

Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Acting Speaker; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Troy Buswell; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Max Trenorden

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration - Motion

Resumed from 27 February on the following question -

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Serpentine-Jarrahdale) [3.23 pm]: I take this opportunity to speak about my electorate, as members do each year during debate on the Premier's Statement. As a relatively new member, I feel that Parliament is under a big cloud that is hanging heavy over many members in this house. It is something that we must work through, but, with the situations that are evolving, it is certainly not a nice time to be a member of Parliament. I think enough has been said in the chamber about the matter, but I put on the record that it is not a nice process to be going through.

Even though I officially represent a metropolitan seat, quite a large portion of my electorate is semi-rural or rural. It has problems with access to the basic services that are enjoyed in neighbouring suburbs.

I will touch on a few issues. The Jarrahdale link road has been an issue in my area for about seven or eight years. A very strong campaign was run against the then coalition government in the late 1990s in relation to a link road through Jarrahdale. We have now come forward some seven or eight years and the issue is still in the process of being developed. However, I will give the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure some credit because she has formulated some plans, which are being circulated. Nevertheless, it is still taking a long time to resolve. A cloud is hanging over the town of Jarrahdale and the people of Serpentine-Jarrahdale because they want to try to resolve this issue. I urge the minister to resolve this as soon as possible so that we can move forward.

That leads me to the other issue of the Tonkin Highway extension. An extension around Byford down to Mundijong has been promised. It has been on the agenda for quite some time. In December 2005 the minister opened the extension of the Tonkin Highway from Martin to Thomas Road in Byford. It has had quite an impact on my area. I will quote some figures to the house. An estimated 13 700 vehicles travel through Byford on the South Western Highway every week. Many of them are heavy vehicles. That means that there are 1 435 additional cars and trucks travelling through Byford every week. According to information obtained from the minister's office, traffic along Thomas Road into Byford has increased by over 80 per cent in the same period. The Tonkin Highway extension is a great access road but where it currently terminates is just compounding the issue of the South Western Highway, and especially in my home town of Byford. I urge the minister to give some clear direction on that matter and to get something happening. She made a promise to me that there are some funds in the 2008 budget. I will be holding her to that.

I made a grievance last year to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services about the Mundijong Police Station. I hope that the minister will take it into consideration in this year's budget. The police station is some 50-odd years old and was built to house two police officers but is now used by seven officers. The police station needs some basic facilities such as holding cells and so forth. There is no lunch room and only one shower. Those types of issues cause problems. The minister has promised me that he will look at the issues when preparing the current budget. I will hold him to that.

Like all outer metropolitan areas, Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Byford and surrounding areas are experiencing major growth. That is starting to have a flow-on effect on the local schools. Byford has three primary schools. One is a private school and the other two are government schools. The two government schools have a combined student population of about 620 pupils. Population pressures are affecting both schools. Byford Primary School will lose its music and Indonesian room because it will be made into another classroom. Music and Indonesian classes will be put back into the library. It is a shame to lose the room but there is pressure for more classrooms. Marri Grove Primary School has just over 360 students and is in the same situation: it is being squeezed for space. It is only a matter of time before more transportable classrooms will be put on the site to keep up with student growth in the area. The time has come, with more than 3 000 blocks of land on the market, for the Minister for Education and Training to look at the process. I understand that there is a four-year program for locking in the building of new schools. With projected growth and the level of sales and building at the moment perhaps the process should be brought forward before we end up with overcrowded schools. The Atwell Primary School, which has just under 1 000 pupils, is in my electorate. Ranford Primary School and Campbell Primary School have about 800 to 900 students each. They are very big primary schools. I would hate to see the schools in my area end up like those schools.

Last year we finally opened our local high school. It is actually a grammar school. That is great for our community because our area has lacked a high school for many years. It opened last year with 45 students. It now has 112 students, which is great. That has given the community a centre into which it can pull together.

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Quite a few of the students are in the cadets. The school also has equestrian, cricket and netball teams. They are from just two classes. The school is making a big impact. I note that the member for Bassendean was involved in the process. He will be happy to hear that it is going well.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I will do, member for Bassendean. I will move on to a couple of other issues in my electorate. I had the opportunity to tour Karnet Prison Farm the other week and to see the new fence that was being put up late last year and early this year. It is just about completed. The workers are just tidying up some loose ends. The prison now has a nice big fence around it. I cannot help but worry about the impact of it, though. For those members who are not familiar with the Karnet Prison Farm, there is an abattoir on site that produces all the meat for all the prisons in Western Australia. It all comes out of that one prison farm. In addition, there are some other industries, some fruit trees and so forth. There is a workshop in which the prisoners make bedside tables, chests of drawers and so on, which are sent to factories to be stained. A great workshop process is happening there. Now that the fence has been put all around the prison farm, I am concerned that the prison farm might be slightly upgraded as prisoner numbers grow. In the future, I can see the prison farm being upgraded very easily from a minimum-security prison to a semi medium-security prison because of the fence. However, it was great to see that the prison farm is doing well. It could do with the injection of some more money. I had a meeting with Richard Harding, who is the Inspector of Custodial Services. He highlighted a number of points in his report. I can definitely see that more money could be put into infrastructure to help with the process of rehabilitating the prisoners so that they can go back into society. It is a fantastically run prison and what it does is great.

A few issues have arisen in my electorate regarding public transport. As members will be well aware, late last year there was talk of the *Australind* service ceasing. Many petitions were presented by me, the member for Bunbury and Hon Barry House. I think we have had a good win because the train service will continue to run. That train is very important to my electorate, because a lot of people who live in the Keysbrook and Serpentine areas catch the train to Perth and back every day to go to work. This is their only means of transport to and from Perth. Once again, an outer area has had to fight to keep its local transport service.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Well done, member. It was a backdown by the minister. You did very well.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I thank the member for Capel. The other issue I have is with general school bus services in the Jarrahdale area. As an outer metropolitan area, it must rely on its buses. Jarrahdale has about two buses a day. Last Monday, 14 kids were actually forced off the school bus that leaves Jarrahdale and goes down through Byford to Armadale Senior High School because they do not attend the Armadale Senior High School. About four of them won scholarships to Kelmscott Senior High School and, therefore, are unable to catch a bus to school. Now their mums and dads must drive them down to Byford so that they can hop onto another bus to get to Armadale and then go on to Kelmscott Senior High School. I have written to the Minister for Education and Training explaining the situation. I understand the government's transport policy is that a student should go to the nearest high school, unless that student has certain religious beliefs and so forth. However, Jarrahdale is slightly different from the metropolitan area. It is slightly isolated. It is about eight or 10 kilometres off the main drag where other transport is available. Only two buses service the area each day, and this school bus is the only one that they can travel on. This has created a predicament whereby 14 kids are now car pooling to come down the hill to the highway so that they can catch a bus to Kelmscott Senior High School or other schools. I hope the minister will take that on board when he receives the letter and sort out that problem, because there is a lot of angst in our community about it.

I will touch on a couple of other issues within my shadow portfolios of information technology and communication. It is great to see that the government is now taking a bit of a lead step in this area. I noticed that today it launched a broadband program. Although the state government has made the point that telecommunications is a federal government issue - I agree with that to a certain degree - if the state government becomes more involved in it, the return to the community for the money invested will be tenfold. I will try to explain it. In the early 1900s there was a gold rush in Kalgoorlie, and the only person who made any money out of that gold rush was the guy who sold people the pan to sift for gold. In telecommunications, the Internet has become very popular, and the only person who makes money out of it is the person who owns the phone line. When we are looking at infrastructure, the most important thing to remember is that a phone line is a piece of infrastructure that will make money. It is no different from road or rail infrastructure. The government should look at becoming involved in this issue a little more and trying to find a way to leverage more money out of the federal government by taking more control of its own lines. We are now going down the road of privatising telecommunications in Australia, and it will get bigger. If, as Queensland has done, other governments can take hold of and control their IT industry, they will experience a boom.

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Western Australia has a great economy because of the mining industry. People with very few skills can get a very high paid job. This will come back to bite us in a few years if the boom ends. We will have a big workforce with limited skills. It will be hard to bring those people back into the workforce. We often hear businesses complain about a lack of staff and the fact that they cannot get decent people because the mining industry is sucking them up. It is great that everyone is getting paid well, but in 10 or 20 years' time, whenever the boom drops off, we will have an unskilled workforce. Anyone who has young kids trying to enter the workforce should tell them that, sure, times are great, but there have been times when they were not so great. If there is any advice they should be given, it is to make sure that they get a trade or profession behind them, as it is so easy to slip into the routine of earning \$1 000 in the mines, but when the mine drops off, that worker is left sitting on the edge. We have to prepare ourselves for that in the future.

The information technology industry is very similar. When I ask young kids whether they are interested in the IT industry, all they can think about is sitting in a cubicle doing data entry work, which is far from the truth about those jobs. Jobs in the IT industry cover a wide spectrum and involve a lot more than just data entry. The Perth-Mandurah railway employs at least half a dozen IT people who work on computer-operated train stops, alarms, bells and so forth. There is a lot of work involved with that one line alone. The industry is crying out for people. I have always said to young people that they cannot go wrong with the IT industry because it can take them anywhere. It is one of those industries where a worker can become multiskilled. Microsoft in Australia is the same as Microsoft in America. If someone learns one program, it will take him around the world. Not too many jobs give people that opportunity. I cannot emphasise enough that the government is doing a reasonable job, but it could do a bit more with the IT industry.

I will touch on the forestry industry, one of my portfolios. The member for Warren-Blackwood touched on it yesterday when he spoke about the 19 state forests that have grown out of the whole forest agreement. That is great, but the Department of Conservation and Land Management is under pressure trying to manage them. We will see a lot more of the types of fires that went through Dwellingup just after Christmas if the state forests are not managed for the betterment of people in the future. I will not get involved in the whole logging process, but if we are going to have more state forests, we need to put in a lot more resources to control burns and so forth. We have to realise that trees do not live forever; one day they will fall over. We need to manage these state forests.

The timber industry - another part of forestry - is still getting over the changes. It has had to adapt and change. The industry has always faced change. Anyone who owns a mill would not be keen to invest a few million dollars because the industry is so uncertain. There are not too many timber mills that are geared up to get the best value adding for their timber. They are trying to find better ways to process the timber. A lot of the mills are very old and there is a reluctance to put any more money in them. In the past few months a couple of mills have been looking at other ways of doing veneering, floorboarding and so forth. That seems to be a good market for them. Again, they have had to put money into kilns and so forth to process all their timber, but it is definitely a step forward. It is an industry that is still struggling from the whole forest agreement and it is one of the things that we have to work through.

I wish to touch on another area of my portfolio responsibilities, volunteering. This is a great part of my job as a shadow minister. It is great to go out and see what people are doing. As the minister mentioned, the government has developed a "working with children" card. If people wish to work with children, they need to apply for a card. It has had its stumbling blocks. I have some figures available to quote. People have come to me frustrated with the situation. When working with children, we can never be too sure about the people involved, so we have to be safe and protect the best assets we have. Volunteering is great fun. It is great to be part of. There is always something happening. On Saturday week the surf lifesavers have an event, which should be a good day out. There is always someone in the community who is volunteering and doing something. It is great that we have a day in December when we recognise the people who volunteer. That is fantastic.

The only other issue I will bring up concerns the rent paid by the Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters Club to use state forest. I have written to the minister and I am still waiting for a reply. It is quite an interesting process. Here is a non-profit organisation whose rent is being raised from \$150 a year to \$1 500 a year. It is quite a considerable increase for a non-profit organisation. I am still hoping to chase that down with the minister, and hope he can help out with that process.

Before I finish up, I take this opportunity to welcome the new member for Peel. Part of my electorate adjoins his. No doubt the member realises that Kwinana has some amazing problems, and there are some good challenges there for him. Two days ago a report was released called "Dropping off the Edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia". It was commissioned by Catholic Social Services Australia. The member for Peel should read this report, because it identifies the two areas of most need in Western Australia as firstly, the Kimberley and, secondly, Kwinana. The report shows that there are 1 400 people in need in the Kimberley, and

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26 000 in Kwinana. There are some demographics to look at. Kwinana is a great town with a great spirit that has evolved over the years. Twenty years ago, the town was predominantly Homeswest housing, and it has struggled with that stigma over its whole life. That is the issue the council is trying to deal with head on. With demographics like that, it is hard to know where to start, but great inroads are being made, and I hope the member for Peel can assist with the problems there. Five thousand people are directly employed in the Kwinana industrial strip, and 44 000 indirectly employed. There are issues with Hope Valley and Kwinana Beach, which do not pay rates, so that the council has missed out on about \$8 million in rates over the past few years. That is an issue that the state government could look at. It is a fantastic community. I wish the member luck in dealing with the issues in that community. I highly recommend that the member for Peel read the report I mentioned.

I thank members for listening to me this afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity.

Dr S.C. Thomas: It was riveting, member.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I thank the member very much. It is always good to have the opportunity to place information about my electorate on the record. It gives me the opportunity to produce some media releases saying that I am working hard and speaking up for my electorate, as we all like to do.

