making available educational opportunities at least gives them a chance to find another way of life. We need to promote that to make sure every young person has an opportunity in life. I am pleased at the way this is going. I would like more, rather than less, resources to be made available.

Any members who have not seen this program in action should not hesitate to visit this area in Geraldton. It is a special area in which these young people are taught, and they really enjoy it. They get a big kick from learning to read and write. I gain great satisfaction when these young people say to me at the end of the program, "Bob, I have never been able to read and write, but now I can and I can do something. When I went to class the other day I felt as though I could really participate in that class." The biggest danger for these young people is when they cannot participate in class. They get lost, and then ask themselves why they should attend school. They do not attend school because they are afraid of embarrassing themselves. We must take away that fear, give them an opportunity to participate and make more resources available for these young people.

MR McGOWAN (Rockingham) [6.00 pm]: I support the motion moved by my colleague, the member for Willagee. I will talk about the overcrowding of schools in my electorate of Rockingham, which I raised in this place on 15 June, and parental involvement in the education process. If we are to resolve the literacy and numeracy problems in Western Australia, the involvement and role of parents in assisting their children to attain literacy and numeracy skills in the early years of schooling must be taken much more seriously.

Many of the schools in my electorate contain large numbers of students, and a new school needs to be built to deal with the pressure these large numbers are placing on school facilities and resources. The four schools in my

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electorate are in a pocket in the Waikiki-East Waikiki-Cooloongup area. East Waikiki Primary School has about 1 050 students, Charthouse Primary School and Koorana Primary School each have between 850 and 950 students and Cooloongup Primary School has 700 students. The area is growing rapidly and contains large numbers of young families in which one or both parents work. Areas with a preponderance of young families naturally have large numbers of students. The four schools are great schools and I enjoy visiting them. The principals are very committed, and often rise to senior positions and win awards for their expertise. The parents and citizens associations - which I have visited and correspond with on a regular basis - comprise committed and decent parents and citizens from the community.

However, the problem remains that these schools are bursting at the seams and are now twice the recommended primary school size. No relief is in sight. A new school needs to be built in Waikiki Gardens. I raise this with the Minister for Education year after year, and still nothing is done. It is a pity he is not in the Chamber, as I would like to raise this issue in his presence; however, he can read the *Hansard*. I raised this issue with him the last time a similar debate took place. He responded with a range of comments. I pointed out that one school in my electorate has over 1 000 students and is the biggest primary school in the State, and that new primary schools have been built in every other area with schools of this size to cater for the growth. The member for Greenough has said that some of the schools in my electorate have a greater population than some of the towns in his electorate. It is generally acknowledged that these schools are very large. At that time the Minister for Education said, and I quote -

I recognise that your schools are large. I have been out there . . . You should wait and see what the Government will do . . . We are currently going through that process. If a decision is made, I hope you have the good grace to come in here and recognise it.

A process has been undertaken in the form of the local area education plan consultation report. These schools are in the jurisdiction of the Peel District Education Office. I quote from a letter by the district director -

The community was overwhelmingly in favour of the establishment of a school in Waikiki Gardens by 2003 with provision for a School in Houses to open in 2001. The Waikiki Gardens community is growing rapidly and further development is currently occurring within the estate. Provision for an educational facility within the area is a priority for consideration within the next year or two.

The letter is dated November 1999. Nothing has been done. The minister is on record in the *Hansard* as saying that something will happen. He said he hopes that I have the good grace to recognise when something is done. I cannot recognise anything, because nothing has been done. He issued a press release - it has been said before but he re-released it - that said two new schools will be built in Rockingham; one in Secret Harbour and the other in Port Kennedy. Geraldine Capp, a journalist with *The West Australian*, telephoned me and said that I must be happy as these new schools will deal with the problem. However, they do not deal with the problem.

I am grateful that two new schools will be built in the City of Rockingham; however, they are nowhere near the Waikiki-East Waikiki-Cooloongup area. To say they will deal with the problem is similar to saying that a new school in Mirrabooka will take the pressure off schools in Wanneroo. There is no correlation. The minister is a decent person, but he seems to have a problem with geography. If compulsory literacy and numeracy testing included geography, he might have been able to work out that the problem is 10 to 15 kilometres north of Port Kennedy and Secret Harbour.

