

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 19 September.

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [5.44 pm]: I support the motion moved by Hon Sue Ellery. I urge government members not to leave the Chamber, because I am sure they will find what I have to say interesting.

I commend the Governor, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, and his wife for the excellent and outstanding way they have performed their duties in Western Australia. Mr and Mrs Sanderson mix extremely well with all Western Australians and they provide intelligent and thoughtful comments on a range of issues. Indeed, they are involved in many aspects of Western Australia's community life. The Governor is a product of country WA, having connections with Geraldton, Northcliffe and Bunbury. I recently saw him at the Kalgoorlie Cup -

Hon Kim Chance: Mrs Sanderson is also a country girl, although not from Western Australia.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Mrs Sanderson is a country girl, although she is from Kangaroo Valley in New South Wales. However, I am sure she identifies extremely well with country WA. The Governor performs his duty in an impeccably impartial manner. However, I wonder what he secretly thinks about some of the trends I will allude to in my speech, particularly the tendency towards city concentration in WA.

Before I make those points, members will be aware that the Australian Football League grand final is being held on Saturday. They may also be interested in the fact that I am wearing a Brisbane Lions Football Club tie.

Hon Nick Griffiths interjected.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Hon Nick Griffiths should drop dead.

I am pleased to be wearing a Brisbane Lions tie not because I barrack for that team - I support the West Coast Eagles - but because the Brisbane Lions will be playing a Melbourne team in Melbourne on Saturday. The Melbourne team happens to be the Collingwood Football Club, and I am pleased to barrack for any team that plays against Collingwood. It is worth mentioning at this stage that Western Australia's Brisbane connection - Simon Black - won the Brownlow Medal last night. Simon is from Western Australian stock and first played senior football with East Fremantle. He is an outstanding Western Australian product. If Collingwood wins on Saturday, I will feel similar to the way I felt after the last State election.

Hon Kim Chance: Elated.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: No, that is how government members felt. I felt a huge let down. The Collingwood football team is similar to the Labor Party, because it operates with a mob mentality and its supporters offer blind, non-thinking, yobbo support. Further, Collingwood operates with a slick public relations machine that is led by the ultimate spin doctor, Eddie McGuire. Eddie McGuire provides the gloss, razzamatazz and snake oil for the promotion of the Collingwood Football Club. Mick Malthouse is the coach of Collingwood. We in WA well remember Mick Malthouse as a tree hugger, because, in a totally inappropriate way, he lent his celebrity status to a cause by going to the south west forest and spreading lies about forest management in WA. The ultimate beneficiary of his actions was the Western Australian Labor Party at the last election. Therefore, for those reasons, and for a host of other reasons I could go into, I say "C'mon Brisbane" - I hope they do well.

Since last year's Address-in-Reply debate, I have looked for trends in the Government's performance and attitude. I can report only one major change. Since the last Address-in-Reply speech, the Government has made significant progress - if we can call it progress - cranking up its PR machine. With increasing frequency a range of glossy brochures, similar to those used by previous Labor Governments, has hit the deck. The latest example I am aware of was the launch last Thursday morning of an action plan for tree farming in Western Australia. The foreword has a photograph of the Premier. I will not criticise the document or the work of the Forest Products Commission, as it has been quite outstanding. The policy of the commission and the document are excellent. However, the trend is consistent.

Hon Ken Travers: What about your lot? You spent a fortune.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Since the Labor Party won government, Hon Ken Travers has become an instant expert on everything; he is the ultimate smart-arse who knows the answer to everything! He is an absolute genius!

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I have noticed some of the photographic portrayals of ministers in the newspapers. We are all used to the media getting facts tangled up sometimes and not representing the full story. The photographs used to represent the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure are approaching gross misrepresentation! Alston,

the cartoonist for *The West Australian*, is also aware of this. Page 3 of yesterday's *The West Australian* carried an article titled "Tourism body under fire". Alston's cartoon portrays Hon Alannah MacTiernan walking along a beach barefoot with a glass of wine in her hand. A camera crew is at the ready and the director says, "Righto Ms MacTiernan . . . you're doing it for tourism . . . you're doing it for WA! You're the "Claytons Elle" . . . now, roll 'em!!" Elle refers, of course, to Elle Macpherson.

