

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS - CONSIDERATION**

*Committee*

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

**The CHAIRMAN:** Given that it is 5.00 pm on Thursday, we will move on to committee reports and ministerial statements. For the benefit of members who have been elected recently, the daily business paper lists a number of committee reports and ministerial statements. They will be dealt with sequentially. If members wish to speak on any of these matters when they are called on, they are welcome to do so. The system is that we are in committee, so each member will have 10 minutes. If no-one stands when I call a particular item, we will move on and that item will drop off the notice paper for the next week. In order that we can commence discussion on any of the items that are listed, there is a need for someone to move that the report or ministerial statement be noted. That is all we are doing; we are noting these papers.

*Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and General Purposes - Nineteenth Report - Uniform Legislation and Supporting Documentation*

Resumed from 27 August 2004.

*Motion*

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I move -

That the report be noted.

Report 19, which is about uniform legislation and supporting documentation, was initially tabled in August 2004 by my esteemed predecessor Hon Adele Farina. The purpose of moving that this report be reinstated, as it has been, was to ensure that it did not go unnoticed. Under standing order 337, it is necessary for reports, once tabled, to be sent by the house to the responsible government minister. The minister must then report the government's response within four months. In the time that has elapsed since last August, there was the slight matter of dissolution of the Parliament, which caused this report to evaporate, together with everything else that was then on the notice paper. We have reinstated it because it needs to be noted by the chamber - I will come back to that in a moment. I am also interested to get the government's response, if it has one.

In noting the report, I point out to members that it is a very specialised report that deals with an important but a discrete matter relating to uniform legislation, and, in particular, with the way in which we process or deal with proposed legislation that is uniform legislation. The history of this is interesting to an observer of such processes. For those who have not had the opportunity to view the report before, I commend it to the attention of the chamber. Members may be interested to peruse the appendices to derive an understanding of the history of how our Parliament has dealt with proposals for uniform legislation, and some of the forums and procedures that are in development, even now, to deal with those proposals.

At this stage I am looking forward to the new committee reporting and taking some of these themes a little further. All those matters are matters for another day. I am sure Hon Adele Farina will be glad to know that matters are being progressed, building on some of the good work that was done by the committee under her chairmanship. Many of the things that flow from the motion to note this report are simply a wish for the chamber, through this process, to continue to engage with the government - we look forward to the government's response - and to draw to the attention of many of the relatively new members of the chamber some matters of interest in how we deal with uniform legislation. Unless we have a simple, distilled explanation of what happens, it can appear to be a mind-boggling, complex and dry subject.

The fact is that uniform legislation as a phenomenon is increasingly evident in the political and legislative landscape of Australia, and the consequences can sometimes be very significant. It is up to legislators in this place to be careful about how they analyse the various proposals that come before this chamber. We need to be careful, because typically the proposals come forward in the form of legislation and are presented almost as a fait accompli. Governments describe how the process has been years in development and point to the great deal of consultation and agreement during successive governments. They also state that Parliament could not possibly dare to alter the legislation.

The second reason that it is important for members to consider these bills when they present is that sometimes there is quite a degree of devil in the detail that may not be generally agreed and considered or well developed. The report gives some insight into that.

One aspect that the report refers to in some detail - I do not propose to discuss it in detail now - is the availability of supporting documentation. I commend that chapter. It is a straightforward part of the report for members' consideration. Successive Parliaments will always be confronted with the challenge of obtaining important information from successive governments. This committee has been finetuning the mechanisms - that is what its

successor will do and what its predecessors have done - to ensure that we do that well. I acknowledge the efforts of former members of the committee in Hon Adele Farina and our recent colleague Hon Paddy Embry for their work on these themes. It was a pleasure to work with them. Of course, the new committee is working very well and is dealing with matters in a far more sophisticated way than the primitive methods used by the former committee. I am joking when I say that. In moving that the report be noted, I commend its contents for the attention of members. It should be one of those documents that is referred to from time to time when the house is considering what is uniform legislation, how should it be dealt with and what time frames should apply to ensure that the appropriate procedures are followed etc. With those words, I commend the report to the house.

