

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Motion

Resumed from 2 May on the following motion by Hon Norman Moore (Leader of the Opposition) -

That this house expresses its grave concern at the significant deterioration in the governance and administration of the state of Western Australia resulting from a government preoccupied with continued internal division and conflict, manipulated by outside influences and increasingly demonstrating serious signs of dysfunction, and calls on the government to urgently address the issues raised by the Corruption and Crime Commission and refocus its attention on restoring public confidence in the capacity of the government to govern for all Western Australians without fear or favour.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [11.04 am]: When the debate was interrupted yesterday, I was talking about the English course of study and the confusion that is being caused by the three different assessment procedures that are currently being used. There is a very real question mark over the accuracy of the year 12 results due at the end of 2007. I also mentioned prior to that that there is still some confusion in schools because the unit grade descriptors that were promised at the beginning of term 2 are still not in schools. Teachers are using an assessment procedure based on unit grade descriptors that are still not available. I have found out in the past 24 hours that the unit grade descriptors are still not available to teachers. We are now at the end of week 2 of term 2. I have been told that they will not be available for another couple of weeks. This shows yet again the dysfunction in what is going on. It is a direct result of the fact that the government is making changes in education and curriculum virtually on a monthly basis. That is certainly not the way to run education.

When I finished my remarks yesterday, I also alluded to a question that I had asked the Minister for Education and Training about the three assessment options for year 12 English. I asked whether the assessment procedure being used for year 12 English will ensure that student results in English will be accurate, based on the concerns of the English Teachers' Forum and the English Teachers Association. I have partly commented on the minister's response, and I will now continue with the remainder of his response to that question. The minister also said -

Whichever system is used, the familiar process of statistical moderation will ensure ultimate comparability of the assessments across the state. Furthermore, the Curriculum Council will conduct the general achievement test in June. All year 12s in new courses will sit the test. Results from this will help guide schools in making final assessments.

As I have said in this place on several occasions, there is a real question mark over the reliability of the general achievement test.

Hon Kate Doust: What has this got to do with the motion?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It shows yet again that the government is dysfunctional. Has the member been listening to me?

I now refer to a committee transcript of a hearing with Mr Axworthy, the acting chief executive officer of the Curriculum Council. I asked -

Is the minister aware that there are some question marks over the accuracy of the GAT?

Mr Axworthy replied -

Certainly. The GAT was chosen because it was a ready-made instrument that had been used in Victoria for a particular purpose. Part of the research project was to see how useful that could be in our context in Western Australia. Before giving a commitment to introduce this test into our fully fledged assessment regime, we felt it was necessary to assess it.

Mr Axworthy identified the fact that there are question marks over the accuracy of the GAT, which is the system being used to help determine the accuracy of results in the English course of study.

HON BRUCE DONALDSON (Agricultural) [11.07 am]: I seek leave for the member's time to be extended so that he can conclude his remarks.

The PRESIDENT: Is leave granted?

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: No.

THE PRESIDENT: Leave is not granted.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [11.08 am]: I was looking forward to hearing the final contribution of Hon Peter Collier, who was making a very valuable contribution to this debate about the dysfunction of the Carpenter government. Hon Peter Collier was drawing our attention to yet another classic example of dysfunction, inefficiency and incompetence in education. The house would have benefited from that advice. However, the failed former Minister for Education and Training took the mean-spirited and immature step of denying the member leave to continue his remarks. Although the minister is entitled to do that, that acts as an analogy for the fact that this government has plenty to hide, and that it cannot accept accountability. By that single uncharitable and short-sighted action, the minister has demonstrated that this motion has considerable merit upon which to stand.

The motion we are considering was moved by Hon Norman Moore, the father of the house, who has seen many members like the now Minister for Local Government come and go. The motion states -

That this house expresses its grave concern at the significant deterioration in the governance and administration of the state of Western Australia resulting from a government preoccupied with continued internal division and conflict, manipulated by outside influences and increasingly demonstrating serious signs of dysfunction, and calls on the government to urgently address the issues raised by the Corruption and Crime Commission and refocus its attention on restoring public confidence in the capacity of the government to govern for all Western Australians without fear or favour.