Hon Dee Margetts: What is your point?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: My point is that the snake oil machine is working overtime; that is, the public relations machine is working overtime. We are seeing a concerted effort to portray gloss and froth rather than substance.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The member does not want to hear any of this; he was not around during the days of the Burke Government. However, some members in this House were. This publicity campaign has a great sense of *deja vu*. I know that the member does not want to hear that. Despite that, it is starting to revisit the State.

The public relations machine is announcing and re-announcing so-called initiatives. I must question the media about the amount of research it undertakes. In many cases, journalists are content to sit next to a fax machine and take government publicity at face value and print it. That is a very poor standard of investigative journalism. The latest example was on the weekend. Once again, we heard of the abolition of preliminary hearings. That story has been given prominence about four times: when it was first conceived, when it was introduced into the Legislative Assembly, when it passed the Legislative Assembly, and when it passed this House last week. I admit that the legislation received bipartisan support and deserved some prominence. It makes me think of Joh Bjelke-Petersen who treated the media with disdain at times. He likened it to feeding the chooks! Things do not seem much different.

If we look beyond the gloss and presentation, we find a Government that governs for sectional minority interests. Its actions are not in the interests of the broader Western Australian community. This was demonstrated starkly with the industrial relations legislation. It is now beginning to be implemented throughout Western Australia and it is starting to bite. The effect is most severe on small businesses, especially those that need flexible working hours. Convenience stores in many parts of Western Australia are faced with the choice of either closing on weekends or sacking one or two employees. Store owners cannot afford to pay employees award rates. Up to 80 per cent of the hospitality industry operates through employee contracts. It is starting to feel the pinch. Many hotels, restaurants and cafes use workplace agreements. The changes will affect single mothers the most because many single mothers need this type of employment. They need to work outside normal working hours to look after their children. Why is the Government picking on single mothers?

An abattoir in the south west of the State employs about 400 people. Nearly all the workers were on workplace agreements. The employees are now dismayed that, after seven and half hours of work, they have to go home. They are dismayed at the lack of flexibility in the new system. If the company were to adopt fully the new regime, it would cost it a fortune. Its only alternative would be to lay off workers. The business will follow the path established by most other big businesses in this State and work under the federal system. In this argument we have heard little from the State's largest industry, the mining industry. The reason is that it has already moved to the federal system. It moved before the legislation passed this Parliament. Rather than fight the system, it opted out because there was a ready-made alternative. Ironically, the federal system was modelled on the earlier Western Australian system, which allowed much more flexibility.

We now see advertising and promotion of the gay law reforms. It promotes the behaviour of a minority as normal and acceptable. What is the agenda for further social change over the next six to 12 months? We can expect legislation on prostitution; the Government is talking a lot about it. It is said to be framing new legislation but it is already copping flak from all directions. What about changes to the drug laws? We have already had the Community Drug Summit but the Government has been slow to introduce changes. I wonder how much that has to do with the facts and figures that show that Western Australia has the second highest level of cannabis use and other substance abuse in Australia, the highest being the Northern Territory. I would not be surprised if the Government got cold feet about drug law reforms. The Parliament may not see legislation decriminalising the use of cannabis and allowing the possession of two cannabis plants by a person for personal use.

The Government is still pandering to another minority group, that of radical green interests. We are hearing standard catch cries every time the Government makes an announcement, especially anything affecting rural Western Australia. They are "sustainable development" and "natural resource management". The Government calls them themes; they are motherhood statements. On the face of it, they appear to be excellent statements. When explained fully, they require a balanced economic, social and environmental approach. Would Hon Dee Margetts agree?

Hon Dee Margetts: That is what it is meant to be.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Yes; that is what it is meant to be. However, we are seeing many examples of the economic and social consequences of government actions being overridden and ignored. The policies that follow are concerned only with environmental factors.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Sustainable development means that environmental, economic and social consequences are taken into account. There are a few examples in which the environmental consequences of a project or development are not negotiable. However, in an increasing number of examples around the State the environmental assessment of certain actions is being used in a veto sense rather than in a consultation management sense. The prime example of that in this State in the past year and a half is the debate on the timber allocation process. That is a very slow process that is inadequate for the social and economic consequences for the timber industry. The timber industry is apparently unsustainable in an environmental sense, although this is being debated too, because the Government is now finding that the agenda of the radical environmentalists will not accept even the bare minimum in the draft forest management plan. Sometimes we have to learn the hard way. That is due to some elements in the green political movement, which is a very uncompromising group of people who will never agree to the outcome of a process unless it is 100 per cent in their favour. There is a marked difference between the green political movement and the conservation movement. I am a member of the conservation movement, but I am certainly not a member of the green political movement.

