COMMITTEE REPORTS - CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Hon George Cash) in the chair.

Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission - Tenth Report - Interim Report on Amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003

Resumed from 22 June 2006.

Motion

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I move -

> That the report be noted.

I wish to talk about the tenth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission headed "Interim Report on Amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003". I will admit that I was having some difficulty remembering exactly why some of this report was worded in the manner it is, partly because it was tabled on 22 June 2006, exactly nine months ago.

The report revolves around recommendations made by the commission itself to the committee and to, I understand, the Attorney General, which is the normal course of events. The committee believes that the Attorney General is contemplating a number of amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003. These recommendations seek to provide some insight into the deliberations on those amendments.

The Corruption and Crime Commission has always had some concerns about the definition of "organised crime", which it voiced to the committee and with which the committee concurred. We are all aware of the problems associated with organised crime not only here in Western Australia, but also in other states of Australia, albeit, I believe other states experience far greater problems than we do in this area. To try to ensure that organised crime does not, if I can term it this way, get out of hand, the committee believes there is a need to redefine "organised crime" for the purposes of the act, and to enable the commission to protect the interests of the people of Western Australia in a far better manner than hitherto it has been able to do.

Another amendment proposed by the commission and endorsed by the committee seeks to expand the definition of "public officer". I was talking to Hon Graham Giffard about this prior to having a good look at the report. On reading that short sentence about expanding the definition of public officer one might, understandably and correctly, become somewhat frightened about what that might lead to. I refer members to page 4 of the report, which states -

> The current definition of "public officer" in s.3 adopts the definition of the *Criminal Code*. The CCC recommends that the definition be expanded to add specific classes of persons to the list of public officers and to allow the government to prescribe additional classes of public officers by regulation.

The CCC is not seeking to take a carte blanche approach; the classes will be prescribed, and if the Parliament believes it is going beyond what could be considered reasonable, it will be in a position to move a motion to disallow. I think that if it were intended that anyone and everyone associated with supplying the government with goods or services should be prescribed as a public officer, that would be going beyond the bounds of realism. The CCC would have to expand probably 100-fold to enable it to check all the allegations of misconduct, serious misconduct and corruption. If I recall correctly, I do not think that was the intent. However, there were instances of, as is said in the report, specific classes of people who might need to be included under that definition to enable the CCC to undertake the role that this Parliament has asked it to undertake.

Further recommendations agreed to by the committee on 22 June 2006 include the simplification of the definition of "misconduct". We have heard recently of some of the problems associated with "misconduct" and "serious misconduct", and how they are defined, and how each can trigger certain things that the commission can and cannot do, particularly regarding members of Parliament. Those areas need to be clarified and, no doubt in the fullness of time when the Assembly passes the amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act and sends them to this place, we will know exactly what is intended and we will be in a position to make our argument either for or against those amendments.

The suggestions under recommendation 2 are somewhat administrative. Under recommendation 3, the committee agreed with the commission in a number of instances, mainly concerning a multiperson commission. It was decided that one commissioner rather than a number of commissioners would suffice. The fourth dot point under recommendation 3 is the provision for a public interest monitor. It can be understood from that recommendation that the committee endorses the Corruption and Crime Commission's opinion that amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003 are not necessary at this stage - I emphasise at this stage - in

relation to making provision for a PIM. Recently, after the tabling of this report, the committee visited Queensland and learnt more about the role the PIM is asked to undertake. The committee now believes that this area should be further explored. Each state encounters similar circumstances and problems of corruption, misconduct, serious misconduct and organised crime. It goes by a number of different names but we all understand exactly what we are trying to overcome. The differences between the states are in how they try to overcome those problems. The committee staff are compiling papers regarding the make-up of the anticorruption programs and organisations that operate in each state. I understand that there are very large differences between some of the geographically larger states such as Queensland and Western Australia and the smaller states such as Tasmania. Tasmania has only the Parliament, an Anti-Corruption Commission and Ombudsman to overview the work of the commission. Conversely, New South Wales has myriad different organisations. The committee must have a thorough knowledge of this so that it can bring information into this place about what is in the best interests of the people of Western Australia in this regard. It is one thing to look at a PIM and agree that it sounds like a very good idea. When all the anticorruption work that is done in a particular jurisdiction is aggregated, it may sit comfortably, but it is not just a matter of adopting exactly what is done in another state and expecting it to work in Western Australia. I am suggesting to members that any number of these agencies and subagencies and programs can all look very good individually, but when they are brought together collectively, they will not necessarily provide the outcomes we are looking for. As a member of the committee, I am looking forward to viewing and analysing the information from each of the states so that the committee can report to this house and make recommendations.