The problem is acknowledged by all the local area education plan reports. Large numbers of students attend these schools. A formal process has been undertaken and it recommended a new school, yet nothing has been done. Other areas have growth problems; these are Bunbury, the northern suburbs, Quinns Rocks and Ballajura. Most places have problems because the number of students at their schools is contracting, but these areas have problems as a result of growing populations. New schools have been built in these areas to relieve the pressure. However, nothing seems to have been done in Rockingham. If the Minister for Education were to build a new school, I would sing his praises and support him for the deputy leadership of the Liberal Party. I would have the good grace to acknowledge what had been done, as he asked me to do. However, he has not done that, so I cannot acknowledge it. He has failed the children and the parents in that area, who know that the facilities of their local schools are under enormous pressure and who would like a new school to be built. Maybe the minister is geographically challenged and thinks Secret Harbour is somewhere near Waikiki; I do not know. However, something needs to be done as soon as possible. If it were, I would have the good grace to acknowledge it and say that I support the minister for the deputy leadership of Liberal Party ahead of the member for Riverton. No doubt he would be thrilled with that endorsement.

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The literacy and numeracy programs have been spoken about often over the past few years. I will talk about the testing taking place with primary school children, the way in which those results are used and what I think could be done to improve literacy and numeracy among children who are not performing well in those areas. I support the testing and think it is important that parents find out if their children have problems. In many cases parents know problems exist, but in some cases, they do not know. I support the Commonwealth putting money into a program to ensure parents are made aware of the problems their children may have. I agree with the member for Willagee and the Minister for Education that the publication of tables that show that certain kids in certain areas are not doing well, or in some way reveal that kids from certain backgrounds, regions or races are not doing well is not productive. All that serves to do is knock those people who are already in a position where they do not need to be knocked. It does not do them any good to be knocked. Therefore, I do not support the publication of tertiary entrance examination results from certain schools or from certain areas or backgrounds to the wider public, because I think it creates a culture of blame and drives down the self-esteem of people in certain communities.

I support something the member for Willagee has talked about a lot, and that is follow-up. There needs to be follow-up on these results. I want to relate my experience in this area. I recall my early years at school. I feel I have a right to talk about it to some degree because my wife is a schoolteacher, my mother is a schoolteacher, my brother is a schoolteacher, my sister-in-law is a schoolteacher and my mother-in-law is a school aide.

Mr Barnett: You are the dunce of the family, are you?

Mr McGOWAN: Yes, I missed out, but at least I am not geographically challenged, unlike the minister.

I recall having difficulty with reading in my early years at school. Actually I do not recall it very well, but I have been informed on numerous occasions by my mother that when I was a boy in year 2 I was unable to read. All the other kids were reading and I was unable to do so. Fortunately for me my mother was a primary schoolteacher. So she took me in hand and I recall every night sitting down with her and we had to read; at the time it felt as though it was for hours and it probably was. I even remember the names of the books. One was called *Dan Frontier*. I think it was based on Daniel Boone, who was the guy with the raccoon hat. She made me sit down every night and read. As a result I went from being a kid who could not read to the best reader in the class. Since then I have been able to go on to other educational pursuits for which I am very grateful to my mother.

It is crucial for solving these problems to have after-hours parental involvement in children's education, in terms of literacy and numeracy, at that young age; in fact, it is crucial for solving a whole heap of problems in our society in future years. Those statistics, which came out during the Estimates Committee, of people who were in prison really stuck in my mind. Around 70 or 80 per cent of those people had not finished primary school. As a result, one can safely assume that the vast bulk of those people would not be able to read or write, or have basic numeracy skills. If we can keep these children who are unable to read and unable to understand basic maths involved and teach them these things, we will go some way towards solving the problems these tests are revealing. My experience was that my mother's involvement in teaching me how to read, which I was not learning at school, saved me from falling through the cracks. I am sure that if other people had that opportunity they would also be saved from falling through the cracks.