**HON ADELE FARINA:** I take this opportunity to thank former members of the committee for the work they did when I was the chairperson. We covered a considerable number of pieces of legislation. Sometimes we were given very short time frames within which to report back to Parliament. The committee worked diligently on all the matters that were referred to it. I also make special mention of and give thanks to the committee officers. A number of officers worked for the committee at various times. They were all highly professional and diligent. I thank them very much for their efforts during that time.

Another reason I have risen to my feet is that Hon Simon O'Brien sought a government response to this report. I am not sure whether he missed that response. I am fairly confident that a Premier's circular in the manner that was attached to this report was circulated during the six-week break. In having presented that circular, the government has pretty well responded to the report. I put that on the record, because the government has clearly responded to the recommendations by ensuring that a Premier's circular that sets out the type of information that must be provided to the committee has been given to ministerial officers and government departments. Hopefully in the future the committee will receive the supporting documentation that it requires in its consideration of bills.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I thank Hon Adele Farina for her comment. She is correct: the draft Premier's circular proposed as an appendix to the report was well received by government. Subsequent to that, I have heard that the practice of issuing Premier's circulars on matters has been discontinued. Therefore, it was good to get to the summit of the mountain, but I fear that, now we have arrived, it is no longer there! Another mechanism has been proposed. The new committee will report on that matter in due course. I will be interested to know whether a further government response will be forthcoming on that matter. In any case, the committee will pick up that matter and ensure it achieves what it seeks to achieve.

Question put and passed.

*Education and Training, Government's Agenda - Statement by Minister for Education and Training*

Resumed from 30 March.

*Motion*

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I move -

That the statement be noted.

**Hon Ljiljana Ravlich:** Don't you want to speak to it?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I was tempted to move another motion, Mr Chairman!

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** We've had enough for one day!

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I agree. In her statement of 30 March, the minister introduced herself to the chamber in her new capacity as Minister for Education and Training. She spent time making a number of motherhood statements about education and life, she informed members of her former life in respect of education and training matters and she thanked Hon Alan Carpenter for his "unquestionable commitment to public schools". I should interpose there that he did so with a significant lack of interest in non-government schools, which is a shame because both government and non-government schools are very important to the education of children in our community. I disagreed with Hon Alan Carpenter during his tenure as Minister for Education and Training about his quite divisive attitude in respect of private and public education. It is totally unnecessary to have signs at schools these days outlining how good public education is. The reverse is implied but not stated; namely, that private education may not be all that good. We should promote education, full stop. I do not care where it happens, so long as it is done properly. The minister know she has a significant impact on private education, which is partly funded by the federal and state governments. Also, the private sector must deliver the curriculum determined by the state's Curriculum Council. The Minister for Education should be even-handed and treat public and private education in the same way. Although I have some regard for Hon Alan Carpenter as an individual, I believe that attitude to private education was a flaw in his time as minister, and it may reflect his philosophical view of the world. I commented on this view when he was appointed Minister for State Development: I felt his attitude towards business could be similar to his attitude towards the private school

sector. I stated that such an approach would not be in the best interests of the Western Australian economy, which is very much dependent on the good fortune of the private and resource sectors that are now subject to his ministerial directions.

The Minister for Education and Training raised a number of issues in her statement. She referred to the \$1 billion investment in education by this government. I must say that I was -

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Excited is the word you're looking for.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** No, not excited. When the Premier announced the \$1 billion education package at the launch of the Labor Party's election campaign -

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Overjoyed maybe.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I was overwhelmed, because I had again seen the capacity of the Labor Party to sell a message that bears little resemblance to the facts.

**Hon Barry House:** Spin.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** It was absolute spin. We obtained the impression that the \$1 billion was new money, but when we looked at where it was coming from we discovered that \$995 million of it had already been allocated under previous announcements. A little money was added on top to make up the total sum of \$1 billion. The media, as it regrettably always does, particularly the television media, ran the story that night that the government would spend an extra \$1 billion on education, even though it was nowhere near that. One of the great tragedies of the political process is that the spin attached to these sorts of announcements is swallowed hook, line and sinker by the media, which then regurgitates it to the unthinking public, which accepts it as fact. The government should be commended for the amount of money it is allocating to education. There have been increases over the years. There is never enough money for education, just as there is never enough money for health services. Any increase in the education budget needs to be thoroughly commended. However, the government does not need to tell the world that it is spending an extra \$1 billion when it is not. A bit of truth in advertising would not be a bad thing with these sorts of announcements. Anyway, enough of that. We have looked at the budget, and we will look at other budgets as they come along.

