

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Arthur Marshall; Acting Speaker; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Paul Omodei; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Peter Watson; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Tony Dean; Mr Mike Board; Mr Tony McRae

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2002

Third Reading

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara - Leader of the House) [5.46 pm]: I move on behalf of the Treasurer -

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR MARSHALL (Dawesville) [5.46 pm]: In speaking to the appropriation Bill, I remind the Government that the penny has dropped for the public. It has suddenly realised that it is disgruntled at the significant increases in payroll tax, land tax and stamp duty. Incidentally, they are all broken election promises. The public should be disgruntled because as well as increases in those three items, water, sewerage and drainage charges have increased by 3.5 per cent; compulsory third-party premiums have increased by two per cent; motor vehicle registration fees have increased by five per cent; parking levies in the central business district and probate fees have all increased; transport costs are up 2.6 per cent; and water rates are up by 2.8 per cent. The Government increased all those charges after it went to the polls promising the people of Western Australia that there would be no increases at all.

Of these increases, I am particularly concerned by the Government's decision two weeks ago to increase stamp duty on the purchase of houses and motor vehicles. This imposition disadvantages the young people of Western Australia, and it could also be considered an imposition on the elderly people of Western Australia. The extra stamp duty of \$295 on a moderately priced property of \$150 000 does not sound like much until people must pay it. The stamp duty on a \$15 000 vehicle was increased by \$37.50.

I have previously mentioned the highs and lows of our State. The State is overburdened with elderly people, although there is a growing population of younger people. Elderly people are moving out of their four-bedroom homes and are buying smaller ones because they do not want to maintain, and no longer need, a big house. Now when they move house, they will be taxed at a higher rate. We should be looking after the elderly people of this State. On the other hand, young people who have saved a small deposit for a moderately priced house are also being taxed. I have not yet referred to the \$500 000 houses and the extraordinary increases in stamp duty that must now be paid on them.

Little fish are sweet. The little people will be taxed the most. Elderly people cannot afford these tax increases because their pensions are being depleted. Every day, people retire who will have to carefully watch their money and their retirement plans. I know people getting to the age of 65 years who have sold their \$280 000 house and bought a \$150 000 townhouse. After bringing up children, and for the first time in their lives, they have \$100 000 to spend. People are disgruntled. They understand that the youth of today, the future of Western Australia, are not given a chance to get going.

Other budget items affect my electorate. The delay in the development of the Perth to Mandurah rail link is costing Western Australia taxpayers millions of dollars and has cost the people of Mandurah thousands of dollars. The original route was to cost \$1.2 billion but has blown out to \$1.4 billion. That is within only two years of this Government coming to office.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Edwards): Order, Members! There are too many conversations in the House. I am finding it difficult to hear the member although he is quite close to me. Hansard is also finding it difficult to hear. Members should be quieter or conduct their conversations outside the House.

Mr MARSHALL: I must say that \$400 million is a very large amount just to change the direction of a track to save 12 minutes in commuting time. The money will come from taxpayers' pockets. The delay is costing thousands of dollars to people in my electorate because the rail link will promote tourism and the hospitality industry will blossom. The rate of employment will improve and the retail and housing sector will explode when the rail link is in place. In addition to that, there will be numerous other business opportunities. The rail link was planned to be finished by 2005. Completion has now been promised by 2006, although it might be 2007. Every year of delay sets back the city I represent.

The rail link will close the gap between regional and metropolitan areas in sport. That will be a big achievement. Parents in country electorates whose children have sporting ability must taxi their children to and from events in the metropolitan area. It is a huge expense and takes up a lot of time. The delay in the completion of the rail link is a cost to all talented people who play sport and the people who have to transport them to the city. The rail link will bring benefits to education and employment. When the rail link arrives, there will be varied lifestyle benefits. I put the emphasis on "when". The delay is costing money.

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When the rail link is complete, accommodation and car hire businesses will flourish. They will benefit immensely from overseas and interstate visitors using Mandurah instead of Perth as the departure point for self-drive tours through the Peel region and the south west. All the projected gains from the rail link have been negated by the Government's inability to plan the project efficiently. The Peel Region Tourism Association recently printed 80 000 copies of a Peel holiday planner for distribution in Australia and overseas. If the brochure were able to feature access to Mandurah by a rail link, it would bring more tourists to the city. Because of the uncertainty, it could not do that. Each year, a crab festival and boat show are held in Mandurah, which attracts many daytrippers. However, the rail link will bring even more.

Peel Thunder Football Club has another year in the West Australian Football Commission competition, and after next year it should be permanent. When an application for a licence for the club was made, we said that the West Perth Football Club could travel to Pinjarra by rail. It would be a good way to promote football. It would be similar to the way in which soccer fans travel throughout England; they use trains extensively. The crowds are very colourful; they all get off the trains in large numbers and display their coloured scarves. It is a fantastic way to travel to a sporting fixture. The delayed rail link is postponing all those pleasures.

The Peel deviation will cost \$340 million and the first stage is set to cost \$165 million. It has been put on the backburner by the Government; it was not recognised in this budget. The minister stood in the House and big-noted herself by saying that she had arranged for the deviation to be called a road of national importance. As such, she said that the State could tap into federal funds. She challenged me to help her. Of course, I will help her. However, the State Government should not rely on federal funds to get the most important project in the south west and the Peel region going. When checking with federal authorities, I discovered that the minister had not done the detailed planning and design. In fact, the project has not been accepted by federal authorities as a road of national importance. I think a few little white ones have been spoken; there is a bit of dodging in the shadows. The minister owes the House an apology.

Local members have fought for the improvement of the school bus services in the Peel region. After five years, the services are finally in place. However, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has decreed that any service south of the Dawesville Channel, along the Old Coast Road, is classified metropolitan. As such, students are charged a fee to attend school. That is now accepted; however, if the services are classified as a metropolitan run, why are there no services on weekends as in the metropolitan area? It is clear from examining the appropriations that issues have not been thought through. The area has been deemed metropolitan to raise money to subsidise other areas of waste. The area is not given the proper services that metropolitan people expect and get. I want that discrepancy rectified.

Another area in which my electorate was shortsheeted in the appropriations is in the removal of family support centres from shopping centres. The Mandurah centre was the best in the State; in fact, it pioneered many ideas and was very successful. It was located in the local shopping forum; people came to it like bees to honey. Everyone in the Peel region travels to the shopping centre for shopping. The family support centre was easily accessible as all the bus routes go to the centre. It was easily accessible to parents who needed support. Unfortunately, the rents in the shopping centre are quite high. The work was sacrificed to save rental costs. It has been replaced by some highflying idea first promoted in Albany. It was not working in Albany so standards were dropped for other centres. People should never change a winning game. The game has been changed because the State is not able to work out the appropriation of funds.

The Mandurah Police Station was due for extensions. The police work in primitive conditions. Because they do a marvellous job, they have the right to squeal about the facilities in which they work. Offices are overcrowded and there is not enough monitoring of cells to ensure there are no deaths in custody. Once again, funds for the extensions were overlooked. I have fought for a long time to establish a police station in Falcon. The need was recognised by former senior officers in the Mandurah region. However, because the allocation of funds is tight due to waste in other areas such as the rail link, which has not been worked out properly, other services, including the building of the Falcon police station, have been cut.

The same has happened with coastal care funding. Huge storms hit our magnificent coast every year and there is widespread erosion. The coalition Government used to provide funds to help coastal communities repair storm damage. This Government took those funds away last year and they have not been reintroduced. The first storms have already struck; there has been destruction at Avalon beach and Falcon. We are expecting more at Tims Thicket and White Hill beaches, which are superb Western Australian beaches. There is no money for them. I am not complaining for myself; I am complaining for the ratepayers and the environmentalists who look after the sand dunes by planting shrubs that hold sand in place and fight erosion. I am also fighting for the City of Mandurah, which has to subsidise these activities. The ratepayers are paying, not this Government.

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Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Mr MARSHALL: Another budget item that was lost to the Dawesville area was the infill sewerage program. Funding for this was slashed last year. Again, we thought that some money would come in this year. We believed that that allocation would be tentative and provided mainly to let us know that the program will continue. The areas that should have received infill sewerage last year are Falcon, Halls Head, Dawesville and Riverview. The Government slashed the programs to these areas to save \$170 million. That does not sound much, but the infill sewerage program is very important for the conservation of the pristine land centred between the ocean and the estuary. We are very disappointed about that. Further, that \$170 million did not come back to my electorate. The sea rescue group that services the large waterways in the Mandurah area needs money but did not receive any in the budget. Neither the Department of Fisheries nor the Department of Transport offices in my area got extra staff.

In conclusion, I finish as I started - with the word "disgruntled". The people of my electorate are disgruntled with this Government and they feel they are being ripped off. I know that the people of Western Australia are very disgruntled with this Government. They are feeling ripped off by all the extra charges that have been imposed on them. It is fitting that we are talking about the appropriation Bills, because most of the people in the arena do not believe that this Government knows how to appropriate its money correctly. They are not getting what they deserve. The major issues that have been discussed in the Parliament in the past two years have been run by minor groups, such as gay and lesbian reform. We are not happy with this budget.

MR O'GORMAN (Joondalup) [7.02 pm]: I congratulate the Treasurer and the ministers for a realistic and achievable budget. I will highlight projects in the Joondalup area that were announced in this budget or have been continued from previous estimates. One of the major projects in Joondalup is the advanced works on the Mitchell Freeway extension to Shenton Avenue, for which \$5 million has been allocated. That was an election commitment, and I congratulate the Government for delivering on that. About \$307 000 has been allocated for the Western Power feeder upgrade for Mullaloo, which will see infrastructure in the suburb of Mullaloo upgraded to prevent any future loss of power. Arena Joondalup has received \$264 000 for maintenance and upgrades. It is an important facility in the northern suburbs and provides sporting amenities to a number of sporting clubs, including West Perth Football Club - the Falcons - which I hope will stay in Joondalup. We have worked very hard to keep it there. I congratulate West Perth on its recent wins in the West Australian Football League. The budget contains \$1.35 million for the new dental hospital, including \$100 000 for planning this year. This follows the debacle in which the previous Government closed the Perth Dental Hospital without making arrangements for dental patients to be accommodated elsewhere. I am glad to say that this Government is planning for dental services to be delivered throughout the State and the metropolitan area. Planning is going ahead for a facility in Joondalup, and a further allocation has been made for capital works to commence in 2003-04. The establishment of a licensing centre in Joondalup is long overdue and has been talked about for many years. It is now coming to fruition and will open in early July. I pass that facility every day, and much work is going on. People from the far northern suburbs will have an easily accessible and excellent centre for delivering licensing information and services. The budget also contains \$600 000 for additional parking at the Joondalup train station. This money has been handed to the City of Joondalup council to provide extra parking in and around the Joondalup train station. I have seen the plans of the City of Joondalup, and I am very impressed with them. I am also impressed that the council has already gone out to tender on that project.

This Labor Government has not forgotten small business. It is supporting the local business enterprise centre with further funding of \$60 000. As a Labor Government, we have delivered all round - not just in our traditional areas. We are also looking after small business, and that is a great thing for a Labor Government.

Funding in the training portfolio will add to Joondalup's role as a city of learning. That has been promoted by the council, and I also would like to promote it. Joondalup has a great educational precinct that houses Edith Cowan University, West Coast College of TAFE and the police academy. Those three institutions are practically co-located because they are so close to each other. Joondalup is also home to a number of private providers, including the Australian Institute for University Studies. I congratulate the Government on maintaining Joondalup as the learning city. It is a great way to market Joondalup into the future, both at home and overseas. The sum of \$1.2 million has been allocated to further integrate the West Coast College of TAFE into the educational precinct. That will largely involve the upgrading of car parking and lighting to make it safer for students attending the technical and further education institution. Having worked at Curtin University of Technology, I am aware that security in and around car parks is a major issue, particularly for students and female staff. The Government has also decided that the TAFE campus at Carine will be closed. Many of its

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courses will be moved to the West Coast College of TAFE or Central TAFE. The idea is to deliver services where they are needed. It is difficult for many students to get to the Carine campus. I believe the previous Government would have made exactly the same decision. Carine is too far out of the way to continue to attract students.

The Eddystone Avenue bridge over the freeway is receiving federal money; however, I am glad to say that the State Government continues to support the Joondalup area by ensuring that the bridge work goes ahead. I have noticed in the past few mornings that quite a lot of work is going on in that area. Our bridge and the associated roadworks should be completed in the not-too-distant future. I also thank the local council for contributing to that project and making sure that it gets under way.

During the estimates process I participated in the division dealing with disability services. The plight of people with disabilities and their accommodation, social and employment needs were made clear to us. We had also been made aware of these issues through lobbying over the past number of months. At this point, I congratulate the Developmental Disability Council of Western Australia on its excellent adopt-a-politician program. Last night I had the honour of being adopted by a local family in my area - the Crothers family and their daughter Wendy. I am happy to be part of that program. I encourage any member who wishes to learn more about the disability services sector to participate. It is a great way to get first-hand knowledge, as well as being an excellent experience for members. It will give members an opportunity to help a particular family in their electorate and will give them a broad view of disability services. People with disabilities really need these services. They are not just numbers; they are actual people. They probably need us a helluva lot more than many other members in the community. Once again, I congratulate the members of the Developmental Disability Council and encourage as many members as possible to become involved in that scheme.

The budget contains a number of revenue measures. Mostly, these extend to changes in stamp duty collection, increases in conveyancing taxes and increases in stamp duty on the transfer of vehicles. Over the weeks, since the introduction of the budget we have heard a lot of criticism of this method of raising revenue. However, the State Government does not have a lot of options open to it to raise revenue. Stamp duty, payroll tax and conveyancing tax are the types of taxes that the State Government can collect.