When notice of this motion was given on 21 March, it was very reflective of issues that still remain unresolved today; issues of great concern that go to the very root of whether this government is competent to govern in Western Australia and whether this government is worthy of the high honour of governing Western Australia. So far in this debate, we have heard contributions from Hon Norman Moore, Hon Peter Collier and others demonstrating clinically, coldly and objectively how this government has failed in all the ways listed in the motion. By contrast, government members in their contributions have been keen to minimise their collective culpability. They want to try to put their spin on it and weasel their way out of a disgraceful catalogue of poor behaviour, manipulation by outside conflict and serious signs of dysfunction.

Just yesterday and on a couple of other occasions, we had to suffer Hon Ken Travers going further than seeking to minimise government culpability. He sought to trivialise the whole issue, as though it does not matter. He had not one thing to say about how the government was meeting its obligations to the Parliament and the people of Western Australia. He just wanted to talk about podcasting and to tell the opposition what it should be doing and how it is somehow failing. Hon Ken Travers needs to understand that opposition and government each involve very different areas of responsibility. He can flap his gums all he likes about what he would like to perceive as some of the problems of the Liberal Party, but the problem with that is that he ignores, at his peril and the collective peril of his colleagues, the very serious signs of decay afflicting the Australian Labor Party in this state. While the honourable member continues to deny that there is any problem at all, and that somehow all the ills that have been visited upon the state of Western Australia through improper practice and apparent corruption are the fault of the opposition and not of the government, he himself is sowing the seeds of the government's demise. That is the only thing that I can say in his support. He showed no capacity to understand the seriousness of the issues raised by this motion, as he sought to trivialise the debate. To give just one example, he did this by asking how serious the opposition was about the work it is doing at this time. He tried to draw in the mover of the motion, who is responsible at a senior level for coordinating opposition policy for the next election, by asking him how many press releases he had put out.

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: How many did you put out all year? Two!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: This is beautiful, because it is a demonstration of how these people, who presume to govern this state, God help us, want to trivialise such serious matters.

I will come to some very serious matters. Before I do that, I remind the house of what Hon Ken Travers, and, now, the Minister for Local Government, think is serious. It is about how an opposition is doing its thing if it puts out more press releases. I do not know what the standard is, but if that is a key performance indicator for the Australian Labor Party, it certainly is not for the opposition. A key performance indicator is about what is achieved, not how many bits of paper are put out.

It is interesting that Hon Ken Travers wants to talk about media statements, because he seems to think that the number of media statements that are put out - most of which are, of course, consigned to the bin by the press - is an indication of whether people are doing their work. To what did he have recourse to get his information? I guess he went to websites, including some official websites. POWAnet, our in-house system, publishes through the Parliamentary Library a range of information about media content, including clips from the electronic media, by television and/or radio, which can be sorted by portfolio area, subject or member. Hon Ken Travers has been a really big feature in that area. He was a background player in a story about 30 parliamentarians going on a

bike ride, and twice he was doorstopped about daylight saving! That is the sum total of his appearances. What a hard worker he is! Perhaps before he seeks to lecture the opposition about what work is required in opposition, he should measure himself by his own yardstick, if it is so important to him. The thing that he really paid a lot of attention to was the number of media statements put out by members.

POWAnet also contains a summary of the number and nature of media statements put out by members, for what it is worth, because as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out by interjection yesterday, it is not about the volume of media statements that one puts out; it is about what one achieves as a result of that. If one goes to the same source that presumably Hon Ken Travers did to tell us about the 20 or 40-odd statements that members on this side were putting out, he should look at the record of himself and his colleagues. I went to that site, and I discovered that there was no reference at all, in the electronic record of the Parliamentary Library, to any media statements that the following ALP members had put out: Hon Shelley Archer; Hon Kate Doust; Hon Sue Ellery, until March this year when she finally became a minister; Hon Ed Dermer, nil; Hon Adele Farina, nil; Hon Sheila Mills, nil; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm, no mention at all; Hon Sally Talbot, one - well done; Hon Vince Catania, nil -

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Hon Louise Pratt, nil; and Hon Ken Travers, not a single mention at all. What a hypocrite and a humbug! That shows us that he is so off beam in what he is arguing, because that is not what it is about.