MS K. HODSON-THOMAS (Carine) [3.42 pm]: I take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome the new member for Peel to the chamber. I am sure he has found the past couple of days very interesting, and I wish him well in his endeavours to represent his electorate of Carine, and I am sure -

Mr M. McGowan: Peel.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Yes - sorry! I am having a senior's moment! It is Peel. Given his speech yesterday, I am sure the member for Peel brings with him much experience and diverse knowledge that many in this place do not have. I welcome him and look forward to participating in good, sound debate in this chamber.

Like many members on this side of the house, I consider that the government is either not aware or uncaring on the issues that most affect the people in our community. I will therefore take this opportunity to remind the government, especially the ministers, of the feelings of the people I represent in the electorate of Carine. I am certain their views reflect the views of many Western Australians. Despite the massive increase in revenue over the past seven years, mainly due to the windfalls from stamp duty and, of course, the resources boom, this government has simply not tried to relieve the tax burden on the community. All the community hears is threats to increase water and other state charges and a flat refusal from the Treasurer and the Premier to address the unjust state of stamp duty on housing. The recent announcement of measures to make homes more affordable to first home buyers is laudable, but what would make homes more affordable is the acknowledgment that it is hard for anyone to buy a home these days for less than \$250 000. Making stamp duty applicable from that amount is an insult to any struggling first home buyer. Once again, I call on the government and the Treasurer to lift the stamp duty threshold to at least \$400 000, and to review the threshold, if not every six months, at the very least annually.

Another area of taxation that has outraged not only me but the people in my electorate is land tax. Yesterday, a rally was held at the steps of Parliament House. That rally was about land tax. The Treasurer should hang his head in shame at what he is inflicting upon the people of Western Australia. Land tax is one of the most disgusting and blatant rip-off taxes to be inflicted upon the Western Australian public. The people at that rally demonstrated their absolute outrage about this onerous tax. Many self-funded retirees and other constituents of mine have expressed their horror at the land tax that is being inflicted upon them. One of my constituents has bought four investment properties with his retirement fund, obviously to support himself in his later years. This year he received a land tax bill of over \$2 300. He pointed out to me that the government determines the amount of land tax that is payable by aggregating the value of the properties on which that tax is to be levied. The Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory do not charge land tax. He pointed out to me also that his properties are for Defence Force Housing. Most of the other states and territories are aware of the need to provide that form of housing. The fact that this government is charging land tax on the cumulative value of the properties owned, and at such a high rate, is forcing investors to buy properties in other states. That will obviously be detrimental to the economy of this state. I believe that if the high level of land tax for which my constituent has been invoiced is not adjusted, my constituent will decide to sell his properties in this state and invest interstate.

Another constituent has received a land tax bill this year of \$2 500. Last year his land tax bill was only \$323. He is an elderly man and is facing the prospect of increasing health problems. That is absolutely outrageous. This massive increase was based on the determined value of his land. We know that land values have rocketed. That has had two undesirable outcomes. Firstly, for many people in this state, it has made the purchase of a house unaffordable. Secondly, it had led to a dramatic increase in this opportunistic tax that is being imposed

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upon ordinary citizens in this state. Our shadow Treasurer has asked the Treasurer, and I also ask the Treasurer, to please provide tax relief for these suffering members of our community, otherwise we will have no option but to call him the Sheriff of Nottingham, because he is taxing the poor merely for the benefit of the fat cats in government.

Another matter about which I receive constant communications is the lack of services provided by this government. This government has a massive budget surplus. However, many residents in my electorate of Carine do not have access to a bus service to take them to Warwick station. That means they either have to walk a long distance to the station, or risk driving their car to the station in the vain hope that they will find a space in the car park when they get there. I was under the illusion that in light of the environmental concerns about traffic congestion and cost, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure was seeking to increase the use of public transport. If that is the case, the government should provide a better link to train services. This is a particularly unsafe road for people to walk along. I have suggested to the minister that if the government cannot provide an ordinary bus, perhaps it can provide a small coaster bus to accommodate the people in that area.

Other management issues of the government simply confound me. I cannot accept the ineptitude displayed by ministers in dealing with many of the problems that my office repeatedly raises with them. I will use one case as an example of the long and inexplicable delays and poor communications that members face. One of my constituents took a problem to the Building Disputes Tribunal. His case was heard on 3 July 2006. Clearly, a determination would have been made at that time, yet by December 2006 my constituent still had not received an answer. As the issue concerned a housing construction, every delay was costing my constituent money. In frustration he wrote to the minister and was basically informed that the Building Disputes Tribunal was a busy group and therefore he would just have to wait. There was not even a shade of remorse or promise to get him a reply within a reasonable time frame. I therefore subsequently wrote to the Minister for Consumer Protection. Interestingly, a month later I received the same non-response - not even a reply. Everyone accepts reasonable time delays; this is just not reasonable. It has impacted on my constituent in a very real way, costing money and causing immeasurable stress. Because tribunal members could not organise a simple response in fewer than seven months, it begs the question: what is going on there? This is a problem endemic across government. Somehow there should be a way to streamline procedures so that people get answers to their questions in a timely manner; and get medical treatment in a timely manner. I believe the government is guilty of allocating its money appallingly. It has delayed good environmentally sound schemes, such as the implementation of the infill sewerage program to the whole of the metropolitan area, and has not properly pursued the installation of below-ground power. The government, despite its massive surplus funds, is simply failing to deliver.

We have heard a lot about corruption in this house and in the media in the past few months; no doubt more will follow. I will go back in time a little and ask: what about the victims of this alleged corruption? For example, and as I raised yesterday as part of my shadow portfolio of small business, I was very concerned about the termination of the employment of the former chief executive officer of the Small Business Development Corporation, George Etrelezis. He had been a diligent and competent public servant for some 11 years. I believe that while working under the former Minister for Small Business, Norm Marlborough, he was sacked. I believe there has been and continues to be a major cover-up of his removal from that position. Although for many people this sacking may have dropped into history, as it appears no-one is interested in his sacking, I put it on record that I am interested in finding out and I will find out. It seems highly likely to me that a gross injustice has taken place and that this injustice may be linked to the reasons the now disgraced former Minister for Small Business, Norm Marlborough, was forced to leave the government and this Parliament. I do not say that lightly; I do not even like to say it. However, we need to know the truth and the basis behind Norm Marlborough's decision. I therefore call on the government to investigate this matter to find out whether Mr Etrelezis was another victim of corruption. I believe the government needs to come clean and not cover up on this matter and, as I said, I will pursue the matter. I have asked a couple of questions about the matter, one of the former Minister for Small Business, Norm Marlborough, and one of the new Minister for Small Business, the member for Girrawheen. The question was asked of the member for Girrawheen on 28 November 2006 and I have received a reply, which basically gives no information about Mr Etrelezis' sacking. That is simply not good enough. I will leave it to my other colleagues the shadow ministers for health and police to point out some of the more important issues about the government's obvious failings in those portfolios, as they impact on all of us in our electorates.

As shadow Minister for Tourism, I will make some additional points. I thank my colleague Senator David Johnston for his insightful speech to the federal Parliament.

Ms S.M. McHale: You wrote it.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I wrote it, did I?

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Ms S.M. McHale: Yes.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Did I write it?

Ms S.M. McHale: Yes, he acknowledged you in his speech for your contribution. For goodness sake. Talk about self-aggrandisement.

Mr T. Buswell: He might have phoned and asked for your contribution to tourism. It would have been a very short phone call.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I advise the minister that I did not write it. I thank him for his speech and there is no doubt that the Western Australian tourism industry must now continue to carry the burden of an ineffectual minister who, simply, is incapable of overseeing her department. I would be delighted to praise the current or next tourism minister for correcting these problems.

I read recently in the press that the government may consider increasing convention funding by \$2 million to support the industry. I certainly applaud that and I hope it is the case. I would strongly welcome that investment. It would be a good first step to restoring faith in the government's management of the tourism industry. I ask the minister to go further by conducting an independent review of funding by Tourism Western Australia. Some of the biggest players in the tourism industry have formed a new lobby organisation known as the Western Australian Tourism Owners Group - WATOG. It is interesting that unlike Tourism Council WA it appears to be independent and does not receive any state funding. Again, it highlights the industry's concern about the direction of tourism in this state. It indicates to me that the tourism industry is facing a crisis; one that this government has not recognised.

Ms S.M. McHale: You know the industry asked that you be removed from your shadow portfolio.

Mr T. Buswell: Who from the industry?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: As the minister knows, she should tell all of us.

Ms S.M. McHale: I think you know.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Yes, one person.

Ms S.M. McHale: It is because of the damage you are doing in undermining the industry.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Is that so and is it why your agency refused my freedom of information request on the last day of Parliament last year? What a wishy-washy reply, and let me dish it up.

Mr T. Buswell: Member for Carine, would you tell us about the impact of the Minister for Tourism's Russian tourism initiative? You might remember when she embarrassed herself and the government in front of senior tourism representatives in Western Australia.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Yes, I do and I am sure they are spending so much of their targeted investment on advertising in Russia, China or India. Where is it going, minister?

I wrote to the minister to get a copy of this document, which is titled "Half a Million Visitors Down: Time for Change". It is an industry discussion paper on which is written "confidential".

Ms S.M. McHale: Record money is coming into this state and the member for Carine is carping. Carry on member for Carine.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The document states -

Without comprehensive and adequate industry consultation, Tourism Western Australia's core strategy, aimed at getting closer to the customer, is not succeeding. An additional \$9.7 million for marketing in the last 18 months has delivered -

- 522,000 less visitors*
- \$221 million less visitor expenditure*
- 2.89 million less bed nights*

It is interesting. I wrote seeking a copy.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: I cannot get an appointment to see her CEO in Bunbury without a minor coming down from Perth.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I think the member for Carine can make her own speech.

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Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I apologise for speaking over you when you were speaking, Mr Acting Speaker. It goes against any standing order. I wrote seeking a copy of that document and my first request was denied.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: My request for a copy was denied on my first approach to the relevant agency. The decision not to grant my application was set out in a notice of decision, a copy of which was sent to me. It is very interesting that I had to contact the office to find out what was happening with my freedom of information application within the 30-day time frame because I had not received a response.

Mr T. Buswell: Who is the FOI commissioner?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: There was no response -

Ms S.M. McHale: She doesn't know who the Freedom of Information Commissioner is.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Look!

Ms S.M. McHale: I am not talking to you, I am talking to the member for Vasse.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The decision that came back reads as follows -

The application was received by this agency on 17 November 2006. The application was received by the Office of the Minister of Tourism on 16 October 2006 and transferred from the Office of the Minister of Tourism to Tourism Western Australia.

. . .

The scope of the request:

A copy of the discussion paper titled "Half a Million Visitors Down Under: Time for Change"

Ms S.M. McHale: You understand what it means, don't you? We did not have the report; do you understand that?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I understand that a copy was given to the minister -

Ms S.M. McHale: And it went to the department.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Yes.

Ms S.M. McHale: That is the process. That's why we transferred the FOI -

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I ask the minister to give me an opportunity to explain. The document was passed on to Ms Lamont who passed it to the Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Western Australia, Mr Richard Muirhead. This is where it gets interesting. The document continues -

Mr Muirhead had the document entered into the record management system with a classification of "Top Secret". Only three staff can access the document.

The document has not been copied, circulated or discussed internally . . .

The document is marked Industry Discussion Paper Confidential and Confidential Draft.

The notice of decision also states -

I have considered the public interest as required by this exemption, and while the public has a general right of access to information held by government agencies, this right has been balanced against the need to protect the confidentiality of certain types of information supplied or shared by other entities with this agency and to protect the future free flow of information into the Government from industry and other sources.

That is absolutely outrageous. I appealed the decision and subsequently received a copy of the document. I will not go into the long and detailed letter that I wrote; however, the report about what is going on in the tourism sector is damning. The minister cannot claim that everything is rosy in tourism.

Ms S.M. McHale: I haven't said that. What I am saying is that you are undermining the industry every time -

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I am not undermining the industry. The minister is not prepared to listen to industry stakeholders.

Ms S.M. McHale: Every time you open your mouth you criticise the tourism industry and the people involved are sick and tired of it, quite frankly. You should look at the way you are behaving -

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The minister should consider how ineffective she has been in this portfolio.

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Ms S.M. McHale: Because you will then understand why the industry wanted you removed.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Does it? I think it would be hard pressed to find -

Ms S.M. McHale: People from the industry spoke to the Leader of the Opposition and asked that you be removed from your shadow portfolio.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: One person did that.

Ms S.M. McHale: And your leader didn't even tell you that he was offering your portfolio to your colleague. You're on the public record as saying that.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: As I stand here, I am still responsible for the tourism portfolio. The minister should look in the mirror. Who is the Minister for Indigenous Affairs? It is not the member for Kenwick. Who is the Minister for Community Development? It is not the member for Kenwick.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr S.C. Thomas): Order, member for Swan Hills! If the debate continues in this manner, I will have to direct that all comments be directed through the Chair. We must have a sensible debate. I ask the member for Carine to continue.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The report is very interesting reading. People should take the time to go through it, because the group of people to whom I have referred have approached the minister about what is going on in Tourism Western Australia and why it is going backwards. They are trying to offer assistance and are being ignored and overlooked. We certainly know the bureaucracy at Tourism WA is growing, but we are still losing bums on seats. The minister should ask small tourism operators whether they are benefiting from the resources boom. We should be dovetailing into that boom and we are not. This government has failed to act. I urge the minister and the Premier to wake up and listen to the hard-working individuals in the tourism sector. This document makes very interesting reading.