During the estimates hearings, I asked a question about the education budget. In particular, I asked about the forward estimates for particular schools, because an announcement was made during the election campaign that the Fitzroy Crossing District High School would be rebuilt. When I looked at the budget papers and the forward estimates I could find no mention of that school. When I asked the question, I was told that this project was in the 2008-09 budget, but because that was one year out from the forward estimates, it was not recorded. I asked the officers during the hearing whether they could provide me with a list of all the schools that would be built in the next four years and was told that I could not have it. I know why I cannot have it; it is because it is a flexible document. The schools that will be built will depend on circumstances, such as electoral boundary changes and the pressure applied by different groups. However, I have made a freedom of information application for that document.

**Hon Kim Chance:** It could be because of changing needs as well.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Of course. I have no doubt that the spin doctors will put the right spin on it. An electoral boundary may change and a school may be in another electorate and may not matter anymore; that could be considered to be a changing need.

**Hon Kim Chance:** You are much too young to be so cynical.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I am not cynical; that is how it works. I was there; I did it; I watched it happen before my eyes. I should not say that I did it; I watched it happen before my eyes. I am looking forward to the response to my FOI request to see whether the government can work out why I should not have access to that document. I really want to know whether the Fitzroy Crossing school will be built, because a former minister of this chamber, who is now the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara, Hon Tom Stephens, told everybody that it would be built. I would hate him to be let down by his own government. He was told that it would be built next year. I suppose, although I am not sure, that we can put up with it happening another four years after that.

It was also mentioned in this statement that the government would legislate to raise the school leaving age to 17. We will argue about that when the bill comes to the house. The Minister for Education and Training should put herself back in the classroom some time and try to look after a 16-year-old boy or 17-year-old girl who does not want to be at school but has been told that it is compulsory to attend. There is nothing more difficult in the world than trying to teach, or babysit, which is what teachers must do in some cases, young adolescents who just do not want to be in school. The minister should also seek to place herself in a family home one morning when the 17-year-old son who has been told to go to school by his mother, because it is compulsory, says words to her that I cannot mention in this chamber but that mean that he will not go. What does she do? Does she physically

carry him to school? It is hard enough to do that when the child is 12, but when he is 16 or 17 and he does not want to be there enormous problems are created for a number of parents and teachers. Members should think about this: children should want to go to school, not be made to. Encouragement is fundamental to education and to many other things we do in life. We should give encouragement rather than make it compulsory. We will not talk about that now, because we will debate the legislation when it comes before the house. At the end of her statement, the minister said -

I expect people in leadership positions to deliver results - whether they are executive directors, district directors, TAFE managing directors or school principals. Expectations for each individual will be made clear and individuals will be held accountable for their achievement.

Does not that sound like the Minister for Education and Training? I could put on a German accent and read that again - you vill etc - but that is not what I should be doing. However, that is what it sounds like - expect people in leadership positions to deliver results. That is fair enough, and so she should, but I do not know how the minister will do it. Why is what she will do as minister any different from what anyone else has done in the past? How will she get results that no-one else has been able to achieve? Does she have a particular set of outcomes that she expects the administrators to achieve? Does she have an outcomes-based administration in her office? It would be interesting to see how it delivers.

I would like to know who is running TAFE right now. Can the minister tell me?

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Why?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Because the person who used to run TAFE is not there anymore.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** We have one agency.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** That is right.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** It is education and training - one entity.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** So Mr Albert is in charge of the whole lot. Who replaced Mr Fernandes?