Taxes were originally raised by the Romans to enable them to conquer other countries. Historically, taxes were imposed by people in power or by wealthy people on poorer people so that they could satisfy their whims and perhaps grow their nation. In Great Britain the lords of the manor taxed the peasants on their estates. Over many hundreds of years we have built up a resistance to paying taxes. The Government is trying to raise additional revenue to deliver services in health, education and in community safety. The Government is directing dollars pretty reasonably in those areas. Yes, it may be hitting people who cannot afford to pay; however, the Government targets the taxes in a good way. We target them up-front. If my daughter, my friends or I want to buy a car, we know that we have a certain amount of tax to pay up-front to purchase that vehicle. It is part of the decision-making process on whether we buy that vehicle or not. Need comes into it. I am sure that people who decide they have sufficient need are happy to wait and get that extra few dollars together. It is the same when purchasing a house. It is an up-front cost, and people know about it. The State Government has not imposed taxes in the mean, nasty-spirited way that the federal Government has done by attacking pharmaceutical benefits and people on pensions who are some of the most needy people in the community. The aim of the State Government in its budget has been to deliver more services to those people. None of us likes tax. I am sure that we would all be happier not paying tax. Then again, would we be happy to accept non-delivery of services throughout this community? This budget has moved on from the focus of the coalition Government, which was to deliver to certain sections of the community. The current Government has refocused the budget to deliver services to people with disabilities and to young people in education, and it has catered for people with illnesses through additional funding to hospitals and health care services. It is important to note that health care involves not just hospitals; a raft of services keeps us a healthy society - from fitness right through to the serious surgery that takes place in our hospitals. This budget has addressed emergency services in the best way possible. I congratulate all ministers on working very hard, and the Treasurer and Premier on bringing down a well-balanced budget.

MR OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [7.14 pm]: Not having had the opportunity to speak on the reports of the estimates committees, I would like to make some observations on those and then speak on the third reading of the appropriation Bills. The estimates committee system falls far short of what should happen.

I commend the member for South Perth for identifying the issue of intellectual property contained within the Department of Agriculture in Western Australia. That issue arises across a number of portfolios including the

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Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Department of Land Administration, which over a number of years have sold intellectual knowledge to other countries. It is not appropriate that the estimates committee debates should be constrained to such a short period. It would be far better for the committees to range over a number of weeks while Parliament sits so that we can investigate all the issues in depth. Two of my main interests, including the Forest Products Commission, were debated in the Legislative Council but not in this House. In the Forest Products Commission portfolio alone there will be a huge diminution in the royalties to the State as a result of the Government's forest policy. That needs to be out in the open so that people can see the impact of those decisions. Likewise with the Water Corporation, which rates people according to access to water and their consumption of water, and with sewerage services. They are large costs to the community. At a time of major water shortages - albeit today's weather would have helped the situation somewhat - they are major issues, and they were not debated during the estimates committees. That shows me that the budget process falls far short of what should happen.

I know what has happened historically over a number of years. The standing committee that looks at this issue needs to take that matter into consideration in its assessment of the estimates process. A minister of the Crown should be more than willing to answer any question from members. It is interesting that government members get the opportunity to ask questions, and I understand why. However, government members can question the minister on any day of the week. The estimates debate should be the opportunity for Her Majesty's Opposition to thoroughly scrutinise the budget. To that extent, the budget outcome confirms a number of things.

I said last year and I will say it again - I suspect it will not change - that we have a smoke and mirrors budget in which funds are double counted and there is an aggregation of amounts. The regional investment fund is a good example of that. An amount of \$15 million that appears in that fund also appears in a number of other budgets and is aggregated so that the regional investment fund becomes the total figure. I can now understand how the Government managed to balance its budget and show a surplus. The Government has reneged on a lot of the commitments and promises that were made under previous budgets. It follows that if the Government delays, obfuscates and reneges it will produce a surplus budget. I am aware of a number of things that happened during the year and of a number of commitments that were made that have not come to fruition.

I am still very concerned at the State's net debt position and its net worth. During the eight years of the previous Government the net worth of the State improved dramatically from about \$15 billion to well over \$30 billion. In that same period the debt projections decreased from \$8.5 billion to \$4.5 billion. Yes, a number of assets were sold including the R&I Bank Ltd as it was known then, the gas pipeline, Westrail and so on, which amounted to about \$4 billion. The previous coalition Government retained debt at roughly \$8.5 billion over an eight-year period. By any measure, retaining net debt at roughly \$8.5 billion was a remarkable achievement, taking into account asset sales. In that period, the net worth of the State increased from about \$15 billion to \$33 billion. That was a major achievement and probably the best achievement of any State Government in the past 50 years.

I will talk about current budget projections from the base of a question from the member for Vasse to the Treasurer on 12 March 2002 and will presume, therefore, that the figures are accurate. In 1991-92 the net debt was \$8.357 billion, which went to a low of \$4.6631 billion in 1998-99 and grew slightly in the next couple of years. However, it is alarming to note that by 2004-05, although net worth will be \$35 billion, net debt will be \$6 billion. That debt will then climb by another \$300 million or \$400 million in 2005-06.

It concerns me that the people of Western Australia will face a budgetary increase in debt in one term of government of \$2.5 billion. If the Labor Party were to win another election, that debt could increase at the same rate over the next term, leaving the State of Western Australia, when the conservatives come back, to try to sort that out. I will be working very hard to ensure that we do not have a Labor Government for too long in this State. The signs are obvious already, after a year and a half of a Labor Government, that the State is in a parlous financial position.

I will deal specifically with issues in my electorate and I will talk about some projects that appear in the budget and some that do not. Spending in the Warren-Blackwood district in the last year of the conservative Government was about \$22 million, and that is an electorate that takes in the entire south west corner of the State, including the Shires of Augusta-Margaret River, Manjimup, Bridgetown-Greenbushes and Nannup. Those funds were spent mainly on public facilities such as hospitals, schools, a courthouse, housing for the aged and roads. The budgets for all of those areas have been cut under the current budget, with a reduction in excess of \$60 million for roads. We know that 80 per cent of roads in Western Australia are controlled by local government, which means there will be a major cost shift to local government for the upkeep of roads. The first question from people around Western Australia to whom I talk, as the shadow Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, is: what has happened to the road and infill sewerage funds? The \$800 million infill

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sewerage program was brought in by me when I was Minister for Water Resources. I am very proud of that and it was a major achievement of the former Government. The program cleaned up ground water and enabled people to a great degree to subdivide their blocks of land. It certainly stopped surface sewage running down the sides of roads in many suburbs in the metropolitan area and country towns around Western Australia. It allowed business and accommodation to expand and it provided a great multiplier effect for people involved in contracting to the infill sewerage program. It is a major retrograde step and a great shame that this Government has gone down the path of reducing and almost eliminating the infill sewerage program.

I refer now to some specific projects that the Labor Government promised in my electorate. An icon project called the sky jetty was to be built in the Donnelly valley, for which the Labor Party promised \$2 million. The Government has since backtracked to the extent that it is prepared to spend only \$1 million in the current financial year to the end of June 2002. The communities of Manjimup, Nannup and Bridgetown and state government departments have been battling to find out when the Government will commit to that project, bearing in mind that, in its election campaign, it committed \$2 million to the project and it has now backtracked to committing \$1 million. The total project, including a road, will cost about \$3 million. It will be a major regional tourist facility that will draw traffic from Margaret River into the karri belt of Manjimup, Bridgetown, Nannup and Pemberton and will create a huge amount of expansion in the tourist industry. The Government must make a decision about that project.

At the same time, I congratulate the Government on its recent announcement of funds for the Pemberton recreation facility. A commitment had already been made under the Department of Sport and Recreation of roughly \$1.8 million for the sports facilities to go under one roof. The proposal was that the State would provide \$700 000 by buying the old sports facility for \$550 000 and providing a further \$150 000 to complete the project. That commitment would create a \$2.5 million project, housing under one roof all of the sports facilities such as basketball, netball, squash and other sports clubs, as well as a function room and licensed premises. A project such as that would be the envy of most country towns. It has taken the Government 18 months to make that decision. I welcome the decision and give due credit to the Government for making it, but it should have happened a long time ago along with a decision on the sky jetty project.

Last February, \$20 000 was committed to the Pemberton community visitors centre and it has still not been forthcoming. Funding of \$100 000 was allocated in the budget for Muirs Highway. That road has been surveyed three times in the past 10 years. It is the major east-west route between the lower south west and the eastern States. It has major traffic movements with B-trains, log trucks and school buses all travelling on a seven metre wide seal. Members can imagine the large expanse of water at Lake Muir that is adjacent to the road; it is a death trap.

I left home very early this morning, at 4.30, and travelled up the South Western Highway to Perth. I do not know why more people are not killed on the South Western Highway. Last Tuesday morning a young fellow died in Yornup. I suspect he fell asleep and hit a tree on a slight bend. It is amazing, with all the B-trains carrying timber and horticultural produce coming up to the city and all the containers going back down to that area, that more people are not killed on that road. I do not wish to even think about it. Even discussing it concerns me, because I am sure that will happen. It is a very narrow, winding and undulating piece of road. The coast road has a good deal of dual carriageway and a lot of money has been spent on the freeway and the tunnel close to Perth. A great deal of money will be spent on the new railway line to Mandurah, which I question because I believe it is being constructed before its time. The upgrade of Muirs Highway should be done as a matter of urgency. It has been taken off the road program. I am talking about the South Western Highway, which goes from Bunbury to Boyanup, Donnybrook, Greenbushes, Bridgetown and so on. It is the major route by which a great deal of the produce from the lower south west comes to the city for communities in the metropolitan area. Most of the food in the State of Western Australia currently comes from the south west region. That highway is a death trap. It is incredible that the State Government has not allocated significant funds to improve it. The budget falls far short of what it should have been. It appears that the metropolitan area is being looked after and country regions are being left out in the cold.

MS QUIRK (Girrawheen) [7.30 pm]: During the estimates committee, the member for Churchlands canvassed with the Minister for Education her concern for the small number of male teachers in primary schools. It is a matter about which I also have some concerns. Those concerns were reinforced when I went with the Minister for Education on a visit throughout my electorate. We discovered that the total number of male teachers in primary schools in the electorate of Girrawheen comprised only 13 per cent of teachers. As at 23 August last year, in Western Australia generally, 10 021 teachers were employed in government primary schools, of whom

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only 1 355 were male. The public discourse generally suggests that this gender imbalance is undesirable. I will shortly address the public call for more male teachers.

I want first to quickly examine some of the factors that have brought about this imbalance. Among the factors cited are the disincentives for males to enter primary school teaching or the disincentives that work against their remaining in primary schools, particularly in the early years of primary schooling. These factors include low salaries, professional isolation, promotion of men out of the early years of primary schooling, whether males are suitable for early primary school education because of perceptions that females are better nurturers and that males are better disciplinarians and are better suited to the latter years of primary schooling, and the concern about child sexual abuse also deters many males from entering primary school teaching.

I was gratified to hear in the estimates committee that the Minister for Education has indicated that the issue is being closely examined, and recruitment campaigns are being appropriately targeted. Research reported by J. Butcher in the paper "Teaching - an appealing career choice for school leavers?" discloses that many year 12 male students do not feel that teaching, especially in primary schools, is a worthwhile career. Other studies have found that those who intended to choose teaching did so for altruistic reasons rather than for any reason to do with money. Male respondents said that if they were going to go into teaching, it was because they saw themselves as role models.

The phenomenon of gender disparity in primary school teaching is by no means isolated to Western Australia or for that matter to Australia generally, but is common in a number of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries. In 1999, with the exceptions of Denmark and Luxembourg, it was found that 65.1 per cent or more of primary teachers in OECD countries were women, with the mean percentage for all OECD countries being 77 per cent. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for Australia indicate that 78 per cent of primary school teachers are female. It looks as though this imbalance will not improve in the short term, as only 26.5 per cent of students currently undertaking teaching studies are male.

Why do we have these concerns about gender imbalance and what are the implications? Concerns about the short supply of male primary school teachers are linked to those relating to the poorer educational outcomes for boys and the so-called feminisation of the teaching work force, and to teacher shortages generally. There are also major day-to-day practical difficulties at schools if not enough male teachers are on hand. Because of this apprehension, at least two recent parliamentary inquiries have been undertaken. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations undertook one and the New South Wales Parliament undertook the other. I also understand that the issue was addressed in Western Australia in the 1999 report "Teacher Supply and Demand 1999-2005".

It is considered that the gender imbalance in the teaching profession translates into an inadequate presence of male role models in schools. In his highly influential book *Raising Boys*, Steve Biddulph calls for more men of the right kind in schools. This proposition, however, is not universally accepted. In its submission to the House of Representatives inquiry to which I referred earlier, the Australian Education Union rejected this assertion. It argued that it was more important to have good quality teachers with correct pedagogic practices than to necessarily concentrate on gender issues. Limited research suggests that the impact of gender imbalance may be overstated. A Finnish study, the results of which were released earlier this year, suggests that students do not regard gender as relevant. They were found to appreciate good teachers regardless of gender. Similarly, a United Kingdom study has found that there is no link between the number of male teachers in a primary school and student performance. Similarly, in Australia, Janet Smith at the University of Canberra has concluded from her research that the cry that we need more males in primary schools is unreflective as it neither critically analyses the needs of children in primary schools nor canvasses the experiences of males who have chosen to become teachers.

What is clear, however, is that the problem is somewhat more complex than it might at first appear and a number of aspects need further clarification. For example, the representation of male teachers in private primary schools is slightly higher than in government primary schools. Is this solely attributable to greater prestige and money or are there other reasons? We often hear the call for teachers to act as male role models for boys because of the prevalence of single-parent families. However, does this suggest that girls living in similar environments will not suffer to any significant extent?