Hon Sue Ellery, who has just joined us in the chamber, very properly points out, perhaps not having heard the preamble to my remarks, that the number of press releases that one has been reported as putting out is in only a very small way an indicator of how much one is contributing to the public debate. Of course, there are many occasions on which members do achieve publicity for their cause or policy without resorting to the basic media statement. I have not put out a media statement this week.

Hon Sue Ellery: I do at least one a week.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Not according to the Parliamentary Library or Hon Ken Travers' stories. However, I do not care what the member puts out. I know whether the member is working, and I know the value of people's work. I know Hon Sue Ellery works very hard, whereas Hon Ken Travers apparently wants simply to labour the point. Let me not indulge Hon Ken Travers, who seeks to trivialise and displace the purpose of this debate.

Hon Norman Moore: He doubled his media exposure by being in "InsideCover" this morning.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Hon Ken Travers appeared in "InsideCover" this morning. I do not know if he released a press statement about that. Thanks to Uncle Simon, he got himself a mention in the newspaper, which - on his yardstick - is a great achievement. I am glad on his behalf that it was the "InsideCover" column and not the death notices.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: It's a pity he didn't have a photo of the horse as well.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Yes. I do not know what happened; I think he lost the horse.

This is a very serious motion, Mr President. The honourable Leader of the Opposition has done us a favour in bringing this matter to the attention of the house. How can the public have confidence in the processes of this government after reviewing the events dating from the beginning of 2006? The opposition knows that this government has long been unduly influenced by certain elements outside Parliament, particularly certain unions, that are able to exercise influence through the various processes of the Labor Party. I will talk about threats related to preselections in a little while when I get the chance.

Hon Kate Doust: Is that within your own party?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No, it is within the member's party.

Hon Kate Doust: I understand that your president's got a hit list.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I do not know where the member got that information from.

Hon Kate Doust: *The West Australian*, actually.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No, the member did not; she is dopey. It was in the *Sunday Times*, and the state president immediately put out a disclaimer. Does the member know how the president did that? She released a press statement. Would not Hon Ken Travers like that!

Hon Norman Moore: Let us never forget how the government of Western Australia is spending our money.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Yes, spending our money as though it is going out of fashion, and spending it in improper ways.