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** There is no replacement?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Why not?.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Why should we?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Because there needs to be a replacement. The minister does not understand. In Western Australia we used to have two departments - the Department of Education, and the Department of Training. Those two departments had been put in place by the Labor Party, and we supported that. I also supported the continuation of those two departments operating as two separate agencies each with its own chief executive officer.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** There is one department and one CEO.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I know, but I will tell the minister why I think she has got it wrong. At the time I argued that the two departments should not be amalgamated because they have different roles to play, a different ethos and different ways of doing business. The department of training, set up by Peter Dowding I might add, was one of the great success stories of the Labor government prior to our government.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** That is not what you said at the time.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I did say it at the time. I did not support the State Employment and Skills Development Authority and a few other things the Labor government did then. However, I supported the fact that the then Labor government had created a Department of Training that would take the TAFE system out of the dark ages, in which it had been residing for many years as the poor relation to the Department of Education. In my time as a teacher, if a person went to TAFE it was because there was nowhere else for that person to go, apart from the curriculum branch. People who could not teach finished up in TAFE. TAFE was the poor man's place in the education system. It was the poor relation. The setting up of the Department of Training gave TAFE a whole new lease of life and gave it a chance to expand and to look after the needs of people in vocational education and training. It did a very good job. In fact I have some empathy with the minister's comments today about the ministerial council and the Australian National Training Authority agreement. The federal government should give us the money and let us get on with giving the TAFE colleges a chance to expand. I would not have signed the ANTA agreement had I been the minister at the time. Unfortunately, I inherited it and it was too late and we are stuck with it, but we need to do something about it down the track at a federal level. For reasons I still cannot comprehend, Hon Alan Carpenter decided to amalgamate the two departments into one. When that decision was taken I felt that TAFE would again be the poor relation to

primary and secondary education and that we would lose all the benefits that the Department of Training had delivered for technical and further education in Western Australia.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Would you be happy to know that I am taking a very active interest in vocational training?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I am sure the minister is right, but one thing that the minister will learn in due course is that she cannot run the TAFE system herself.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I understand that.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** And she cannot run the education system herself.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I understand that, too.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** In my view, Mr Albert does not have the time - he might have the expertise but he does not have the time - to run preprimary, primary, secondary education and TAFE, when prior to him we had two chief executive officers, one whose name has been mentioned, Peter Browne, who was the CEO of the Department of Education, and Mr Ian Hill, who was the CEO of the Department of Training. They were highly qualified and competent CEOs, both running very big agencies, one with a budget of approximately \$1.5 billion and the other with a budget of approximately \$500 million. There is a good reason to have a CEO in charge of both sections, but the government amalgamated the two, put Mr Albert in charge of the whole lot and got rid of the guy who was next in line running the TAFE sector and did not replace him. The government should have a good hard look at that, because if the person who is running the whole education and training system, who was formerly the CEO of the Department of Education, is also going to be running the TAFE sector without a second-in-charge, then TAFE will sink back into the morass that it was in before Peter Dowding got hold of it and dragged it out. I like to pay credit where credit is due and I think he did a good job. He worked out, as the current minister has worked out, that training had been neglected for many years and was in the process of getting fixed up. The legislation that I brought in - the vocational education and training legislation - for the creation of independent colleges was a way forward.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** If you devolve that autonomy to the colleges, why do you need to put somebody over the top of them anyway? It is your model to devolve responsibility, but then you want to put five layers over the top. I cannot understand the rationale. Either you devolve and let people get on with the business of managing or you do not.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Is that what the minister is doing?

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** No, it is not. I have one CEO over both systems, because they are integrated, and that is a policy choice of this government.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I think it is the wrong decision.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** That is okay; you can think that.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Even though we have relatively independent TAFE colleges, the state government still has a significant role for a department of training. One of the great problems I had in gaining some independence for the TAFE colleges was to get them out of the clutches of the then Department of Training, which did not want to let them go. The department hung on to the Kimberley and the Northam colleges, because it wanted to hang on to its empire. However, the department still has a significant role to play with the resourcing of the colleges, of spending the money that comes from the commonwealth through the Australian National Training Authority agreement, and there needs to be somebody to assist the Director General, Mr Albert, with what is happening in the TAFE sector. The minister should understand that I am not whingeing for the sake of whingeing; I am telling her that it is my view - and I am entitled to it - that we run the risk of the TAFE system sinking back into that second-class part of the education system from whence it had come before Peter Dowding fixed it. I am putting that to the minister in the context of a decision made by a previous Labor government. If the minister ever responds to this motion, I will be interested to note her statement and how she intends to require directors and others in the school system to deliver results.