Recommendation 4 states -

> The Committee recommends that the *Corruption and Crime Commission Act, 2003* be amended to empower the CCC to perform a witness protection function.

The committee has been looking into the area of witness protection for some time, and continues to do so because an enormous amount of information must be gleaned from this area. It sounds relatively simple. However, some of the witnesses may be in prison. Therefore, one must wonder whether the amount of protection that must be afforded to people on the witness protection program is being provided. We have found that that is not the case in some states. The committee is yet to decide whether the witness protection program should be managed by the police alone, by the police in conjunction with the CCC or by just the CCC. I imagine that the CCC would be loath to take on additional functions at this time because of the other administrative areas it is concerned with regarding organised crime and because of the resources it either has or does not have. However, members know that circumstances can change. Therefore, this chamber could be asked at some stage to give consideration to whether the CCC should perform that witness protection function.

Recommendation 5 concerns conducting examinations. This too is a somewhat administrative role. It is a method of allowing the flow of work to continue at a rate that everyone would expect to avoid bottlenecks. However, the Attorney General will decide what form that will take, if it occurs at all.

Recommendation 7 states -

> The Committee recommends that the *Corruption and Crime Commission Act, 2003* be amended to include a provision that the Standing Committee has the right to interview the Executive's preferred candidates to the positions of Commissioner, Acting Commissioner, Parliamentary Inspector and Acting Parliamentary Inspector.

Fortunately, the committee has been able to receive the concurrence of the Premier to interview those people without those amendments. Those recommendations have been presented to the committee and the committee has interviewed a number of people for the position of commissioner. I expect that that arrangement will continue, although it would be preferable to amend the act. I am not suggesting that the Premier would renege on what he has decided - far from it. However, in the future, it would be far better if that provision was included in the act so that everyone knew exactly what was intended.

Recommendation 8 states -

> The Committee recommends that the *Corruption and Crime Commission Act, 2003* be amended to include a provision that prospective appointees to the positions of Commissioner, Acting Commissioner, Parliamentary Inspector and Acting Parliamentary Inspector must obtain the highest level security clearances as part of the recruitment process.

The committee found that there appeared to be variations between the position of commissioner and other positions regarding the security clearance that was in fact obtained. It states on page 13 of the report -

> The Act does not currently require prospective appointees to these senior positions to obtain security clearances prior to an appointment being confirmed. The Commissioner did submit to security vetting,

> but this should be a mandatory requirement under the Act. Prospective appointees should be required to pass the highest level of security clearance given their powers under telecommunications interception legislation.

I think most people would agree to that. I assume it is just a simple oversight. However, having had to cause the act to operate, it can now be seen that it would be in the interests of all to ensure that those security clearances were available, so that everyone could feel particularly comfortable. On the question of telecommunications interception, we have seen over the past number of months the extent to which the Corruption and Crime Commission can intercept telephone calls, and has been doing for some considerable time. Therefore, I believe it is particularly important that the people who are able to instigate those interceptions have that security clearance; and yet again it should be in the act itself.

Recommendation 9 states -

> The Committee recommends that sections 10(1) and 190(2) of the *Corruption and Crime Commission Act, 2003* be amended to allow other suitably qualified people to be considered for appointment as Commissioner and Parliamentary Inspector.

Part of the reasoning behind that was that the committee believes we have a very small pool of people with that high-security clearance on whom we can call. The current commissioner, Kevin Hammond, is retiring at the end of this month, and a replacement must be found. I suggest that it will not be an easy task. Our parliamentary inspector, who is a Queen's Counsel, is well regarded in the community. He is still running his own business. It will not necessarily be easy to find people of that calibre who are available when the commission requires them. For that reason, and without trying to identify other suitably qualified people, it is a matter that we believe needs to be taken into consideration. We have left that with the Attorney General to consider and bring forward if he believes it is appropriate.