I remind the house of a few matters. There are only a few matters, but it is enough for us to ask how anyone could have confidence in dealing with the Carpenter government. On 16 January 2006, from memory, the opposition was staggered to hear that Hon Geoff Gallop, the then Premier, had suddenly announced that he was leaving that office and resigning from Parliament - just like that. We were given a reason that related to a mental health condition that he felt precluded him from continuing as Premier. I do not wish to comment on that matter any further. Suffice it to say that the then Premier suddenly upped and left. That caused considerable problems for the Australian Labor Party, because the question of a successor then arose. A substantial number of backroom deals were done as people manoeuvred themselves into position or sought to reap the spoils that go with the creation of a new premiership. We know that Hon Michelle Roberts, the member for Midland, was very interested in obtaining the position of Premier. She sought advice. Who did she go to for a blessing or a polite rebuff? She went to Brian Burke. The former state president of the Australian Labor Party, Michelle Roberts, sought permission from Brian Burke on the question of whether she should stand for Premier. Evidently she was told no. The person who was chosen by the ALP collectively was the member for Willagee, Hon Alan Carpenter. From the point of view of the ALP, he has some strong credentials for the position. He is media-savvy. He is also a skilled communicator and is relatively free from the baggage of WA Inc. He has a unique perspective on that period because he reported on the WA Inc royal commission all those years ago as an ABC reporter. He was seen as being set apart from those scandals that attached themselves to the Burke, Dowding and Lawrence governments. That is the same Burke who has caused so many problems for the ALP today through his activities and involvement with, and pernicious influence in, the ALP. Alan Carpenter was a likely starter for the job of Premier. How we wish the ALP had chosen Jim McGinty, or a rising star like John D'Orazio! How we wish Burke had kept his trap shut and let Michelle Roberts do it, but no; they chose Alan Carpenter. Alan Carpenter is always having his trips overseas interrupted. I might get back to that if I have time. Hon Alan Carpenter returned, statesman like, to have the mantle of premiership thrust upon him, or so it would appear. There is no-one in this town who is an observer of politics who does not know that there was more to it than that. The ALP is a party that functions in or out of government along factional lines and with behind-the-scenes deal making. Whatever his merit as an apparent cleanskin, Alan Carpenter did not have that powerbase behind him, except that provided by his friend, Hon Jim McGinty, who is something of a powerbroker. However, they needed support from elsewhere, and they got it through the agency of the likes of Brian Burke, who is a powerbroker behind the ALP. As we know, Burke does not deliver favours and numbers without exacting a price. That is why after the elevation of Hon Alan Carpenter to the position of Premier, this intelligent man, who had observed so closely the goings on and the evidence of the WA Inc royal commission, did some inexplicable things about which I would have credited him for having had better judgement. These things include: firstly, promoting to cabinet Norm Marlborough from 20 years of well-deserved backbench obscurity; secondly, embracing the member for Ballajura, Mr D'Orazio, as a rising star; and, thirdly, elevating the members for Murchison-Eyre and Riverton to cabinet status. Everyone in this town knows, and has always known, that Norm Marlborough was Brian Burke's gofer. They were very close but Marlborough was the subordinate. Everyone was surprised - I was surprised - to see John D'Orazio put in charge of police and justice. I was surprised, as we all were, to see Marlborough given cabinet rank, because of the way Burke pulls his strings and because of what that would mean for the reputation of government in Western Australia. It did not take long. We soon saw all the reasons why Marlborough should not have been made a minister.

In due course - it did not take long - we saw D'Orazio also required to resign in disgrace from cabinet, and indeed from the Australian Labor Party. In fact, so much did that member impugn the name of the Ministry for Justice that this government has changed the name of the department to try to distance itself from him. We saw the appointment of Mr McRae to the very delicate position of Minister for the Environment, yet Mr Carpenter, like everyone else, would have known how close Mr McRae was to Mr Grill, Mr Burke's colleague as a lobbyist. Mr Carpenter also put Mr Bowler in charge of sensitive portfolios related to development matters, again despite his closeness to the lobbying group of Burke and Grill through his close associations with Mr Grill.

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: It wasn't as close as Hon Norman Moore is to Noel Crichton-Browne!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: We are not talking about Hon Norman Moore. Hon Norman Moore should not be under attack from anyone about this matter. This is about the ALP. I am sure the ALP does not want to hear this, but it is going to hear it.

All those things in relation to those members I have just mentioned were fostered by Alan Carpenter in the advancement of their careers - careers that ultimately have come crashing down in ignominious disgrace. It was Alan Carpenter who encouraged them and who gave them ministerial office. Simultaneously with kicking the Marlboroughs and others of this world into cabinet, he also said that there was an edict from his predecessor - an article of this government's policy - that, difficult though it might be to enforce, he would overturn. That was that Burke and Grill were no longer persona non grata. He said that his ministers were free to talk with them, and why should he not put some of their mates, people such as Norm Marlborough, in cabinet? That is what he did simultaneously. Everyone knew that was dangerous for the integrity of the government. Alan Carpenter

knew, or must have known, that it was dangerous for the integrity of the Labor government, but he made those decisions and he took those actions. We all know the result. Marlborough - disgraced in a fashion that is quite unprecedented in my experience and observation of the Parliament of Western Australia; D'Orazio - again and again failed and booted out in disgrace; Mr McRae - again five minutes in the environment job and compromised by his phone calls and dealings with Mr Grill, and there may be some other matters concerning that particular ex-minister that we may need to reflect on at another time; and Mr Bowler - hopelessly compromised.