Nevertheless, it is clear that there are some very real problems for young males in Australia. We would be derelict in our duty if we did not do everything in our power to conduct an in-depth inquiry into whether these problems are connected with educational practice. These problems include the fact that boys are five times more likely than girls to kill themselves; they are more likely to be unemployed; they are much more likely to die in

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car accidents; they are also more inclined to drop out of school before year 12 and, therefore, less likely to go to university; and they are generally less literate than their female counterparts.

Although the greater prevalence of male teachers in primary schools would be useful in reducing the social isolation of those teachers who are already there, and would possibly enhance the status of teaching more generally while removing the female label of teachers, whether recruitment of more males will achieve the broader educational outcomes which we seek is a moot point. Of paramount importance in achieving optimal educational outcomes is to ensure the employment of the highest quality teaching personnel, irrespective of gender. As Smith notes -

In an ideal world, our teachers would represent a variety of ways of being and possibilities, and would reflect a balance of gender, race, age, class and sexualities.

Similarly the 1998 Senate inquiry to which I referred concluded -

... the profession should be attempting to attract the best and most suitable people into the profession, regardless of gender. If teachers mirror more accurately the society in which they operate - in terms of gender, class and ethnicity - so much the better. But teaching must remain the primary consideration
...

From these matters, I believe we can draw two conclusions: first, that much research still needs to be undertaken to more fully understand the implications of the shortage of male teachers in primary schools. Given its potential importance, this should be done as a matter of priority. Secondly, even if there are no adverse educational outcomes from this imbalance, it would seem sensible management practice if we could draw on a wider pool of talent from which to recruit teachers.

The current situation effectively limits available personnel to 50.1 per cent of the community. Accordingly, some more inclusive recruitment practices should be investigated. For example, as was alluded to in the estimates committee, we could explore recruitment of those who are pursuing a second or third career. This practice is currently proving fruitful in parts of the United States.

Finally, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the exemplary work of principals and their diligent and committed staff in the electorate of Girrawheen. In particular, I refer to Margaret Swain of Alinjarra Primary School, Trish Davis of Majella Catholic Primary School, Josh Jashari of Blackmore Primary School, Ken Armstrong of Dryandra Primary School, Gary Brown of East Hamersley Primary School, Pedro Cruz of Emmanuel Christian Community School, Doug Grasso of Girrawheen Primary School, Suzanne Temple of Glendale Primary School, Julie Woodhouse of Hainsworth Primary School, David Price of Koondoola Primary School, Geoff Metcalf of Montrose Primary School, Carlyn Dyer of North Balga Primary School, Stan Grabski of Our Lady of Mercy Primary School, Stephen Ker of Waddington Primary School and Ross De Leo of Warriapendi Primary School. The professionalism and dedication of these principals and their staff ensures that the opportunities and life choices available to the young people of Girrawheen, Koondoola, Hamersley, Warwick, Balga, Alexander Heights and Mirrabooka are the best possible.

MR EDWARDS (Greenough) [7.41 pm]: I take this opportunity to comment on the reports of the estimates committees because I was sitting in the Chair at the time they were discussed and had no opportunity to speak. This is only the second time that I have sat through estimates. I believe there was a far better performance for all this year than last year. I echo the comments of some speakers on my side of the House that ministers seemed to find opportunities to speak at length on dorothy dixers asked by government members, which was possibly to the detriment of the Opposition. However, I believe that the whole infrastructure for the estimates committee this year was a lot better than it was last year. I also echo the comments about using the Legislative Council Chamber as well as the Legislative Assembly Chamber. All we can do is improve. Perhaps the answers just need to be a little sharper. I believe that we have perhaps tied ourselves down too much to a time frame. Perhaps the estimates committee needs to be spaced over a longer time frame, which would give Her Majesty's Opposition in the Legislative Assembly more time to ask the questions that need to be asked of government. I put those comments forward for thought and consideration for next year.

I turn now to the third reading. I ask the Government to hold the line on the southern transport corridor to Geraldton and on the deepening of the port. I am aware that some strong, last minute opposition has been voiced by some reasonably influential people in the Geraldton region. However, this project has been on the planning board for six to 10 years. It has started to grow some legs in the past three or four years and is now at a stage at which money has been put in the budget. I commend the Government for doing that, but ask it to make sure that the \$8 million stays in the budget and that the southern transport corridor is not held up because of this

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opposition. Equally, I ask that the \$100 million guaranteed by the Government for the deepening of the port is also not held up.

The extension of Indian Ocean Drive is another issue that I wish to raise. It is currently in the news because of the request by the Australian Defence Force to use a larger area of a reserve for a firing range. If Indian Ocean Drive had been started in the past 12 months, that request might not have come to fruition. However, it is now another complication that will have some effect or impact on Indian Ocean Drive. That \$33 million would have been well spent because it would have brought in some \$200 million to \$300 million in development to the Jurien Bay area and Moore River precinct. With this added problem, it will probably be much harder for that to now occur. However, I urge the Government not to support the Defence Force proposal to enlarge the firing range but to keep its eye on the ball and make sure that Indian Ocean Drive is completed as soon as possible.

I have already spoken about the downsizing of the Department of Agriculture and the Agriculture Protection Board. I reiterate those comments, because it will have an impact on my electorate and on country electorates in general. For example, a new office complex was built in Geraldton for the Department of Agriculture. I am sorry to say that I do not know how much was spent on that complex, but it would have been a significant amount of money because it is a magnificent building. However, staffing levels do not fill the building. The Agriculture Protection Board has been responsible over the years for skeleton weed and vermin control. In my area, the staff of the APB has gone from 13 to between three and five. There are now about three full-time and two part-time staff. That issue needs to be addressed. I know that the Minister for Agriculture does not sit in this House. I urge the Government, through members here, to address that issue. The farming community finds it hard enough to combat the weather and the vagaries of farming without basically having the legs cut from beneath it because of the downsizing of departments like the APB, which provides help with weed and vermin control. I am aware that a review is in place and hope that it will view some of those issues in a different light. I would like to think so.

I am also aware that my region has a growing horticultural industry. A particularly good officer was brought down from Kununurra to further the development of horticulture in my region. After about two years, that gentleman has been moved to Perth and will now study green tea research or something like that. We have grape growing projects, olive farms and any number of horticultural developments. The Geraldton and Greenough electorates could have done with the help of an officer or person with that expertise.

The other issue of great concern to country people is the cost of fuel. The current price of fuel in Geraldton is more than a dollar a litre and pretty much has been ever since this Government has been in power. I think it has dropped under a dollar a couple of times. I remind the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection, who is in the House at the moment, that this Government came in promising to lower fuel prices and criticised the previous Government for not doing so. Quite frankly, this Government has fallen on its face. Country people have not seen any lessening of the fuel price. It is one of the issues that is always raised with me. I am sure that the minister will have an answer for me and I am happy to listen to it later. I just put that to the minister again, as an issue that needs to be addressed.

I turn now to the issue of the health boards, which have just been disbanded. Although I am not totally opposed to some streamlining of those boards, I am not sure whether the Minister for Health has done this in the right way. Wiping them out in one fell swoop is being short-sighted. The members of those boards were volunteers, who had the best interests of their local community at heart. I would have liked to see more consultation with those people, since this is a Government that claims to pride itself on consultation. I fear that we have seen little consultation in many areas, and this is one of them. I have four health boards in my electorate, and I know some members of those boards feel that they have had little input. The outcome will be, I fear, a situation in which a bureaucrat makes all the decisions. I am aware that regional boards will be formed on development commission boundaries, but the question remains about who will be running those health boards. I urge the Government, and particularly the Minister for Health, to give that some consideration. At the moment, country people are very suspicious of the way in which these new health boards will be formed.

I conclude with reference to the increases in taxes and charges. I raised this subject in my speech in response to the budget. I have heard some members of the Government applaud these increases tonight, but I do not think anybody likes taxes and charges being increased. This Government came into power saying that there would be no increases. Perhaps the naivety of that statement is shown by water rates and sewerage costs going up by 2.9 per cent, third-party motor vehicle insurance by three per cent and public transport fares by 2.6 per cent. This begs the question about the way in which the public regards politicians. Again, this is something I raised earlier. Politicians make commitments like that, and they are not held to, and the public, quite rightly, regards them with

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some suspicion. This budget will probably come back to bite the Government in a year's time, and it will struggle to meet some of the commitments it has made.

DR CONSTABLE (Churchlands) [7.53 pm]: I wish to draw attention to two issues I raised in the estimates committees. The first concerns the Edith Cowan University land at Churchlands. In December last year, the Government announced that it would give the land freehold to the university so that the university could develop that land and sell it, and could then fulfil its strategic plan of developing the Joondalup and Mt Lawley campuses. At the moment the land is vested in the university, and I understand, from the supplementary information I received from the minister, that the process of the transfer from crown reserve to freehold title is currently taking place through the Department of Land Administration. The only condition the Government placed on this gift to the university was that the university had to engage in an acceptable public consultation process, whatever that means. That consultation process is now happening. Three workshops involving members of the community have taken place and the community reference group has met once, to explore the options that came out of the workshops.

A major problem with this community consultation is that the university has already set the outcomes. It announced to me some months ago, during a visit to my office, and also at the community workshops, that some things are not negotiable. The main outcome that is not negotiable is that the university intends to net \$40 million from this development. In order to do that, it must gross \$72 million. There seems to be an enormous difference between the gross amount and the net amount the university says it needs to develop buildings on the other campuses. There is much doubt in people's minds about where this development is going. The interests of the university quite clearly do not coincide with the interests of the community. The university started by saying it wanted to make \$40 million net, and for that there would be an allowance of 10 per cent open space. When I told the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wally Cox, that I did not think that was in the best interests of the local community, he said that was tough, and if we wanted more open space, there would have to be higher housing density. This is not consultation; it is a fait accompli presented with no regard for the local Churchlands community. The university is intent on making as much as it can from that land. It does not care about the densities, public open space, saving the remnant bushland, or the impact on Herdsman Lake. All it cares about is making \$40 million, getting out of town and going to Joondalup. That is not good enough, and the Government should be looking very closely at it. It is one thing to give this very valuable piece of land to the university, and quite another to put a community consultation process in place with little regard for the outcomes; the university owns the land now, and everything will be all right. I am putting the Government on notice now that everything will not be all right. I expect the Government to hold the transfer of that land until I am satisfied, and the Government is satisfied that the university is doing the right thing with this consultation.

Many issues are of great concern to the local community, and many are being thought about and addressed, such as traffic in the area. The second issue I raised in the estimates committee with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure was the future of the Stephenson Highway reserve. I understand that is a long-term issue, but one section of that reserve runs along the northern border of the Edith Cowan University Churchlands campus. This is an ideal opportunity to examine that stretch of land, between Pearson and Empire Avenues, to make sure that the development takes this road reserve into account. If there is to be any modification to that road reserve, it should be done at the same time as this development is being planned. There are a number of reasons for that, but a very special reason is that the road reserve, as it currently stands, passes just a few metres from the classrooms at the Newman Junior College. That has been of great concern to the school for some time, and I am hoping that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will act very quickly to look at this. She has promised me that she will do this, and I have no reason to doubt that promise. I am hoping that some modification can be made, so that traffic issues can be dealt with as a whole, taking that road reserve into account, and options for future planning are not cut off. Another reason that the road reserve must be looked at now is that the area in which the road reserve meets Empire Avenue in Wembley Downs is very close to the entrance to Newman Junior College. If that four-lane road is to be built, it would be impossible to get into the Newman Junior College through its front entrance. There will be no entrance to the school if that stretch of road is built. Therefore, it is important that this matter be reviewed and looked at carefully as part of the development of Edith Cowan University.

The other main issue that has come out of the workshops and discussions that I have had with constituents is a deep concern about a number of environmental issues in the area. Any development of the Edith Cowan University campus will impact on those environmental issues. Of particular concern is remnant bushland on the northern part of the campus in particular, and how the development will impact on that. People are concerned about the loss of native trees that are spread throughout a beautiful university campus. As we know, most

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developments are carried out by bulldozers knocking down just about everything in sight. It is a cheaper way to put in the utilities that are required for developments. There is great concern about the native flora on the campus in particular.

Within 200 or 300 metres of the campus is Herdsman Lake. There is grave concern about the impact on Herdsman Lake of the destruction of trees on the campus site. Environmental studies must be detailed and carried out carefully before any development goes ahead. Not only that, it is a fact that the Edith Cowan University remnant bushland provides part of the green belt from Kings Park to Bold Park for native fauna and particularly for bird life. Once again, any development in this area must take that into account.

The many constituents with whom I have spoken feel that this development is a cynical one. First, they believe that the Government has been cynical in giving the land to Edith Cowan University. There was no need to do that. The Government could still have developed the land, kept control of this 20-hectare site and given the proceeds to Edith Cowan University. Instead, the Government has chosen to gift the land to the university and wash its hands of whatever happens on that site. That is not good enough. The cynics among us can see that the Government has learnt the hard way, because it has had to go through the pain of the events surrounding the Scarborough Senior High School site. Therefore, it probably decided that it would be much easier to give the site to the university and let it take the flak. From the university's point of view, government members have been the good guys for giving the site to the university in the first place. From the community's point of view, it is a cynical exercise indeed - one that has not gone unnoticed and about which I am sure the Government will hear a lot in the next few months.

The issue of development of sites needs to be examined carefully, as does consultation with the community. If a local community is presented with the outcomes before consultation, most thinking people will believe that they are wasting their time by giving up hours to go to workshops and to be on community reference groups, because all those workshops can do is to tinker at the edges of what will happen anyway. It gives the developer - in this case, the university - the opportunity to say that it put a consultation process in place, just as it was required to do; it went through the motions of doing that, and now it can go ahead and develop the land.