Another example was reported on page 3 of *The West Australian* yesterday in an article headed "Tourism body under fire". The article states -

The WA Tourism Commission is bogged down in bureaucracy, skill levels are dropping and it is reluctant to cooperate with industry, according to a draft review.

The draft review mentions a number of factors. One factor that illustrates the point I am trying to make is that -

It also warns of the potential for "overzealous" environmental groups to hinder tourism growth, particularly in the development of sensitive areas such as Mauds Landing at Ningaloo Reef. It says rejection of the \$200 million development could be seen as a big deterrent to potential investors and warns that "more and more of the State is coming under the control of interests not necessarily favourably disposed to tourism".

I do not pretend to be an expert on the Mauds Landing proposal. In fact, I have never been to Coral Bay. However, I understand that the development of Coral Bay has been topsy-turvy and without proper management. That is the issue. The environmental factors of this proposal should not be used in a veto sense by saying "Save Ningaloo Reef", which is once again a warm and fuzzy motherhood statement. The best way to save Ningaloo Reef is by managing it properly. I believe that is what the Mauds Landing proposal aims to do.

The other theme that I have tried to examine in the 12 months since I last spoke in the Address-in-Reply, and on which I have been unable to find any major changes, is the Government's tendency to use rhetoric, with little action to follow it up. Other members have referred to the fact that this Government has held symposiums, conferences, forums, workshops, consultations and summits - in fact, more summits than the Rocky Mountains has - into all sorts of issues. It is a valid comment that we have a "mirror" Government: it will look into it. To my knowledge, this Government has not produced one concrete or effective policy or action to address the problems in health, education, water supply, and law and order. These issues, together with the southern railway, are supposed to be the five areas in this State that are immune to spending cuts.

Another criticism that is becoming increasingly obvious, and that we will keep making as country representatives, is that this Government is becoming increasingly city-centric. Western Australia is already in the unhealthy position that 75 per cent of our total population lives in the Perth metropolitan area. We can find no other parallel anywhere in the world. Therefore, we cannot adopt automatically in a State like Western Australia the same sorts of principles that are adopted elsewhere in the world. As a parallel, there is widespread concern in Australia about the monopoly control of retail markets by big corporations. Coles and Woolworths control about 80 per cent of the retail market in Australia. The Government is making an attempt to enshrine its electoral changes in legislation. Those proposed electoral changes are on appeal to the Supreme Court, and we are awaiting its verdict with bated breath.

I will illustrate the themes that I have mentioned by referring to three issues that are very relevant to the south west. The first is road funding. The Government has made widespread cutbacks and is taking an attitude towards country Western Australia that is very uncaring. The second is the alarming possibility that more water will be taken from the south west, particularly the Harvey irrigation area and the Scott coastal plain, and later I

will elaborate on some of the economic and environmental factors. The third is the situation facing land conservation officers in the State. There have been cutbacks and their jobs have been eliminated.

The road situation can be best summarised by referring to an article from the *South Western Times* of Tuesday, August 22 headed “\$500m road plan dumped”, which states -

More than \$500 million worth of major road projects in the Bunbury area have been dumped because there is not enough money in State Government coffers.

The head of Main Roads in Bunbury, Derek Lee, -

He is a very good public servant and I sincerely hope he is not targeted for being quoted in this article -

said projects such as an access road to the Bunbury port as well as a new outer ring road behind Gelorup and the Peel Deviation had been planned for decades but could still be years away.

The latest project to fall victim to a lack of funds had been the scheduled \$60 million upgrade of the South Western Highway between Pinjarra and Bridgetown which had been shelved by the Labor Government despite parts of the road “crumbling to bits”, Mr Lee said.

The other day my colleague Hon Robyn McSweeney asked a question in this place about those roadworks. The answer rambled on about debt levels and the percentage of the road funding program for the city versus the country. It does not mention absolute figures because they would not show up in a good light. The answer also included the inevitable criticism of the previous Government for expenditure on the Narrows Bridge, the Graham Farmer Freeway and the Kwinana Freeway extension to Safety Bay. Where would we be now if those roadworks had not been completed in the eight years of the Court Government? The answer refers to everything except the South Western Highway. The article in the *South Western Times* continues -

He said for the first time in years, there were no new road projects underway in the region, with Main Roads’ South West budget slashed by \$30 million in the past two years.