MR A.P. O'GORMAN (Joondalup) [4.06 pm]: I congratulate the new member for Peel on his election to this place. Like us he will question his sanity well into the future, I dare say. I appreciate this opportunity to speak about my electorate of Joondalup. I have been the member for Joondalup since 2001 and I am happy to say that during that time we have seen some significant improvements in the Joondalup area. One I am most particularly proud of is the West Coast Academy of Hospitality and Tourism, which celebrated its first anniversary on Monday. It was a great event. The number of apprentices and trainees going through the academy is counter to the trend in many other training organisations. The numbers are going up significantly and the academy is filling all its places.

I would like to talk about a number of suburbs in my electorate. One in particular that I have a lot to say about is Craigie. In 2004, following a local area education plan, Craigie High School was closed. A recommendation of that local area education plan was that the buildings be bulldozed and the land subdivided as quickly as possible. That has occurred up to a point. The school closed in December 2003 and the buildings were bulldozed in January and February 2004, but to this stage the land has not been subdivided. There have been some issues around that. I am glad to say that I believe the site is now with LandCorp, which is putting through a town planning scheme for the area. That should be approved fairly shortly and the blocks should come up for subdivision. Craigie is one of the older suburbs in my electorate; it is a little more than 30 years old. It is a suburb that needs a little tender loving care. Another local area education plan has been run in Craigie, which did not extend to surrounding suburbs. That related to Craigie Primary School and Camberwarra Primary School. I am happy to report that unlike many local area education planning processes it went through relatively painlessly. The good residents of Craigie had accepted that both of their schools were significantly below ideal numbers. One has about a hundred students and the other has between 200 and 250 students. The recommendation to the minister from the local area education plan was to merge those two schools and then sell off one of the sites. There was also a recommendation that a new school be built on one of the sites before the other school is demolished. I wholeheartedly support the proposal; I think it is a great way to go. The new school probably would not have to be a full 16-room school, which is the norm for primary schools, because of the lower numbers it is anticipated will go there - probably 300 to a maximum of 350. Suffice to say there would still be enough land to extend the school should there be regeneration in that area. I strongly support that idea and I hope the Minister for Education and Training will receive a copy of this transcript and see that I have put on record my encouragement to go down the route recommended by the local area education report.

Underground power is another issue for the electorate of Joondalup. The suburb of Craigie is just over 30 years old. Kallaroo and Mullaloo, both of which are coastal suburbs, are also just over 30 years old. The power infrastructure in Kallaroo and Mullaloo is also above ground. Those suburbs experience a number of power outages because of the age of the infrastructure, their close proximity to the coast, and the effects of salt and

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other elements from the ocean. My electorate includes the younger suburbs of Beldon and Heathridge, which also have some areas with above-ground power. I would like to see the power infrastructure in both those suburbs also put underground. I have spoken to the Minister for Energy a number of times and I am well aware that the local council manages that issue. I have been told many times that when the City of Joondalup conducted a survey on the matter, it was wholeheartedly rejected by the residents. However, I understand that the survey was not conducted in Kallaroo, Mullaloo, Craigie, Beldon or Heathridge; it was conducted in Duncraig a number of years ago. The council seems to be hanging its hat on the result of that survey and will not survey the residents of the suburbs I just mentioned. I urge the City of Joondalup to resurvey its residents when the next round of undergrounding the powerlines is due. I have conducted a survey in some of those suburbs and am strongly of the view that the residents of those suburbs would love to have underground power, firstly, because the power outages will no longer occur; secondly, because it will eliminate the risk of pole-top fires; and, thirdly, it will enhance the value of the residents' houses. As I said, some of the suburbs are on the coast and the property values have increased significantly. People would like to underground the power so that the property prices can increase even more. During the last term of government, deep sewerage was provided to Mullaloo. I was amused that Western Power, as it was called at the time, and the Water Corporation could not get together and place the powerlines and deep sewerage in the same trenches.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: They still don't.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: No, they still do not cooperate. All sorts of reasons are given for that, but I think it is ridiculous. I know that it is possible to put the powerlines and deep sewerage in the same trenches because I have a trade background and have worked in a large organisation. I have worked with power and water together; there are ways of doing it if there is a will to do it. I strongly urge the Minister for Energy to reconsider the way the underground power program is administered through the local councils and to determine whether a better system can be developed to provide that service.

I have raised the issue of graffiti many times in this house. According to the mayor of Joondalup, Heathridge, Beldon and Craigie are three of the four worst suburbs in Joondalup for graffiti attacks. The attacks occur primarily on public property; that is, local government or state government utilities. A lot of graffiti attacks have occurred also on private property, such as local shopping centres. I will stand corrected, but there are two shopping centres in Joondalup that stand side by side. One is the Heathridge Village Shopping Centre and the other is the Heathridge City Shopping Centre. I continually confuse the two. One of those shopping centres is managed very well and all graffiti attacks on it are cleaned up each morning. For quite some time the other shopping centre allowed the graffiti vandals to continually tag the centre and the centre would not remove it. I am happy to say that because of approaches from local residents and me, the management of the shopping centre that allowed the graffiti tagging to continue for some time put up some money and we organised a people-against-vandalism group. I thank Tom Drinkwater and his friends in the northern suburbs for painting the shopping centre. The shopping centre was tagged again that very night. Part of the verbal agreement we had with the management of the shopping centre was that when we had painted it, the shopping centre would maintain it. I am happy to say that the centre management has stuck to its word, because I drive around that area fairly regularly and every tag that I see is removed within 24 or 48 hours. I congratulate the management of that shopping centre, Roy Weston in Warwick. It is great that it has come on board and is helping us out. I approached Lease Equity, the centre management of Belridge Shopping Centre in my electorate, because the shopping centre had a similar problem. I spoke with Brett Gerloff, its property manager. Within two or three weeks of my having discussions with him, he had organised for that graffiti, which was particularly bad, to be painted out. Last Monday morning, a graffiti forum hosted by the mayor was held in Joondalup. A number of state government agencies attended the forum and we had discussions with those agencies about removing graffiti in the allotted time as outlined in the Premier's circular. I am glad to say that all those agencies were very cooperative in coming to the table and putting forward their issues. Hopefully, we are starting to head towards getting a better system for reporting and removing graffiti in this state. I am glad to say that in response to my prompting - some people might call it whingeing - the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has provided us with a camera that can be moved around the hot spots so that some of these graffiti vandals can be caught. We are in the process of doing that at the moment. I reiterate: I thank the centre management at Heathridge and Belridge shopping centres, the Office of Crime Prevention for operating the camera, and the People Against Vandalism group operating in the northern suburbs for doing the paint-out.

Another issue in my electorate - I am sure that it has been raised with every member in the past couple of years - is housing affordability in home ownership and in the rental market due to the economic boom. My daughter asked me to meet her at midday one day last week at a certain place because it was open for viewing. When I migrated to Western Australia, and before I purchased my own property, I looked for rental properties. I would leave a key deposit with the real estate agent, take the key and look at the property, and I could take my time, make an assessment and submit an application. In the current market, the real estate agents will not hand out the

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key with a key deposit. There are probably reasons for that, such as insurance matters and so on. However, they get all the prospective applicants to view the property at a nominated time. Indeed, when I visited this apartment at Madison with my daughter, who wants to rent a place, there were in excess of 30 different people looking at the property at the same time. That means that, first, people cannot make a suitable assessment of the property and whether it will suit them; and, secondly, there is a big rush to put in applications. The rent for that three-bedroom apartment was \$290, which horrified me. I own a couple of rental properties and I am not getting anywhere near that amount for either property. Some people wrote additional dollar figures on their applications in an attempt to get first crack of the whip. It is not a fair way of doing things. It does not give those people in our community with fewer prospects an opportunity to rent decent accommodation. I ask the Treasurer and cabinet to consider some way of relieving that pressure. I know they have considered it, because I assisted an elderly couple who had to move and when we looked for rental assistance, I found that the bond assistance was significantly higher than it had been a couple of months earlier. It is an emerging issue as a result of our economic boom.

Joondalup Youth Support Services provides accommodation in the northern suburbs for youths who no longer have a home for one reason or another, and it is looking at obtaining more properties. I flag that issue for the government. It will be looking, along with Foundation Housing Ltd, the housing organisation in the northern suburbs, to make some more affordable properties available. There are those issues. The property issue is not just about housing. The property issue spills into commercial tenancies. I have seen that very recently as well as over a number of years. I have made a couple of grievances in this place about commercial tenancies. The legislation we have is skewed too far in favour of landlords. There is not enough protection for commercial tenants. I have seen that quite recently in the redevelopment of Lakeside Joondalup Shopping Centre by ING. ING is a very reputable company. To my knowledge it runs a great operation. However, it is now in the process of more than doubling the size of the Lakeside Joondalup Shopping Centre. As leases have expired the company has not issued new leases. It has kept tenants on month-by-month leases; that is, holding-over leases. Most of the tenants eventually figured out that a holding-over lease means that they will receive one month's notice. Unfortunately, that happened last month and most of the tenants must be out by 17 March. They have very little opportunity to survive until the new shopping centre and new tenancies become available. It will probably be eight or 10 months. When the tenants told me that, I considered it to be pretty harsh. I have spoken to ING. About an hour ago I received a phone call from my office to say that a number of the tenants have rung my office today advising that ING had spoken to them. Some of them have been accommodated within the shopping centre. Some of them are in "carts" in the middle of the shopping centre. ING has tried to find spots for some of the others around the shopping centre. It has proved rather difficult because the centre is almost fully leased. I am glad that ING has done that. That has been a great development. However, on top of that, as part of most commercial tenancy leases there is a requirement to de-fit a tenancy when the tenant leaves. The tenants who spoke to me felt that that was a particularly harsh thing to do to them at the moment as the shopping centre is being refurbished and expanded. In some cases the cost of a de-fit is \$20 000.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: In one case I saw a quote for \$70 000. We approached ING and I had a discussion with two gentlemen from the company last week. They went to the centre yesterday and, to the best of my knowledge, many of the tenants have been spoken to and the de-fit requirement will not be pursued. That is a saving to some of the tenants of anywhere between \$20 000 and \$70 000. That is fantastic. I thank ING for taking that into consideration. There are probably a couple of tenants who are not happy because I have not spoken to them all. Nevertheless, it is a great advance that we have been able to get rid of the de-fit costs.

Another organisation I will talk about is Women's Healthworks. It has been operating in the Joondalup area for many years - I will not guess how many. It provides counselling and health services to women. More recently it has been providing services to sufferers of anorexia in the form of working groups. The services are provided through a Lotterywest grant. Basically, they have very little funding. I congratulate the people involved for doing that. I hope that their funding applications to continue doing their work are successful in the future.

Last October the Minister for Health opened the Joondalup dental therapy clinic, which has 10 chairs. A number of dentists are operating at the clinic at the moment. Not all 10 chairs are fully staffed because there is a slow build-up to the total number of clients. I believe that the clinic is already handling more than 2 500 dental therapy clients, which is a great boost for the local area. It means that local residents, many of them elderly, do not have to be sent all the way to Warwick for their dental treatment.

Mr T. Buswell: Gee, do you know that the people in Busselton have to go to Donnybrook to see the dentist?

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: When the member for Vasse stands to make his speech, he can make that point. However, this is my time now, and I would like him to hang back. I will also talk about the redevelopment of

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the Joondalup Health Campus. This has been ongoing for a number of years. The size of the hospital will be increased quite significantly. There has been a lot of planning and a lot of negotiating between the department and Ramsay Health Care. I understand that the negotiations have now been concluded and agreements have been reached on the future expansion of the hospital, so some on-ground work should commence in the near future.

Sentiens Pty Ltd is a mental health provider. It has also had the plans for its hospital approved. It will be in the central business district of Joondalup, on the corner of Davidson Terrace and Shenton Avenue. Sentiens has worked very closely with me and the community to make sure that that facility goes ahead. I thank Sentiens for considering Joondalup. It is a much-needed service in that area.

While I am dealing with hospitals, I will mention bushfires, which seems a bit odd when talking about hospitals. However, over the past month or so, there have been three bushfires in close proximity to the hospital, which, by the look of it, were deliberately lit. I was going to say that it really burns me up, but it really gets to me when I look out and see a fire by the hospital, with houses no more than 50 metres away from the fire front. Those fires were deliberately lit, and I have already been reported in the newspaper as calling a couple of people idiots. They were throwing beer into the fire and toasting marshmallows. They were acting in a silly manner and hooning around in their cars on the night of the fire. I plead with people to remember that fires are dangerous and they should not light them, particularly when they are close to a hospital and an aged care facility. They should hang back from doing that; it does not help us.

I will also mention stamp duty on caravans and those types of recreational vehicles. As everybody knows, I have raised this a number of times in this place. There has still been no movement in that area. I know that the Treasurer is looking at all sorts of stamp duty, and we should see some movement on that issue in the budget. I hope that the caravan industry will be looked at in the same light as the boating industry, in which no stamp duty is payable. I hope that there will be a reduction in the stamp duty on caravans and recreational vehicles.