A much higher density development than anywhere else in the area is being proposed for this land at the moment. It is out of keeping with the rest of the area in which it sits. This matter needs to be revisited and monitored carefully by the Government. I urge those involved - the Minister for Education, the Premier who announced the gift to the university, and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure - to carefully examine what is happening on that site before it gets out of hand.

These are the two issues that are very important to my electorate. The central issue of the development of the Edith Cowan University site and the related issue of the stretch of Stephenson Highway between Pearson Street and Empire Avenue need to be examined together. I hope that we can get detailed information from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure about the future of that stretch of highway before too long.

MRS EDWARDES (Kingsley) [8.05 pm]: I will speak on a couple of areas concerning the budget Bills. In the area of consumer and employment protection, the first thing I will do is to thank the minister for picking up and following through on those Occupational Safety and Health Amendment Regulations, which would have had a major cost impact on small business. The greatest effect would have been on the fruit growing industry. However, it would have been much broader than that. Of course, those regulations would have affected small builders and small contractors within the building industry, including painters and so on. After 10 years, their elevated work platforms would have undergone a full stress test, and every five years after that they would have faced a huge cost impost.

Another issue that came out of that was the cost itself. There were variations of between \$3 000 and \$4 000 to \$10 000. There was no general agreement on what would comprise the bare minimum of the stress test that would be necessary and any liability that would fall back onto the company that carried out the test if something occurred not long afterwards. The public liability issue that arose from that also had not been taken into account adequately.

When I talked with the fruit growers who first raised the issue, it was interesting to hear how it came to their attention. These regulations were passed in March this year and were to come into effect on 1 July. A WorkSafe officer from Bunbury rang one of the companies in that area that does this sort of work and asked how he, as an inspector, would identify and know what he was looking for. The chap from the company told him that there was a number and all the rest of it. The company fellow wondered why the WorkSafe officer had asked that

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question. All of a sudden he realised that the new regulations, with their huge cost impact, would come into effect on 1 July.

Although I thank the minister for taking notice of the industry and following through on that matter, it should never have happened in the first place. Any impact of regulations on industry, particularly small business, should be raised at the time the regulations are signed off. Questions should be asked about what the cost impact of those regulations will be on small business, what has been the consultation process, and who has carried out that consultation process. I do not know whether the minister has looked at the latest *SafetyLine Magazine*. It is a fantastic magazine. On the inside cover is a great story from the minister, with a nice photograph. At the bottom of the page, it stated that for the new Occupational Safety and Health Amendment Regulations, readers should look at the back page. I thought I had it all wrong. I immediately turned to the back page and found a brief inconsequential notification of the occupational safety and health regulations. However, the impact cannot be determined by looking at the back page, and people still have to download the 200-plus pages from the net and wade through them in order to determine the full cost impact. That was one of the issues that slipped through the net, and it is pleasing to know that it was rectified before it was too late.

I now turn to the Labour Relations Reform Bill 2002, and the theme of consultation. The minister was quick to conduct a narrow impact study of workplace agreements in only a few industries, and to then herald the study in Parliament. He is still not prepared to spend any money on a cost impact analysis, particularly one that focuses on small business and employment. There will be a great impact, and, like most situations, the impact will not be fully recognised until people start to lose their jobs and businesses start to fold. I hope that even at this late stage the Government will rethink some of the key components of the legislation. I note that the minister has already indicated that he will reintroduce employer-employee agreements. The Bill will be recommitted in the Legislative Council. On behalf of the Opposition I committed that we would support the recommitment, because we do not want to leave employers at the total mercy of the union movement. The right of entry provisions allow a union to nominate the person that the commission has to authorise, and the commission has no discretion in the matter. What would happen if the nominated person had a criminal record and there were major security issues at the place they wished to enter? Businesses have put forward all types of scenarios to the Opposition. Indeed, I have no doubt they have also been forwarded to the Government. There are serious concerns about a number of provisions in the Bill, but the right of entry is a crucial one. Also, the Government is taking away the rights of both union and non-union employees to say that they do not want their personal records looked at by a union official. In a day and age when there is huge emphasis on privacy, why do employees not have a right to say that they do not want their personal records looked at by a union? That is a fundamental right in 2002, and beyond. We now acknowledge people's privacy to a greater extent, but the Government is absolutely and totally sweeping aside such a concept. This is a key issue that will come back hard to bite the Government.

I now turn to the issue of planning. The planning minister has spent much time on the Perth to Mandurah rail proposal. Even people within the planning industry have suggested that the minister has far more interest in transport, particularly in rail, than she has in planning issues. The Perth to Mandurah rail link is a highly debatable issue. Where is the vision for the future growth of Perth and the central business district? Where is the support for businesses and developments on Adelaide Terrace, as against those in West Perth? The Government is proposing a rail line that will travel along William Street and link with the northern suburbs railway. The potential for a further link - when growth demands it in 10 to 15 years - from the central station to Adelaide Terrace, along the Esplanade, up to Parliament House and through to West Perth and beyond, does not exist. Most of the world's major capital have a major central link. If people are travelling to Perth from Armadale, Joondalup or Fremantle, they should be able to link with transport in and around Perth. People who work in Adelaide Terrace should not have to get off the train at the central Perth station and catch a central area transit bus or another bus. They should be able to continue their journey right through. The Government's plan does not take into account the future growth of the CBD. The William Street access route is definitely wrong. If I am right - the proposal might meet our needs for only the next 10 years - it will cost a great deal to change it in the future. This will also affect future decision makers; indeed, the minister will not be around so it will not worry her whether she has made a right or wrong decision. However, Perth's future planners will face major restrictions because of the growth of the CBD. All the pennies have gone into the one bucket without the public first being told of the benefits of the William Street proposal. Indeed, the Western Australian people have not been involved in this matter. Professionals have been involved and committees have been established, but the public has not been genuinely consulted on this issue. Again, when the proposal is put in place, the impact will be revealed.

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The Western Australian people were presented with a bad option and a really bad option. Therefore, when the Government announced that it would take the bad option and sink the railway in front of the foreshore, the public was supposed to thank goodness that the Government had not chosen the really bad option. In any event, I will believe the sinking and funding of the proposal when I see it. I have been told that not only will development in Northbridge suffer, but also development in front of the conference facility and on the foreshore. If that is the case, it is an absolute disgrace that the public has not been consulted. Nobody will wear development right on the foreshore and in front of the conference facility.

I now turn to the Green Bill, which the minister has proposed to introduce and have passed in the Legislative Assembly before the end of the year. Therefore, she will entertain certain amendments only if they get through in time to be included in the drafting of the Green Bill. The planning industry has stated that this measure is not good enough and will not fix the problems it currently faces. It will not deal with the assessment processes between the areas of environment and planning. What on earth is happening? The minister is too focused on rail and transport and not keenly interested in planning matters. The Opposition put out a Green Bill two years ago when the minister was in opposition. At the time, she stated that it did not meet the needs of the planning industry. The planning industry is saying exactly the same thing about this minister's proposal. It says that what is being put forward is short-changing it and will not meet its needs whatsoever.

I refer finally to redundancies. The Government has made great play about saving money in the future by abolishing positions and combining departments. It says that the system is costing more now because of redundancies and amalgamations but that in the future major savings will have been achieved. We found out a couple of things during the estimates committees. If redundancies are funded by a department or agency, the position is not abolished. The department keeps the position up its sleeve. That position either is not immediately filled or is filled by someone in an acting position or by a permanent replacement. That is not the idea of redundancies. The Government's great play about making savings from the redundancies will turn out to be a furphy and will not come to fruition. My recent criticisms about the redeployment list still stand. There are major issues with the redeployment list. I refer the Deputy Premier to all the public service jobs that were advertised in last Saturday's newspaper. I think he will find that a number of those could have been filled by people on the redeployment list.

MS GUISE (Wanneroo) [8.21 pm]: I speak briefly on the budget and the items that were raised during estimates week, as well as related matters that reflect on my electorate. As the member for Wanneroo and the former President of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, it is appropriate that I start with education, which is division 59 of the budget. A number of questions were asked about the capital works program. I was particularly pleased when I was chairing the estimates committee to hear a question from the member for Darling Range about two schools in my electorate. The Government has committed \$5.5 million for new primary schools in Carramar and east Marangaroo. The minister's response was that the planned work would be undertaken for these schools to be open in time for the 2005 school year, and that the capital works allocation would be reflected in next year's budget for the work program to start in 2003-04. The funding is in the out years. I have 19 government schools and eight non-government schools in my electorate. Two important schools in my electorate are under construction. Kinross middle school is in the second stage of construction, and \$5.6 million has been provided in this budget. The new senior campus at Mindarie is also under construction, and \$8.7 million has been provided in this year's budget. I have been advised that 34 per cent of approvals for new homes in Perth in the past three months were within the city of Wanneroo. I cannot understate the growth that is happening in the northern corridor. These new schools are imperative in fulfilling the community demand. Access to education will continue to be a challenge in those northern suburbs in which the growth is so rapid. Local area education planning processes are under way for Yanchep District High School, Wanneroo Junior Primary School and Wanneroo Primary School. The outcome of these deliberations will be taken into account to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for children attending those schools.

I also comment on questions asked in division 59 about the reduced class sizes in years 1 to 3. I am particularly delighted that we have been able to deliver on the promise to reduce class sizes and that money has been allocated to deliver 387 more teachers in government schools. There would not be a parent in this State who was not happy with that announcement. WACSSO, the group of which I was a member, fought for many years for the reduction of class sizes and a fair go for the public school system. It is nice to see that some of those concerns are being addressed. The importance of early intervention in years 1 to 3 cannot be overestimated. It is a crucial time in a child's development and it is essential that children get the quality time they need with their teachers. That is not often possible in a large group. I think this decision will be major step towards addressing the needs of these children and identifying problems.

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Part of this budget covers the Police Service, and the estimates discussion focused on the relevant division, 47. I am particularly interested in the parts of division 47 that cover capital expenditure. It would be remiss of me to not mention that \$100 000 has been included in this year's budget for the design and planning of a new police station in Wanneroo. A total of \$3 million will be allocated, and the new station will be completed by late 2004 or early 2005. Members may remember that I have mentioned in this place the deplorable conditions that exist in the current station. It suffers from a lack of facilities, including an appropriate interview room, change rooms and bathrooms for male and female officers, and kitchen facilities. Improved arrangements are required for the storage of the armoury. From a Wanneroo perspective, and on behalf of the police officers and other staff who work in that station, I welcome the news that something will finally be done about those deplorable conditions.

Capital works expenditure in the budget includes \$131 million for new schools and school upgrades and \$14 million for computers in schools. It is a challenge for any Government to keep up with technology. It is amazing to see the technology that students are using in schools such as the new Quinns Beach Primary School. I see the students carrying their laptops around the schoolyard. They are able to use wireless technology anywhere on those school grounds. To some extent, we have much to learn from five-year-old kids about how to make best use of this technology. When I was President of WACSSO, I was fortunate to see the innovations that are occurring. Young children are able to compose music using that technology. What these kids are able to do is amazing. I hope that in the years to come, we will be able to build on that technology for the benefit of our rural and remote communities. I have seen instances in South Australia - I am sure we are going down that path - in which the interface between the class and teachers occurs electronically. It is incredible. On one side of the screen the teacher's work goes up, and on the other side is the work of the student in the outback station.

Mr Johnson: It is good to see the kids often teaching the parents and the grandparents how to use computers.

Ms GUISE: I have always said my son is my helpdesk! I think many of us can relate to that. It is always difficult to keep up with the new technology. The children are our future.

Ms Radisich: Teach them well and let them lead the way.

Mr McRae: It could be a great song title.

Ms GUISE: Does the member think so? We could do that!

The other important aspect of this budget is the health portfolio. The Government has allocated \$109 million to metropolitan region health projects. Proactive measures are being put in place to ensure that we work towards increasing and supporting the number of nurses in our hospitals. I cannot understate the importance of that. Anyone who has spent any time in a hospital knows the importance of good nurses to people's health and general wellbeing. Nurses deserve full recognition for their contribution to the State, the health system and the people of Western Australia. I will continue to lobby for improved access to medical services in my electorate, particularly general practitioner services, which continue to be a challenge north of Burns Beach Road; aged care; and mental health services.

The last item of capital works of mention is \$353 million for the Water Corporation for drought response infrastructure, sewerage and waste water. It is probably most pertinent to finish on that item of capital works because the major issues affecting my electorate involve agriculture, water, the environment and planning, which in one way or another all impact on the electorate of Wanneroo. One of the questions that is currently being addressed in the electorate is how to protect the agricultural industries while at the same time allowing the rural areas to capitalise on what they do - and do well - and providing for the potential diversity of the area through tourism. I look forward to discussing that further in this place. I cannot wait to debate a motion on the Notice Paper on that issue. We need to provide long-term sustainable development for horticulture and other productive uses of the rural area in support of the local economy and the community as well as new initiatives for the development of new water resources, water reuse and land management.

The City of Wanneroo is the third most productive local authority in Western Australia in terms of the value of products, as it generates over \$110 million in revenue per annum. It is an incredibly important area for not only its regional wealth but also what it gives back to the State. I will ensure that we address those issues on behalf of my community.

The budget is designed to ensure that we build a solid base for future growth and work to create more jobs for Western Australians. That is another subject that is close to my heart, because I do not believe that the northern suburbs, in particular, can continue to be developed in such a way that they remain sleepy hollows and somewhere to which residents only go home to go to bed at night. We have to be in a position to create jobs for

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people living in those suburbs. On that note, I commend the Bill to the House and look forward to discussing these matters further at another time.

