

Mr John Bradshaw; Mr House; Mr House; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr Matt Birney; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Hendy Cowan; Mr John Quigley; Deputy Speaker; Mr Pandal; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Arthur Marshall; Speaker; Mr John Day; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Motion*

Resumed from 23 May.

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

Ms McHale: The bell tower which is now leaking?

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

Ms McHale: I am not saying that.

Mr BRADSHAW: The member is saying that.

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

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

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

Mr BRADSHAW: I do not care -

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

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

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

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

I am concerned by the current Government's belief that super ministries will be the answer to saving a lot of money for Western Australia. I can remember the 1980s when the then Labor Government decided to make a monolith of the health system in Western Australia. It amalgamated the hospital and allied services, community health and psychiatric services into the current Health Department. I was in Parliament during that time and I opposed that move. I believe that big is not necessarily beautiful and I do not believe that creating super ministries is the way to go. It is better to try to retain control on a small basis than have monolithic departments that are difficult to control. I do not believe the Health Department has operated properly since those three departments were amalgamated. In the 1980s, the Department of Conservation and Land Management was created. Last year it was deemed necessary to split it to make it a workable entity. CALM should be considered differently from the Health Department because of the conflict of interest in that department; however, it was set up as one ministry to try to save money.

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies has put out a paper on the subject of super ministries. Although specifically aimed at the mining industry, the comments are relevant to the general concept of super ministries. As the former Premier Richard Court said, super ministries need super ministers. I am not too sure

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whether too many parliamentarians are super ministers. Regardless of how good a minister may be, it is very difficult to run a large organisation or department. Ministers also have their own electorates to look after as they always have their eye on re-election. Sometimes they take their eye of the ball and do not come back after the election.

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

Change for the sake of change must be avoided.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In conclusion, it states -

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

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

Myalup, Preston Beach and Binningup are beachside areas in my electorate that cater for holiday-makers and permanent residents. Unfortunately, the quality of the drinking water in those areas is atrocious. In the past six

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months, residents have had several meetings with the Water Corporation but, unfortunately, there have been no guarantees about what will be done to overcome the problem. Some analyses of the water at Myalup and Binningup have been done. I am not sure whether members are aware, but the water guidelines were changed in 1996. Even under the old guidelines, the quality of the water was at the top end of being unsatisfactory and unsuitable. In some cases the water was over the limit. Under the new guidelines, the poor quality levels are almost twice as bad. The Health Department has not yet adopted the guidelines. In some ways it lets the Water Corporation off the hook. If the Health Department enforced the guidelines, the Water Corporation would be forced to improve the water.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am concerned about the financial state of Western Australia. When the new Government was elected in February, one of its first statements was about the parlous state of the State's finances, and how difficult it would be, as a result, to fund the new Government's programs. I received from the Treasury Department a statement dated 28 February 2001, which stated that for the eight months ending on that date a cumulative net operating balance of \$459.6 million was recorded. This compares with the projection of \$98 million for the full year. Revenue and expenses for the eight months to the end of February represented 70.8 per cent and 66.7 per cent of

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annual projections respectively. The sale of AlintaGas in October 2000 had a substantial impact on the eight-month cumulative result. According to that statement, there would be a positive result in the budget by the end of the financial year. I know that the new Government can spend money to upset that projected positive result and, even though the figures are above the anticipated level because of the sale of AlintaGas, the result would still be positive. I keep hearing from the Government that the State's finances are in a bad way. The Opposition, when in government, may have spent \$300 million or so on top of its original budget, but an increase of \$300 million in revenue from the oil industry accounted for that additional expenditure. I shall be interested to hear about the position at the end of the year, and I have asked for a briefing by Treasury Department to explain those figures. It is no good asking the Government, because the Government will have a biased view on the issue because it will be looking for ways of getting out of its commitments.

Mr Logan: The Government would not do that!

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

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

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

Mr Kucera: What is the date of that document.

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

Mr McRae: And so they should be.

Mr BRADSHAW: But not for good reasons.

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

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

Mr D'Orazio: It cannot be any worse.

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

Mr D'Orazio: It could not be worse.