Mr President, I will not dwell on those characters any more at this time because I am aware that there are still proceedings both within and without Parliament that may touch on their conduct. All I have done really is refer in passing to matters on the public record about each of them. What is the common denominator? The common denominator is that they were put in those positions, which everyone knew they would abuse, by Hon Alan Carpenter the moment he became Premier of Western Australia.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That's revealing! That's a new fact that people should know, as though it hasn't been out there, for goodness sake!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: People need to be reminded of it. Why do people need to be reminded of it? It is because we know more about Hon Alan Carpenter than just that. We also know that those actions were inexplicable. Why they were taken? They were taken because he wanted the Premier's job and that was the price he had to pay to get it. To gain patronage and power, the ALP has shown that it is prepared to prostitute itself again and again and again in government.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You know nothing about policy.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I think we know a fair bit. The sum total of these things, without reference to a range of other matters that I could throw in, is that in the eyes of the public, the standing of the Carpenter government is compromised because we cannot trust it. We cannot trust the processes that it has in place to deal with the decisions that have to be made. The proper decision-making processes can be disregarded by ministers of this government if it is convenient for them to do so. They can give favours to people who happen to be paying good money and are clients of Brian Burke, whereas if people are not clients of Brian Burke, they may find that they do not get what they should get on merit and that their competitors do. We were reminded of this the other night on the *Four Corners* program when we were played an excerpt from a conversation Brian Burke was having with another person. He said, "You don't want to make an enemy of me. I'm not a good person to have as an enemy." Why is he not a good person to have as an enemy? Perhaps we could ask Hon Adele Farina, a colleague of the Labor members in this house, who is unfortunately away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business at this very time. Hon Adele Farina has given evidence that she was stood over and threatened with the loss of her pre-selection by Brian Burke unless she toed the line about influencing the outcome of a development application lodged by a client of Brian Burke. Do actions like that evoke any confidence in people who have to deal with this government that they will get a fair go? As far as I am concerned, that particular revelation gave me more confidence in Hon Adele Farina and her courage than I had had before. Does the ALP caucus find comfort in that? Does the Minister for Local Government interject about the backbone of Hon Adele Farina? Does Hon Ken Travers lecture us about Hon Adele Farina resisting that? No. Hon Adele Farina is damned by some of her colleagues because she "ratted on a comrade".

Hon Graham Giffard: Who? Name one.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Why does Hon Graham Giffard, a Mr Burke lover, want to know?

Hon Graham Giffard: Because I think you're making it up, that's why.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! We are having a few too many interjections. I am aware that some members are particularly interested in getting the call. I will look out for them when Hon Simon O'Brien concludes his observations.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It is quite obvious that people such as Hon Graham Giffard get awfully upset these days. He used to be a cheerful chap.

Hon Graham Giffard: Too many lies for me. I get upset when there are too many lies.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Who is the member hearing them from? I look forward to Hon Graham Giffard getting up and renouncing anything that I have said, anything at all. We know how thick he is with the disgraced former Premier Burke. We know what a supporter he is, do we not?

Hon Graham Giffard: No; the only person who is thick in here is you.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: That remark really hurts, Mr President!

The PRESIDENT: Order! Perhaps Hon Simon O'Brien can address his observations to me rather than going down the path he is going down.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Very well, Mr President. I was distracted by the hysterical interjections from members opposites, who do not like hearing what I have to say. All of this is on the public record. This is a government that cannot be trusted. It has lost ministers left, right and centre.

Hon Barbara Scott: And centre left!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: And centre left, near right, far right and far left and all the rest of it probably! As we have seen lately, there is a culture throughout the Australian Labor Party of factional nepotism, threats and the like. Apparently, these are the things that form the decision-making process in this government.