Not everyone's mum is a primary schoolteacher. We need to make a special effort to get those people who do not have that level of experience or education or ability to impart that knowledge, involved in education. My mother-in-law who, as I said, is a teacher's aide, works in an education support centre and she said that if parent meetings are held on the school grounds often parents will not come because the parents themselves have had bad experiences at school. She said if they hold a school parent information session off school grounds and maybe combine it with something a bit lateral, such as a barbecue, there is much more parental involvement with their children's educational outcomes.

The member for Willagee has graciously provided me with some information on expenditure on specific programs to get parents involved in their children's education. These figures are quite disturbing. In the 1999-2000 financial year, \$5 000 was spent on the supporter reader program, which involves assisting teachers, home tutors and parents to identify students experiencing difficulties with literacy, throughout the entirety of the State's education system. My numeracy skills are not good enough to work out what that is for every student, but I estimate it is about 5¢. In the last financial year, \$10 000 was spent on involving parents in the parents as partners learning difficulty program. That may be a few cents for each student at schools in this State. That is not good enough. From my experience, such problems can be solved by getting parents involved with their child's education by: Reading with their children in the evening; encouraging them to be interested in books; having a wide selection of books; encouraging them to write diaries and express their feelings in diaries;

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discussing current events with them; playing children's games such as Scrabble; and encouraging their children to do crosswords. Most importantly, assisting parents to develop patience and support their children requires more effort than government funding of \$10 000 a year. If the Government puts more money into those sorts of programs, perhaps it will pay dividends and we can save in a range of other areas in the Education budget.

It will require more than this, but the Government is not doing enough. The term that is around at the moment and has high usage in a range of areas is "case management". The families with children who are not performing and who are not able to develop those basic literacy and numeracy skills need to have that individual case management approach applied to them. They should not be singled out and blamed; the support mechanisms should be put in place in their homes, and in environments that are not threatening to them. The support mechanisms should teach the parents to be the teachers, to help with the teaching and to be the partners. It is a great name: Parents as partners. If we do that sort of thing, maybe the kids in this State who are having these difficulties will be as lucky as I was when I had these difficulties as a seven-year-old, and they will experience the joys of education and a good life as, luckily, I have been able to.

MRS van de KLASHORST (Swan Hills - Minister for Family and Children's Services) [6.19 pm]: I left the classroom after 10 years of Labor Government and came into this place. I have made many speeches supporting the Government's record on education compared with the Labor Party's record, which was absolutely abysmal. I was working in the library when I left the school.

Mr Kobelke: Are you saying that lower participation rates are a good thing?

Mr Court: You should listen, because she will tell you how it actually was.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: That is right. I was a deputy in the mornings and I ran the library in the afternoons. My cupboard, which was about the length of the front bench, was full of old equipment that could not be repaired because the edict from the then Minister for Education was that only one in five pieces of equipment could be repaired. Teachers would come to the library for a video recorder, an overhead projector or a tape recorder to tape lessons. Unfortunately, I could not provide that equipment because we were allowed to repair only one in five. I distinctly remember borrowing equipment from my home and other teachers' homes so teachers could have equipment in their classrooms. We were allowed only a certain number of photocopies because there was not enough money in the school for photocopying paper for the various classroom activities. We also could not get textbooks because the school did not have enough money.

The member opposite spoke about classroom sizes. The grade 4 and 5 classes I taught had up to 38 children. That does not happen under our Government. Now classes have about 32 children. I have taught year 2 classes that had over 30 children. That does not happen now either; we have changed that. The member for Willagee spoke about the Labor Party's new policy, which will establish special colleges and schools to train teachers. I attended Mt Lawley teachers college and I remember distinctly that there were the Mt Lawley, Claremont, Churchlands and Graylands teachers colleges. The Dawkins federal Labor Government turned those colleges into Edith Cowan University. Now the Labor Party is saying it will change it back again. It cannot make up its mind. The specialist training colleges for teachers offered three-year training courses. I am a remedial teacher. I have a postgraduate degree in reading education, so I am a teacher of literacy. I did that training at Claremont teachers college. I was specifically trained in literacy for pre-primary to third year high school children. The member says that the Labor Party will establish new specialist teacher training colleges. We had them, and the Dawkins Labor Government turned them into Edith Cowan University. It removed the specialist training and the colleges that trained teachers. The whole emphasis of those colleges was on teacher training.