I will leave it to members to read the rest of the report, if they so wish. I believe it is an important report, and, as I said earlier, it will be all the more important when those amendments come forth to this place for consideration. Members may wish to take note that it is report 10, and it may give some insight into some of those amendments that come forth and assist members in their deliberations on whether they will agree with those amendments.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I will make a few comments on report 10, which was tabled some months ago, way back when. In many senses it is an interim report that - to say builds a case is probably overstating it - gives a running commentary on a number of developing themes within the CCC and the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission on prospective amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act. I will not comment on all the recommendations. I note that I support, agree with and have no objection to a good majority of them. On page 1, the report states -

> The Committee tabled a report in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council on 17 November 2005 setting out the background issues and terms of reference for the *Inquiry into Legislative Amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act, 2003*.

That report 3 of the committee of the thirty-seventh Parliament deals primarily, I think, with issues in relation to the Court of Appeal. Contempt and organised crime are the main issues discussed in that report, which states -

> In view of the Commissioner's concerns raised on previous occasions, and again in connection with the Court of Appeal decision in relation to organised crime and contempt, the Committee considers it imperative to conduct an inquiry . . .

Report 10 is an interim report on that inquiry. It continues -

> To this end, the Commissioner has agreed to present a further report to the Committee as soon as possible detailing the recommended legislative amendments.

We are starting to see the shape of that in report 10. It continues -

> The Committee aims to table the Commissioner's further report in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council by December 2005.

Sometimes events overtake the commission and it does not always meet those time lines, which is fair enough. In report 10, the committee outlined its own inquiry process. The report states -

> The Committee wrote to a number of relevant stakeholders requesting formal submissions to assist its inquiry.

I would be interested to know who those stakeholders were. I notice from the list of submissions received that there are a number from the CCC, and also from the Supreme Court of WA, the Australian Crime Commission, WA Police, the Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission and the WA Bar Association. I would be interested to know whether the committee went wider than that in the views that it sought from stakeholders; that

is, whether it sought views from organisations that are not necessarily crime enforcement or crime monitoring organisations or whether it sought views from advocacy groups or groups that might otherwise describe themselves as having an interest in civil liberties or in employee welfare. I would be interested to know that because, if it did, none of those organisations felt it was important enough to provide a submission to the committee. It is interesting that a limited range of submissions was received. That is understandable in one sense, because these are recommendations that, by and large, go to the operation of the act. However, they have pretty broad implications for people. Therefore, in these situations, I believe it is a good idea to cast the net reasonably widely. I also note that the report states -

> The Committee will progress its investigation into these issues -

We will receive further reports on this -

> by convening briefings and public hearings with a range of stakeholders.

I am interested in that.

I will deal now with the recommendations themselves. Recommendation 1 is that the definition of "organised crime" in the Corruption and Crime Commission Act be amended. I do not profess to be as well versed as others in the difficulties with organised crime. I am very interested in learning more about how the definition is proposed to be amended. It is not clear to me from the discussion in both this report and report 3 why there is a problem with that definition. Therefore, I am interested in having a more detailed discussion about what that definition means. Obviously, if there is a problem with the application of the act to organised crime, we need to make the required changes to ensure that the act will achieve what we want it to achieve.

Another amendment that has been proposed by the CCC is "expanding the definition of 'public officer'". Hon Ray Halligan also spoke about this matter, and pointed out that the act refers to specified classes of persons. That is true. Section 7A of the act states -

> The main purposes of this Act are -
>
> (a) to combat and reduce the incidence of organised crime; and
>
> (b) to improve continuously the integrity of, and to reduce the incidence of misconduct in, the public sector.

My understanding of this act has always been that it applies to the public sector. I guess it depends upon how extensive the list of specified classes of persons is. In that sense we are discussing this issue in a bit of a vacuum, because there is no list of the proposed specified classes of persons. My concern is that this proposed amendment has the potential to take this provision beyond the stated purposes of the act and thereby shift the ground on which this important organisation is based. I therefore urge caution on this proposed amendment. The Corruption and Crime Commission is a powerful organisation. No other organisation in this country has the powers that have been granted to the CCC by this Parliament. Therefore, any recommendation that would result in a fundamental shift in the application of the CCC act would need to be spelt out very clearly so that we have a thorough understanding of what effect it might have on the act. For example, it might mean that candidates for elections to local government or Parliament who are not already public officers would come under the jurisdiction of this act. Also, if this proposed amendment is read in concert with the other proposed amendments to the act, the CCC will have the potential to be a much wider corruption and crime monitoring and fighting organisation than the one that was originally put in place by this Parliament. Therefore, as I have said, I urge caution on that matter.