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

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

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

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

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

On Monday a lady came into my office whose husband was sent to the Harvey Hospital. He was then sent to Bunbury Regional Hospital for X-rays, or something, to be done and came back to the Harvey Hospital to be admitted. He sat in a chair in pain and discomfort for about five hours because a bed was not available. I have

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

Several members interjected.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although this Government has a mandate to govern, it appears not to understand the concerns of rural Western Australians, and it has significantly underestimated them. Already there are some signs that the Government will make decisions that will affect detrimentally those of us who live in the regions and the rural areas of this State. Over the past few years in rural Australia it has been as tough as it has ever been. Many people live far from the source of government decision making and do not have the opportunity to have a direct input because of the distances involved, unlike those of us who live closer to the centres of authority.

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

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

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

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

I understand that the chief executive officer of Agriculture Western Australia was in Mt Barker the Wednesday before last. He told the staff of the Mt Barker research station that it was to be closed, along with the two other research stations at Badgingarra and Esperance. That caused some consternation among the local residents because of the services that are provided by those institutions. I understand that the Minister for Agriculture has

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issued a directive to review those decisions. I thank the minister in another place for making that decision. I urge him not to impose that decision by slow strangulation.

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

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

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

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

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

The capital needs of rural Western Australia are as important as those of the city. In our term of government, we were able to provide capital upgrades to many services in regional areas. I am particularly proud of the capital refurbishment of Agriculture Western Australia. It is only one example, but an important one, of support for the regions. Those capital needs are as important today as they were in the past and their funding must be continued. Once again, they are easy to cut. The Government could cut funding to roads or to the capital needs of schools and hospitals, and it probably would not be noticed for three or four years; however, the long-term effect would be dramatic. I make particular mention of the proposed new fisheries research centre for Western Australia, to be built just north of Perth. Planning has been taking place over the past two or three years. It has the potential to be a world-recognised research centre because we have commitments from the South Africans and others operating in the Indian Ocean that they will use it as their key research centre. It would focus attention on Western Australia and provide a major world-recognised centre for our ocean people - I use that term broadly, as it includes not only fishermen but also people involved in aquaculture and research into oceanography. It is proposed to cost between \$10 million and \$15 million. I urge the Government not to cut that funding. It is vitally important that it continue.

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

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told a meeting of fisheries ministers that of all the things he had done, the hardest job was to be minister for fisheries. I am sure many ministers would disagree with that. However, it is not easy to make decisions that ensure a sustainable fishery. We need to make certain that the decision-making processes are not lost in a bigger department.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

*Amendment to Motion*

Mr HOUSE: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

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

**MR TRENORDEN** (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [10.16 am]: This is a critical core issue. The Government is sadly mistaken if it believes that people in rural Western Australia will take this matter lightly and accept a reduction of this nature without being given an opportunity for considerable input. In the course of their lives, members have learnt that one of the first priorities of any Government, and why we have Governments, is to get away from anarchy. One fundamental responsibility of government is to provide security to its people. This amendment goes straight to that core issue, which is why prior to the last election the National Party made a commitment to increase funding to country police stations and increase the front-line presence of police. The National Party is critically aware that the number of police officers in those areas is insufficient to do the job, let alone a reduction in the number of those officers. The previous Government employed additional police officers and the current Government has a commitment to employ 250 extra police officers. The National Party's commitment is that the correct portion of those additional officers to be sworn in should go directly to country people, together with all the services that go with them, and to continue running all police stations in country areas. That is what I had in mind when a challenge was made a few days ago in this House to the minister to explain to country people why she was planning to remove police officers from the country, given that the Labor Government has a commitment to provide an extra 250 police officers. I particularly challenge her current proposal to reduce by 23 the number of officers in the wheatbelt region. This is not a dreamt-up situation from an opposition member. Police officers from the central wheatbelt office attended a public meeting of 20-odd shires at which they were told clearly that it is a fact, not a proposal, that 23 police officers will go from that region. Days later a minister of this House said those claims were untrue. The minister is in a position to explain herself. She has either not been correctly informed or has deliberately misled the House. That may be of political interest to members. However, I can tell them that it is not of interest to the people in the central wheatbelt; they want their police officers to stay. Whether I can win a point with the

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Minister for Police is not the core game, although it is an important factor, because the minister has an absolute responsibility to report accurately to this House about the matters for which she is responsible.