MR MASTERS (Vasse) [8.31 pm]: In beginning my comments, I throw a bouquet in the direction of the Treasurer. It will be only one bouquet. The Treasurer may recall that during the second reading debate I said something complimentary about him. I said that there was a significant improvement in Western Australia's total net worth towards the latter period of the forward estimates. However, I believe that I may have misinterpreted the budget papers by looking at net worth instead of net assets versus net liabilities. Even if I look at net liabilities versus net assets, the future picture for Western Australia is, according to the forward estimates, quite bright. In particular, for the 2005-06 year, there will be an increase in net liabilities of \$583 million, while net assets will increase by an estimated \$1.5 billion, which is a healthy trend, being an increase in assets of almost three times the increase in net liabilities. That is as far as I am prepared to go with the bouquets; now for the brickbat.

It is unfortunate that in the Treasurer's first year, the 2002 year, net liabilities increased by \$1.891 million and net assets by only \$2.483 million. The State's net worth increased by \$591 million over that period, which was barely 25 per cent of the total increase in net liabilities. If that trend had continued, in years to come we would have been in pretty rotten shape. Even though our net assets may have gone up by more than our net liabilities, the proportionate increase of net liabilities would have blown out very significantly. We should welcome the trends in the forward estimates - if they hold true. Nonetheless, I urge the Treasurer not to weaken in his resolve over the coming years, especially in two years time, when he is preparing a pre-election budget, because, at the end of the day, if our net liabilities, which include our debts, increase at a disproportionate rate to the increase in net assets, Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd, Moody's Investors Service Pty Ltd or some other rating agency will come along and will do more than just slap us over the wrist. It will say that our credit worth has been downgraded because we have not been able to keep our net liabilities and net debt under control.

There are some difficulties in understanding budget papers regardless of which Government is in power. I have been both frustrated and disappointed by some of the difficulties encountered in trying to understand what the budget means. For example, during the estimates committees I asked the Premier, in his capacity as the Minister for Science, to give some clear indication of how the total budget for science and innovation had changed from the current budget period of 2001-02 to the current budget papers, namely the 2002-03 year. I have a reply, although I do not intend to read it into *Hansard*. It is Supplementary Information No A51, and the bottom line is that no direct comparison could be made between the \$41.756 million 2001-02 budget allocation and this year's \$28.9 million for science and innovation.

The difficulty is that, even being generous and assuming that in this year's budget, the \$28.9 million allocated to science and innovation should have added to it the \$6.3 million that is to be expended by the Minister for State Development under output 3, innovation and technology, of the Industry and Technology division in the budget papers, there is still a shortfall between last year and this year of \$5 million or thereabouts. I note in the information supplied to me by the Premier a very short sentence indicating that an additional \$5 million has been allocated as "administered revenue". I do not know whether the Treasurer is able to explain what that means, but the allocation is not to be found anywhere in the budget papers. Unless the Treasurer is able to give me some clear indication of what that means, I fear it is a fudge factor. The bottom line is that, comparing last year's budget allocation of \$41.7 million for science and innovation with this year's combined figures of \$28.9 million and \$6.3 million, this Government has allocated at least \$5 million less to science and innovation this year than it did last year. Considering how much the Premier, in his capacity as Minister for Science, has hung his hat on the science portfolio, I am disappointed with what I believe to be a real reduction of \$5 million from last year to this year in the combined science innovation and technology allocations.

Mr Ripper: Judging by our discussions when we formulated the budget I would not think that there is a reduction in science funding. Administered revenue is normally revenue that is paid by the organisation to other organisations. It is money for grants and things like that, whereas controlled revenue is the budget for the agency.

Mr MASTERS: I thank the Treasurer for those comments. In the budget papers, under the two headings of science and technology, which falls under the Premier's portfolio, and innovation and technology, which falls under the Minister for State Development, there is no mention of \$5 million for administered revenue. I am having difficulty coming to grips with the details of the budget and trying to find out how much money has been spent, where it has been spent and comparing this year's budget with last year's budget.

Mr Ripper: The member should ask a question on notice of the Premier, who is the Minister for Science.

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Mr MASTERS: Effectively, Supplementary Information No A51 is a question on notice. I am, therefore, disappointed when the Premier's response is that the Government is unable to make a direct comparison between last year's and this year's budgets. I asked the question and I made a specific request for a comparison of the science and innovation budget allocations of the previous Government and the current Government. I am not trying to limit the question; I am trying to broaden it to give the Premier as much room to move as possible to explain how money is to be spent this year and how it was spent last year. I continue to get the response that the Government is unable to make a direct comparison. That is a difficulty and I hope future budgets will be clearer.

I will give another example. Under the tourism portfolio - the member for Nedlands is aware of this matter - last year the Government crowed loudly about \$5 million it provided to the tourism industry to help it to recover from the problems of 11 September and the Ansett Australia collapse. A media statement released by the Minister for Tourism today is headed "Minister reveals WA Tourism in better shape than anticipated". I am pleased to hear that news. However, the second paragraph of the media statement reads -

Mr Brown said WA was well in front of other States in its recovery, due to the State Government's fast action in providing \$5million in crisis funding, to counter the impact on tourism.

The reality is that the State Government did not provide \$5 million in crisis funding. The WA Tourism Commission gained approval from the Government to move \$5 million out of its accumulated cash reserves for expenditure in the various ways that were necessary to overcome the problems last year of 11 September and Ansett. If the Minister for Tourism had said that the Government was giving the WA Tourism Commission approval to reallocate \$5 million of its cash reserves for spending in that way, I would have said, "Well done, minister, that is a prompt response to a serious crisis." Instead, the minister and this Government are once again crowing about the fact that it is their money - meaning taxpayers money - and their decision to provide that extra \$5 million; they are trying to hang their hat on that particular funding initiative. In fact, it is nothing of the sort. Certainly, \$5 million was provided but the \$5 million has begun to be spent. The bottom line is that the Government is trying to big-note itself on this issue. Sadly, it should not be taking credit for something that it does not deserve to be taking credit.

I give another example of how easy it is for Governments of all persuasions - the Gallop Labor Government is now in my sight - to fudge the figures and to make life difficult when the Opposition tries to understand what is going on. At pages 627 and 628 of the *Budget Statements*, under the sustainable forest management output, it is stated that there is a reduction of 400 000 hectares in the area of forest to be managed as state forest; that is, a reduction from 1.875 million hectares to 1.475 million hectares. Yet, output 1 on page 625 under nature conservation indicates an increase of 300 000 hectares in the area that is being managed for nature conservation purposes, as opposed to state forest, which is production forest. Where is the missing 100 000 hectares?

Again, I asked during the estimates committee where those 100 000 hectares have gone. It turns out that the 400 000 hectares have gone and are not accounted for. I do not have time to develop the argument, but the bottom line is that the response from the Minister for the Environment states -

The 400,000 hectares . . . is already included in the total area managed under the Nature Conservation Output.

However, there is no increase in the nature conservation output from last year's figures that can equate to this 400 000 hectares. It is either included there or it is not. If it is included, there should be an increase of 400 000 hectares somewhere in the *Budget Statements*. The reality is that there is an increase of only 300 000 hectares, which it is anticipated will be new purchases of land in the next 12 months by, presumably, the Department of Conservation and Land Management. I am sorry to say that there continues to be a shortfall of 400 000 hectares. That shortfall has not been explained in anything that the Government has said, and I will have to ask more questions to find out exactly what is happening.

I do not have a great deal of time to talk about how disappointed I was to find that my electorate of Vasse received significantly reduced funding in this budget for capital works; I believe the figure in the budget is \$12 million. In past years that figure from the previous Government was between \$20 million and \$40 million. This year's budget is therefore very disappointing. It is also disappointing that there has been significantly reduced funding in virtually all areas of the environment portfolio.

In the last few seconds of my speech, I must say that I am particularly disappointed about two other areas. One is the indication at page 802 of the *Budget Statements* that the amount of funding allocated to the Perth cycle network will be reduced by \$1 million this year, \$1 million next year, \$2 million the year after and \$6 million in

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2005-06; that is, a \$10 million cut overall. Another area I mention is the budget of \$7.8 million for the trial of hydrogen fuel cell buses. Is that expenditure justified?

MR WATSON (Albany) [8.47 pm]: I congratulate the world's best Treasurer. I thought he was an excellent man when he produced his first budget. The fact is that he is only half the man he was when he produced his first budget and he still gave us a tremendous budget. Quite a few other members of the House should look at the Treasurer's diet!

The main allocation in the budget for Albany is \$8.6 million for a water filtration plant. Most people in the city believe there is no water shortage and they probably believe there is no water shortage in country areas. The previous Government did not properly examine water shortages. There is a real problem in country areas and especially Albany, which is renowned for getting a lot of rain. We say that only to people whom we do not want to return to Albany! The water catchment in Albany is not as good as it should be. The current catchment of water in Albany will last only five years. If a major industry were to be established in Albany, it would last only three years. The \$8.6 million allocated for a water filtration plant is the first stage of a five-year project costing \$30 million to improve Albany's water supply. A water supply is integral to a country town. The water in Albany is now crystal clear but it will last for only a certain amount of time.

It was great to see an allocation of \$12.7 million for a new small boat harbour in Albany. Some people might say that a small boat harbour is just for putting in boats. However, we must look at the big picture in Albany. We must consider that many tuna boats look for drop-off points along the way from Brazil to New Zealand. They would stop in Albany not only for provisions, but also to use the infrastructure of the freezer and cannery on the wharf. We need those boats to come to Albany. Because Albany harbour is open to the weather, some boat owners do not leave their boats there during the winter when they can get bashed up against the wharf. Two boat owners at the moment have their boats in Fremantle; they get all their provisions and drop off their fish in Fremantle. The economy in Albany cannot afford to lose them. A smaller version of the Hillarys Boat Harbour is planned, which will have walkways and a Cicerello's sort of eatery in an attempt to get families back to the foreshore. When I was doorknocking during the election campaign, I found it interesting to talk to many older people in the electorate, who remembered the old days when everybody used to go to the foreshore.

The foreshore has been a bit of an eyesore. During the 1970s the then Labor Government set money aside for its redevelopment. City of Albany councillors do not agree on many things, but one thing they all agreed on was that the foreshore could be a tremendous development. They passed the plans unanimously. The plans include the development of the Anzac park. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, gave the land to the City of Albany. For the last Anzac Day, the State Government gave to the Returned Services League some lone pines, which will be planted as part of the overall plan. Albany was the last port that the Anzacs saw before they left Australia. The City of Albany and the RSL are developing great plans for the foreshore for 2014, which will be the hundredth anniversary of the departure of the Anzacs. The distance from one side of the Anzac park to the other is the distance between the trenches at Gallipoli. The plans are that two pathways, one on each side of the park, will designate the two trenches. Flower gardens will be planted, and the schoolchildren from different schools will have various sections to look after. The park will also contain an interpretive centre and a very large memorial in the form of a soldier picking up his mate at Gallipoli.

The City of Albany has also passed a plan in principle to have represented a battalion of soldiers walking up the boardwalk.

Mr McRae: Albany is one of the greatest seaside resorts in Australia.

Mr WATSON: I thank the member. I cannot help but agree. People can go there at any time of the day or night and see whales if they are lucky.

Ms Radisich: Won't it be dark at night?

Mr WATSON: We put little lights on the whales at night so they can be seen, so they do not get hit by the ships. We are very environmentally sensitive in Albany.

People talk about Gallipoli, but many people cannot travel to Gallipoli to see where their grandfathers or great grandfathers fell. However, people can travel to Albany to see the last piece of Australia that those brave soldiers saw before they went to war. Anzac park will have a big painting of all the ships that were in the harbour before they left. I looked at a print of the painting. One of its interesting aspects was a Japanese destroyer, which helped to escort our soldiers to Egypt before they travelled on to Gallipoli. Albany has some tremendous history about the Anzacs.

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The Albany justice complex has an allocation of \$1.6 million as part of an \$11 million budget for the overall project. I do not know whether anybody has seen Albany Police Station or the Albany courthouse. The member for Nedlands indicates that she has seen them. People who have attended the courts there will know that they are archaic. I think the courthouse is 120 years old. I have had the privilege of travelling to Bunbury, Busselton, Fremantle and Geraldton and I have looked at the court complexes there. I would hate to take any of our policemen or court officials to those places because we would never get them back. However, we have looked at all those other places and if there are any faults, we will be able to recognise them and make the Albany justice complex tremendous. The Albany Police Station is very small, but the police officers do a remarkable job.

Ms Sue Walker: You will have to travel to Nedlands and look at its police station.

Mr WATSON: We are looking for more criminals because we do not have enough to keep our prison going.

The budget also makes provision for passing lanes on the road from Kojonup to Albany. It will cost \$1.4 million as part of a \$7 million project. It was tragic to see three people killed just outside Mt Barker the other day. The Perth to Albany road poses a very big problem, especially the stretch from Kojonup to Albany. I do not know whether people get tired before they get to Mt Barker, but that is probably the most lonely and dangerous stretch of road of which I am aware. It has a very high accident rate, as can be seen from the number of crosses on the side of the road.

Mr Waldron: It happens after they leave Kojonup.

Mr WATSON: Yes, people tend to get tired after the bright lights of Kojonup. However, it is a huge problem. The member for Wagin would have driven along that road many times.

Mr Waldron: Main Roads has told me that it needs to get the specifications for that road to a level where people know that they are approaching an overtaking lane and will not take the risk. This morning I saw someone take a stupid risk because of impatience.

Mr WATSON: That road is also a major tourist route. Many tourists from Singapore and Asia arrive in Perth and have never driven more than 100 kilometres at one time. They hire a car and head down the highway. By crikey, they can cause some damage.