The member also spoke about remediation and the need for specialist remedial teachers in schools. He said the Government should be funding two specialist remedial teachers for literacy and numeracy in each school. We have already done that by devolving to the principals of schools the decision about how they will use the extra teachers in the schools. If a school needs literacy and numeracy remediation, the principal can direct some of the staff into those areas. We have given principals the flexibility, because not every school is the same, as members know, to arrange their staff as needed. Specialist literacy and numeracy teachers can be used in the schools. If I were still teaching, someone like me could be used in schools as needed. This Government has worked on developing that.

Aboriginal education was also mentioned. This Government is building an Aboriginal education school in Midland and is putting in a principal and specialist teachers to assist the Aboriginal community in that area. The member for Willagee also referred to the education of boys. We have put Ian Lillico, who was the principal in Bullsbrook, into head office in Silver City and have asked him to set up programs throughout Western Australia.

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We sent him overseas to look at ways in which we can assist young boys to cope at school. These programs have now been introduced into schools and are ongoing.

We have put covered play areas in schools. We have repaired asbestos roofs in schools. We have worked our way through the \$80m-worth of maintenance that was needed when we first came to government. Before I left Mt Helena Primary School, a piece of carpet under my desk at the back of the library was removed and fitted in to repair the worn carpet at the entrance to the library, because the school could not afford new carpet. It was appalling. We have also improved early childhood education.

Mr Court: Things could not have been that bad under the Labor Party.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: They definitely were that bad. I was there in the middle of it.

Mr Court: It sounds like industrial revolution stuff.

Mr Johnson: I thought you had to take your umbrella to some schools just to keep the rain off you.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I do not know about that, but I do know that the paint was peeling on the veranda at my school, and the school missed two years of maintenance because it could not afford it. This is what the Labor Party was doing to education when I left the school. I am speaking from personal experience.

We have also completely revised early childhood education to bring it into the twenty-first century. I commend the minister for that. It is one of the most important things this Government has done for education. If we catch problems at an early stage, we can solve them. The member opposite agreed with that. We have established the local education area concept. We have allowed people in the community to decide what is right for their schools. We have given responsibility to people at the local level. We have set up the middle-school concept. I attended the monthly meetings of the parents at Eastern Hills Senior High School to set up a middle school. When I visited those teachers recently, they told me that it was one of the best things that had happened to that school. The transition from primary school to high school has been done in a seamless way, which is most important for the education of children. I congratulate the minister for moving education into the twenty-first century in the seven years we have been in government.

Members have referred to literacy and numeracy. One of the most important issues in society today is that children learn through computers as well as through books; therefore, it is important to have a significant number of computers in schools. When Labor was in government, I had to borrow a computer to teach a grade 4 class in a demountable. Schools now have airconditioning. I used to teach a grade 4 class of 38 children in a demountable when it was 41 or 42 degrees in Mt Helena. I even had to paint my own blackboard in one demountable classroom!

Mr Barnett: You were lucky to have your own blackboard in those days.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: This was before we got into government. I used to take the children out of the classroom into the playground on hot days because we could not teach. We have now airconditioned those types of schools and all of our demountables.

Another innovation of the minister, which can be seen in schools in Midland and Swan View, is to give those children who do not want to finish year 12 in the academic system a seamless link to further education. These children can be involved in local businesses and in technical and further education. The business community, schools, TAFE and the university combine in my area to advance the education of these young people. I am proud of Swan View Senior High School because it has moved itself forward by working with the local community to enhance the prospects of children.

One of the points thrown up by the Opposition is that the Government should encourage parents to help their children. Members opposite said that we are not throwing masses of money into this. The Opposition throws masses of money into things that perhaps could benefit from more innovative approaches. One of the innovative ways to deal with this issue relates to my hobbyhorse - the school as a focus in the community. We do not need to throw money at the situation. We need to encourage parents to see the school as the centre of their community. We need to do what Mundaring Primary School has done, which is to allow the community to use its oval at weekends. Eastern Hills Senior High School has a quasi-restaurant in which it teaches children catering skills and invites parents to dine. Many innovative approaches are possible to bring people and parents into schools without relying on massive direct funding. I do not know if the Opposition is aware that 1 500 senior volunteers go into the schools to assist young people on an individual basis. That is an innovative program. Schools are being used after hours to teach computer literacy to seniors. We are undertaking

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intergenerational programs. All of these programs combine to allow the school to be the major focus of the community.