Bunbury City Council city development executive Tony Brun said yesterday the South West’s growing population and increased road use by trucks, made projects such as the proposed \$40 million Bunbury port access road urgent.

I recall moving the Address-in-Reply motion in 1995 or 1996, as Hon Sue Ellery has done this year. I made a major point of referring to the Bunbury port access road and the urgency of it.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: That road is vitally urgent to the economy of the south west community, which uses the Bunbury port as its access to the world. The article continues -

An estimated 1000 trucks entered the dangerous Eelup Roundabout intersection each day, -

That is near Bunbury -

with more than 400 trucks using Koombana Drive.

The situation is becoming critical. It continues -

“And yet the funding allocation nowhere near meets the needs of the area.

“You’d think we were in an area of decline, not growth.

“Look at the Peel Deviation. It was promised in 1990 that we would have dual lanes all the way to Mandurah from Bunbury by 2000. When I last checked my watch it was 2002 and still it hasn’t happened.”

The coalition Government went a long way towards providing a dual carriageway from Bunbury to Mandurah. There are still a couple of sections to go. At least the commitment was made by the coalition Government to complete the Peel deviation by 2005.

Hon Ken Travers: Where was the funding coming from? You never funded it!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Mr Smart-arse over there will be able to tell us the answer to that.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford): Order, members! This is the Address-in-Reply debate and Hon Barry House has the call.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The coalition Government committed to complete the Peel deviation by 2005.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: There is a second aspect to that; that is, the Serpentine deviation, which connects the bottom of the freeway to the Peel deviation. That has disappeared off the face of the earth since this Government has been elected to office. I cannot find even a reference to the Serpentine deviation.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Perhaps Hon Ken Travers would like to make his own speech at some stage and, in the meantime, just shut his trap and listen.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! We are dealing with the Address-in-Reply debate and there is one person speaking and that is Hon Barry House.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: During the estimates committee hearings, Hon Murray Criddle, as the previous Minister for Transport, put some questions on notice to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Some of the responses to those questions are very illuminating. I have copies of those answers, and I will refer to the sections of them that relate to the south west. One question Hon Murray Criddle put to the minister asked for the originally planned completion date, the current estimated date of completion and the annual expenditure up to the date of completion for the series of roads throughout Western Australia that he listed. The next question asked for the originally planned completion date, the current estimated date of completion, the annual expenditure up to the date of completion and an explanation of why the series of roads had not been funded in 2002-03, because they were clearly on the priority list prior to that. That list makes very illuminating reading. I will refer to the roads that are relevant to the south west in particular. As I said, the road that is particularly relevant, the Peel deviation, does not even rate a mention. The road projects for the Albany Highway are to construct and seal the Albany ring road and to reconstruct and primer seal the road from North Banister to Arthur River. The value of those two projects is about \$11 million and they are scheduled to be completed in 2006-07 plus. The project to reconstruct and seal Brockman Road to the Blackwood River section was once worth just over \$9 million. Once again, that project is not even scheduled for completion before 2006-07. I will say more later about the project to widen, primer seal and seal the Bussell Highway from Vasse to Margaret River, but it is a significant project valued at \$25.5 million. It is not even on the horizon until 2006-07 plus, which might mean anything. The project to construct and seal Caves Road from the Busselton bypass to Dunsborough is valued at \$21.14 million. Once again, it is not even on the horizon until after 2006-07. Another project is to reconstruct, primer seal and seal the South Coast Highway to Manypeaks. I thought I had struck an exception to the rule because this project was allocated \$75 000 in 2002. However, then I saw the three asterisks next to that item, which mean that the funding in 2002-03 is for the final seal. In fact, the final stages of that road project were just being completed. That project was committed to and largely completed by the coalition Government. The projects on Muirs Highway - Mt Barker bypass construct and seal, the Mt Barker bypass to Denmark, Mt Barker Road widen and seal, and Strachan to regional boundary widen, primer seal and seal - are worth a total of \$30 million. Once again, those projects are not even on the horizon until after 2006-07.

Hon Bill Stretch: That is an absolute killer stretch of road.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: It is a terrible stretch of road and is an indictment on consecutive Governments in the past decade that no significant works have been done on that road. It is an indictment on the Government that it is still at least five years out from any allocation to that road.