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

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

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

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

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

If the Government thinks we will take that lying down, it is sadly mistaken. The community of Western Australia will be angry about this proposal. At the first meeting in Toodyay, which was attended by community

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members and the shire presidents and chief executive officers of about 20 shires, one of the first statements that was made - not by me or any other member of this House - was: is it not amazing that these police officers will be taken from National and Liberal Party seats and will be put into Labor Party seats? That is the message in the community, and it deserves consideration.

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

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

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

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

Mr Pental: Or waiting outside the hotel.

Mr TRENORDEN: That is right. However, there is nothing better in a country community than for a police officer to be seen walking through a hotel bar a quarter of an hour before closing time and saying to people, "Fellas, it is closing time and I will be outside." That can be done in a country town if the police officer has the time to be in the hotel before closing time. However, if 15 per cent of officers are taken away, that will not happen. They should also have time to have a talk with young Bill or Joe down the street and say to them, "Look, I know you are a bit bored. However, I know, because I have been told by everyone in the community, that you are breaking into houses and so forth." He can then do something to get them off the street by getting them involved in community activities and sport. That is what is done in country areas and that is why the crime statistics are down in my electorate. They are not down because police officers are not needed. It is not

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acceptable to penalise the community just because it has been proactive. If the minister and commissioner think that because they give the people of the wheatbelt what they believe to be a rational argument for a reduction in police numbers they will accept it, then they are sadly mistaken. The one thing that country people value the most in rural WA is their lifestyle. Lifestyle is the No 1 commodity and providing a harmonious community for people to live in is what we do best. This is a direct attack by the Government on the wellbeing and the welfare of country people.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Kobelke: That was under your Government.

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

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

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

Mr Kobelke: Only because you took the Australian record.

Mr OMODEI: Crime has not stopped just because the Labor Party was elected. The only difference now is that *The West Australian* does not blame the Government for crimes such as breaking and entering; it blames the crooks. When the coalition was in government, *The West Australian* blamed the Government for this problem because it wanted to get rid of that Government. Is it not remarkable that since the Government changed, the

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hospital scenario and all those people in crisis are no longer the fault of the Government? Whose fault is it? The truth is that nothing much has changed, has it, minister? The Minister for Labour Relations has found that, once in government, the situation is a bit different from the carping and criticising of his time in opposition.

Mr Kobelke: I can actively go about fixing it.

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

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

Mr OMODEI: That is nonsense.

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

Mr OMODEI: The last police budget was \$440 million, up 77 per cent, which was an increase of \$191 million on the previous Labor Government's budget. I will not go through all those figures. I am pleased that the Minister for Health is back in the Chamber because I understand he played a significant part in the review of country policing and it would be interesting to hear his response during this debate. The Liberal Party is saying that the Government should not discount country Western Australia. Most of the wealth of this State is created in country Western Australia. In days gone by every country person had a city relative. I do not know if it is the same now, but I imagine it is because people are gravitating to regional centres and to the cities. The relationship between country and city was a productive one. It would be a great shame to see a gulf appear between city and country people. The previous Government made every effort to make sure schools, hospitals and housing were provided in country towns. If one travels the length and breadth of country Australia, it can be seen that Ministry of Housing accommodation for aged persons, hostel accommodation, nursing homes, multipurpose service buildings and hospitals were built. In the eight years that I was a minister, I was proud to be able to travel to any town in Western Australia and see the work that my Government had done. If the Labor Party can achieve that in its term of government, it will get my congratulations. However, it has a long way to go.

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

Mr Kobelke: Do you want to rephrase that?

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

I have just about covered all the issues that I wanted to cover. In every town around the State, police have been integrally involved in programs like Neighbourhood Watch and Safer WA committees. If it were not for the local copper, there would be no Safer WA committee in many towns. Moving from the old community policing

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system to the Safer WA program has been positive. It was initiated by the previous Government in concert with local government. Those sorts of things will be undermined only by a move to shift country police out of country towns. I urge the Government to reconsider its view. If it has a problem with providing extra police officers, it can cut some of the fancy programs that it promised during the election and put that money into providing them.