What does a Parliament do when confronted with that sort of scenario? What can we do? Are we meant to launch an inquiry into every aspect of activity? Shall I move for a select committee of inquiry into how one transport firm known to me was approached by the lobbyist Burke for money to represent it, and another trucking firm involved in the resources sector was approached by Burke and asked for money to represent it to make sure there were no problems in its way. When the first company says, "No thank you; we can do our own negotiating in dealings with this government; we have faith in the processes of Western Australia" and the second trucking company engages Brian Burke and Julian Grill and starts paying them, what happens then? The first trucking company faces all the difficulties in the world getting its trucks licensed, getting permits and keeping the trucks on the road. However, the second company, doing much the same thing in the same area, has all such problems swept out of its path. Do I suggest that we inquire into that? If I did, we would have to inquire into so many other things, would we not? We would have to inquire into mining applications that are not approved and environmental conditions that are either enforced excessively or eased off without explanation. There may be reasons for all those things, but if we look at the inexplicable variety of decisions made by this government we must ask how far this pernicious influence runs. How deep does it go? Quite clearly, it runs very deep indeed. We cannot have inquiries into all these matters that deserve inquiries. Scandals that on their own would be major events are now so numerous that it is very difficult for us to even begin to deal with them. That is what this government has come to because of its culture of nepotism, threats, improper favours for mates, exchange of money, grubby background deals and all the rest of it.

For all of those reasons, it is quite legitimate for Hon Norman Moore to move that the house express its grave concern at the significant deterioration in the governance and administration of the state of Western Australia. The blame for that can be put squarely, root and branch, at the feet of this Labor administration. Some members of the government are concerned about what is going on, but what are they doing about it? Do they close ranks or do they stand up for what they believe in? They whisper rumours off the record, including to me, but they still support the whole rotten edifice that continues as the Carpenter government. We have seen that it is rotten and it is not getting any better. A great deal of that can be sheeted home to the current Premier, who accepted support in exchange for favours that he knew should not have been given. We have reaped the consequences. The disgrace of Marlborough and others is now apparent to all, and it all goes back to the patronage of Hon Alan Carpenter, who probably did not want to give it in the first place but had to do so in order to achieve his premiership. That is why this matter needs to be debated more fully. We will certainly continue to do that. I pledge to Hon Ken Travers my determination, and that of my colleagues, to take his advice about how hard oppositions have to work. He is right. While one is in opposition, one can, should and must work harder. No matter how hard we are working, if we are to leave opposition we obviously have to work harder. I pledge that I will redouble my efforts to provide a better alternative government for Western Australians. That will perhaps not give much comfort to Hon Ken Travers because I do not think he was sincere in asking that we do it.

Let us look at what is left of this fractured and damaged cabinet, these soiled goods that sit around the cabinet table. Mr Kucera is not there; he resigned in disgrace some time ago. I have mentioned Mr Marlborough; Mr D'Orazio; Mr McRae, who still does not think he has done anything wrong; and Mr Bowler. I do not know who is the next cab off the rank, but let us look at a few who are there. The Minister for Local Government started in this place on the same day as I did, and away from here we are friends even though we are combatants.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That you should mix with someone of such poor character! That you should want to be a friend of someone with such dubious integrity!

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I do not want a public falling-out between such good friends!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: The new Minister for Local Government has been handed not one but a handful of poisoned chalices.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: The recycled Minister for Local Government.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: This gives me pause to ask how many Ministers for Local Government there have been recently.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: Eight.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Eight! Since when?

Hon Bruce Donaldson: Since they came to government.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Good grief! Who was the first?

Hon Bruce Donaldson: Can anyone remember?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Look at what has happened over the past 12 to 18 months: how many ministers have held that ministry of local government? There have been a lot. I think Hon Jon Ford was the minister's immediate predecessor. No, it was Mr Bowler. We know what happened to him. Prior to that it was Hon Jon Ford, I think. The minister is shaking her head. Is she saying she does not know or that I am wrong?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You're telling the story.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am asking the minister, because nobody can remember who on earth the minister for any portfolio is from one moment to another. Down at Government House there is probably a little turnstile for ministers coming and going. Round and round it goes; it must be spinning its blooming head off - clickety click, clickety click - as these ministers come and go. Who has not been Minister for Disability Services?