The projects on the Old Coast Road - Australind to Australind bypass, construct and seal including a bridge - has funding of \$14 million. Once again, that does not even figure in the budget until 2006-07. One section of the Perth to Bunbury Highway, a \$37.35 million project, actually gets a guernsey - the Australian bypass to Bunbury inner harbour, construct and primer seal with \$1 million in 2004 and \$1 million in 2005. Big deal! That will probably pay for the planning and the consultation process but it will not get anything on the ground.

The Bunbury outer ring road and Lake Clifton to Binningup projects of \$40 million and \$5.4 million respectively do not figure. On Raymond Road, the South Western Highway to Australind bypass reconstruct and widen project, once again, is postponed until after 2006-07. The current figures on the South Western Highway, which I referred to before, for the Bendale Road to Donnybrook reconstruct and seal project is \$4.29 million; the Donnybrook to Bridgetown reconstruct and primer seal project is \$27.17 million; and the Waroona to Roelands reconstruct and widen project is \$24.4 million. That allows only for what is needed right now, not for the road works which will be required as a result of emerging projects that will put increasing demand on that section of the highway. A prime example is the Donnybrook woodchip mill which will require significant road works. Those projects are required now but that mill will put added pressure on the whole area. The Brookton Highway-Albany Highway-South Western Highway construct new link project is a major project of \$138 million. It is probably not surprising that that project does not register on the radar until after 2006-07. On the Vasse Highway, the Busselton to Nannup widen climbing lanes project of \$3 million does not rate a mention. On the Albany Highway, the Kojonup to Albany construct passing lanes project has an allocation of \$1.4 million, which means there is one exception of \$1.4 million in all those projects. On Mowen Road, the

Rosa Brook Road to Nannup construct and primer seal project has an allocation of \$0.4 million in 2002, \$0.8 million in 2003, \$0.8 million in 2004, \$1 million in 2005 and another \$7.45 million to be spent after that. Mowen Road is an important east-west link, particularly for the Shire of Nannup. That will at least honour a commitment made by the coalition Government with the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River and the Shire of Nannup that the work would be done by the local shires and funded by Main Roads. That will be a long and tortuous process and is perhaps not the best way to do it because some work done the previous year must be restarted when work stops and starts. At least there is some progress there, albeit minor. On Muirs Highway, the Nyamup to Strachan reconstruct project of \$8.7 million has some small allocations over the next couple of years; however, that project is overdue.

Mr Deputy President, that is a smattering of examples of roads in the south west region which do not even have a berth on the road funding program for the next five years. That is an alarming situation for roads that require major work done in a region that is under increasing pressure. The Milyeanup coast road on the Scott coastal plain in the Shire of Nannup is an important road which had been allocated \$400 000 this year with ongoing funding over previous years. The Shire of Nannup had a firm commitment from the Government that money would be allocated to it. On the strength of that commitment, it purchased equipment and planned the road construction only to find to its dismay that the Government had reneged on the commitment to provide \$400 000 this year. The Milyeanup coast road is a vitally important link for an emerging area in the southern part of this State for horticulture, the dairy industry and tree plantations. The Shire of Nannup was alarmed at the prospect of losing that funding and approached local members - Paul Omodei, Hon Adele Farina and me. After a series of knock-backs, the shire finally got a meeting with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and I believe a commitment was made to provide \$200 000 this financial year of the previously committed \$400 000 for that road; that is, half of the committed amount. That is one example of this Government's disdainful attitude towards a local authority and country people.

I want to spend a little time talking about the upgrade to the Vasse Highway to Margaret River route, which is in dire need of attention. This was illustrated in no better way than by an article in *The West Australian* on Saturday 24 August. The article has a picture of a policeman standing next to the "MR5" - Margaret River - signpost on the highway. The article is headed "Tourist drive 'is death alley'" and states -

The entrance to one of WA's top tourist towns has been labelled death alley by police because of the grim road toll.

Eight people have died on a 1.8km section of Bussell Highway, 5km north of Margaret River, in the past four years.

A ninth man is in a critical condition in Royal Perth Hospital with multiple head and body injuries following a crash on the same section on Sunday.

The article details the death toll in these accidents from 1998, commencing with the death of a 31-year-old Margaret River woman and her three-year-old son, and refers to a series of other tragedies. That is an alarming illustration of a road that needs urgent work. As I said before, no funding is provided for that road until 2006-07, but Main Roads is doing some consultation work.