Mr Kobelke: We will deliver all our promises.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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prepared its forward budgets on expectations that it will receive \$300 000 and if the money is not received, it will be a blot on the copybook of the Labor Party.

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

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

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

**MR WALDRON** (Wagin) [10.57 am]: I support my National Party colleagues and the members for Kalgoorlie and Warren-Blackwood in this matter. If country areas of Western Australia lose more police officers, there will be an increase in crime rates and problems in country areas. Many communities are concerned about this issue. They believe there is not enough police presence in country areas now. If more police are lost to these areas, the problems will only get worse. In my maiden speech yesterday I referred to drug-related crime and domestic violence, which are becoming growing problems in our towns. There have been recent problems with crime in Katanning. Last week I met a lady who has a restaurant in that town and she is very concerned about her business because of the crime rate. More police are needed to quell and manage the crime rate. In 10 days I will attend a Safer WA meeting in the town to try to deal with the crime problems in the town. Smaller communities, not just regional towns, also have problems. Drug-related crime and domestic violence also exist in small communities. If police are removed from the regional towns, smaller communities will have no chance of obtaining a police presence. Broomehill is a small community located south of Katanning in my electorate. Previous speakers have mentioned how small communities are very keen to work with the police. The local community in Broomehill has identified certain problems. Although there is a police presence in Katanning, there is none in Broomehill. Through lobbying, the commitment of resources and the help of local government, a police officer who works at Katanning now resides in Broomehill. The presence of a police officer in that community and the sight of the police car makes people realise that there is authority in the town and people who are inclined to offend think twice about doing so. It also gives the community some confidence. Domestic violence in these smaller communities does cause some problems, and if there are sufficient officers in a country area for an officer to be located in one of these smaller centres, he will have an affinity with the people and can probably head off violence by knowing and understanding the people. If the police have to travel 50 kilometres to get to a place where they do not know the people, it may be too late to help. It is very important that the Government realise that country areas need a police presence, even in those small centres. I cite the town of Darkan, which has no police officer at present. Darkan is a small to average-size country town, and the nearest police are at Collie and at Williams, which are approximately 40 or 50 kilometres away. I would like to think that, if a police officer could not be stationed there, at least one could live there, as is occurring in Broomehill. I am sure the Darkan community would support that, and it is something I will be pursuing.

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

**MR COWAN** (Merredin) [11.02 am]: Police numbers in rural Western Australia has been an issue for over two years. It first came to light when members holding seats in the eastern wheatbelt were notified by officers of the

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

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

The minister replied -

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Sweetman: It is six to four on now.

Mr QUIGLEY: I think the member was indicating how many of the Opposition might vote with the Government to defeat this amendment. The amendment is fatally flawed - I have the Governor's speech in front of me - because it seeks to criticise the State Government's lack of commitment to provide an adequate Police Service to the people in country Western Australia, and, in particular, the decision that would deplete police

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numbers in rural Western Australia. Neither the Governor's speech, nor the policies of Premier Gallop's Government, contains decisions that will lead to the depletion of police numbers in country Western Australia.

Mr Trenorden: But there has been a decision.

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

Mr QUIGLEY: Who instructed him to withdraw them?

Mr Cowan: The senior executive of the Police Service -

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

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

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

Several members interjected.

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

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

Mr Cowan: You are an honorary member.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Several members interjected.

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

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

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

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

Several members interjected.

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

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

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

Mr QUIGLEY: I agree entirely. That must be looked at. I wrote to the former Premier, as the minister responsible for the Anti-Corruption Commission, pleading for something to happen. His response was to forward the letter to the chairman of the ACC for him to respond to me. It was absolutely pathetic. Everyone has an event in their lives that trips them into politics. Mine was that great sense of injustice. However, as I said in my maiden speech, my view of society and of what needs to be done is now broader than that. That is what