The next proposed amendment is "simplifying the definition of 'misconduct'". Similarly, I urge caution on that amendment. The report states that the CCC claims that the misconduct provisions in section 4(d)(iv) and (vi) of the act are overly complex provisions that notifying authorities find difficult to apply. The definition of "misconduct" in section 4 of the act includes a range of things. Paragraphs (a) to (c) describe actions that constitute serious misconduct. Paragraph (d) provides that misconduct occurs if any one of the acts listed in subparagraphs (i) to (vi) is committed. Those subparagraphs include an offence against the Statutory Corporations (Liability of Directors) Act 1996 or any other written law; and a disciplinary offence providing reasonable grounds for the termination of a person's office or employment as a public service officer under the Public Sector Management Act. It is not clear to me how that definition can be described as overly complex. I suggest that rather than simplify the definition, the proposed amendment will substantially broaden it. The definition of misconduct seems to me to be clear and precise. Any change to the definition of misconduct would broaden the application of the act substantially, because the CCC is required to rely on these definitions in determining its courses of actions and its investigations. Therefore, I also urge caution on that matter.

The next proposed amendment is "clarifying the definition of 'principal officer of a notifying authority'". The report states that according to the CCC, the current definition in section 3 is unclear, because some organisations

do not have a natural sole principal officer. That recommendation makes a lot of sense. It does not appear to me to have any prospective downside. It is a sensible and pragmatic solution.

The next proposed amendment is "clarifying the offence of knowingly making a false or malicious report". The committee's explanation for that is adequate. Therefore, I do not have any difficulty with that recommendation.

The next proposed amendment is "adding a provision for CCC to give a report about a proposed commissioned police officer to the Commissioner of Police". The report states that sections 90(4) and (5) of the act allow the CCC to prepare an integrity report about a person proposed to be appointed as a non-commissioned police officer, constable, special constable etc. I question whether that is what we really want the CCC to be doing. The WA Police has the expertise to prepare integrity reports on prospective employees. It is not clear to me why this function should be given to the CCC rather than the police. Clearly the CCC also has the expertise to do these checks. That is not the issue. The issue is why the CCC needs to do those checks when the police already have the expertise and the capacity to do those checks. It is a question of where these functions should be placed, and whether we should expand the role of the CCC and curtail the role of the police. The WA Police is very capable body. It is eminently suitable to carry out this function. I do not believe that a function that would ordinarily be attributed to the police should be given to another body. Therefore, I also urge caution on that amendment. The report does not explain why it would be necessary to do that.

The next proposed amendment is "preventing persons who are not public officials from disclosing restricted information". This would apply to members of the general public. The report states that the CCC seeks to tighten the disclosure rules by creating a new offence of disclosing confidential CCC information on the part of persons not already covered as public officials. We need to have a proper understanding of what those restricted matters are, and the circumstances under which members of the general public are restricted from discussing with any person what they know about a CCC investigation. I support the basic proposition that the CCC is not able to effectively and completely restrict the dissemination of this information; therefore, it is necessary to amend the act in this way to deal with that matter. However, I again advocate that we take a prudent approach to ensure that these provisions are not broadened too widely.

The next proposed amendment is "making provision for witness and interpreter fees". That makes good sense. The final proposed amendment is "amending a drafting error in section 27A(3)". I agree with that recommendation.

I talked earlier about broadening the class of persons who might come under the purview of the CCC.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Prior to the lunch break I was referring to some of the matters contained in recommendation 3. The reference to a public interest monitor is interesting; it only gets a two-line reference in the report. I have to say that I am not sure how a public interest monitor would work. It is an interesting title. I would not mind if the committee were to provide a bit more information in future reports about it if it were of a mind to include a public interest monitor. I note at the moment that it does not think it is necessary. It is an interesting area.

Recommendation 4 refers to witness protection. That is an ongoing issue. Hopefully, that will be working satisfactorily eventually. Recommendation 5 states -

> The Committee recommends that the *Corruption and Crime Commission Act, 2003* be amended to allow the Commissioner to delegate the power to conduct examinations . . .