When I left the teaching profession the schools were in an abysmal condition. Unlike many metropolitan electorates, Swan Hills contains 28 schools. I have watched as each school has implemented repairs, put bores into gardens and constructed additions such as covered areas and new roofs. I have seen the maintenance and construction needs of Eastern Hills Senior High School attended to. Schools are 100 per cent better off than they were under the Labor Government. I know; I was there. I taught under that system. Labor's record on schools is abysmal. I am proud to belong to a Government that has done something for the young people of Western Australia. I do not support the amendment.

MR BROWN (Bassendean) [6.33 pm]: I am sure the majority of the teaching staff and parents of students are highly dedicated to achieving successful outcomes for their students and their children. In this debate about the success or otherwise of the Government's education system we must look at total outcomes. Let us look at what happens when people do not get a decent education. Statistics given in this place show that one of the implications of a poor education is a higher propensity for people to come into conflict with the criminal justice system. Some figures on the educational qualifications of people in the prison system given during the budget estimates committee hearings were instructive. The figures show that 78 per cent of prisoners have only a primary school education; 12 per cent of prisoners have some high school education; 2 per cent of prisoners have completed high school; 6 per cent of prisoners have some vocational training; 1 per cent have tertiary training; and 1 per cent was unknown.

When we talk about outcomes, we can look at this issue to see whether the Government's education policy is successful. Those figures clearly indicate that a higher level of educational outcome leads to a proportionately lower level of offending. Could members imagine the outcome if we could take the large percentage of people who had only a primary school education and ensure that they had some high school education? On the figures provided by the Ministry of Justice, we would see a remarkable decrease in the level of offending. If every young person had some high school education and the current statistics in the prison population reflected that change in the level of education, the prison population in this State would decrease by at least 50 per cent. However, under the coalition Government the prison population per 100 000 people has increased by at least 50 per cent.

Mr Bradshaw: That is a flow on from your bad government.

Mr BROWN: No, the age of offenders is between 13 and 28 years. The coalition has been in government for the past seven and a half years. It is easy to say it is all Labor's fault. What has the Government been doing for the past seven and a half years? It has been asleep at the wheel. Frankly, if those figures are any indication, the outcome is poor. If the system was working, the level of offences and incarceration would be trending down each year, not up. It would be trending in the reverse direction. This is an outcomes approach. This is what the Government says we should do. It says we should not listen to the rhetoric; we should look at the outcomes. As an outcome this is an abysmal failure. I listened to the member for Kalgoorlie talk about what is happening now in her electorate. I was in Kalgoorlie last week. When the coalition Government came to power the young people who are now causing problems in that area were five, six, seven and eight years of age. Where has the Government been? It has been nodding off, and it has been doing so because this is the difficult end of the market.

This is the area that I debated with the Minister for Youth who said he was interested only in the easy stuff and did not want to get into the difficult end of the market. He said he did not want to deal with the 3 or 4 per cent of children into whom the Government needs to put a lot of resources. It is really tough to keep these kids in school. It is hard work to give them an education. Many resources go into that area. However, we either put the resources in early or we put them in late. More resources are necessary when they are put in late, because resources are required for the police, to pay compensation to victims, and for the Ministry of Justice. The cost to the community goes up and up, as has occurred now. Western Australia has the highest rate of imprisonment per 100 000 people that it has ever had, and it is getting worse. When the new Acacia prison opens next year it will be full from day one. The Government has been so incompetent in this area that it will be very lucky if prison riots and very dangerous situations do not occur this summer because the prisons are bursting at the seams. There are 650 or 700 prisoners in Casuarina Prison, which was built to house 350. In *Hansard* a few years ago the Government predicted that this year there would be about 2 300 prisoners, but already we have about 3 200 prisoners. The Government could not see what was happening in the community. It now says that the education system is great and it is doing a terrific job. It must look at the outcomes and not at all the airy-fairy stuff. It must look at the central issue, which can be found at the difficult end of the education system. That is one of the tests.