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happened. It is no good opposition members standing in the Chamber and saying, "We want to fight drugs; there is cannabis in Narembeen, or wherever". The tap must be turned off at the top. It is no good opposition members rabbiting on about Labor being weak on drugs because it has a policy of a cautioning system, when it was their Government's cautioning system that was trialled in the northern metropolitan police region. It does not sit well. We must attack the top end. It is no good opposition members coming in here with the rhetoric that they will attack the top end and the Mr Bigs when they countenanced a system that gives favour to them and the false allegations they peddle, while waylaying good officers under suspension. There is no particular decision. The Opposition has totally and hopelessly failed to identify any particular decision of this Government that would deplete police numbers in rural Western Australia. I invited interjections, and I invited further interjection from the member for Merredin, so members could identify which decision of this Government will lead to a depletion of police numbers in the wheatbelt, if any. No-one has identified any decision.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr QUIGLEY: Opposition members have not identified any decision -

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

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

**MR PENDAL** (South Perth) [11.37 am]. I do not know whether I have become more marginalised or wiser as I have grown older. I disagree with everyone who has taken part in the debate. That is why I tend to think I must have become more marginalised. The last time a similar, but briefer, debate took place in this House was several years ago when the member for Darling Range was the Minister for Police. He had a view about the matter, which I think was incorrect but which has been perpetuated through the generations, and that is perhaps being

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tackled for the first time by the current Minister for Police. I do not know the outcome of that; I hope she tells us in her response to the debate. My problem with the debate is that we have been told for years by Ministers for Police in this place, including the member for Darling Range, that the Government of the day does not have the power to direct the Commissioner of Police. I say that is a nonsense. It is one of the reasons we have this problem. In past debates, people have quoted things like the separation of powers. That has nothing to do with what is at stake here. On other occasions we have debated the outmoded nature of the Police Act which, incidentally, was written and passed by this House in 1892. It is a joke; it is an anachronism. Members were promised that the Parliament soon would be in a position to deal with a new, modern police Act. Successive Commissioners of Police have successfully snowed successive Ministers for Police. In that snow job they have relied on section 5 of the Police Act. Section 5 of the Police Act has nothing whatsoever to do with the minister's power to direct or not to direct the Commissioner of Police. There is nothing in the Police Act, in any other legislation or in the Constitution that says that a Minister for Police cannot have the same role in the Police Service as other ministers have in other portfolio areas. There are peculiar difficulties in the Police Force; for instance, a police minister could not direct a Commissioner of Police in a prosecution. However, that is no different from many other ministers of the Crown who do not have the power to decide who will be prosecuted at law.

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

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

Section 5 of the Police Act in part states -

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

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

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

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

That brings me back to the point properly raised by the member for Innaloo. The amendment that the House has been asked to deal with bemoans the decision of the Government to deplete police numbers in rural Western Australia and redeploy them in the metropolitan areas. I am not without sympathy for the member for Stirling's amendment; however, it is not just a country problem. Under the previous Government, the deployment of

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police in South Perth was dramatically reduced at a time when it should have been on the increase. South Perth was the state capital of home invasions and offences of that nature at that time. Every electorate reflects the anger and sense of frustration about inadequate police numbers.

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

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

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

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

Mr Pental: He is a bit shy.

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

The Premier said last week that that court case was one of the member for Innaloo's last cases, and he was just finishing it off. However, on Monday, 21 May, the member for Innaloo told the community that if a case came up and it was a matter of public interest, he would like to reserve his right to act in that matter. As a member of Parliament, the member for Innaloo's role is to take up all matters of public interest. That is absolutely critical. However, there is a place and a forum for doing that. The member for Innaloo is great media copy, and we as the Opposition do not mind at all if a backbencher goes into the community and criticises the Government; the member for Innaloo can go for his life any time he wants to do that. However, if the member for Innaloo's