That is interesting because I am sure that the process of appointing a commissioner to the Corruption and Crime Commission would be fairly exhaustive. A highly qualified person would be required. That is certainly true in the person of the current commissioner. The government would have expectations of appointing a suitably and eminently qualified person. The notion of delegating the power to conduct examinations to another person - appointed as an examiner - and sit as the commissioner is an interesting one. I strongly urge caution in that respect because the commissioner is exercising quite excessive duties. We say that over and over again in this place and in the community. One would not lightly delegate those powers to a person without giving serious consideration to the qualifications of the person and his understanding of the duties and the role of the CCC and the purpose of an examination. The CCC is like no other creature that we have in Western Australia. It is a powerful body that is there to seek and establish the truth of matters that it is inquiring into. It is not a prosecution body as such. It is inquiring body; it is about arriving at the truth of the matter, which I think is the phrase the commissioner uses. It takes a very special insight to understand what the nature of the body is. The power would not ordinarily be handed over to - with the greatest respect - a St Georges Terrace lawyer if the workload became great. One would have to look very carefully at the person the powers were being delegated to.

In the main I support the majority of the recommendations but there are some key areas where we need to proceed with great caution when we are examining changes to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act.

Question put and passed.

Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation - Eighteenth Report - Agriculture Produce (Egg Production Industry) Regulations 2006

Resumed from 24 August 2006.

Consideration of statement lapsed.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Fifth Report - Overview of Petitions

Resumed from 24 August 2006.

Motion

Hon KATE DOUST: I move -

That the report be noted.

I do not have a copy of the report with me as I had not planned to speak on the report. If someone can give me a copy of the report, I am happy to go through some of the outcomes of the petitions that the committee inquired into.

The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs has had a busy period in dealing with a range of petitions. This is a very good report and I congratulate the committee on the work it has done. I also thank staff for the assistance they have provided to us because we have dealt with a diverse array of matters. Once again we dealt with the issue of liquor burners at Alcoa. This time it was in Kwinana as opposed to the Wagerup inquiry. The committee is well and truly experienced at dealing with those matters.

The committee dealt with the issue of uranium mining in Western Australia. This matter comes before the committee on a reasonably regular basis. It was quite interesting because the committee considered doing some further work. The committee looked at a number of matters connected with the petitions that were brought forward. On pages 7 and 8 of the report there is a list of outcomes for mines in the Northern Territory and South Australia. The committee was also interested in looking at the Senate reports on uranium mining that were prepared during the 1990s as well as associated issues such as occupational health and safety. I am looking at Hon Robyn McSweeney hoping that she will speak on this report as well. There is also some information about the Olympic Dam mine. The committee decided that it would acknowledge the concerns of petitioners that were raised with the committee, particularly concerning the hazards associated with nuclear activities. We considered the issues raised in the petition. The petition was finalised on 31 May 2006.

Another issue that went on for quite a while and that was of interest to committee members, particularly those from the South West Region, was the woodchip mill in Bunbury port. A petition was tabled by Hon Barry House on this topic so I know he will be interested. The report refers to the issue on pages 12 to 15. Lot of issues were raised in relation to the petition about the changes that were happening at the Bunbury port. Some members of the committee visited Bunbury to have a look around. However, I was not one of them.

Hon Barry House: The remarkable thing about all that is how Hansol got the approval for its woodchip mill very quickly without any hassles but WAPRES, which has a more extensive network of product, is still struggling for assistance to come through.

Hon KATE DOUST: I am sure the member would be interested to read what the committee worked through on that. Ultimately, most of the issues we looked at involved an exchange of letters. We felt satisfied that some of those issues have been resolved in terms of noise and traffic control and some of those other things. That petition was also finalised in March of last year. There was another petition in relation to the Yilgarn drainage system in the eastern wheatbelt. We did not conduct a major inquiry into that subject. A lot of it was resolved by correspondence with the relevant minister. A petition relating to the Synergy regional call centres, tabled by Hon Simon O'Brien, was inquired into, as was another one dealing with regional parks and bushland protection. We have had quite an interesting array of topics. Petition 20 dealt with local midwifery care options across Western Australia. Our committee dealt with a similar petition some time ago, and I think another committee is also inquiring into this area, so our committee was able to refer this matter on. Two slightly different petitions were tabled by Hon Giz Watson, dealing with the issue of the Sunset Hospital site and the proposed sale of that land. We also considered the Perry Lakes Redevelopment Bill. We ended up finalising that, because by the time we got to deal with the petition, the legislation had been passed. That was finalised fairly quickly. We considered another petition lodged by Hon Paul Llewellyn in relation to the karri forest at Northcliffe. Hon Paul Llewellyn has a lot of interest in that area, and there was quite a bit of debate about the issue. We are still considering a range of other petitions, which are listed on page 30 of the report. We have since tabled a report