I conclude by saying that the minister has said she will be the Minister for Education and Training for the next four years. As I have already said to the minister today, that may well be the case if she is politically smart.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I can only do my best. I will not lose sleep over that.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I know that the minister will not, but the trouble I have is that her best at the moment is not good enough. She has an extraordinarily responsible job. Education is more important than the job of any other minister in the cabinet, because that is what creates the society of the future. As somebody said earlier today in respect of curriculum, if the minister gets the curriculum wrong now, somebody 15 years down the track will suffer from it. It is so important that the minister get it right.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Do you honestly think I would be light-hearted in my approach?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** No, in fact I wish on the odd occasion the minister would be a little more light-hearted instead of being so dogmatic.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I do not think dogmatic is a term that accurately describes me. I could think of a lot of things, but dogmatic is not one of them.

**Hon Kim Chance:** And she insists on that!

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I think that is very unfair.

**Hon Barry House** interjected.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I think members could take their pick of the three of them, and they are all accurate. The minister must understand that there are people who know things about education, just as she does, and she should be taking notice of what they say, just as she should be taking notice of what has been said in this house this afternoon. People have raised the issue of curriculum change, not on the basis of any political point scoring but on the basis of trying to get the minister to understand that she has a problem and that she should be taking notice of what they are saying. If the minister wants to remain minister for the next four years, she should take on board my simple advice and do something about it instead of burying her head in the sand and assuming that she is right on all occasions.

Finally, she should stop always taking the advice of her bureaucrats. They have their own axes to grind and their own interests to serve, and hers is not usually one of them. They will survive this minister as they have survived hundreds of ministers over the years. Ministers come and go but bureaucrats stay there and keep winning. The minister should work out that there is a problem with the curriculum. She should see if she can do something about delaying the decisions and giving the system a chance to cope with the new curriculum better than it will be able to now. I am quite happy to move that we note the minister's statement.

Question put and passed.

*Standing Committee on Legislation - Twenty-sixth Report - An Overview of the Committee's Operations: Second Session of the Thirty-sixth Parliament (August 2002 to November 2004)*

Resumed from 19 November 2004.

*Motion*

**HON KATE DOUST:** I move -

That the report be noted.

In the absence of any other members who were previously on the committee, I am pleased to say that this is probably the shortest report that this committee tabled during the last session. If members have the opportunity to go through the report, they will see that it was a very hardworking committee. The committee tabled in this place 25 reports on bills that have been referred to the committee, plus a special inquiry report. The committee had five members: Hon Jon Ford, Hon Peter Foss, Hon Giz Watson, Hon Bill Stretch and me. We seemed to work quite well together. We spent a lot of time together because of the types of inquiries we conducted. From time to time other members joined us as substitute members. I know that Hon George Cash, Hon Derrick Tomlinson and Hon Ken Travers participated in a range of different inquiries over the last session. If members are able to have a look at the report, they will see that we conducted a number of inquiries into legislation that was referred to us. The committee took lengthy periods to conduct its inquiries, but that was not because the committee was sitting on its hands; it was because they were quite substantial pieces of legislation and the committee went into great detail to try to ensure that when the legislation was dealt with in the house the committee would have ironed out any potential problems that people had perceived. Even when committee members had some differences of opinion, we were able to successfully resolve them. I am sure that there was only one minority report, perhaps two, over that period. That is a fairly positive sign, because it shows that we were able to work through our issues and be as accommodating as we could.

I also thank the committee staff. We had a range of staff working with us over that period, and they were exceptional. They worked long hours and put in an enormous effort. They are very talented people, who never refused us anything. They are very dedicated and were able to assist in producing some excellent reports. I thank the other members of the committee. It was very educational as a new member to participate in the Standing Committee on Legislation. It was a good insight into how legislation is drafted and how the processes work in this place. It was fortunate that experienced members participated in the committee with Hon Jon Ford and me, who were new members, because we were able to gain from their experience in this place.

We were fortunate enough to travel on a couple of occasions, particularly with the Corruption and Crime Commission and State Administrative Tribunal inquiries. I know that there has been a lot of discussion in this

place about whether or not travel is valuable to committees. Those two committee trips around various parts of Australia were indeed valuable to the committee in enabling us to pick up some points of interest and, in a couple of cases, particularly with the SAT legislation, providing opportunities to make recommendations for improvements in the legislation we were dealing with.