I have another little gripe that I want to put on record. On a number of occasions constituents have come to me seeking assistance with planning issues - not planning issues with the government and the Western Australian Planning Commission, but planning issues with the City of Joondalup regarding the R codes being breached. I am not an expert on R codes, but certainly in some instances, particularly around Mullaloo, where deep sewerage has been put in and where, hopefully, underground power will be installed in the near future, many blocks are being subdivided and houses are being put in back gardens and things like that. Many of those houses are also having extensions put on to them. I continually receive complaints about breaches of R codes and their provisions being overlooked. What I am hearing is that there seem to be different rules for different people. I ask that the City of Joondalup consider its planning processes and whether, before the approvals are put through, some of the builders are pushing the codes to the very limit.

There are a couple of other issues. The member for Carine raised the issue of public transport in the northern suburbs. We have a fantastic rail system. I have used it many times. The biggest problem now is patronage - high patronage, not low patronage - at peak times, and car parking and bus services. We have not kept pace with the population growth, and I do not think there have been any additional bus routes or additional resources for bus routes put into the northern suburbs, certainly in the Joondalup-Wanneroo area, at the top end of the northern suburbs, since 1992. I urge the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to consider that in the budget submissions. I ask the ERC to make sure in its considerations that the northern suburbs are well catered for with additional buses over time and also additional parking at the train stations. It is a big problem for us. There are a lot of people in my electorate who like to use public transport, particularly at peak times, but it is getting more and more difficult to find a parking space or public transport to get to the train station.

There are two other special things that are close to my heart, the first of which is Transplant WA. Transplant WA is primarily located in the northern suburbs. The coordinator for that organisation is Anne Bradshaw. She puts in a lot of effort to fundraise for the Transplant WA Games. It is proposed that the Australian Transplant Games be held in Perth in October 2008. She is working very hard to see that some of those games are held in the northern suburbs in Joondalup because that is where most of the people come from. We would like to assist Anne with that. I ask any members who have transplant recipients in their electorate to support that event. Another organisation that does great work with people with disabilities in the northern suburbs is Special Olympics. Trish McLean, the coach for the international Special Olympics team, does lots of work with that organisation. She is heading to Beijing for the Disabled Olympics, and she is trying to bring the national Disabled Olympics to WA. If members have people with disabilities in their electorates who would like to participate in the Disabled Olympics, I ask them to support those people as well.

MR T. BUSWELL (Vasse - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.32 pm]: It is always a tough act to follow the member for Joondalup but I will give it my best shot.

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Mr M.W. Trenorden: He did challenge you to follow.

Mr T. BUSWELL: He did, and I have accepted his challenge. I wish to respond to the Premier's Statement. Having sat in this chamber yesterday evening when he made the statement and having had the opportunity to read it today, it would be fair to say that it was a particularly uninspiring eight pages from the Premier. I accept that the Premier probably has a few other things on his mind at the moment. Notwithstanding that, I would have thought that when he stood before the Parliament on the first sitting day of 2007 he would have perhaps provided a bit more encouragement and inspiration to this state moving forward. Notwithstanding that, I am sure we will lumber through the government's legislative program throughout the year.

The Premier raised a couple of points in his statement that I wish to address later. It is interesting what is happening in Western Australia at the moment. We live in a period of unprecedented economic growth in this state. We almost have to go back to the 1890s to find a period when Western Australia enjoyed a similar burst of economic growth and a similar population growth. One of the problems is that growth like this brings with it many opportunities. It also brings with it, as I am sure members in this house are aware, plenty of challenges. It is a unique set of circumstances that we find ourselves confronted with. My view is that we have a once-in-a-generational opportunity to leverage those circumstances for the greater long-term good of Western Australia. In positioning Australia to grow into the twenty-first century, there are four or five key issues that those of us in public life need to focus on. Firstly, we need to position Western Australia as what I would term a "can-do state", a state where people and investors can get on with their lives in an orderly, yet well governed, environment. The second point is to ensure that Western Australia can attract and maintain a broad-based workforce that will enable the state to grow and prosper well beyond the mining boom. When I talk about a broad-based workforce, I am not merely referring to the oft-quoted need for skilled labour, because in this state we need labour right across the spectrum, from what would be termed unskilled - that is not a term I like to use because all labour is valuable - right through to highly skilled. In my view, this is the single biggest challenge confronting the long-term future of this state. The third thing we have to focus on in public office in this state is to make sure that Western Australia remains a place where families can grow and develop aspirations for themselves, and then work hard to achieve those aspirations. This often gets back to key service delivery in areas such as education. We need to make sure that the young children of Western Australia have access to world-class education that enables them to go forward, if they choose, from the shores of this state and make a positive contribution to the broader global economy.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: A mathematics teacher for Jerramungup District High School might help.

Mr T. BUSWELL: That may help.

We need to ensure that we have safe communities, so that those of us who enjoy daylight saving - which I do not - can take their families down to the park to play on the swings, safe in the knowledge that the children will not tread on disused needles at the end of the slide. We need a health system that makes sure that our children and, in particular, the elderly are well cared for.

The fourth thing we need to focus on is making sure that the government focuses on the delivery of core services, and that those services are delivered efficiently, free of scandal and in what I would term a low-taxing environment. The final thing we need to focus on in public policy in this state is making sure that the people of this state, the private corporations that choose to do business in the state, and the public institutions of this state are all empowered to contribute in a positive way to the protection of the global environment. If we accept those five challenges in public policy, whether it be in government, setting forward the future direction for the state, or in opposition, critiquing the government and developing an alternative vision for the state, we will go a long way towards helping position Western Australia for the twenty-first century.

I wish to focus in particular on two areas that relate to my shadow ministerial responsibilities and the areas of public policy interest that I have. Funnily enough, those two areas are housing affordability and taxation competitiveness. In relation to the first matter, there is little doubt that Western Australia is currently in the grip of the most significant and sustained housing crisis in its history. You rightly pointed out, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.P. O'Gorman), despite my snide comments, that it is a crisis from the northern suburbs of Perth, to the town of Broome, the southern towns of Esperance, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe and all places in between. It is a statewide crisis. Let us consider a couple of very simple indicators of this housing crisis. It is very interesting to note that in the past two years the median house price in Perth has increased from \$260 000 to \$460 000. In the past six years the median house price has increased from \$160 000 to \$460 000. That is almost a 200 per cent increase over six years. It is absolutely astounding. The Commonwealth Bank and the Housing Industry Association produce a housing affordability index, which is very interesting. Going back two years to the December quarter of 2004, housing in Perth was 42 per cent more affordable than in Sydney, according to the HIA housing affordability index. By the December quarter of last year - two years later - Perth had become the

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most expensive city in Australia. It is astounding to think that, in two short years, Perth has gone from being the second most affordable state capital city in Australia to being the least affordable.

Another interesting measure of home affordability is serviceability; that is, the percentage of a person's income that is required to service the debt that a person has taken out to purchase a home. I will share with members a couple of figures, because this point is worth making. In 2000, a person who bought a house valued at the median house price, and who paid the stamp duty and the 10 per cent deposit but borrowed the remainder of the money, would have had to make a monthly loan repayment of around \$1 064. In 2000, that amount of \$1 064 would have been around 30.5 per cent of average weekly ordinary time earnings. Therefore, it would have cost a person about one-third of average weekly ordinary time earnings to service the debt. In 2007, six years later, the monthly loan repayment to service that same debt would be around \$3 176. That represents around 65 per cent of average weekly ordinary time earnings in Western Australia, or nearly three times as much as was the case in 2000. Single-income families in this state that are on average weekly ordinary time earnings are now required to contribute 65 per cent of their income to pay off their debt. That is assuming they are able to borrow the money in the first place! That figure has doubled in the past six years. It is clear that this state is in the grip of a major and sustained housing affordability crisis.

As I have said, the capacity of this state to attract and maintain a broad-based work force is the single biggest issue that will prevent this state from moving forward when the mining-led boom subsides. If we are to attract and maintain a work force, we need to provide affordable housing. People will not come to this state if they cannot afford to buy a house. They certainly will not stay in this state in the long term if housing costs are excessive. Unfortunately, it does not stop there, because the second wave that is emerging in housing affordability is rents. You touched on that issue, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.P. O'Gorman). Rents in Western Australia are set to spiral. Historically, the rent on residential properties returns a yield of about five per cent.

Ms J.A. Radisich: Historically, it is one per cent.

Mr T. BUSWELL: The gross average housing yield is determined by dividing the annual rental income by the value of the property. Historically, the gross average housing yield in Western Australia is five per cent per annum. It is currently about two per cent. The market will ultimately determine that rents will rise towards that historic level of five per cent. That is inevitable. It is happening now. People were happy to accept a suppressed rental return when capital values were going through the roof. People did not mind that the rental return was low when they were making \$10 000 every three months from the appreciation in the value of their property. Who would? However, that appreciation in property values has now ceased. Most of the people who invest in property are rational. Rents will inevitably increase so that there is a return to the historic yield. That is happening now, and it is a significant issue in this state.

The second factor that is forcing an increase in rents in this state is land tax. Earlier today, the Minister for Housing and Works attacked the federal government. I do not know what she actually attacked the federal government for; it was certainly not on any matter of significance. I will make an interesting point. For every \$1 000 increase in land tax, rents will go up by \$20 a week. In the past few years, the average land tax bill in this state - that is, the total amount of land tax payable, divided by the total number of people who are liable to pay land tax - has increased by around \$3 000. In some cases, land tax bills have doubled, tripled and even quadrupled. That is what the people who were on the steps of Parliament House yesterday were protesting about. It is a huge issue. It is completely unacceptable for a government that purports to have a magnificent social conscience to allow increases in land tax to flow through into rents. Those members of the house who have investment properties would have received a land tax assessment from the Office of State Revenue. I say to people that when they have to tell their tenants that they will be increasing their rent, they should take with them a copy of their land tax assessment notice, and a picture of the Treasurer, so that they will understand just why their rent is to be increased. It is not necessarily about adjusting them for market movements; it is about covering land tax. There are ridiculous examples of people's land tax bills being greater than the rental income they receive in a year. Do members know what they do?

Ms J.A. Radisich interjected.

Mr T. BUSWELL: These are houses that people are renting, member for Swan Hills, you ignorant, ignorant woman.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Order, members! There is only one member on his feet. We should be hearing only one voice, not a gaggle of voices. I therefore ask members to allow the member on his feet to get his comments out.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I was almost wilting under that attack, but I have recovered thanks to you giving me that opportunity.

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The value of the houses is immaterial; they are properties that people are renting out and their rental income does not cover the land tax. What therefore do those people do with those properties? Those properties move out of the rental market. Land tax therefore does two things: first, it creates a recouping effect as the person gets the land tax back in rent; and, secondly, it creates an impact on the supply of rental properties. It is a clear, documented fact, yet the Treasurer sits in this place and refuses to do anything about it. He talks about home affordability and refuses to help in areas such as that. Housing affordability, as I said before, is a serious, long-term problem. When we look at the cause of the housing crisis -

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr T. BUSWELL: The cause of the housing crisis in this state is quite clear: demand has outstripped supply. That is a fact. The problem is that there were clear and obvious signals many years ago that housing demand in this state would escalate dramatically. What did the government do about it? It did absolutely nothing. It is a clear and established fact that the failure to increase the supply of land to match this huge increase in demand is the basic root cause of the huge increase in housing prices. The basic root cause is the failure by the government to fulfil one of its basic obligations: to make sure that enough land is made available in this state in an affordable, appropriate and timely manner for people to build houses on. That is a well-documented failure.

I want to give members some interesting figures. The first set of figures was compiled by the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia from information provided by the Department of Land Information, which probably has a new name now. I will read from statistics for the June quarters of various years. In 2000 there were 3 057 metropolitan residential lot sales. Of those 3 057 lots, 20 per cent were valued at more than \$200 000. In 2005 there were 3 259 lot sales, which was about the quarterly rate, 25 per cent of which were valued at more than \$200 000.

Mr M.P. Whitely: These were lots that were not new to the market.

Mr T. BUSWELL: No, they were vacant residential lot sales in Perth.

Mr M.P. Whitely: They were not necessarily new onto the market.

Mr T. BUSWELL: They were vacant residential lot sales, which I hasten to add would include all new lot sales. In 2006 the total metropolitan lot sales was 1 945 - a huge reduction in lot sales - 57 per cent of which were valued at more than \$200 000. The supply has gone, as we all know, demand has been very strong and prices have gone through the roof. The Property Council of Australia recently employed a firm called MacroPlan Australia Pty Ltd to conduct a study of major Australian capital cities to forecast lot supply for the next 20 years. MacroPlan commented that there was a growing demand and supply imbalance in the Perth housing market and that over the next 20 years the supply of blocks in Perth would be -

Mrs J. Hughes: When was this report written?

Mr T. BUSWELL: About two months ago. MacroPlan said that the supply of land in Perth would amount to about 140 000 blocks over the next 20 years. The demand for land in Perth in the next 20 years is about 198 000 blocks. The plan states that there will be a 57 000 lot shortfall over the next 20 years. Why has the land supply policy failed? It is because there has been a philosophically focused approach by the minister on urban infill. It is amazing that, apparently, people have to live close to where they work, ride their bike to work and slip into the city centre on the weekend for a cappuccino. It is madness. The government has failed to deliver core infrastructure in a timely and cost efficient manner.

We know that there have been immense delays in approvals. The approvals process in this state is failing to deliver land. What has this government done in response to the housing crisis? It appointed an approvals facilitator. What does that person do? He or she tickles at the edge of a system which is failing dramatically. The developers are being blamed. The minister says that the developers have their white sandshoes on the land supply pipe. I have not heard her give one concrete example.