I refer to a brochure headed, "Bussell Highway Upgrade Vasse to Margaret River", which sets out the vitally important consultation and planning that is occurring on the route. I have a couple of concerns about that. First, the consultation is taking place now without any commitment to funding for at least five years and will have to be reconsidered in five years. I pity the poor Main Roads officers who have been saddled with this role because they are aware that it is being done in a vacuum without any funding to follow it up.

Another major problem is that it does not include the Margaret River bypass road, which was raised seriously three to four years ago. The consultation and planning stage does not include a bypass for Margaret River. That is also alarming because there is a unanimous feeling in that community that a bypass for heavy traffic must be planned now and constructed in a few years. If the opportunity is missed now, it may not be taken up in the future.

I will spend some time on the issue of water and will indicate how the water debate is affecting the south west region. Some aspects of this issue are particularly relevant to the south west area. In recent weeks, a couple of quite alarming and misleading articles were published in the *Sunday Times*. The most alarming article was printed on 8 September under the headline "Water Fix". Last week, another article was headed, "State has water for 1 600 years". The chief political reporter, Mr Grahame Armstrong, wrote the articles. I understand that until recently, the Government employed him, which worries me. Is this reporter running the Government's agenda or is the reporter, who is fresh out of the Government's employment, trading in government secrets or undermining government policy? I do not know. I will take him to task on a couple of issues he raised. In the first article to which I referred he implies that the simple option open to the Government is for it to take 30

gigalitres of water from the Harvey irrigation system. He claims that the water is there for the taking. The people of the south west are getting very sick of those in the Perth metropolitan area looking towards the south west as an easy option to solve their water supply problems.

A series of dams in the hills, as well as the Harvey Dam, have been constructed. The south west is surrounded by a series of dams that feed into the Perth metropolitan area and even more are planned, yet local residents in the south west cannot get access to good water, which is very galling for them. The towns in those areas are forced to use alternative water supplies that are not of the same quality as the water that is supplied to Perth. The Harvey irrigation area is now run by Harvey Water, a private company that took over the infrastructure from the Water Corporation in that area. Harvey Water is forced to use water from the Wellington Weir, which is not of the same quality as water from the Harris Dam or other catchments in that area, which it would dearly love to use. The salinity content of water in the Wellington Weir is much higher than that of the Harris Dam. Harvey Water would prefer to get its water from a better supply.

The article is nonsense because - and I give credit to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage who pointed this out - the water is not available to take. If there has not been enough rain in Perth to fill the water catchments, there will not have been enough rain in the south west either. If the water is not available for the south west irrigators, it is not available for the people in the Perth metropolitan area either. Many irrigators in the south west found it insulting that the article insinuated that they waste water. Harvey Water inherited an open irrigation system that needed a lot of work. About \$10 million has been spent to upgrade that system in recent years and Harvey Water has done a good job. I can understand the irrigators' resentment at being told by city-centric people, who consider it their right to use sprinklers on their lawns every day and who have open, unending access to water, that they are wasting water by using it in productive enterprises including beef and dairy farming and horticulture.

Hon Kim Chance: I do not think anyone said that. It was said that we have a wasteful system, which is very true and we are trying to address that.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Some people might have interpreted it differently. I can understand the irrigators taking issue with that. Country people live with the water situation all the time. Most country people have dual water systems. They have rainwater tanks and open catchments or bores to service other parts of their properties or household needs. We all live with that. Therefore, country people do not take lightly any form of criticism or implied criticism that they waste water. They see people in the metropolitan area who regard water as a free and endless resource, which it is not. The way in which people in metropolitan Perth use water has a huge impact on the south west of the State.

I will refer to the Scott coastal plain and the proposal to take water from the Yarragadee formation. Some time ago, I asked the Minister for Government Enterprises whether the Water Corporation planned to take ground water from the Scott River basin to feed into Perth's water supply. In his answer, the minister confirmed the suspicions of many local people that there was a proposal to extract ground water from the Blackwood ground water management area, which includes the Scott coastal plain area. The proposal was to extract up to 60 gigalitres from the Blackwood ground water management area. Sixty gigalitres is about half the amount of water that people in the Perth metropolitan area managed to save as a result of the Government's education drive over the summer.