The budget also contains provision for \$500 000 for the refurbishment of the Great Southern College of TAFE. It is probably one of the best TAFE colleges in Western Australia, if not Australia. It is great to see that our Government is giving it \$500 000 for refurbishment.

Mr McRae: The review of vocational educational processes that was set up by the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection made an outstanding and valuable contribution to regional people.

Mr WATSON: I will pass that on.

Work will continue on the Albany Regional Hospital paediatric ward. Country hospitals tend to get a bit of flak. The member for Avon tends to relate what happens in hospitals in country areas. I was lucky enough to take country Labor members to see the Albany Regional Hospital. They were very impressed.

Ms Radisich: Was that before or after you took them to the abattoir?

Mr WATSON: It was after the abattoir.

They were quite happy with all the services that are provided there. I would like to congratulate the health service in Albany. It has some remarkable doctors and nurses, who look after the hospital tremendously well. We are having some trouble getting a surgeon and a gynaecologist. One of the major problems that emerged in the estimates committee related to our ability to retain doctors. It was great to hear the Minister for Health say today that all third-party insurance will be paid for doctors.

One thing that I noticed in the member for Stirling's speech during the budget debate was a criticism of the fact that Kalgoorlie got \$3 million for a golf course and that the water for it was to come from Perth. He also criticised the small boat harbour because he said that the Government did not have enough money for it. I always thought that the National Party would be happy for people in country areas to get things like this, especially as the member for Stirling's electorate doughnuts mine. His electorate goes around to where the small boat harbour will go, so I was intrigued and disappointed by his comments. I know that when this message was passed on in the Albany, Denmark and Mt Barker regions, a lot of people were disappointed.

Mr Bowler: In the goldfields too.

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Mr WATSON: The one thing I was happy about was that I could speak for longer than the member for Eyre, who said only four words in his budget speech.

Mr Waldron: On the golf course -

Mr WATSON: I have only two minutes left.

Mr Waldron: I was going to talk about the Katanning Golf Course.

Mr WATSON: The Katanning Golf Course is very good. I have played in the bush there plenty of times.

I congratulate the Government on really looking after country areas. The Albany region and the hinterland have done really well in the first two budgets of this Government. An amount of \$1 million has been budgeted for the Katanning Senior High School refurbishment, \$1 million for a karri-tingle interpretative centre in Walpole, and the Western Power distribution centre to the Denmark-Walpole area will be upgraded. Things are happening all the time in the country. Regional cabinet meetings have been held and there have been regional investment tours. The Premier came down to announce the water strategy. Everything has been done to really help country areas. I congratulate the Government on this tremendous budget.

MS RADISICH (Swan Hills) [9.01 pm]: What can I say? Another year, another budget, and each one as exciting as the last! I want to touch on a few points in the wrapping up of this debate. First, I turn to education. The Swan region has obtained many benefits for education from this budget. Upper Swan Primary School has been privileged to be granted \$1.5 million over the next couple of years for renovations and extensions. It is one of the most fantastic schools in my electorate and is led by principal Chris Reed. It has some innovative teaching and learning programs.

The comments about technology made earlier by the Deputy Speaker certainly apply across the whole metropolitan area. When I visited Upper Swan Primary School last year I was amazed to see young students in years 3 or 4 whipping up PowerPoint presentations, which is a skill I have not mastered even though I consider myself to be of the technological generation, so I too have something to learn from our young primary school students. The need for the renovations and extensions that will occur at that school were pressed upon the Minister for Education, the Government and me by the P&C, particularly through its president Mrs Paula Kosovich. Paula is unrelenting in her quest to make sure that conditions at Upper Swan Primary School are the best that they can be. I am pleased that the Government has been able to grant some funds to ensure that those standards will be improved in the future.

When I went to the school last year I was saddened to see a toilet block at the back of the school that was quite removed from the main centre of activity and near semirural, vacant properties. I was concerned when I saw two young girls holding hands and going off to the bathroom, because no-one knows what unwanted and unwelcome people could be lurking around unpopulated areas of the school. Through these upgrades, the bathroom facilities can be incorporated into a more prominent part of the school so that those safety matters can be addressed. In addition, a new cluster block will be built, which will replace the oldest classroom at the school. I am not quite sure about this, but I think that the classroom the students currently use is the same classroom as that in which my 76-year-old grandmother got her education. I could be wrong, but if I am, my mother would certainly have used that classroom when she was at the school. That gives members an idea of how old the facilities are. I am pleased that they can be updated and regenerated.

Coolamon Primary School is also set to benefit from the recent state budget with a \$5 million allocation to build a new school in village five at Ellenbrook. That project will replace the existing school, which exists as a schools in offices project. This has been an extremely innovative and successful project. I am sure that the new facilities to be built over the next year or two will be far better for the students in the north Ellenbrook region.

There was a disappointing feature of the budget from my point of view because no funding was provided for the development of a high school in Ellenbrook. This is important to me. Ellenbrook is a growing community. It has 8 000 residents at the moment. The population is set to grow, perhaps to up to 30 000 residents over the next 10 or 15 years. At the moment there are two public primary schools, one Christian college and one Catholic primary school at Ellenbrook, but no public high school. That has to be a priority of the Government over the coming years. That is certainly a priority of mine and of many members of the Ellenbrook community, including those residents who have children who are about to go to high school and the community generally. As much as primary schools are focal points of local communities, high schools provide the extra facilities that can really bring a community together by providing access to theatre arts, extra sporting halls and the sorts of community facilities that can be used by both the school and other groups in the area. I flag the great need to establish a high school in Ellenbrook as an issue for future budgets. In the meantime, there are perhaps things

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that can be done to see this project develop as quickly as possible. That could mean developing a middle school or a junior high school as an interim measure, or basing a school on the schools in offices or houses models, which could provide core subjects at high school level and other facilities in the nearby area could be used to offer manual arts and other vocational aspects of high school education. A lot of options are available. I urge the Department of Education to fully explore all the options. I will continue to pressure this Government to make sure that we get an Ellenbrook high school as soon as possible. Residents have been promised a high school since about 1994 or 1995. That did not come to fruition under the previous Government. At this stage, this Government has not been able to fund it either. I am confident that that will happen in the not too distant future.

The second major item I will reflect upon is in the area of small business. Minister Brown revealed during the estimates committee that two main initiatives have been undertaken and funded by the Government.

Mr Bradshaw: Do you know that you are not allowed to call members by their names? We were pulled up today for doing that. It was rubbish.

Ms RADISICH: I think I said Minister Brown.

Mr Bradshaw: We used the term Attorney General McGinty and got pulled up for it.

Ms RADISICH: If that is the case, I will refer to the Minister for Small Business.

Two major initiatives in the area of small business are relevant to my electors, and to people in the Swan Hills area. The first of these is a strategy to promote mature-age entry into small business. In the changing economic climate of the past five to 15 years, many 40 and 50-year-olds have been made redundant as a result of downsizing and other corporate restructuring to increase efficiencies and promote productivity in work places. That has resulted in a number of my constituents turning to other measures to generate incomes to support themselves and their families. One obvious way to do that is to establish their own small businesses. For people who have worked for others, either in the corporate or the government sector, for their entire working lives, it is difficult to understand all the intricacies of successfully establishing and running a small business. I am pleased that the minister has made a commitment to assist mature-aged entrants into the small business sector, so that they have the greatest opportunities to succeed in the enterprises they establish.

The second initiative with which I was extremely impressed was the small business advocacy service. I understand this service has been running for about two months, but has not been officially launched by the Government. The service is intended to help small businesses deal with government departments - to cut through the red tape and provide a liaison service. In some respects, it fulfils a function that some members of Parliament carry out on a daily basis. We are approached by constituents from all sectors of the community, whether it be small businesses, families or others who want their member of Parliament to advocate on their behalf. That is great, but this service is so much better, because it has professionals at the other end of the line with experience in small business, who can go straight to the relevant person in the department to ensure that small business issues are addressed responsibly and properly. The advocacy service is unrestricted in the depth to which it can deal with government departments, and it can deal with local, state and federal matters. If a small business has an issue relating to signage, licensing or employment matters, it can call the advocacy service and hopefully get some results. The best thing about the service is that it is free, so it imposes no new financial burdens on already stressed small business operators. In addition, the time efficiencies will mean much to small business operators. Many members of the Eastern Hills Business Association to whom I have spoken want to be involved in the community much more than they already are, but even attending the meetings of their own association means time away from doing their books, checking their stock and getting their own affairs in order. By providing an opportunity to streamline the search for answers to their problems, the advocacy service will improve their lives. The minister will be launching the service in a couple of months, and I look forward to the brochures being distributed widely. Hopefully, this will be a whole lot better than any models that have been applied in the past and will survive into the long term to help as many small business operators as possible.

MR SWEETMAN (Ningaloo) [9.14 pm]: I will take the opportunity of the third reading debate to make some observations about the Estimates Committee. I did not get an opportunity to make a contribution during the deliberations on the estimates reports made to Parliament earlier today. The concept of holding the estimates committee hearings in each of the Chambers was an extremely good idea. It was great to go to the "House of Lords", and to sit there in that very cosy and roomy environment. I am sure it was great for the ministerial staffers as well. It was also interesting for a member from this Chamber to have a look at where we go when we die!

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I participated in the examinations of fisheries, agriculture and the Gascoyne, and for a part of the examination of transport. I concur with some of the points that were made by you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and one other member about the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. The amount of time she spent in the House over the course of one day, handling both her own ministerial responsibility and those of the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, was a real task. I was not surprised when I came down from the upper House at about 9.30 pm, thinking I would have time to make some comment in this Chamber about the Gascoyne Development Commission, to find that it had concluded and everyone had gone. Obviously the members participating in that committee had some small mercy and pity on the minister, and allowed her to go home.

One thing that must be borne in mind, especially in relation to the primary industry portfolio, is that with the larger portfolios - there are now 14 ministers instead of 17 - the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is also responsible for three development commissions, but still has only three hours allocated to him. Traditionally, primary industry has prompted many questions during the estimate committee hearings. Last year, when hearings took place in the small committee room across the hall, agriculture got the first guernsey, while the fisheries staff - Peter Rogers and others - sat in the hall outside, waiting for an opportunity to go in. I came out of the committee to go up to my room and saw Mr Rogers. He asked how long it would be, and said it looked like being a really late night. It was about 9.50 pm at the time. I said it would not be a late night, because the vote is put at 10.00 pm. He looked at me with a mixture of relief that he would not be kept late, and disappointment that his staff had hung around for the entire period of the committee and only really got in at the last gasp to field a few questions.

This year I am the shadow minister for agriculture, rather than fisheries, and it was quite interesting to go to the upper House, ready to ask questions about agriculture, and have the parliamentary secretary, the member for Cockburn, say to me that, because of the disappointment suffered by fisheries at the last budget estimates hearings, it had been decided to put fisheries on first, just in case it got squeezed out again. There would be many questions about agriculture, so the suggestion was that fisheries would go on first. I had to agree with that, even though I was not happy about it. It certainly made good sense, because there were expectations in the agency that fisheries would get some reasonable amount of questioning. Fisheries went on first, and that session lasted about one and a quarter hours, and then the committee members thought that agriculture would run for the rest of the time available. It did not, because there were still three development commissions to come. Everyone felt a bit cheated. Members felt cheated that they did not ask enough questions and the staff that came in expected far more questions in that short period. One of the development commissions did not even get up at all, while the other two probably got one or two questions each.

Until the Deputy Speaker delivered her report, the Opposition felt it had been really hard done by, and it has still not completely dispensed with that argument. The Opposition thought it never did better than 50-50 in the questions, which alternated between the Government and the Opposition. When I was chairman of committees - I did four budgets as a part of the previous Government - we were instructed by the ministers that this was a time when the Opposition needed to ask the most questions, so we were not to go blow-for-blow between the Government and the Opposition. The opposition members had to be given some reasonable chance.

I reckon the Opposition probably got 70 or 75 per cent of the questions. Quite often we had tussles in estimates committee hearings because the opposition spokespersons thought that they were not getting a reasonable rub of the green. However, I compared the way in which the former Government handled the estimates committee process with the way in which the past two estimates committee hearings have functioned. If the number of questions that were asked in each division were averaged, the Opposition probably asked more than 60 or 65 per cent of the questions. Therefore, the end result is interesting.

Mr Board: Questions, not the time, though.

Mr SWEETMAN: Perhaps not the time. I certainly believe that these estimates committee hearings were better than the previous ones in that we were able to develop themes. We were not cut off if we were developing a theme and did not have to revisit a question. That is how the estimates committee hearings were conducted when I was a member of the Government. Members were able to develop a theme, which meant they could ask five or six questions in rapid fire to close off their questioning on a particular division of the budget.

Mr Board: That is the way it should be.

Mr SWEETMAN: Yes. To some extent that is how the latest estimates committee hearings were conducted. Members were able to ask three or four questions in rapid fire. The call might then go to another opposition

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member to run out the questions that he or she had on a particular division. Therefore, it was well done in that respect.

One thing that needs to be tidied up in the estimates committee hearings is the comfort breaks, which I think they will now be called but which were previously referred to as smoko or tea breaks. The officers from the agencies were in this Parliament for the estimates committee hearings, but it seemed strange to me that when we suspended for morning or afternoon tea, we all headed off in different directions. I do not know whether the minister chose to take away his or her staff so that they could enjoy morning or afternoon tea together while members of Parliament went to the cabinet dining room to enjoy a cup of tea. I would like to think that there could be an opportunity for members on both sides of Parliament to mingle and have a free interchange or discussion with those agency people. Next year, I hope that the formal comfort breaks in the two committees can be scheduled to take place at different times so that the staff and members of Parliament can enjoy a cup of tea and a scone together in one area.

Mr Bradshaw: The Department of Health hearing went from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm without a scheduled break.