Last week the government announced First Start. First Start will be great if one happens to be one of the 3 000 people over the next three years who will have access to a First Start loan. That loan is capped at 3 000 people over three years. It will be great for those people, but it applies to only about one-fifteenth of the total number of first home buyers in Western Australia. It is not a solution to the problem; it is not even a bandaid.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: Some of them are for existing housing, and that further aggravates the situation.

Mr T. BUSWELL: A very good point. What should be done? First, we must acknowledge that this state has a major long-term problem. Secondly, the approvals process in this state needs a complete restructure. Finally, proactive steps must be taken in this state to increase the housing stock, and that includes land tax reform that

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will encourage private sector involvement in the provision of low-cost housing and the like. After six years of Labor in government there is a land shortage in a jurisdiction that has more land area than almost any jurisdiction in the world. It is a ridiculous scenario, and people are paying for it through either rents or an inability to buy properties.

The second legacy of six years of Labor is that this state is now, without a doubt, the highest taxing state in Australia. People in Western Australia pay more in state taxes than residents of any other Australian state. The government said when it was elected to office in 2001 that it would maintain this state's taxation competitiveness in terms of taxation per capita. Using that measure, we were then the third lowest taxing state in Australia. We are now the highest. Last year the Treasurer changed the measure and said that the rate of taxation would be a measured as a percentage of gross state product.

A government member interjected.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I am glad the member agrees. In 2001-02 the rate of taxation was 3.71 per cent of gross state product. Last year it was 4.29 per cent. Our taxation percentage of GSP went up 15 per cent. The average in other Australian states went down by three per cent. On that measure, it is a good measure. The government might be right, and perhaps it should use three measures. On that measure we have gone up and the rest of Australia has gone down. We have failed. Using the third measure - the Commonwealth Grants Commission's taxation effort measure - when this government was elected this state was the second lowest taxing state; now it is the second highest taxing state. On every single established measure of taxation competitiveness in this country, this state has gone backwards at a rapid rate. It is a disgrace to think that in these unique times in the history of Western Australia the legacy of six years of Labor in government is a state in which people cannot afford to live and ordinary citizens pay more in tax than any other Australian resident.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: By my calculations the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has blown \$1 million a day since she has been the minister.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I thank the member for Avon because his interjection leads me to my next point. It is like poetry in motion. The Treasurer talks about taxation relief but knows that he cannot deliver taxation relief. Why can he not do that? Yesterday, when he knew that the land tax rally was to take place, he said in a press release that he had cut 11 taxes. However, each of those taxes had to be abolished under the goods and services tax agreement. The Treasurer cut taxes at the same time that he raked in GST moneys. He is a fraud and everybody knows it. The Treasurer cannot cut taxes because recurrent public sector expenditure in this state is going through the roof. When the Labor Party was elected to government, it promised to cap government spending and ensure that it did not rise by, in percentage terms, any more than the consumer price index plus population growth. Every year the Treasurer has made the same statement. He has never once achieved his objective, yet every year he recommits to it. If the government had achieved that objective, this year's recurrent expenditure would be almost \$1.7 billion less. An accumulative effect over the past four years means that the government has spent \$4 billion more than what it had targeted.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Honestly, the member for Bassendean is like Krusty the Clown! He should keep quiet. He should not bother dusting off his resume in an attempt to fill one of the ministerial vacancies. We know that the member for Bassendean did not have to get out his resume during the last preselection. What about his property portfolio? He is trying to get the value of his land increased. We know about the member for Bassendean; he should watch a John Travolta movie and read his letters from Tom Cruise.

If the government was committed to taxation reform, the Treasurer would do two things in the run-up to the budget. First, he would accept the challenge to make Western Australia the lowest taxing state in Australia. Members should read the Queensland budget papers. Every single Queensland Labor Premier has committed, year after year, to ensuring that Queensland remains the lowest taxing state in Australia. Do members know who started that policy? It was Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Members can curse him; however, he established a fiscal management framework in Queensland that, to their credit, successive Labor Premiers have kept near and dear. That is the sort of thing this Treasurer should be doing. Secondly, the Treasurer should offer sustained and meaningful taxation relief. The government may like to consider the opposition's taxation package, which includes cutting payroll tax to five per cent. The opposition's package gives first home buyers relief from stamp duty. How can government members talk about relief for first home buyers when last year none of them blinked at the opportunity to save every first home buyer in this state \$19 000 in stamp duty? The Minister for Housing and Works wonders why we snicker when she rabbits on about her heartfelt commitment to home affordability. She is a joke!

Ms J.A. Radisich: We are leading the nation.

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Mr T. BUSWELL: I will tell the member for Swan Hills why WA is leading the way. First home buyers in Western Australia pay more in stamp duty than do first home buyers in all other Australian states. Members opposite should tell me why a first home buyer - especially given the median house price in Western Australia - should give the Treasurer, the fat controller, a cheque for \$19 800. It should not be a case of "Dear fat controller, here is \$19 800 for the privilege of buying my first home. Thank you very much. Here's my address, please send a Christmas card." Do members know how much first home buyers have to give the skinny controller in Queensland? They give him nothing. All the first home buyers in Ellenbrook must be going up to the member for Swan Hills in the street and slapping her on the back. They must be thanking her for letting the fat controller charge them \$19 800 for the privilege of buying their first home in Western Australia. What an absolute joke and disgrace!

I want to touch on the fifth point I made in my opening statement, which is the things we should be focusing on in public policy in this state. I referred to the need to make sure that ordinary Western Australians, the private corporations that do business in this state and the public institutions of this state are empowered to make a proactive contribution to the global environment. The Premier talks about the government's commitment to 20 per cent renewable energy. That is half the contribution of an Emu Plains wind farm. That is the renewable energy target he has committed the government to. It is a disgrace. This is a significant issue. We all have a responsibility to our generation and to future generations to make a positive contribution and empower people to get involved proactively. To promise the people of the state a saving of half an Emu Plains wind farm power supply is unacceptable. He would deny the people of China access to our uranium to enable it to provide power to the 18 million to 22 million Chinese who move to the coast each year. The first thing those poor aspirational people do when they move to the coast is plug in their kettle to get hot water for a cup of tea, just like their neighbours do. We are denying them access to nuclear power, which is used all over the world.

The great irony of this is that Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Peter "The Dancer" Garrett - the whole rotten lot of this government's federal cronies - support the export of Australian uranium. The Labor Party in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania supports the export of Australian uranium. Half the members opposite do also, but for some weird reason, this government does not. Members opposite talk about carbon emissions and our responsibility to the global environment. It is an absolute disgrace. If members opposite want to learn about a commitment to the environment, they should get the Premier or the Treasurer to send them to Japan. I had the good fortune to go there last week. Members opposite should look at a country that uses nuclear power as part of a sensible strategy. Japan still uses coal and gas. It is a country where every person is dedicated to making a positive contribution. That is all I want to say. We need to empower the people and institutions of the state to make a positive contribution to the global environment. We have to do that. It is our most pressing of responsibilities. However, we will not do it by promising half an Emu Plains power station and refusing to export uranium. There are many challenges and it is a good opportunity to move ahead.

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine) [5.03 pm]: As a baby boomer I acknowledge the passing today of an icon of Australian music, Billy Thorpe. I think we should note that. I remember seeing him on the stage of the Capitol Theatre many years ago - I am showing my age. I think I remember the member for Avon being in the seat behind me on that occasion, and bopping like a beauty!

I also acknowledge that tomorrow, 1 March, is St David's Day. St David is the patron saint of Wales. As patron of the Welsh Society, I say to all Welsh people that the red dragon leads the way.

In reply to the Premier's Statement, I will talk about my electorate of Yokine. There are some other issues I would like to touch on, including the key issues the Premier raised yesterday, that touch the lives of the people of Yokine. I first want to raise the cornerstone of our current policy platform, which is education. I urge any member who has the opportunity to pay a visit to Mount Lawley Senior High School. It is the jewel in the crown of public education in this state. I take my hat off to Terry Boland, the principal of that school. Incidentally, he has been nominated as principal of the year in the Rotary principal of the year program. He is a brilliant educator and administrator. During the 2001 election I pledged that we would rebuild that school, and I was absolutely delighted when the then Minister for Education and Training honoured that pledge. Regardless of politics, it is and always has been a good school; now it is an absolute jewel.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: It is very similar to Shenton College. It has risen like a phoenix from the ashes. A few years ago the school was virtually condemned. I acknowledge the staff of Mount Lawley Senior High School, who are an excellent group of people. I acknowledge also the community groups that have played a big part in the reconstruction of what is now a centre of excellence.

I acknowledge the efforts of both the current and previous Ministers for Education and Training. More than \$2 million has been spent on Mirrabooka Senior High School over 12 months to improve the information

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technology section and to improve the course that used to be called domestic science but is now called a commercial cooking and kitchen program and gives children an opportunity to gain employment in those areas that are currently suffering from skills shortages. All members have referred to that problem over the past couple of days. The school has a great principal, Armando Giglia, and an amazing group of support people, but it also faces some enormous challenges from a multicultural perspective and from socioeconomic disadvantage. Many disadvantaged families who live in that area consider the school to be a way out for their children. Armando Giglia and his school support staff always rise to the challenge.

The Coolbinia kindergarten recently had an issue with a government policy to move kindergartens onto the same site as schools. It is a laudable policy that I have no problems with. However, over the past 15 or 20 years the local community at Coolbinia had built an excellent kindergarten some 400 metres from the existing school premises. I recently attended a public meeting there expecting to be confronted by parents who were happy to be getting a new kindergarten. The absolute opposite happened. Some 50 parents were incensed that the kindergarten was to go. I take my hat off to the current acting Director General of Education, Sharyn O'Neill. She took the time to drive there on a Sunday afternoon and look at the kindergarten for herself. She rang me at my office the next day and I spoke to both the current minister and the previous minister. It is because of the efforts of the acting director general and two mothers, Annemarie Denbow and Donna O'Hara, that the outcome was a triumph for the mothers and for commonsense. Thank goodness the kindergarten is to remain where it is. I now have an opportunity to discuss the future of that school and the kindergarten with the Department of Education and Training and with the school community. Education is a key issue in my electorate, and all our schools are important. I have a diverse multicultural electorate that ranges from an Islamic college at the southern end to the Carmel School, which deals with many hundreds of young Jewish people, to the St Andrews Greek Orthodox Grammar School. A wide range of primary schools must deal with the enormous influx of migrants and refugees from northern Africa. I have raised this issue on a number of occasions in this house. Schools at Mirrabooka, Nollamara and Balga have between them almost 20 classes in English as a second language. The 20 or 25 students in each of those classes are struggling to come to terms with their own language, let alone English. They are trying to come to terms also with the cultural differences between the refugee camps in which they were born - and in some instances in which they saw one of their parents murdered in front of them - and their new country and new language.

I take my hat off to the staff members who have taken on this enormous challenge. I mention in particular Jean Blechynden from Balga Primary School. She started a program called baby talk. I thank the minister for community development for providing financial support for that program. Jean Blechynden is a gifted educator who recognises the difficulties young children face during their first year at school. More importantly, when she realises that the child has a difficulty, she looks at the child's family and siblings. She sees kids as young as two or three months of age who will have difficulties communicating because of parenting issues. This gifted educator has recognised a way forward for the future of our people. Education is a cornerstone of the government's policies. Education is a key; there is no doubt about that.

I have mentioned Carmel School. For more than a decade, the people at Carmel School have approached the Curriculum Council to have Hebrew included as a tertiary entrance examination subject. Members may well ask why it should do that. There is a fundamental difference between Jewish education and other diverse education in that Judaism relies heavily on the Hebrew language in the overall educational context. Without it, many children cannot study subjects such as medicine and so on and practise Judaism at the same time. In some ways, the Australian Islamic College is faced with the same issue. However, Hebrew was not included in the curriculum. The hours that those children spent learning Hebrew worked against them in the TEE scoring process. For some reason, it was caught up in a bureaucratic tangle. I have no doubt that if it had been brought to the attention of members on the opposition benches, they would have dealt with it in the same way that I did. I raised the issue with the previous minister, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, and, thankfully, she recognised the need for it and it has now been included in the curriculum. It is a win for commonsense in the education of young people, particularly when young Jewish children had to go to Melbourne to get the kind of education that they needed and that could easily have been provided at Carmel School, which is an outstanding college. Incidentally, this year it had one of the highest levels of admissions to tertiary institutions of any private school. It should be congratulated, as should the previous minister, for showing some commonsense on that issue.