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Let us look at another test. The member for Swan Hills talked about computers in schools and the great program we have and indicated that the Government has done a great job. Western Australia is doing its best, but many good, competent teachers have not been retrained so that they have the skills they need for computer education.

Mr Barnett: They are being retrained. There are 25 000 of them.

Mr BROWN: They are being retrained. An article in *The Australian Financial Review* referred to the Prime Minister being in India. One would not think of India as being a more advanced industrialised nation than Australia. However, we are talking about bringing in Indian information technology professionals. In one of the States in India people are talking about their IT providing a 45 per cent increase in their economy per year. This is supposed to be a forward-thinking Government, but it is not putting in that effort.

Let us look at some real issues. We can produce glossies and come up with new names for programs, such as the Building Blocks program. The glossies can have the minister's face smiling out of them, but we can see from the hard outcomes whether the system is working. Previously I have raised Index program in Midland. It took the 13 and 14-year-old children who refused to go to school. If nothing was done, they have a strong propensity to finish up in the criminal justice system. The program was funded to a maximum of \$35 000 a year, which paid for the coordinator. Kids came into the program and worked there for a while. They were then placed with employers. Six months after those children left the program a check was conducted to see whether they were still employed or whether they had gone back into the education system. The outcome was that 70 to 75 per cent of those children who refused to go to school either stayed in work or had gone back to school, so it was a successful program. What happened to that program? The money was removed. Why was it removed? That occurred because the Education Department took the view it was not its responsibility to fund the program because the children had left school, so it was no longer an educational program. The Department of Training and Employment took the view that it was not its responsibility to fund the program because the kids were too young to work. The Ministry of Justice took the view that it was not its responsibility to fund the program because not all of the kids had been involved with the criminal justice system. Funds were withdrawn from this perfectly good, working program that suited children who refused to go to school. That is the sort of short-term, narrow thinking we have seen from this coalition Government, not just once but time and time again.

Members may recall that before the 1993 election there was a big debate about the revolving door syndrome. The coalition Government said that it would fix up the revolving door. About six months ago a constituent contacted me after her house had been broken into. She had seen the young people who had broken into her house, and she reported the crime to the police. The police were quickly on the job and apprehended them. An hour later they were back at her place. She raised this with me and we had a meeting with the police. The police said that it was all the fault of the politicians because they would not pass a law to fix up this situation. I indicated that the coalition said that it would fix it up when it passed the Bail Amendment Bill. Under the Bail Amendment Bill, young people cannot be released other than into the hands of a responsible adult. The police officers said that they could not determine who was responsible. We pressed them and they said that the problem was the Bail Act was in place and they understood what it meant, but they had only two cars on the road at night for this massive area, and if they did not release the young people on bail, they would have to take them to Rangeview Remand Centre and they would have a car off the road for three hours.

Mr Barnett: Are you reading the right speech?

Mr Bloffwitch: This is supposed to be about education.

Mr BROWN: The member for Geraldton has not been in here.

Mr Barnett: You have been talking about justice. It is a good speech, but it is on the wrong topic.

Mr BROWN: I am not switching the topic. I am talking about looking at the outcomes of education and crime rates, particularly among young people. The higher the standard of education, the lower the crime rate. Therefore, if the system is working well and education is improving, crime should be coming down.

Mr Bloffwitch: It is.

Mr BROWN: It is not. The prison population is 50 per cent higher per 100 000 people than it was when we were in power. The Government reckons that it is winning when the rate of imprisonment is 50 per cent higher.

Mr Carpenter: The revolving door is spinning faster and faster.

Mr BROWN: Absolutely. Education plays a key role in all of that. If the education system were performing well for the difficult-to-teach kids, the crime rate would be coming down.

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The member for Swan Hills said that schools everywhere in Western Australia were getting covered assembly areas. In case members did not know, the funding for covered assembly areas has finished. I have been told the funding in this year's budget is the last that will be available. One of the schools in my electorate has put up its hand, but as yet no provision has been made for a covered assembly area.