**Hon Barry House:** I wish you could get that message to the Premier.

**Hon KATE DOUST:** I am sure he is listening!

I am not always a big one for travel, but I did find it very beneficial. Hon Bruce Donaldson has just woken up, and is looking forward to travelling with the committee of which we are both still members! It was very well organised and very informative. We spent some very long hours working. On some occasions we worked until midnight, night after night, to make sure that we were able to deliver the reports on time. Sometimes the Attorney General got a little bit heated because he thought we were not delivering on time, but that was only because the committee was trying to do the best job it possibly could to make sure that good legislation was introduced. This is a very brief report indeed. If members look at any of the 25 reports the committee tabled, they will find that they were substantial, and that a lot of work was put into them. As a result of that work, on a number of occasions we were able to proceed with the debate in committee a lot more rapidly than we would have if the standing committee had not done a thorough investigation.

I thank the members of the opposition who were on the committee - Hon Peter Foss and Hon Bill Stretch in particular - because, although we went into the committee with a perception of what they would be like to work with, as we got to know them over time and saw how they thought through issues - I am not sure whether "pleasant" is the appropriate word - it became quite an enjoyable and enlightening experience. Hon Peter Foss in particular was always very helpful on committees, and that needs to be noted. He was always prepared to listen to people, and to change his view to accommodate others. It is a shame Hon Giz Watson is not here, because I know that she would probably want to talk about this report. She was the deputy chair, and made a valuable contribution to the committee over the past session.

**Hon Norman Moore:** Will she want to talk on it? We will adjourn this debate otherwise.

**Hon KATE DOUST:** I am not sure. She may want to because she continues to be a member of the committee. I wish the members of the new committees all the best in their endeavours and hope that they are able to work as well together as did members of the past committee.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Norman Moore**.

*Standing Committee on Public Administration and Finance - Eighth Report - Interim Report into Water Services in Western Australia*

Resumed from 11 November 2004.

*Motion*

**HON BARRY HOUSE:** I move -

That the report be noted.

It was my privilege to chair the committee that produced this report. I am happy to admit that the report does not do justice to the work of the committee. The committee conducted much research on this matter but could not give it adequate consideration or report on it properly because it simply ran out of time during the last Parliament. The committee recommends that another committee of this Parliament pick up the threads and pursue that committee's terms of reference.

The terms of reference of the committee were passed by the Legislative Council on the following motion by Hon Norman Moore -

That the Standing Committee on Public Administration and Finance inquire into and report on the issues confronting Western Australia that arise from, or relate to, the present and future sustainable supply, quality, retention, and maintenance of water services throughout the state.

The committee elected to approach this inquiry as a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Public Administration and Finance because the committee had another term of reference running at the same time on the rating system of local governments. The subcommittee consisted of Hon Dee Margetts, Hon Ken Travers, Hon John Fischer and me, and Hon Norman Moore was a participating member. I thank all members who committed themselves to the committee and contributed many personal interests regarding different aspects of the supply of water services in Western Australia. Each member had a particular sphere of expertise. Hon Dee Margetts obviously brought a conservation and environmental aspect to the hearings and deliberations, Hon Ken Travers had some past involvement and experience with the Water Corporation, and Hon John Fischer had a particular interest in water issues that were not just mainstream issues involved in servicing the Perth

metropolitan area. He had an interest, as did other committee members, in lateral topics such as cloud seeding and artesian water in Carnarvon and places further north.

The subcommittee was served very well by Jan Paniperis, Senior Committee Clerk, and Kelly Campbell, Executive Officer (Committees), who was our research officer. If members have a quick look at the report, they will see that we received 53 submissions, which is a substantial number. We conducted a series of hearings with a range of people. We travelled to Kununurra. It was an extremely interesting exercise to be in a community that is surrounded by water and land, yet find that the two biggest issues were the lack of access and availability to water and land. It does not seem to make much sense. It is illogical and does not make much sense to have an enormous water resource in the Ord Dam, yet use only eight per cent for irrigation purposes. If I recall correctly, the expansion of the irrigation scheme will still bring usage of the dam's water up to only 23 per cent; yet we are continually told that there is a crisis or some difficulty and we should not be touching that water. There are obviously some issues involving the Kununurra township, which draws its water from a nearby bore field. That in itself is restricting the future potential of the Kununurra townsite. There are obviously some local issues that are important to an area such as Kununurra.