While I am on the subject of commonsense, I will touch briefly on the recent debate about local council boundaries between the City of Stirling and the Town of Vincent. I thank the Local Government Advisory Board, headed by Charlie Gregorini, the Mayor of Swan, for listening to all the comments from the consultation process that was held with both the Town of Vincent and the City of Stirling. I attended many of those meetings because they affected my electorate, and a lot of them became very emotive and heated. Nothing is more emotive for people than to suddenly find that perhaps they will have to live "somewhere else". There was a very strong view in the Coolbinia-Menora-Mt Lawley area that it remain a part of the City of Stirling. Equally strong

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views were put for the other side. I have no doubt that the advocacy of community members such as Paul Collins and ward councillors Trevor Clarey and Rod Willox, with whom I often have robust discussions about our political differences, played a very large part in the outcome. On the other hand, the views of the people of Glendalough that they should become part of the Town of Vincent were similarly put and accepted. I believe that was due in no small part to the views on that change being put properly and sensibly by the chief executive officer of the Town of Vincent, John Giorgi. Both mayors, Nick Catania and Terry Tyzack, fought a good and robust fight on behalf of their constituencies. I am fortunate to have people of such calibre in local government in my electorate. It was a good, balanced and sensible outcome that took into account the views of all. However, it has again raised the debate about the large number of councils in this state and about local council boundaries. Both councils are vibrant and well-run jurisdictions. However, there is no doubt that there is a need for us to revisit the report on council amalgamations that was released about 18 months or two years ago. This is not an issue just for places such as Northam and Avon, or for Plantagenet and Mt Barker, as I recall from when I was a copper in the area. These issues need to be addressed. In the future, there will need to be some rationalisation of the cost of rubbish collection, electricity supplies and sewerage. It is an issue that I will raise with the government. I think the outcome achieved was sensible but, again, it unfortunately created division in the community. We should be able to work through those issues maturely in this day and age. This matter also raises the issue of the viability of councils generally, particularly the smaller councils. They need to have a hard look at themselves and ask whether, at the end of the day, they are giving good value and service to their constituents.

I note that the member for Vasse touched on Japan. The President of the Legislative Council, Hon Vincent Catania and I were very pleased to accept an invitation from the Hyogo Prefecture and from the national Parliament of Japan, which is known as the Diet. I was made to feel very welcome when I went there! Their hospitality was quite amazing. I share the views of the member for Vasse about Japan. It is a country that is so organised and efficient it is almost quite frightening in parts. I will not go into the trip too much because the President has not presented his report. I will not steal his thunder.

One of the things I will raise with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services is that we had the great privilege of visiting Kobe 11 years after the earthquake. We visited the museum, which was an amazing experience. The earthquake is simulated in the first part of the museum. I do not know whether any members have had the opportunity to visit it, but it is an opportunity they should not miss. The member for Cottesloe is indicating that he has. It is a stunning feeling to stand in the museum as the simulation of the earthquake starts. It is equally stunning to see what happened after the earthquake and then walk outside to see Kobe harbour and realise what the city has done in 11 years. The reconstruction is amazing; it is mind blowing.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I visited Kobe about 60 days after the earthquake. I think I was the first outside visitor. What struck me - it was extraordinary - was that small wooden houses were actually upside down. They had been thrown into the air and they landed on their roofs. It was a scene of absolute devastation.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: It is totally amazing what they have done. The point I make is that the museum is not just a museum; it is actually a working institute on emergency and disaster management. It is one of the best I have seen. I have visited Mt Macedon in Australia and I have visited the American institutes as a police officer. I would urge the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to look closely at whether we can establish an exchange between that institute and our emergency services here.

The Japanese are amazing with planning and urban redevelopment. Their efficiency is mind blowing. As a funny aside I mention that we were in our hotel - it was a major multi-storey hotel - and there was a little notice on the bed that said that there was bad weather and for people to please not be alarmed at the movement and creaking of the hotel! Of course, my wife was terrified as soon as she read that. We went downstairs and spoke to the concierge. The hotel was built on one of the new islands constructed out of the rubble from the earthquake. It was built on movable rubber pistons that moved back and forth. Every time there was a really strong wind the hotel swayed.

When we were there we also noted there is a very strong desire to have direct flights between Perth and Kansai. That is something that was raised with me when I was the tourism minister. It is absolutely essential. We are missing out on tourists from the southern end of Japan because there are no direct flights between the new Kansai airport - which, again, is an incredible construction - and Perth. Our agricultural and fisheries sectors are being disadvantaged as well, particularly concerning fresh vegetables and seafood. One of the things that amazed me as we drove around Osaka is the huge trucks that have tanks on the back with live fish and shellfish in them. They have big pumps running so that everything is delivered fresh. We are missing out on that huge market. If the Tokyo market for seafood drops off a little bit, there is no way we can balance that because there are no direct flights. However, I recall from my negotiations with the federal government that some type of a loose agreement between JAL and Qantas is apparently precluding the establishment of those flights. That is

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something I will take up with the minister in due course. All Nippon Airways is now prepared to negotiate direct flights. I strongly believe that is something we should do.

As an aside, the deputy speaker of the prefecture gave me his pin, which I am very proud to wear. He raised with me that he would like package golf instruction programs to be done in Perth. Currently, they are all done in Brisbane and in Queensland - hundreds of them. However, he loves coming to Western Australia. The other issue - it is something that Merredin might like to take up through the National Party - is that there is a real lack of pilot training in Japan, particularly private pilot training, and small airline schools.

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I should not raise that with the member for Avon.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr R.C. KUCERA: There is an opportunity for those things to happen. I will go back to a couple of local issues. I put on record my appreciation for the work of Craig Peacock and the staff of our Western Australian office in Tokyo. What a great bunch of people they are, and what a magnificent job they are doing for Western Australia. We are held in enormous respect by Japan. That is something that we should all think about soberly this week in light of some of the things that have happened. The business respect that the Japanese have for us and their desire to still be our number one trading partner are enormous.

Finally on that issue, the future of Western Australia's exports of liquefied natural gas to Japan is amazing. When we realise that the Tokyo Electric Power Company now gets 50 per cent of its energy requirements from this state alone and that it services something like 2.8 million major customers a day, it gives us an idea of how our economy will continue to grow in the future.

I will return quickly to local issues. A key issue which has come up in my electorate in the past two years and on which we had a test case through the City of Stirling is the rating of not-for-profit aged care homes. Thankfully, we won the test case with the Rose Mount Retirement Centre. Charlie Gregorini, through the advisory committee, took up the issue, and recommendations on it have been made that I understand support each of these not-for-profit organisations being rated only on their service requirements and not as commercial operations. I hope that continues, particularly because places such as Ashlar Glen, the Church of Christ and the Returned and Services League aged care facilities and a range of other aged care homes are in my electorate. I think that the member for Victoria Park and I have the largest conglomeration of retirement villages in our electorates, and I think the electorate of Mandurah comes third. I have great concerns now, because I understand that the Western Australian Local Government Association has suggested to the minister that there should be a variation of the review that was done by the State Administrative Tribunal. I do not know whether this is correct, but some of my constituents have raised it with me. If it is being raised once again, I have great concerns, because all the money is ploughed back into those aged care homes. In fact, with the big gap between the money provided for support from both the federal government and some of the other agencies, there is a real issue with the funding of these organisations. The homes look great, but the people who live in those homes cannot afford to live anywhere else. We must be mindful of that. Again, I have some concerns, which I will take up with the relevant minister.

I will move on to one of my passions, and that is sporting clubs of all types. There is a huge range of sporting clubs in Yokine. However, again an issue is starting to emerge regarding local council rates. Thankfully, the City of Stirling has taken a very balanced and sensible view, particularly through its better clubs program, whereby it rates clubs on a needs basis. In other words, provided the clubs pay for their essential services, such as rubbish collection, council rates are not imposed at the full level. Indeed, if they are imposed at the full level, they are returned to the clubs.

I have had an association with yachting in this state for the past 30 years. Some of the yacht clubs on the river and on the coast, some of the golf clubs, some of the tennis clubs and some of the bigger sporting associations are now being seen by local governments as possible cash cows. I urge a great deal of caution. One of the local governments that I will talk about is the City of Melville, which has been trying to rate all the city's clubs. I recently had a delegation from the South of Perth Yacht Club, with which I have been associated for many years. It was given a piece of land, which was reclaimed from the Swan River, in return for moving from its site on what is now the freeway. Thankfully for the club, that piece of vested land was created specifically for it and is essentially not a part of the City of Melville. The City of Melville is still challenging that decision because it had a win with the East Fremantle Yacht Club and the Swan Yacht Club. Their fees have gone through the roof because they now have to pay the same rates as the commercial marinas are paying. The tennis club in Applecross is another example. It sounds as though I am sticking up for the members for Murdoch and Alfred Cove. It is the same with golf clubs in my area. The City of Stirling has taken a sensible view on this.

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Just because there are a number of big boats moored at a yacht club does not mean that every member of that club can afford a boat or can afford to pay the rates that are being proposed by many local governments. What do we move on to after this? Do we move on to our footy clubs or the bowling clubs or the other sporting facilities that have been provided through the hard work of community volunteers? I was the shed captain at the South of Perth Yacht Club for years when my kids were learning to sail with the Pelicans. I put in countless hours there, along with all the other great volunteers and parents, to build the facilities of the club. Yes, the club runs a restaurant and a bar but every penny that comes out of those facilities is ploughed back into the operations of the club. I ask councils to think about this. If we drive these clubs to the wall by looking at them as cash cows, what will we do about the provision of facilities? The state government cannot provide every single sporting facility, and neither can the community be expected to fork out every day.

I have a boat at Fremantle Sailing Club. It has taken us all our lives to get to the stage at which we have a boat big enough to live on during the weekend, much to my wife's disgust. The point is that I am just an average wage earner like most other people. Yes, I have a reasonable wage because I am in Parliament, but the average people I see down there with their little runabouts are not the Brian Gardners of the world with their huge boats; they are blokes who want to do a bit of fishing. Let us not price them out of the market. With sporting clubs generally, particularly with the push on obesity - I say that tongue in cheek - we cannot price our kids out of playing tennis or kicking a football around the ovals. Let us be sensible about this. Yes, local governments are all desperate to raise rates and to be viable, but perhaps they need to look at some of those amalgamation ideas that I spoke about earlier instead of trying to rip money out of other areas. It is an issue that I am passionate about. I will take it up with the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

I will move on very quickly to the issue of refugees and migrants in my electorate. I do not normally hand out accolades to the press. Recently Reece Whitby has been running a series of stories on refugees and migrants on Channel Seven. I compliment him on those stories. They have been sensible and balanced and they have shown the real side of the struggle faced by people who come from places such as Sudan, Afghanistan and Iran. It is refreshing to see Channel Seven news running programs that show not just a 30-second grab but a sensible, balanced report on something that will be an issue for us. I keep coming back to the issue - not just in this chamber, but also in my party room - of resources for refugees generally and for people who come straight off the boats. They do not usually have a say on where they will be put, and we do not have a say on who comes to Australia or how many come to our state. Once the federal government deposits them, they receive a limited amount of English education and then they are left to fend for themselves.

Last year I had the opportunity to visit a lot of Muslim leaders in northern England and southern Wales. They said that if we do not address the three key issues of education, jobs and housing with new migrant groups, particularly young people - if we do not give them a value to hang on to - we will start to see the kinds of issues that we have seen emerge in northern England. We cannot allow swamps to be created with little alligators running around in them snapping, because those alligators will eventually come back and bite us. We have to do something about that. We have to make sure that those three areas of housing, jobs and education - particularly English language education - are supported. It is not just confined to this state. I urge members on both sides of the house to take up this issue with their federal members to make sure that we do not create the situations that are being created in northern England.

I wish to compliment the local groups in the community. I have mentioned Brother Steve Bowman on a couple of occasions in this house, along with his amazing staff and volunteers at the Edmund Rice Centre. I was very pleased today to advise him that he is to receive a \$257 000 cheque for fitting out the new premises. Jann McFarlane, the former federal member, now does an amazing job with the Northern Suburbs Migrant Resource Centre. Local churches also assist, in particular St Gerard's, with its Catholic migrant programs. In my own family church, Father John Ward and his wife Julia, and the entire congregation have embraced and taken in almost 400 Sudanese refugees. They are doing an enormous amount of work. What really concerns me, however, is what on earth we would be doing if it were not for these organisations? Where is the federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship?

My nephew Martin Kucera is just 17 years old. He arrived this week from the Czech Republic. He was listening to the debate in the house yesterday. He is a fine young man, and I discovered him last year as part of a family I did not know existed in my father's village, including nephews, uncles and a whole range of people I had never met. It was a salutary lesson for him yesterday. I brought him here for lunch. He listened in particular to the Premier's speeches on the issues that were raised yesterday, and the censure motions about what has been going on in the Corruption and Crime Commission. He was very impressed with the way the Premier conducted himself; he does not know the Premier from a bar of soap. He is a very bright young man. He sat and listened to the proceedings, and in particular to the Premier's Statement. He retrieved from the Internet last night a saying by Vaclav Havel, who was one of the instigators of the modern Czech Republic. Havel was a very principled

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man whom I admire enormously. I ask members to think on this saying in this house, because a lot of toing and froing has gone on. Our positions as politicians are important. I congratulate the member for Peel on his election and on a great speech yesterday. Vaclav Havel said -

Genuine politics - even politics worthy of the name - the only politics I am willing to devote myself to - is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community and serving -

This is vitally important -

those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole.

It is a responsibility expressed through each individual action of each member to and for the whole. Each of us needs to reflect on what we have read and heard this week and look at our own individual actions. This is a worthy profession; one that I have come to love over the past six years. It is also a profession I have come to hate on occasions. However, it is a profession that supports the entire community and those who come after us. I ask members to remember that its deepest roots are moral, and it is a responsibility expressed through our individual actions towards the entire community.

MR T.R. SPRIGG (Murdoch) [5.33 pm]: I first of all add my congratulations to the new member for Peel and wish him well his career in the Parliament. I also congratulate him on a terrific maiden speech yesterday. It was very well done indeed.