Hon Norman Moore: That is a better question - it would have a shorter answer!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I put it to the government that it cannot deny that when such a large number of ministers are turned over in just a few months, that is dysfunction. Ministers are not given the chance to get across their portfolios, much less deliver outcomes, when they are constantly being changed. The government is scraping the bottom of the barrel pretty hard at the moment. However, I do feel sorry for the Minister for Local Government.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Don't feel sorry for me!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: There are a lot of reasons that I feel sorry for the minister. The minister has now been given a hodgepodge of portfolios that have been thrown together at random because the government is fast running out of ministers and no-one else is available to deal with them. The fact that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is still a minister shows just how desperate the government is.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Are you saying those portfolios are not important?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No. I am saying they are important. The problem is that the minister now has to deal with a lot of unrelated areas that have all been thrown together, just because the minister has no other ministerial colleagues available to do that work. That is unfair on the minister. The minister cannot do justice to that large number of very important portfolios.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I would have to disagree with you.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: We shall see, shall we not?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Yes, we shall see.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: We shall see whether the minister is any good at dealing with those portfolios. There are clear signs that when a government is suffering from dysfunction -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Do you want an extension?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No. The minister would not give it to me, anyway.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I am happy to give you an extension.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No. I want to hear from the minister.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: We want to hear from you.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! We might hear from the minister shortly. However, I am having difficulty following the debate at the moment.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: When five ministers have been publicly disgraced, most of them in rapid succession, and when metaphorical turnstiles have had to be installed at Government House to accommodate the rapid turnover of ministers - clickety click, clickety click - so much so that no-one can keep track of who is the minister for what -

Hon Barbara Scott: It is like a revolving door!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Absolutely! There have been nine, 10 or 11 Ministers for Disability Services within a period of less than two years, and there have been seven or eight Ministers for Local Government in a little over a year. If that is not a sign of dysfunction, I do not know what is!

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: Have you double counted me?

Several members interjected.

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: You may be double counting.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: That is fair enough, too, because of all the different ministers that have been given these portfolios. The government cannot make up its mind about what it is doing. The issue of dysfunction has been questioned in the context of this motion. The illustration that I have just given demonstrates clearly the dysfunction of this government. If the government has an answer to that question, I am interested to hear what it is. I support the motion. I look forward to dealing with this matter again, despite the threats of the wet lettuce leaf opposite, Hon Graham Giffard, whenever the government chooses to revisit this matter.

HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan - Minister for Local Government) [11.54 am]: Obviously, we oppose the motion. I could not believe it when I read the motion. I thought: this really is a case of projection by the opposition. I will get to that later.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: This motion suggests that -

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, Hon Simon O'Brien! I cannot hear the minister because of the volume of Hon Simon O'Brien's interjections. However, I am more concerned that Hansard may also have difficulty hearing the Minister for Local Government.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Clearly, this motion tries to allege an internal division and conflict within government, which simply does not exist, because we are very much a united government and a government that is achieving very positive outcomes.

Hon Simon O'Brien: How often have you rung Hon Adele Farina? Have you done that lately?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I speak to Hon Adele Farina very frequently. Quite clearly, Hon Simon O'Brien knows nothing about policy, and now he is demonstrating that he knows nothing about politics. He certainly does not know anything about Labor politics, and I guess I cannot blame him for his ignorance because he has no understanding or experience of Labor politics. Nevertheless, I will put that to one side, because I think the member is trying to drive a wedge in terms of who is mates with whom in the Labor Party. However, the member should wait until I start on him, because I have a very interesting story to tell, but I will not go there yet; I will do him slowly.