on the marina at Point Peron, and I imagine that that will be dealt with at some point. That was a very interesting issue to consider, and I look forward to the opportunity to go through it in more detail.

I have not had the opportunity to go through this report in any more detail. Petitions form a fairly large part of the work of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It is sometimes difficult for the committee to decide which petitions it needs to hold full inquiries into and which can be resolved through much simpler means. The diversity of the matters we look into is always very educational. All the members have worked well together. I see that the committee Chair, Hon Louise Pratt, is now in the chamber. I know that she will be able to give a far better briefing than I on how the committee has dealt with all these matters. I reiterate the comments I made about the committee. It works very well; its members work well together and that is of great benefit because it enables us to progress these matters efficiently and hopefully obtain good outcomes for the people who have raised these matters via petition. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to outline very briefly some of the matters the committee has dealt with.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: As Hon Kate Doust has highlighted, the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs enjoys the process of inquiring into petitions. One of the unique things about this Parliament is that we have such an inquiry process examining petitions. I think that we are the only Parliament in the Commonwealth of Australia that does these things, although I think Queensland might now be looking at a similar process.

Hon Barry House: I wonder if they do it in the Senate.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Maybe that is an initiative I can pursue.

There are some things that this place can do to enhance the way we deal with petitions. The Parliament of Queensland has an e-petition process that is quite successful, and that is also something that this place can examine. The Parliament of Scotland also has a terrific e-petitions process. It means that we can get pretty good indications of community feeling. They get 50 000 or 60 000 signatures on some topics. I imagine it would be interesting to post a petition on the Internet by a formal parliamentary process on topics such as daylight saving. It would give a pretty good indication of community views on such a topic. I have done some work with the Procedure and Privileges Committee to encourage it to adopt the examination of e-petitions. There is more to be done, but I am pleased with the way the environment and public affairs committee currently manages petitions. However, as Hon Kate Doust has pointed out, even though petitioners might have some very legitimate concerns, it can sometimes be quite difficult, with the workload we have, for us as a committee to look seriously at which topics we can make a real difference on by spending our time inquiring into them.

One of the petitions highlighted in this report was about the Alcoa liquor burner at Kwinana. The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs knows this topic very well as a result of its extensive work on Yarloop and Wagerup in past years. We have a deep appreciation of the significant impacts the community feels from polluting industries. We conducted a significant level of inquiry into whether the concerns of the petitioners had been addressed by government. We noted that a significant level of assessment and referral to the Environmental Protection Authority took place to address the concerns of the petitioners. We examined what kind of pollution control equipment was in place, including primary site clean filters for particulate control, condensing, the wet scrubber and regenerative thermal oxidising unit, as well as increased stack height. These are the kinds of things that took place at Alcoa in Kwinana to address the emissions concerns. It is probably a similar process to what happened at Wagerup, where significant investment was made in pollution control as a result of community concerns. Historically, in this area the leverage of communities saying that this is not good enough and calling upon the company to get on and fix it has made a significant contribution to lowering emissions.

One of the other significant petitions we looked at dealt with a topic that comes up quite frequently before the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - uranium mining. We deliberated on whether to conduct an extensive inquiry on the prospect of uranium mining in Western Australia. We were asked to deliberate on whether the Legislative Council should investigate and evaluate the acceptability of the uranium mining industry, measured against the known health hazards for workers in the uranium and associated industries and the residents of Western Australia arising from the establishment of a large number of uranium mines in this state. Not surprisingly, this petition was put in largely by anti-uranium mining activists. I certainly support and commend them for that action.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: You would. I didn't.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Yes. Ultimately, when the committee examined the extensive nature of the inquiry that would be required on this issue, it decided it was better to say that the state government has a very explicit policy on this issue, which is that there will be no uranium mining in Western Australia.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to standing orders.