I want to touch on some issues in the electorate of Murdoch in my reply to the Premier's Statement, and also a matter I came across some seven or eight months ago that has been causing a great deal of angst. It is loosely termed the Balga Works program. I will go into some detail about that a little later on. The major issues in the electorate of Murdoch have probably not changed too much from this time last year, because they are involved with infrastructure projects going through the area, such as the southern suburbs railway and the Roe Highway extension. It pains me a little bit to think that, for probably the past 18 months in this place, I have been championing the cause of people whose living amenity has been affected quite dramatically by infrastructure projects happening in the electorate. I refer to people whose homes have been damaged by roadworks going on in their backyards, and the dealings and frustrations those people have had to suffer to even get someone to come and have a look at the damage, let alone to obtain some compensation. On 21 June last year, 15 of my constituents who have been affected in this way were present in the public gallery of the Assembly. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure rose to her feet and said, "This is horrible. I will support these people. If they have been given the runaround, I will fix it." However, nothing happened for about three months. It was not until 19 September, when I brought up this matter again, that people started to talk to some of those people who had been present in the gallery on that day. Some of those people have slowly been compensated for the damage to their properties. However, it has been a difficult process. I challenged the minister in June to tell us the criteria under which compensation will be paid. I acknowledge that compensation is the responsibility of the contractor to whom the contracts have been let and who is doing the work. I am concerned about the answer that I received from the minister. I will give members an example. This person received some good news about compensation just last week. This person's property backs onto Roe Highway stage 8. Sorry, I should have said stage 7. We have not reached stage 8 yet; that is yet another sad situation. This person had sustained considerable damage to her bathroom, because almost every tile on the walls of her bathroom had a hairline fracture in it as a result of the compacting works that had been done virtually at her back fence. She was offered \$500 in compensation. Some people are not very good at negotiating and are a bit nervous about signing forms. This lady spoke to her next door neighbour about her situation. Her neighbour told her that the offer of \$500 in compensation did not seem right, because she had also sustained considerable damage to her property and had made a claim for \$3 000 in compensation. This lady then negotiated over a three or four month period, and the offer was increased to \$2 240. She did not think that would cover the full cost of repairing the damage, but she thought it was much better than the \$500 that she had been offered originally. Fortunately, at that stage the lady's neighbour telephoned my office, so I decided I would go and look at the damage. This lady told me that she intended to accept the offer and had prepared a letter to post that day. I told her that she would be very foolish to accept an offer of \$2 240. We then talked about the matter for a bit longer, and I found out that she had not obtained any quotes for what it would cost to repair the damage. When she obtained a quote the next day to replace all the tiles on her bathroom walls, the quote was \$16 000. We let the Roe 7 Alliance, which was dealing with the matter of compensation, know about that. This lady received a letter last week to say that she will now get a cheque for \$15 000. I have a problem with the way in which that was done. If this lady had accepted either the \$500 or the \$2 240, she would have been greatly out of pocket. Some criteria should be set so that people will know what will happen with compensation. We have achieved a good outcome on this occasion. It was very interesting. I have written some letters and so on. I received a message from some people

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in the Roe 7 Alliance that they had been told not to deal with me. I took that as a badge of honour, because I had been asking the hard questions, and they did not want to answer.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Who told them that?

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: The Public Transport Authority, I believe.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is reprehensible. They had no right to do that.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Yes. Anyway, we managed to get an outcome in that case.

A lot of people in my electorate are being affected by the new roads that are being built in the electorate of Murdoch and the noise levels that have been established. I will give members some examples from the Bateman-Bull Creek-Mt Pleasant area, where the freeway is being moved closer to people's homes. The noise level objective is about 63 decibels during the day and 55 decibels at night. I have sat with these people and heard the noise they have to put up with. I have also done some research. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any national or even international standard for noise levels emanating from major roads. In other parts of the world, 45 decibels is regarded as the maximum. These people have to put up with 63 decibels. I find it remarkable that the supposedly independent bodies that are doing the noise testing are putting their equipment in the most advantageous position so that they can take advantage of the prevailing breezes from the opposite direction and that sort of thing. Therefore, the reading is not a true reckoning. Unfortunately, my constituents have to put up with that, but we will continue to advocate for them, as it is most disappointing.

There are still traffic problems in the area, and they emanate from one decision of this government; that is, to delete Roe Highway stage 8 and the Fremantle eastern bypass from the metropolitan region scheme, thus not completing the ring-road system that every major city in the world has. Unfortunately, the electorate of Murdoch suffers from traffic flows on South Street and on Leach Highway in particular. Even Parry Avenue, a very small suburban street in Bull Creek, is becoming a rat run because people are trying to get away from the traffic on Leach Highway and South Street. It is most disappointing indeed that this government has deleted Roe Highway stage 8. It is building Fiona Stanley hospital in my electorate, which will create a lot more traffic in the area. It behoves the government to at least take Roe Highway to Stock Road. That obviously will not fix the major problem. It will fix a problem in the electorate of Murdoch by getting trucks and cars off that section, but it will certainly not fix the whole situation.

That brings me to the new southern suburbs railway and the promise by the member for Riverton back at the time of the 2005 election about taking trucks off Leach Highway and South Street in his electorate. The people of Murdoch believe that it may have some impact on their traffic flows as well; that is, trucks taken off there may not go back. However, the most normal route to head west in the direction of Fremantle from Roe Highway will be onto Kwinana Freeway and back onto Leach Highway and South Street. It therefore remains to be seen whether that traffic will increase at that stage. I was interested to hear the minister say that the first train will run on 29 July. I then heard the member for Riverton say that the government will get those trucks off Leach Highway and South Street in the electorate of Riverton on 1 October. What will happen in the two months in between? The member for Riverton made the promise that as soon as the railway to Mandurah was opened, he would get the trucks off Leach Highway and South Street. However, there is a two-month gap there. Of course, this is a big delay from the original promise anyway, which was a broken promise from the 2005 election.

Speaking of the member for Riverton, I have a \$50 bet with him that the southern suburbs train will start running closer to Christmas than 29 July. I hope I am wrong and that I lose that bet because if I am wrong those trucks will start coming off Leach Highway more quickly. The member for Riverton could also probably do with the money now given his current circumstances!

I note that other members have talked about graffiti in their electorates; Murdoch is no exception. We have graffiti problems. We do not have sufficient noise walls in the area and I have mentioned the noise issue before. However, the ones that we do have are graffitied almost every day. I note that the government's graffiti plans are to remove all graffiti within 48 hours and any obscene graffiti within 24 hours. That just does not happen. The more the government leaves graffiti, the more other people tag it. It just gets worse and harder to remove. I have had many discussions with the minister about the removal of graffiti. Unfortunately, it is getting worse in the electorate of Murdoch. I commend the community groups in the northern suburbs that are working to try to get rid of graffiti. It is amazing when interstate and overseas visitors visit our electorates and say, "Gee, you've got a nice place but what about that graffiti?" It really hurts when people say that. That is an ongoing issue in the electorate of Murdoch. The security forces run by the local councils do a good job in reporting it. I have found that some of the people who have been given contracts to remove it are a bit slack in removing it; that is something the minister must look at in making sure graffiti is removed in the expected time frame, which is within 48 hours.

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In my capacity as the shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, I briefly want to touch on the major stadium issue. I am sure that other members will do that. The Langoulant task force is due to report at the end of next month. There has been much public debate on this issue, and I have been surprised that the debate has been so prolonged and so vitriolic in a lot of ways for a fair while now.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Mostly driven by George.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Yes. Unfortunately, I do not think it will be built at Cockburn. However, I am looking forward to the Langoulant task force's report.

Mr R.C. Kucera: You don't think he's got a vested interest there?

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: It is okay for me; I live near there.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Do you think he has a vested interest?

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Yes, absolutely! I look forward to that report. The task force must be allowed to do its job. It has been suggested that there was interference by government ministers. The experts are looking at the issue and will come up with the right decision. I challenge the government to make the decision to build a new stadium. The initial capacity should be for 60 000 people, with the ability to increase the capacity to 75 000. That is the way to go. Independent operation of the stadium is absolutely essential. I am an Aussie Rules person and have great respect for what the game does for this state, but those involved fail to understand that even if they do not totally manage this proposed stadium, they will be in a better position with a new stadium. Unfortunately, as much as Subiaco Oval has the traditional values of the Aussie Rules game, a new site must be found. I challenge the government to make that decision by the end of this year and get on with building a state-of-the-art multipurpose stadium for this town. God knows that everybody believes this town needs it.

I will touch on one other matter in the time remaining to me. I refer to the Balga Works program, which has been mentioned in this place previously. Towards the end of last year, one of my colleagues, Hon Peter Collier, made a speech in the Legislative Council on this issue. In my short time in this place and as a humble backbencher I have come across issues that affect between one to 10 people. The Balga Works program affects 200 people. I have had discussions with many people affected by this failed program. When the Premier was Minister for Education and Training he was asked questions about this program. The program was designed to train recidivist kids by giving them the skills to get apprenticeships and, if necessary, send them back to school. The aim of the program was to get these kids, some of whom were very difficult, off the streets.

Governments of all persuasions tend to handball programs that are suggested to them to the organisations that made the suggestion and provide them with funding. They do that because, in some cases, it is too hard for government agencies to handle and they cannot be held responsible for those programs. I suggest that is what happened in this case. The then Minister for Education and Training, the now Premier, was approached about this program in late 2004 and he said in this house that he had heard about the program, which he thought was good but was very expensive. The predicted cost of looking after 40 to 50 kids was over \$2 million. He believed the program would not go ahead. However, the program did go ahead. The person promoting this scheme, Mr Michael Carton, to whom I will refer later, had formed an alliance with the principal of the Balga Senior High School, Merv Hammond. On behalf of the Balga Senior High School, Merv Hammond said that it would take on the program and train the kids. I put it to members that the principal of a senior high school probably exceeded his authority by authorising a \$2 million program. It has come out subsequently that his wife and son were also involved in the program and were consultants to it. It might give members an idea of why it happened.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Are you talking about the principal's wife and son?

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Yes. Time does not permit me to go into the details of why the program failed, but it did for many reasons.

I come back to the funding of the project. The now Premier, the Minister for Education and Training at the time, said no to the funding. The principal of the Balga Senior High School said on behalf of the school that it would take on the program and would find the money. It put the Balga Senior High School and its parents and citizens association in a parlous position. Obviously Balga Senior High School could not continue funding the program and, when that happened, money started coming in from the Swan District Education Office of the Department of Education and Training.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Again, it is my contention that someone exceeded his or her authority by making payments that were not authorised by the department. After talking to many people my best estimate about the payments that were made for a program that was not authorised by anybody in the department is over \$3 million. Hostel

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accommodation in Joondalup that was part of the program was finally closed last year. To her credit, the former Minister for Education and Training, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, knew that something was wrong, so she called the Corruption and Crime Commission. The CCC has been investigating this matter for a little while. For some people, the investigation is proceeding too slowly. I am not sure what resources the CCC has at its disposal, but I have put it in contact with several witnesses and it is slowly getting around to talking to those people. The CCC must investigate this matter, because there seems to be big anomalies in the program. One thing that disappoints me is that, although the several members on the other side of the house who know quite a lot about this matter have done a bit to help some of their constituents by writing to the minister in an attempt to secure outstanding wages, they have not dug into the matter deeply to find out what really happened. I refer to the members for Kingsley, Joondalup and Girrawheen and Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich and Hon Graham Giffard. They are just a few of the members on the other side of the house who have been involved in this matter. For reasons best known to those members, they have decided that the matter is too complicated and that they cannot do much about it. As local members, they will be derelict in their duty if they do not try to find out what happened. This is a big issue. Plenty of people have become victims in this matter. At least 70 people who worked on the program have yet to be paid their superannuation and total wages. I have their names and addresses and the amounts that they are owed. The amount of money outstanding is estimated to be \$500 000. Many of these people changed careers to work on the program. I am talking about very dedicated teachers and carers who changed jobs to become involved in the program and who have yet to receive their total wage. At one stage, many of these people approached the Department of Education and Training about the money they were owed and, as a result, some money was paid. Some money went to Hurson Pty Ltd, Michael Carton's company. It sounds as though he paid the favoured ones, the ones who were not making too much noise and who were compliant with his wishes. I believe that 70 people are owed \$500 000 in wages and superannuation payments. I call on the Minister for Education and Training to look into this matter immediately and to ensure that the outstanding money is paid. Some people have been waiting for their money for over 12 months. When the Department of Education and Training started to pay these people last May or June, I thought that it was finally doing the right thing. However, the payments soon stopped. I now know why they stopped, although it was a mystery to me for a while. They stopped because the State Solicitor told the department that it was not liable for the outstanding money. To the letter of the law, the State Solicitor is probably dead right. The department may not be legally liable; however, it is morally liable. It would be reprehensible conduct if the government did not pay these people their money. I want to mention three people in particular who have come to me. They have had great courage in standing up to be whistleblowers. I refer to Nicole Wright, Judith Nunn and Meredith Duffus. These three women have suffered great trauma because they believed in this program and they believed this conman who was telling them that, ultimately, they would get their money. They have had difficulty getting work again. Meredith has lost her car because she could not keep up her payments. Her car has been repossessed and she has no way of getting around. At one stage she looked like losing her rental accommodation as well, but we were able to help her there. This all stems from a failed program. It should never have happened. Checks were not carried out on Michael Carton, the fellow who did this. Last week, in Melbourne, he was given an 18 months' suspended sentence on charges of fraudulently obtaining \$140 000 of commonwealth money to do a training program in Melbourne in the 1990s. He has just been brought to justice. It says in this newspaper article I have that he is a reformed alcoholic and drug user. He has been able to come over here, con a lot of our public servants, and get this program up and running.