This government has delivered record economic growth and a record low unemployment rate of 2.7 per cent. In the September quarter last year, it was 14.5 per cent economic growth, and the unemployment rate is now 2.7 per cent. We have exceeded -

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Before I invite the Minister for Local Government to continue her remarks, I indicate that it is reasonable to interject, but the purpose of interjections is to facilitate debate. When a speaker on his or her feet is not taking interjections, as appears to be the case now with the Minister for Local Government, there is no point in having interjections because it disrupts debate.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We have exceeded apprenticeship and training targets by more than the 30 000 that we in fact set prior to the last election. There are well over 32 000, and I think it is now nearing 35 000, new apprentices in the system. We have delivered six balanced budgets in a row, and we have retained the AAA credit rating. We have hired more than 1 700 extra nurses, and we have employed more than 1 300 extra teachers. We have recruited more than 300 extra police officers and cut home burglaries by 30 per cent. We have introduced tough antihoon laws and slashed the rate of car thefts by more than 40 per cent. We have cut the waiting list for elective surgery by 4 000 people, and we have secured future water supplies with Western Australia's biggest desalination plant. In fact, I had lunch yesterday afternoon with the new Consul-General for the Republic of Croatia. I have to say that he was very interested in what we were doing with desalination. The point that he made to me was that with well over a thousand islands off the coast of the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Croatia has a desperate need, in order to build up its tourism industry, to ensure that there is a fresh water supply on those islands. Currently, there is not, and he is very interested in our technology for desalination

plants. We have also created 33 new national parks and three new marine parks, and we have almost doubled the size of the Perth rail network.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Can I ask you to identify the document you're quoting from?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, because I have not held it up and I do not intend to. I say to the honourable member that I cannot believe -

Point of Order

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I do not mind being dismissed peremptorily by the honourable the minister. I get used to it and I rather like it. However, when I exercise my prerogative to ask that the minister on her feet identify the document she is quoting from -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I thought you meant table it; sorry.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No, I was not asking the minister to table it; I was asking her to identify it. I will ask her to table it later.

The PRESIDENT: Standing order 48 does not apply. However, standing order 47 is relevant. It states -

A document relating to public affairs quoted from by a Minister, unless stated to be of a confidential nature, or such as should more properly be obtained by Address, may be called for and made a public document.

The minister may wish to make an observation.

Debate Resumed

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: This is a public document, so it is no big deal. It is titled "Achievements of the Carpenter Government".

Hon Simon O'Brien: Who wrote it - Sharryn Jackson?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is actually authorised by Bill Johnston, 79 Stirling St, Perth. There is no big deal; it is just a document on the government's achievements.

Hon Simon O'Brien: And obviously completely impartial! No problem!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I can keep going because there are pages and pages. If members opposite think that a good government does nothing and sits on its hands, they are very wrong. That may well have been the experience of the Court government but it is certainly not what happens in the Carpenter government. This is a government that is about delivering good outcomes for the good people of this state. That is exactly what we intend to do. We are also very conscious about making the right decisions for the future of Western Australia. We have a Premier who is very strongly committed to ensuring that our strong economy delivers jobs and opportunities for all Western Australians. He is also very conscious of the need to provide the infrastructure and the building blocks to ensure that everybody in this state benefits irrespective of where they live, who they are and how old they are. He is building on the boom to ensure that there is something for everybody. He is making decisions for the future and is working to ensure that the strong economy delivers better services to all Western Australians. As a government we are preparing the way to ensure that some of the challenges we face - for example, in the area of climate change - have strategies in place to address them. It is beholden on us to do so. We must ensure that the good times we are having at the moment are used in a very sensible way to ensure there is something for everybody to benefit from in the future.

The government is also trying to encourage innovation and promote new industries to ensure that Western Australians have well-paid jobs and skilled workers in the future. We are ensuring that the good economic times we are fortunate enough to be experiencing are not squandered but rather are dealt with to ensure there is a much longer-term benefit.

I will refer to a region in one of the portfolio areas I am responsible for, which is Kalgoorlie-Esperance. Anybody reading the motion moved by Hon Norman Moore would have to say to himself that he does not know where the motion comes from. If we look at all the economic indicators, we can see that it is an absolute nonsense. The only thing a person can conclude is that it is just a desperate attempt by a desperate opposition to score some political points. I use the Kalgoorlie-Esperance region as an example because it is doing very well economically. Having said that, it is not an isolated example. Why would it be an isolated example when we see enormous infrastructure growth all around regional areas?

In 1985 I was deputy principal at Morawa District High School. I remember that time because it was a very difficult time for the farming community.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.