Incidentally, the committee focused on a couple of areas. We made a deliberate decision that the issue was so broad that we could never hope to cover it all. We therefore tried to focus on issues that are identified in the report, such as the quantity, quality and location of water resources currently available in Western Australia; the possibility of finding further sources of water; the quantity, quality and location of current, future and potential future demand for water; and the most cost-efficient way of meeting the current and potential demand for water. We tried to focus on those aspects of a series of case studies, I suppose, on water services and availability throughout the state.

We as a committee travelled to Bunbury and held some hearings there. Of course, the south west is vitally important to the provision of water services in Western Australia, as most of our surface water comes from the south west area by way of a series of dams and some extraction of underground water. A major talking point - because the south west is my electorate, obviously I have taken a keen interest - was the proposal to extract 45 gegalitres from the Yarragadee aquifer. That is an ongoing issue. One good thing that has come out of that is that resources have been made available for research into the aquifer so that there is more knowledge about what is actually there. I continue to have reservations about the extraction of water from the Yarragadee aquifer to meet the present and future demands of the south west as it expands through agricultural, industrial and residential developments. Of course, we must get right the environmental aspects of the possibilities associated with extraction from the Yarragadee. I have often said in this place that I do not believe people would class me as a greens zealot or a tree hugger, but there are elements of extraction from the Yarragadee that deeply concern me. I believe that some of the initial research indicates that between 12 and 23 gegalitres of water from that part of the aquifer from which it is proposed to take water recharges the Blackwood River. If that is interfered with, it will be of major concern to the south west. We need to get that right if extraction of water from the Yarragadee is to happen. It seems to me that the Water Corporation made up its mind five or six years ago that it would extract water from the Yarragadee regardless of the consequences. Ever since then, it has pushed its agenda very hard and taken advantage of money that has been allocated to research. I think it is still the Water Corporation's agenda. It continues to promote that ahead of the desalination plant. It is probably inevitable that water in the range of 45 gegalitres will be taken from the Yarragadee aquifer at some stage. I am sure some people would like even more water to be taken. It is a major source of water and it is a major resource for the south west of the state in many ways. We have to be very careful about how it is done.

We heard of other issues in the south west such as Harvey Water and its commendable efforts with water use and efficiency, particularly focusing on its major source of water, Wellington Dam. The dam is the state's largest reservoir at 186 gegalitres. Unfortunately, it is unusable as potable water, which is a shame. The water is becoming very marginal for use in irrigation. I applaud the announcement made last week. Unfortunately, at the last minute, I could not get to the opening ceremony but I understand that the Leader of the House attended. I applaud the combined federal and state initiative of re-channelling some of the water from the East Collie River into mine voids, which will take the major salinity intake from Wellington Dam. Hopefully, that will turn the salinity levels in the dam around in a few years and the water will be much more useful to the entire south west. I would love to see the day when the water is potable and can be used elsewhere.

The committee also conducted hearings at Kalgoorlie. They were especially interesting because they coincided with the regional sitting of Parliament in the Kalgoorlie town hall. It was a very useful exercise to demonstrate to a regional area the full processes and activities of the Parliament. Kalgoorlie has some obvious major water issues, and major water proposals have been suggested, including the proposal to pipe desalinated water from Esperance. We heard some of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposals.

The report contains a suggested concentration of activity in any future research undertaken by a parliamentary inquiry. Events have superseded this to some extent, with the announcement about the desalination plant and

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other work in progress for water conservation as well as water availability. This house could look at modified terms of reference because this is an ongoing issue. Whether the work is picked up by the Standing Committee on Public Administration and Finance or some other committee is a matter for debate. However, a valuable well of research material is available for a future committee to take on as a result of our initial investigations into some of these issues. I certainly hope that comes to light in the course of this session of Parliament.

**Debate interrupted, pursuant to sessional orders.**

*House adjourned at 6.02 pm*

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