Mr SWEETMAN: That is crazy. However, a lot of people in that hearing probably would have been reluctant to take a break. We must have some sympathy for the minister and the ministerial staff, because they must remain in the Chamber during the hearing. They cannot duck out in case a member asks a question on the division -

Mr Board: Why do you need a break in five hours?

Mr SWEETMAN: Members of Parliament who were asking questions could take a break, but many people were required to stay in the Chamber. It was discourteous to expect and probably uncomfortable for them to sit in the Chamber for that period. I support any move to give those people a break.

Mr Bradshaw: There should be a scheduled break between 9.00 am and 2.00 pm, because at one stage nobody knew what to do.

Mr SWEETMAN: Yes. I was able to ask a number of questions on the night my shadow portfolio responsibilities were dealt with, and I received some reasonable responses from the parliamentary secretary, and particularly from people to whom he deferred; namely, Mr Mike Marsh and Dr Graeme Robertson, who is the Director General of the Department of Agriculture. Following the estimates committee hearing, they have been kind enough to follow up with additional information on those areas in which they were not able to provide all the answers to the questions I asked.

The agriculture portfolio is interesting. Other members have already made some points about it. The reduction in agriculture's budget is of concern. In real terms, it looks like the budget has decreased by at least a couple of million dollars when the cost shifting from one section of the agency to another is taken into account. There has also been a reduction in the allocation to full-time equivalents. My understanding is that 55 FTEs will not be laid off but, through natural attrition, the work force will be reduced by 55. That will have dire consequences, particularly for some of the regional agricultural offices. The farming, horticultural and pastoral industries have become dependent on the information and intelligence that many of the regional offices can supply to them. I am concerned also about the Agriculture Protection Board and the detection of diseases and things like that. The position now being taken seems to be that the agency will be reactive rather than proactive. Staff are being withdrawn from many of the offices, in not only the country areas but also the city. Monitoring and surveillance within the agricultural areas are seen to have less significance in making sure that people are in tune and that any outbreak of a highly infectious disease is picked up as early as possible.

I believe that some interesting times are ahead for the agricultural industry in general, particularly with the strengthening dollar. Although it is around 56c against the United States dollar at the moment, it has been above 57c in the past few days. That is a clear indication that the dollar will probably stabilise at a higher value than it has done for a couple of years. On top of that, tariffs and other blocks have been put in place in various markets around the world. We have not taken those markets for granted, but we have been able to access and make reasonable money at the margins in those markets. It is clear to me that the agricultural industry will face some pretty tough times if the Australian dollar continues to strengthen.

Being the shadow spokesperson for agriculture has its pitfalls. I tend to take a businesslike approach to the task. When one looks at any business proposal, one of the first things one does is to try to weigh up the abilities and strengths of the opposition. Our opposition is all our competing trading nations. We try to place products into the various markets and hope that we can do so at a price that is cheaper than our opposition, so that we can retain those markets. We will have to fight very hard. In the past five, 10 or 15 years, Governments have been

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too kind to many of our agricultural industries, whether it be through grants, subsidies or things of that nature. Many areas in the farming, pastoral and horticultural industries have not developed because they have been quite comfortable to sit back and collect a subsidy. They have not sharpened their business skills or made the right decisions at key times to further develop their business. In the next two to five years it will be interesting to see what happens in the pastoral and farming areas and whether the move to large operations and corporate-style farming will be fast-tracked. Those operations already exist, but it is likely to happen to a greater extent, with amalgamations of perhaps two or three farms. If the Pastoral Lands Board and the minister agree, there will probably be amalgamations of two or three pastoral leases as well, so that those operations will become more viable. At the end of the day, they will be able to place their products in international markets only if they are competitive.

Although Australia screams about the subsidies that will be provided to United States farmers under the US farm Bill during the next 10 years, Australia has had an advantage. The United States has had the misfortune to have a strong, stable economy, and probably the strongest currency in the world. Therefore, Australia has had an advantage while its currency has been nearly half the value of the US currency. When everything is taken into account, it might be found that Australian farmers are disadvantaged because they must import chemicals, farm machinery and things like that. However, at the end of the day, they are selling into a country in which the US farmers think that the Australian farmers are not necessarily subsidised - although they are to a small extent - but have an advantage because the Australian currency is basically the value of a currency in a developing nation - a third-world nation almost. However, over time, that will stop. The Australian dollar will continue to appreciate, and our farmers will need some help from government, not so much in the form of subsidies or handouts, but in knowledge, advice and nurturing the industry to get it through these times and to take it to a better stage in its business and product development so that it is internationally competitive, regardless of the value of our currency and to some extent regardless of the tariffs and barriers it is confronted with in some of the international markets. With those few remarks, I am pleased to complete my contribution to the third reading on the budget debate.

MR DEAN (Bunbury) [9.31 pm]: I preface my contribution to the third reading debate on the budget by saying that as a new observer to Parliament I find it fascinating that opposition members do not talk about their electorates in any great detail. I assume that members opposite are as proud as government members are of their electorates. I do not understand why they do not talk about them.

Several opposition members interjected.

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order, members!

Mr DEAN: It is good to see that the same courtesy is extended to both sides of the House. The electorate of Bunbury did not fare -

Ms Sue Walker interjected.

Mr DEAN: The member for Nedlands' tone is quite obnoxious at times.

Several members interjected.

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order, members!

Mr DEAN: The Bunbury electorate did not fare as well as it did in the last budget. Many of the projects on the Bunbury 2020 agenda were met. The recent budget put the icing on the cake for a few of the agenda items. After we build a revised version of Bunbury 2020, I will look forward to next year's budget, which will be taken to the electorate the following year. I will go through a few of the minor allocations in the budget that Bunbury is proud to receive, and not the macro details concentrated on by members opposite.

I refer to the Leschenault Peninsula which, strictly speaking, is not in the electorate of Bunbury. However, it may become a part of the electorate after the redistribution of boundaries. The Leschenault Peninsula is a tongue of land between the Leschenault Inlet and the Indian Ocean. An analogy is Halls Head, which is in the Mandurah area. To all intents and purposes, it is not a pristine site; rather, it is fairly rugged. It has remained unchanged since it was first settled in the 1830s and 1840s, when it was a station that raised water buffalo and horses for India. Indeed, the main entrance to Leschenault Peninsula is Buffalo Road, a name derived from its previous use as a water buffalo station. The Government has allocated \$250 000 for the upgrade of the peninsula. The \$150 000 received in last year's budget was wisely spent on an interpretive centre for John Boyle O'Reilly. Boardwalks have also been constructed in delicate wetland environments. All in all, the money was

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spent fairly wisely. The next \$250 000 will take the O'Reilly walkways closer to the beach where O'Reilly escaped in 1868.

In its eight years in office, the coalition Government never tackled the issue of a new secondary school in the greater Bunbury region. It took the previous and present Labor Government to build both new high schools within the greater Bunbury region. Eaton High School - a high school that was much needed - has been allocated \$8.6 million in the budget. The school will probably be dated by the time it receives its first student intake. There will probably be a need for a North Australind senior high school, to cover the Kingston area and the area north of the current senior high school. The Bunbury 2020 agenda will also look at a new senior high school site south of Bunbury. Newton Moore Senior High School probably has between 1 200 and 1 300 students, and the figure was only 900 a few years ago. Given the expected growth in Dalyellup Beach, students will either attend the Catholic college, Newton Moore Senior High School or Cathedral Grammar School. There is already pressure on Newton Moore Senior High School. There is a need in the south of Bunbury, the member for Vasse's area, for a new senior high school. Such a measure was pencilled into the Bunbury 2020 agenda, and it is a proposition that will be resurrected in next year's budget.

One of the primary problems in Bunbury that the Government was able to solve - which the previous Government ran away from and over which the member for Mitchell threatened to resign - was the issue of the Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School. The member for Mitchell often performed such stunts. He threatened to resign if the Djidi Djidi school was placed on the old Picton Primary School site, which is the current location of the Bunbury Community School. He felt that the community school should be the user of the site. That is rather ironic given that the property belongs to the Western Australian people. For the information of members, the Djidi Djidi Primary School, which has received an expenditure of \$1.5 million out of a total between \$5 million and \$6 million for the primary school, will move about 100 metres from the Bunbury Community School, the same site over which the member Mitchell threatened to resign. The Government was able to make the difficult decision about where the Djidi Djidi school should be located, and the planning has already started. I had a bit of a knock-back in this matter because the education minister refused time off for the principal so that she could carry out the proper planning process and ensure that the school received all that it needed. He did not approve the request I made in writing; however, I am still pursuing the matter through the system. Dalyellup Primary School is a wonderful school, and one built on the public-private partnership principle, because it is a school near the Dalyellup shops. It is also one of the schools putting pressure on Newton Moore Senior High School. That is one of the reasons we need another senior high school in the south of Bunbury area.

Another project for Bunbury is the harbour development, of which there are several aspects. The port development and containerisation of the Bunbury port facility must be considered. The Government has allocated \$2.3 million in the budget for the containerisation of the Bunbury port. The business case has yet to be proved in total. It must be proved that container movement through the south west and out through the Bunbury port is a needed asset. One million dollars was spent on pilot boats for the harbour. It was disappointing that money for the port access was not provided in the budget, especially given the expansion of blue gums in the Donnybrook region, in the south east of Bunbury and in the Collie region. The Collie region is a different catchment area, and 200 000 tonnes of blue gums will soon come from that area. I imagine that Donnybrook will also have similar amounts -

Mr Bradshaw: And live sheep.

Mr DEAN: Yes, live sheep and cattle are exported from Bunbury. Port access will be a major requirement for the port of Bunbury between the next five and 10 years. There is also the prospect of an iron and steel mill in Collie, which will generate a lot of port use. That port use should come via the railways rather than the roads. I was briefed by the port authority chairman and chief executive officer last week, and the amount of road traffic that will come to the port of Bunbury once the Collie and Donnybrook blue gum industries get going is staggering.

The budget contains \$2.9 million for the Kemerton expansion. I imagine that it is mainly for water and electricity provision. It is interesting to note that the Department of Environmental Protection or Western Power - I cannot remember which - placed advertisements in last week's *South Western Times* calling for submissions on new power stations at the port of Bunbury and Kemerton and a coal-fired station at Collie. We wish everyone the best with the power procurement process.

All in all, Bunbury did remarkably well out of the state budget, although not as well as it could have done and not as well as it did last year. We will revamp the Bunbury 2020 agenda and I assume the Opposition will do much the same and produce some sort of agenda to take to the people. I look forward to the challenge of

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matching that. Next year, regardless of the redistribution, Bunbury will rightfully achieve what it deserves as the capital of the south west.

MR BOARD (Murdoch) [9.41 pm]: In the short time I have to contribute to the third reading debate on the appropriation Bills I will concentrate on my shadow portfolio of health rather than on my electorate, which I would prefer to do in some aspects. I want to put on the record a number of issues that came out of the estimates committee hearings, particularly one that the Opposition believes it explored prior to the hearings. We made a number of comments in the second reading debate, some of which were of interest to the media and the Parliament. We need to again put them on the record and discuss what came out of the hearings and what we learnt through the scrutiny of the real records, rather than what is contained in the rhetoric and press releases that came out with the budget. The first and most important point relates to the overall health budget. The minister put out press releases indicating that the health budget had increased by 4.3 per cent. He said that there was a 2.2 per cent inflation rate, even though in the budget papers the Treasurer predicted a three per cent inflation rate. According to the minister, the overall health budget had increased by 1.3 per cent in real terms. When the minister was put under scrutiny and we were able to deal with his advisers, we learnt that the only increase in the budget was an increase in the outputs and that the overall health budget - the amount of money it costs to fund the health budget in Western Australia - had gone up by only two per cent, which in real terms is a minus one per cent increase. The media have not picked that up, even though we had made it very clear to them that the overall funding in the health budget was minus one per cent on last year. I put that on the record.

A number of other things came out of the estimates committee process. Another issue is the progress of the Health Administrative Review Committee report. Although there have been many ministerial statements and press releases about the HARC report, progress has been extremely slow because of difficulties in the appointment process. That has had a domino effect. The Labor Government has delivered its second budget, but many of the promises that were made to the Western Australian community prior to the state election have not been met. The Government is almost a third of the way through its term, and is moving towards the 50 per cent mark. Virtually none of those promises of major reforms in health has been met. The minister indicated to the Western Australian community via press release that the recent pay rise for doctors in Western Australia was in tune with the general wages policy of rises between three and four per cent. We found when we put the minister and his advisers, including the head of corporate services, under scrutiny that the pay rise for doctors ran between six per cent and 25 per cent. Those figures have nothing to do with the press release. We also found that the pay rise will cost the Western Australian community an additional \$80 million over the term of the two-year agreement. That flies in the face of what the Government told the media, and what the media published; that is, that the increase is in line with the general wages policy. Put under scrutiny, the minister agreed to that. We feel that the Western Australian community has been misled, and we have been trying to make that point.

Health accounts for almost 24 per cent of the state budget. A massive amount of money is required to run the growing and demanding health area. We also found during the scrutiny of the minister during the estimates committee hearings that the capital works budget for new works is at a record low. In fact, only \$8.5 million has been allocated to new works in health, and only \$5.5 million of that is for this year. In other words, the majority of capital works projects have been ongoing for two to four years and are reaching conclusion. They are in their last years of construction. I asked the minister what he will do when he has finished opening all the projects the coalition Government put in place. Where are his new capital works projects and initiatives in the health area? They are nonexistent. That will become very evident over the next year or two when there is a big vacuum of new health projects, hospital upgrades and so forth.