Mr Bloffwitch: All my schools have them.

Mr BROWN: I can understand that, and probably provision has been made for most of the schools in Liberal electorates. However, not every school in Labor electorates has a covered assembly area. This school has put up its hand. We know the Government plays political favourites, and the member for Geraldton has confirmed it. He is even laughing now, and I intend to send that school a copy of *Hansard* to indicate that government members are having a bit of a laugh about it. There has been no funding for one school in my electorate, and that school is quite angry about that. It is being required to make do with a facility that was paid for by the parents many years ago, and that is not good enough.

MR RIEBELING (Burrup) [6.50 pm]: I want to refer to a problem with school education in my area. This is a problem that the Minister for Family and Children's Services seems to know nothing about, because all she has said is how wonderful the new Government has been. At one stage the minister said how wonderful the old system of education was when we had colleges and the like and that the nasty Labor Government took that away. I wonder whether the minister thinks the system we have now is working well, because that is a system that the Labor Government imposed.

The problem that I have in my area is the difficulty of trying to get a proper assessment of young kids who have some learning difficulties. The member for Willagee indicated that a Labor Government in six months will put specialists into regional centres to rectify some of these learning difficulty problems. An acute problem in my area is the lack of audiologists and speech pathologists. The Health Department and the Education Department have a vested interest in trying to solve this problem. Two hundred kids in Karratha and Roebourne are in urgent need of audiology services, but they are not getting those services. There are two outstanding government speech pathologists, one with the Education Department and one with the Health Department, but they have no way of dealing with the volume of speech pathology work that they need to get through. This Government has not been able to rectify that problem no matter what it has endeavoured to do. I have been told by the experts that the audiologists may be able to divert work from the speech pathologists. I have written to Dr Jann Marshall, the senior health program consultant for the Health Department, about this problem, and she has told me that an allied health working group has been set up by this Government. That is a fantastic new initiative, and no doubt the Minister for Family and Children's Services has spoken about it. The only problem is that it does not exist. I have spoken to and written to the Health Department, and although the letter from Dr Marshall states that this group has been asked to develop some solutions to the recruitment and retention of allied health professionals, that group does not exist. It is a furphy. This Government is very good at making announcements about new groups and new strategies, and about a new this or a new that, but nothing is happening in rural Western Australia. We have huge problems with education.

Mr Bradshaw: What you are saying is rubbish.

Mr RIEBELING: Okay. The member for Murray-Wellington is part of this Government. Can he tell me when the allied health working group was set up, who is on the board and how I can get in contact with it? I will give the member until tomorrow to do that. It should not take him too long. He can tell me who is on it, and I can then write to those people. The author of this letter, Dr Jann Marshall, does not know who is on it, and she thinks, through other contact, that there is no chairperson, it has not had any meetings, and it has not been set up. We are expected to believe the Government when it says it has set up a group to try to solve some of the problems, but as soon as we test this group we find it does not exist and is nothing but smoke and mirrors.

Mr Bradshaw: Ask the Health Minister.

Mr RIEBELING: The Education Minister is here, and he is just as involved in this as the Health Minister. This is the sort of frustration we experience in country Western Australia in trying to deal with 200 young kids who cannot receive the services that they need.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Education) [6.56 pm]: The amendment states that the Government gives education a low priority, and a lack of attention and leadership. I will leave out the last one and talk about the first two. It can never be said that this Government has given education a low priority. We have given it the highest priority. We can measure that priority in all sorts of ways. I know that to measure it in terms of dollars and buildings is crude, in a sense, because education is about what kids do in schools and what they gain and learn from that experience; nevertheless, in the past five years, this Government has increased education

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spending by an average of 8.1 per cent per annum. Never before has there been such a commitment to the funding of education, particularly public education, and not for a long time has there been such a transformation of education as has taken place over recent years. Those changes are far reaching. It is certainly true that there is a focus on physical aspects. Whenever I go to a school, people always want to talk about computers and buildings, and I am sure all members experience that. We have built more schools, and we have developed middle schools and senior colleges, the early childhood program, universal kindergarten and pre-primary programs. We are also putting \$100m-worth of additional computers into schools, and we are putting fibre optics and Internet connections into virtually every classroom in the State. We have also had the emergence of vocational education, which does need to be refined and improved in quality in some areas; advances in agricultural education; the development of a new curriculum and an outcomes-based approach to education; and a focus on literacy and numeracy.