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comments have the ability to undermine the confidence of the community in the Police Service, then that is an issue that not only should concern the Government and Minister for Police of the day but also should be treated seriously by all members.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr AINSWORTH: I understand the separation of powers very well. The point is that we are arguing very strongly for the retention, and an increase in number, of police personnel in country areas. Ravensthorpe is one town that is currently understaffed. Recently, a police officer in Ravensthorpe was relocated in rather unfortunate circumstances; and I will not go into that, because it is another issue. To my knowledge, that police station is still one officer short, and the community is very concerned about that for obvious reasons. In addition to the normal reasons that a community would be concerned about its police numbers being down, in the next few months that community faces the likelihood of the shire population doubling because of the major mining activity that is taking place in the district. One nickel mine has been operating in Ravensthorpe for the past 12 months, and the Ravensthorpe nickel operations mine, which is projected to commence at the beginning of next year, will bring another 1 200 people into the shire, which will effectively double the shire population. I am not suggesting in any way that the people who will be coming into the shire to work with that mining company will automatically bring with them a lot of crime and other issues, but when a population increases to that extent, obviously matters will arise that require police attention, and if the police station is already undermanned, that will only exacerbate the problem.

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

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

My comments will be brief and broad. I agree with the member for Avon and support the amendment. I recognise the effectiveness and proactiveness of police officers in country regions. It is important that that be recognised. Over the past five to eight years the Police Service has become more involved in the community by working with the Education Department, Neighbourhood Watch, Safer WA and the police and citizens youth centres. I congratulate the service for that. However, country people will see the rationalisation of the Police Service in country towns as yet another slap in the face. I am aware that the Geraldton-Greenough region - my backyard - is short of officers. My colleague the member for Geraldton, who unfortunately is not here, has made a commitment for that to change. I now question that commitment. Any watering down of police services in country towns is unacceptable. I do not have a problem with sensible staffing levels across country Western

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Australia; however, I have a problem with the withdrawal of police officers from country areas. I remind the Government that country people consider the presence of police officers in their communities as a right and a recognition of confidence in their towns and where they live, as of course do people in the metropolitan area. I urge the minister to carefully reconsider the removal of police officers from country areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I said yesterday that Mandurah is the most popular one-day destination tourist town in Western Australia. Thousands of people go to the area on holidays and weekends. Just two years ago the town had a series of bag snatches; there was a run of young people who had no respect for society who walked down the streets spitting and swearing at people. That sort of thing is no good for a town. People leave saying that they will never return.

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Six years ago the town had a police presence on the streets and things were fine. The police got to know the shopkeepers and locals. They would talk to people. People would tell them what they had seen. One can imagine the police being told about stolen cars and the like. There was interaction with the community. That is not happening now as the police officers are not there.

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

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

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

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

Mrs Roberts: And unarmed robbery?

Mr DAY: That is related to assaults. It sadly reflects the fact that the community has become more violent. In spite of the good work done by members of the Police Service and the community, unfortunately actions by the previous Government failed to halt the increases in those areas. I will be interested to hear from the minister how she thinks the present Government will do better in those areas than the previous one. The previous Government gave strong support to the Police Service in every area. The police budget almost doubled during the term of the previous Government, from about \$240 million a year to about \$430 million. I do not expect the

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present Government to highlight this fact, because it is not in its interest, but the figures will show that the rate of increase in funding for our Police Service increased at a greater rate over the past eight years than it did during the term of the previous Labor Government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I also found it interesting that the Minister said -

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Whitely: I am worried about it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Day: Where are they going to be?

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

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

Mr Day: Have you changed your views?

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

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

Mrs ROBERTS: It is interesting to hear these complaints about policing in members' electorates from members who lost their voices when in government. Time and again I had to sit in opposition and listen to the member for Mitchell say that police services in his area were fantastic and that the police commissioner and the police minister were doing great jobs. He said that he was happy that crime levels were under control and there were no problems. That was the catchcry of most members when they were in government.

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

Mrs Edwardes: He congratulated you on that.

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

Several members interjected.

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

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

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is a tool to assist the Western Australia Police Service to prioritise police resources in consultation with district officers and regional commanders. It will also take into account local policing issues throughout Western Australia.

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

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

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

Mr Trenorden: That's your job.

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

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

Mr Trenorden: The population is not declining.

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

Mr Trenorden: The population is not declining.

*Point of Order*

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

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

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

*Debate Resumed*

Mrs ROBERTS: This is an interesting debate and I can assume only that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was rolled when his side came up with this topic because, while people from the National Party are crying and bleating that police officers are to be taken out of their areas, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is strangely

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

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

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

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

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

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on page 495.]

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*