The three major indicators in the health area - that is, the measure of where we are - have always been elective surgery, the cost of separations and the number of ambulance bypasses. All are increasing and are at record levels. Ambulance bypass is now a daily occurrence. The incidence of bypass is 1 000 per cent higher than it was when we left government. The Treasury documents show that waiting times for elective surgery are on the increase. In other words, people are waiting longer for elective surgery than they were when we left government. The cost of separations in Western Australia - that is, the cost of a number of procedures and for people to be treated within the public hospital system - is often considered the highest in the country. It is above the average. I believe it is a 12 per cent increase. Contrary to all the promises that the Minister for Health has made about reducing the high costs of tertiary separations and bringing them in line with those in the private sector, they are going up and in real terms are much higher than anywhere else in Australia.

The Government made a commitment to rural health. Although it made many promises, its actual expenditure was at very poor levels. In its scrutiny of the budget the Opposition indicated that although there had been a number of press releases about increasing the resources to rural, remote and regional hospitals the reality was

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that, with the costs that Treasury had built in and passed on to those hospitals, they had less money to deliver services, and in that sense there had been real cuts. Recently, regional areas voiced their concerns about the sacking of regional and rural hospital boards. In fact, no hospital boards will operate in Western Australia. As a result of that, communities will be denied direct administrative control of their local hospitals. The Minister for Health indicated that was in the general interests of the rural and Western Australian communities. What it meant was that the minister had removed from local communities the huge input they have had in fundraising and in supporting local health services.

Mr Watson: They do not have to worry about insurance or being sued.

Mr BOARD: I indicate to the member for Albany that I attended a meeting at The Vines on the weekend with 180 shire presidents, local councillors and people involved in administering local government throughout Western Australia who were devastated about the Government's decision. They were extremely concerned about the delivery of health services in their areas. They voiced their concerns to the Minister for Health and to Mike Daube, the Director General of Health in Western Australia.

Mr Watson: How many out of 180?

Mr BOARD: I did not play politics, but I can assure the member that when they came together they were all concerned about this. Country areas are experiencing a shortage of general practitioners, nurses and other health professionals. The minister is well aware of that and we were aware of that when we were in government. Many of these local authorities, local community organisations, Rotary groups and hospital boards had got together to provide incentives to attract people to those areas. That is how South African doctors have been attracted to country areas. The local communities have built houses for the doctors and nurses, and clinics for the doctors. Those facilities were not funded by the State Government but out of money raised by the community, Rotary and various people getting together.

Mr Watson: Those people will still do that. They will not just stop.

Mr BOARD: The member for Albany does not understand. They had ownership of their hospitals.

Mr Watson: They still have.

Mr BOARD: No, they do not; the Government has taken it away from them. Only one person, if that, will have a place on a regional board. The Government has disfranchised those people, and I am very concerned about that.

Mr Watson: You are putting down country people by saying they will not look after their hospitals. That is rubbish.

Mr BOARD: No, I am not. The Government has short-changed them.

Mr Watson: You do not know country people if you think they are going to do that.

Mr BOARD: The member should ask the Minister for Health why he sacked those hospital boards.

Mr Watson: How can you stand there and say that country people will do that? Country people do not let their friends or their hospitals down. That is a disgrace.

Mr BOARD: The member should ask himself why the minister sacked the hospital boards.

Mr Watson: It is a disgrace saying that.

Mr BOARD: Why?

Mr Watson: The member should go into the country and say country people will not look after their hospitals because there are no boards. That is absolute rubbish.

Mr BOARD: Why did the minister sack the boards?

Mr Watson: There were 71 different boards and now there will be six.

Mr BOARD: They were all concerned about their hospitals. They were trying to do the right thing and raise money. The boards were a threat to the minister's making cuts to rural hospital expenditure. They know it and the member knows it.

Mr Watson: Rubbish!

Mr BOARD: That is the reality. It does not matter how much the member tries to gloss over it; it is about cost cutting and trying to centralise decision making with the bureaucrats rather than letting the community have a real say.

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We saw some extraordinary things in the budget. Health Direct is a phone service that provides advice to people seeking health services. That is running in Western Australia at the cost of \$34 a phone call, which is a 12 per cent increase on the cost last year. I asked the minister how he could justify the cost of a call to the Department of Health running at \$34 when people could see a GP for that. The answer was that he did not know and he would look at it. I suggest that the minister needs to have a very good look at it because it is costing the Western Australian community millions of dollars. Health Direct is an important service, but surely it ought to be more cost effective than that.

The Government has shown a lack of commitment to the major decisions that are needed. The budget contained nothing about promoting and supporting more GPs in the country. It did not provide incentives for nurses to go into the country; hence some of those major issues. The budget contained no major funding to sort out some of the problems with hospital waiting lists. The minister says he has a commitment to emergency areas and he has undertaken a review of that area. However, no funding was committed to that area in the budget. We found no major commitment to sort out the growing waiting lists for elective surgery. All we saw were some great press releases prior to the budget. The budget came down and there were some misleading statements about its size and direction, but it did not stand up to scrutiny. In reality health costs are growing at between seven and nine per cent in Western Australia, whereas the health budget increased by two per cent, or minus one per cent in real terms. Where does this leave us? Health services in Western Australia are under increasing pressure. The budget did not go anywhere towards meeting the election promises or rhetoric of the Government.

MR McRAE (Riverton) [9.55 pm]: I do not want to keep the House longer than necessary. However, I want to take the opportunity to record a couple of things important to the community that I represent in the electorate of Riverton in the suburbs of Parkwood, Riverton and Shelley and in those small parts of Leeming, Rossmoyne and Lynwood that are also part of my community. I want to put on the record the priority that the communities I represent place on education. I do that with some pride because it is only 16 months ago that the people of Western Australia elected a Labor Government to this side of the Chamber. They did that because they wanted a Parliament and representatives who had a vision for our community. I am proud to be a member of the Gallop Labor Government that sees education, health and community safety not as platitudes and rhetoric, but as demonstrated priorities that it will put in place in not only budgetary terms but also the daily work that we do to make those services the best that they can be.

This is a great Labor budget because it gives those key areas and priorities in my community and across the State the resources that they need and deserve. This budget has allocated a record \$2.4 billion to health. It provides for an increase of 300-plus new teachers starting in our state school system at the beginning of the 2003 school year. We see in this budget the increased intake of police that we guaranteed going into last year's election. This budget is delivering on those core promises on the key priorities of the Western Australian community and certainly my community.

It is also a great Labor budget because in very difficult economic straits the Treasurer has produced a budget that is in surplus. We are not in the middle of the boom times of the nineties. This is not a Government that is selling off the people's assets to try to balance the books.

In the middle of that, we can deliver the increased outputs to our budget priorities and fashion a modest - indeed, slim - budget surplus. That is a great achievement in modern budgetary terms and it is a great achievement for a Labor Government in its first full year. It puts a lie to the charade of the campaign run by the conservatives last year when they plastered across television screens "Don't trust Labor". In my electorate, the people who might not have voted Labor previously, because Riverton had been a Liberal-held seat, are pleasantly surprised that they can trust Labor not to privatise people's assets, to put money into the priorities that it said it would and to engage in consultation with the community on its key priorities. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure demonstrated that engagement today, both in a ministerial statement and during question time, when she talked about the freight review that has been ongoing since last October. That review has been remarked on by industry people, community people and environmentalists as one of the most innovative and inclusive processes that they have seen operate in any sector of government for many years. I am proud to be part of a Government that has delivered to the community that sort of engagement and empowerment in decision making.

The State's record \$2.4 billion health budget includes \$6.1 million for upgrades to hospitals and health services across the south metropolitan health service region, which services most of the people in my electorate. That money is set aside for upgrades to Fremantle Hospital, our major regional hospital. The people in my electorate are also applauding the extra \$31.5 million allocated in the next four years to the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women and the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, which will deliver upgraded and better wards. People are well aware of the deterioration in the physical infrastructure of hospitals. They know that this

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sort of expenditure will put back resources in a way that will begin a repair process to our hospitals, which must be done.

It is also recognised in my community that the Government's effort to bring nurses back into the system is a credible ingredient to improving health care services. Putting aside for the moment buildings and doctors, at bedsides nurses are the key to the hour-by-hour care and monitoring of the health and wellbeing of patients. Our Government will give that priority to increasing the numbers of nurses in the system. That is a great achievement on our part and I look forward in coming years to working with the very dedicated, intelligent and well respected Minister for Health towards bringing nurses back into the system.

It is also evidenced in my electorate that the education budget has Labor and the community's priorities stamped all over it. The member for Murdoch and I share the catchment group for Rossmoyne Senior High School. Although that school is just over the boundary between us, it is, in fact, in his electorate and students attending Rossmoyne Senior High School come from both the Murdoch and Riverton electorates. This year the long-awaited \$2 million bonus from the sale of AlintaGas will be delivered to Rossmoyne Senior High School for the construction of -

Mr Board: Thanks to the coalition Government.

Mr McRAE: I will come to that in a moment. Well might the member for Murdoch thank the coalition Government. If he said that to the teachers at Rossmoyne Senior High School today, I am not sure whether they would be that fulsome in their praise. They would say that it is too little, it is way too late and it will not deliver what they need in their community. They would say that because in the past eight years not one cent was spent on major maintenance or upgrades at Rossmoyne Senior High School.

Mr Board: That is not true.

Mr McRAE: If the member for Murdoch does not believe that to be true, he should ask the teachers at Rossmoyne Senior High School and the Minister for Education and he should check with the Fremantle education district records, as I have done. He will find that not one cent was put into major maintenance or upgrades at Rossmoyne Senior High School for more than eight years. Frankly, that is a damnation of the previous Government's priorities. Two senior ministers in the previous Government represented that school, which is rated No 1 by the Australian newspapers survey of schools in Australia. It is clearly the most outstanding academically achieving school in this State, yet not one cent was spent on major maintenance or upgrades of a major kind in eight years; that is an absolute disgrace. The parents of children attending Rossmoyne Senior High School are well aware of the problems they face in trying to catch up.

The \$2 million allocated to the school is terrific. It is terrific that, having sold AlintaGas, we are delivering the \$2 million and that the school will get a performance and multimedia centre for learning and teaching. However, it is an absolute disgrace that on the back of that, last year a whole section of covered walkway in a major thoroughfare of the school, where children normally sit to have morning tea or lunch, collapsed to the ground five minutes before they got out of class for recess. We are blessed that nobody was injured, or indeed killed. If that had happened during a recess or lunchtime, I believe we would be talking about a death or certainly a major injury. I have to ask why part of a school can collapse like that. It collapsed because not one cent was spent on that school for major maintenance or upgrades in the eight years that the coalition conservative Government was in power. That is a disgrace.

I have had discussions with the member for Murdoch and, in all fairness, we are taking a bipartisan approach to see what he and I can do to assist that school get the resources it needs for an upgrade and to take the performance centre to the standard that will make it a stand-out facility and teaching and learning centre. I give credit to the member for Murdoch. I approached him and he and I have had discussions about it. We will work on it and do whatever we can to make that a great performance and multimedia centre.

That is one school. There are three major high schools in my electorate. The other two major high schools are Willetton Senior High School and Lynwood Senior High School, which are also outstanding schools in their communities. Willetton Senior High School has a great mix of vocational education and academic learning. It also has a very keen sports program. In the past 10 years it has been possibly the leading basketball school in Western Australia; indeed, it has won a couple of national championships. The combination of vocational education, academic learning and sports programs in Willetton is exceptional. At Lynwood Senior High School -

Ms McHale: It is a great school.

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 18 June 2002]
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Mr John Kobelke; Mr Arthur Marshall; Acting Speaker; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Paul Omodei; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Peter Watson; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Tony Dean; Mr Mike Board; Mr Tony McRae

Mr McRAE: Yes, it is a great school. It is another school that I share with another member, the member for Thornlie and Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth. People who attend Lynwood Senior High School come from both my electorate and the electorate of the member for Thornlie. In our work together, there is a focus on delivering services to the needs of the community. Last year Lynwood Senior High School continued to develop its vocational educational program, as a result of which it was a great achievement for that school to be placed on the top rungs of vocational education and training achievers in this State. Each of those high schools in the Riverton electorate is achieving extraordinary things for their school communities and each is delivering the services that those communities are after. They do that for a couple of reasons. I never cease to give praise when it is due and in this case it is due to the parents and teachers in each of those schools who work way beyond the call of duty. There is absolutely no question that the people who participate in the parents and citizens groups in each of those schools provide the framework and basic learning culture that give those high schools the sorts of achievements we see today.

It is also true to say that is evident for each of the primary schools. Parkwood, Riverton, Rostrata, Burrendah, Banksia Park and Shelley Primary Schools are all outstanding in their own ways. They all have nurturing and learning communities that are looking for innovation in the support of their children's development.

At Castlereagh School a respite centre is being constructed for the parents of children with special needs. I must place on the record my thanks to some old friends and colleagues: Jim Murie from the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union, his son James Junior, and Ian Hamilton. Three of us some 20 years ago were electricians in the iron ore industry in the Pilbara and members of the electrical trades union. We came together and volunteered our time to put in the airconditioning system for the respite centre at Castlereagh School. I am very proud to have been able to assist with that. I know that the CEPU and Ian Hamilton are also very proud and pleased to have been part of that. I also congratulate Orana and Queen of Apostles Catholic Primary Schools for their efforts.

There is much work to be done on transport issues in my community. Those questions surrounding Roe Highway and the impact on South Street and Leach Highway are still to be worked through. I will be talking to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure about that. Much work is still to be done on environmental protection. The Canning Regional Park Advisory Committee, of which I am chairperson, is continuing to do its good work. Community groups, such as the 1st Canning Sea Scouts, are outstanding community service groups. I look forward to being part of a Government that not only sets the right priorities in government, but also will continue to work with the community in the years to come to make my electorate and the surrounding district the best it can be.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Kobelke.

House adjourned at 10.12 pm