Hon Nick Griffiths: Not just the Perth metropolitan area, but the people of Kalgoorlie-Boulder also responded. We are one community. You should stop trying to divide us between country and city; it is most insulting.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: This is my point. The Minister for Racing and Gaming says that we are one community, and we are. However, people from outside the integrated water supply area that allows people to turn on a tap and get a lovely flow of water can be forgiven for thinking otherwise.

Hon Kim Chance: My water in Merredin comes from the metropolitan area and I am grateful for it.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Absolutely, and the Leader of the House should be grateful; the water in Kalgoorlie also comes from the metropolitan area. However, I am trying to make the point that not all people in the State have the same access to water.

Hon Nick Griffiths: Bunbury and Busselton have their own schemes.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Absolutely. The proposal to take 60 gigalitres is equivalent to 50 per cent of the estimated sustainable ground water resource. No proper research has been conducted into whether that is a good, fair or logical estimate. The answer I was provided with also states that competing water needs should not result in any danger to farm enterprises. I will spend some time on two aspects of this matter. If the Water Corporation proceeds with its proposal to take this enormous amount of water out of the Yarragadee formation from below the Scott coastal plain -

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford): Order, members! A number of conversations are going on around the Chamber, which makes it very difficult for the Hansard reporters to hear the debate.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: There are two potentially very alarming impacts on this area. The first relates to water dependent industries. Already the Scott coastal plain is a valuable area for horticulture, tree plantations and dairying.

Dairy interests will increase very shortly as properties are being purchased by large dairies that will feed into the Western Australian system. Those industries are water dependent and people are alarmed that pinching the water from the Yarragadee aquifer will impact on water levels.

Hon Kim Chance: There is no evidence of that.

Hon Ken Travers: Why did you not give this speech in 1999 when Perth Water identified Yarragadee as a source?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: We hear the oracle again. Hon Ken Travers knows everything about the Water Corporation and everything else on this planet, it seems.

Another industry has also been given prominence in that area; that is, industrial hemp crops have been trialled successfully in the south west. If we get to the stage - I hope we do - in which industrial hemp can be grown commercially, the Scott coastal plain is ideally suited to that industry. A group of local people want to work constructively with the horticultural industry to take over the facilities of the old Beenup mine. I hope the Government gets behind that project and supports it.

The Beenup mine brings me to the second major area of concern, which is environmental. I mentioned that the environmental effects of extraction of water of that volume from the south west could have enormously damaging implications. I mentioned that there were perhaps a couple of examples in which environmental aspects are non-negotiable. This is one such case. In this sense, I believe that the Water and Rivers Commission is on the right track. The Beenup mine closed because acid sulfate soils had been exposed to the air. When the soils that are extracted as a result of that mining operation are exposed to the air, they turn into sulfuric acid. That caused the closure of that mine because it was too difficult to manage. The rehabilitation of that mine is a huge undertaking. The Beenup mine has enormous dams in which those tailings are kept under water. That applies to soils right across the Scott coastal plain. If the water table drops, those soils will, in effect, emit sulfuric acid, which will go straight into the Scott and Blackwood Rivers. That would be an environmental disaster and it would be irresponsible of any Government even to contemplate that without far more research than has been done to this point. I am not the only person saying this. The Shire of Augusta-Margaret River has written to the minister, and I am sure he is aware of that.

Hon Nick Griffiths: The response will say that Hon Barry House is playing politics on this issue and is being misleading.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I presume from the minister's attitude that he will dismiss the shire's letter as arrogantly as he is dismissing what I am saying tonight. If the minister dismisses that with this sort of arrogance, he is telling the community of Western Australia something about his attitude in government. It is city-centric and the minister does not understand what is occurring.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford): Order! The only person with the call here is Hon Barry House.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I will not be able to go through the full content of the speech that I prepared.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: Do you need an extension of time?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I would like an extension of time, but I doubt the punitive powerbroker on the other side will give me one.

I have done a fair bit of work on the Scott coastal plain area. I chaired a steering committee a few years ago which produced a quasi planning document titled "Scott Coastal Plan - A Strategy for a Sustainable Future".

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Of course, Hon Ken Travers would know more than I, even though I have worked on this for about five years! Hon Ken Travers was born with that sort of knowledge; he is an absolute smart-arse.

I do not have any more time to speak about the 15 land conservation officers who have been sacked in the south west.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Bruce Donaldson.