I commend the member for Willagee for talking about some of the educational achievements that we should expect to see, and I agree that a significant number of children in this State have deficiencies in literacy and numeracy. The assessments we have been undertaking indicate that about 80 per cent of kids meet the benchmark. That rates us fairly well compared with other States in Australia. The fact that one in five children has a problem is a challenge. That is the reality. It has always been the case, but for the first time it has been measured objectively.

I am not being defensive, but we probably need to be a bit careful with regard to retention rates. I would much rather have higher retention rates than is the case and would want to have 90 per cent of young people either in school, technical and further education or some workplace learning experience so that they are continuing with some form of education or training. The statistics are a bit misleading. There is no doubt that there is a counter-cyclical effect where if the job market is strong for young people they tend to take jobs and school retention rates fall, and vice versa. The job market for young people has been a lot stronger in recent years than it was in previous times. That has an effect on young kids, and they leave school when we would hope they would stay on. At the same time, many young people have moved to TAFE, as TAFE has experienced a rapid expansion, and that is good. Many kids in school are undergoing vocational workplace-structured learning processes. However, I accept the point that we should have higher retention rates.

I argue that what has been done in education in the past five years has been the most dramatic change in education in terms of funding commitments since the postwar period. The only comparable period was during the late 1950s-early 1960s when the system was driven by baby boomer-postwar immigration population growth. That was a response to an explosion of school age children in the country. In the past five years we have adopted a systematic approach to improving the quality of the facilities, the curriculum, the teaching and the like. The test is - and I accept this test - whether we will have improved education outcomes in the years to come. I believe we will. The test is all about kids learning better. That is an expression that teachers and school principals like to use, and it is a good one. It is about children becoming more adaptive, getting better skills and being more successful in their lives. I think we have done an enormous amount and I give credit to all people involved in the education sector. It is a huge sector, and it is doing a great deal. As a community and as a Parliament I hope that we will always debate education. There will always be things that can be improved and done better. It should not and will never stand still. I feel very proud to be associated with what this Government has done in the past few years in the field of education. I think it is a terrific result. Going into an election I can assure members that the Government will be proactive on education. We intend education to be one of the prime issues in the election. One of our top two or three priorities throughout the election will be our performance in education compared with that of the Opposition. In fact, we will be judged on our performance in education alone.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 9 August 2000]
p110c-141a

Ms Sheila McHale; Mr Jim McGinty; Ms Diana Warnock; Ms Megan Anwyl; Mr Ian Osborne; Mr Alan Carpenter; Mr John Kobelke; ;); Mr Bob Bloffwitch; Mr Mark McGowan; Mrs June van de Klashorst; Mr Clive Brown; Mr Fred Riebeling; Mr Colin Barnett

Ayes (15)

Mr Brown	Mr Carpenter	Dr Edwards	Mr Grill
Mr Kobelke	Ms MacTiernan	Mr McGinty	Mr McGowan
Ms McHale	Mr Riebeling	Mr Ripper	Mrs Roberts
Mr Thomas	Ms Warnock		Mr Cunningham (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (26)

Mr Ainsworth	Mr Barnett	Mr Barron-Sullivan	Mr Bloffwitch
Mr Board	Dr Constable	Mr Court	Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes	Dr Hames	Ms Hodson-Thomas	Mrs Holmes
Mr Johnson	Mr Kierath	Mr MacLean	Mr Marshall
Mr McNee	Mr Minson	Mr Osborne	Mrs Parker
Mr Prince	Mr Shave	Mr Sweetman	Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst		Mr Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)	

Pairs

Mr Marlborough	Mr Cowan
Dr Gallop	Mr Tubby

Amendment thus negatived.

Motion Resumed

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Barnett (Leader of the House).

House adjourned at 7.04 pm