There are many victims; the people who have not received wages are not the only ones. The kids themselves are victims. I have done some investigations and found that many of the kids had been taken from difficult situations. Some of those who had been on the streets are back there. I will give one example. Last March, the *Stateline* program lauded this program and the boom bus that went around the Northbridge area and picked up the kids. If members saw the program they would have said that Rebecca Carmody did a great job, it looked fantastic and it was a really good story. That story featured not only Michael Carton saying how good his program was but also an 18-year-old Aboriginal boy named Stan Penny, who was born a heroin addict. He had no say in the matter; he was born an addict. He was brought into this program and was doing an apprenticeship as a plasterer. He had been in the program for about three months. He said it was great, there were no more drugs for him and he was going straight. He was going to get a trade and he loved his work. Anyone who saw the story would have said, "It just did my heart good. Isn't this program great?" Probably two months after that program was aired, Stan Penny had a disagreement with the principals of the Balga Works program because he wanted to visit his family, and was thrown out of the program. I am sad to relate that for the next 12 months or so, Stan Penny lived on the streets and was back on drugs. We have taken him back and got him into a detox rehabilitation program. He has been in there for two weeks. It is very difficult to get these kids free of drugs but so far, touch wood, he is going pretty well. We may be able to get Stan Penny back, but he is just one victim of this failed program. I think there are probably between 50 and 70 kids who at some stage had access to or were involved in this program but have been thrown out and are not getting any help.

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The recruiting of the kids was also a scam. Kids were taken from other programs because somehow or other this group was able to say that if it got a certain number of kids, the government would give it a certain amount of money. Some of the kids in the program alleged that their Abstudy money was ripped off by the principals of the program. So many things have gone on in this program that the government has to act now. The taxpayers of Western Australia are also victims. As I mentioned, \$2.5 million to \$3 million has gone to this program. The program has failed and the bloke who ran it has been proven to be a crook. He must be brought to justice, and I certainly hope the Corruption and Crime Commission can do that. It behoves this government and particularly the Minister for Education and Training to pay these people the money they are owed so they can get their lives back in order. This is a real blot on the government. It is a shame that this program, which had some good attributes, was run by a conman. We can say that about him because he has been convicted in Melbourne. He should be brought to face justice here and the government must pay these people the money that is due to them.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Stirling) [6.00 pm]: I thank members for the opportunity to respond to the Premier's Statement. Firstly, I congratulate the member for Peel. He has had many congratulations over the past couple of days and has also had a baptism of fire in his first days in Parliament. I welcome him to the team and am sure that he will make a huge contribution over a number of years.

I took the time last year to bring some produce from the electorate of Stirling into the house, and it vanished. I presented to the chamber a number of items for which some of the producers in the great southern are famous. They included a couple of bottles of wines and other products. I tabled them and they disappeared, which highlights the quality of the produce. For that reason, I chose to not delve into my pocket and bring some more produce into the chamber this year. Members of the house and others have an opportunity to taste the produce of the great southern during the March long weekend when a raft of events has been arranged. The overall event is called "Taste Great Southern". The towns of Albany, Mt Barker and Denmark are hosting a range of functions that will be held over the long weekend to afford people an opportunity to see what producers in the region have to offer. I encourage people to visit the great southern to taste some of the wares.

Mr P.B. Watson: Have many wineries been affected by the bushfires?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It is not yet known what impact the bushfires will have on the wines. However, it is believed that the fruit may have had wax coating over it at the time. If there is an issue, it will relate to smoke damage but at this stage it is unknown what the damage will be. While the member for Albany is talking about the quality of fruit for this season, I am told that the harvest is slightly down on normal years because of the dryness of the season, but that the quality is likely to be greater. Members who enjoy nice wines should pick up the 2007 vintages because it would be good to put them in a cellar and pull them out in a few years.

While talking about alcohol, I will mention a group that I was not very aware of, but which the member for Albany will be familiar with. It is called the Great Southern Distilling Company. That group has been producing spirits for a number of years that it sells in a number of bottle shops in the great southern. I did not want to table bottles of spirits because I am sure that they would have been a target for some members at the end of the day! It is great to see those ventures develop in the great southern and to see business opportunities arise for people who are prepared to invest in the region.

I will again mention a couple of major projects which I have previously mentioned in this house and which are moving into the fundraising stage. The first is the Grange Resources Ltd magnetite mine at Wellstead. Those types of projects and the Lignor Ltd strand lumber project will bring wonderful wealth to but also are likely to put pressure on the region. The lumber project involves processing woodchip into beams so that it can be milled and sold as timber. Such projects will bring great wealth to the great southern. I am a great supporter of them, as are the member for Albany, ministers and others who visit the region. It is great to see those projects getting support. That will put pressure on the region. The projected number of people who are likely to move to the region for just those two projects alone will put a lot of pressure on the availability of land and housing. There is also the potential to construct a couple of biomass plants in the region. Two proponents are looking at whether they will be able to utilise the canopy of the plantation timbers to produce electricity. These projects are not as far down the line as the other two projects that I have already mentioned, but they have potential for the region. It is good to develop some insurance against electricity generation coming from afar, and it adds to the region.

The type of projects that are coming online in the great southern - there are a number of smaller business projects I do not have time to mention today - put pressure on the infrastructure. If I were to raise one core issue that merits mentioning in Parliament, it would be the regional development and infrastructure that is required in the area to support growth and development. The first issue that I will highlight, which I have mentioned previously in this place and which was mentioned today by other members when they spoke about their regions, is land release. There is a shortage of available housing and a shortage of available land on which people can build houses. The consequence of that situation is that it simply pushes up prices. The price of land in all the

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communities that I represent has increased considerably, and I guess that is reflected across Western Australia. It puts a lot of pressure on new home buyers and on people who want to move to the regions to take advantage of the employment opportunities that arise from the development in those areas.

A number of pressures have led to the position in which there is not enough land. One of them relates to power and water, and I will talk about those matters specifically in a moment. However, another pressure relates to the inland towns of Frankland, Cranbrook, Mt Barker to some extent, Wellstead and Manypeaks. In many cases, the cost of development in those areas is higher than the return that developers can get for the sale of that land. From their perspective, that means that the project is not viable. Therefore, the reason that land is not becoming available is that a developer cannot cross the nexus between dealing with the infrastructure costs and getting the land to the point at which it can be sold profitably. I would support strong investment by government in a regional infrastructure fund. In that way, local governments could apply for funds either to help undertake development themselves or to support development by private developers. The government has put \$20 million a year over the next four years into the regional investment fund, and I think it is in its second year now. That might sound like a lot of money, but \$20 million a year for the state of Western Australia is not a substantial amount. There was no allocation of funds to the infrastructure component of the regional investment fund for 2006-07. For 2007-08, \$3 million will be allocated to it and in the following year, \$6 million will be allocated to it. I am not talking about large sums of money. Western Australia does not have the scope for shires to provide sufficient funds to help with the development that they need to undertake to support their areas. Late last year the National Party had a briefing from LandCorp on the issue of land release in regional areas. I found that it has an allocation of \$4 million as a community service obligation payment that it can use to support developments in areas in which developments are not profitable. An amount of \$4 million is simply a spit in the desert in the context of the size of the issue for land development in inland regional areas. It disappoints me that that is the limit of its community service obligation support for those sorts of developments. Obviously, that is one of the reasons we do not have the level of land release that is needed.

I turn now to the issues of power and water. These issues have been highlighted over the past month or so in my home town of Denmark. The power supply has reached its capacity, and because it has reached its capacity, Western Power is no longer approving any applications for connection until it works out who will pay for the infrastructure that is required to increase the capacity. Mr Acting Speaker, you may recall that last year I asked the Minister for Energy a question about a power capacity improvement program. The government had a very successful regional power improvement program that targeted the reliability of power in regional areas; it worked very well. The feedback on that program from the community has been very positive. That provided an opportunity for the minister to support a capacity improvement program, whereby strategic investment could have been made in areas of growth to support the backbone infrastructure that was needed to get power capacity to those particular areas.

Denmark is not an area that is not growing. It has been growing at a substantial rate for the past 10 years. As a result, it is not going to end up with an isolated asset. Whatever investment is made in infrastructure will provide a return over time. I have no doubt about that. From the middle of December last year until about mid-April, no connections will be approved. That has put a hold on land releases and subdivisions. It has put a hold on any developer that has an opportunity to release land to meet demand. The consequence of that is that land prices will move up. The consequence of that is that people will not be able to afford to move there and the labour needs of developments in the region will not be met. I support some sort of capacity improvement program that does not operate on a strictly user pays basis. It should involve an injection of government funds to put in background infrastructure in order to draw development and further connections that will pay for the system in the long term. There are a lot of pressure points around Western Australia in that regard. If we look at areas that are edge-of-grid concerns, we will see they include Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun. There is a lot of pressure there because of the mine development. They also include Bremer Bay, Jurien Bay and, of course, Walpole. Walpole is an area within my constituency. These are areas that need some very special support. It is not good enough to say, "Right guys, it will be user pays. We are going to find a way to get some money out of everyone, from those who make the subdivision right down to the mums and dads. That includes not just the big developers that might do 100 lots, but right down to the mum and dad subdivisions. They will have to make a capital contribution to pay for the assets that Western Power needs to put in to get capacity to those towns." That is something that needs to be addressed. That is part of the question I put to the Premier today. I would like to take that a little bit further.

It is not just power in these areas that is an issue. There is currently an issue with water. It is an issue across the south west. I had an informal chat with the minister not that long ago about the pressures on some of the communities in the south west. Water is being carted into Walpole at present. I understand that that is a solution but I do not see it as an acceptable solution. We need to be moving towards a position where we have a much more sustainable water supply. When I was first elected to Parliament, I toured my electorate and had a look at

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the water supply in Walpole. That was two years ago. It would leave a person cold to see the spot where water is being drawn from. It is in the Walpole River. When I saw it, it was the end of summer and the area was an absolute sludge pit. At that stage, water was not being drawn from that source because there was a second dam on private property. Water was being drawn from that for the town's water supply. That is not acceptable; something has to change. We have reached a point this year at which water is being carted into the town to meet demand. We need to have a very close look at that and get something that is much more sustainable.

Speaking of Walpole, one of the pressure points getting a lot of consideration from the community is the deliberations by a community reference group for the upgrade of the sewerage system. I compliment the Water Corporation for establishing a reference group to deliberate on all the options that are available. The community is very keen to look at a plan that involves recycling. The town is in the middle of an environmental hotspot. It has the Walpole wilderness area to the north, the Walpole-Nornalup National Park, and the soon to be named marine park. I know that Mr Acting Speaker (Dr S.C. Thomas) spent time there just recently. To use that as a case study to look at some alternatives for how we might deal with sewerage and water would be a real asset to the government. There is scope to think outside the box rather than be perhaps confined to our traditional approaches of how we deal with water and sewerage. Looking at recycling options is something I have been promoting, particularly in light of the prospect of pumping water from the south west Yarragadee.

Tourism is a highlight of my electorate. It is growing not just on the south coast, but also in the Plantagenet and Frankland areas. A huge number of people are moving through there. To support the development of the utilities infrastructure - that is, power and water - is also to support our tourism industry. I think tourism brings something like \$120 million a year to that region. I do not think it is a big ask to ensure that we have sustainable power and sustainable water supplies. It is also interesting to note that over the past two years in the Denmark and Walpole areas, this government has raised \$25 million from stamp duty and goods and services tax on sales of land. That is a substantial amount of money. I guess I am seeing an opportunity to reinvest some of that back into that region, which is generating so much for the government coffers.

One of the events in that area that I would be remiss if I did not mention today was the recent fires in Porongurup. There have been a number of fires in Western Australia this year, with it being a particularly dry year. It has been a strong cause for concern for all those who represent some of those forest regions in particular. However, the one that was particularly close to us was the Porongurup fire. We are not sure how it started. It started on private property and burnt just about all of the Porongurup Range. It then broke away and burnt something like 3 000 hectares of private land also. The interesting thing to come out of that was the level of support that came from all the different government agencies. I want to mention in particular groups such as Western Power. When the fire was burning, Western Power was right in there and responded very quickly to put the power back on. It coordinated all of its movements with the people in charge of the fire. Pretty well as soon as the fire had gone through and Western Power had a chance to go in safely, it did. Western Power as well as the Water Corporation did a great job in their response to those fires to get people reconnected.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.T. REDMAN: All the groups involved such as the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Department for Community Development, the State Emergency Service and St John Ambulance really pulled together to have that fire put out, as did the volunteer bush fire brigades in particular. Two public meetings were called by the shire. One was pretty much in the middle of the event. That meeting was called by Kevin Forbes, the shire president. I acknowledge the decision to have that public meeting and to pull the various agencies together to talk about where they were at with the fire and to make sure that there was communication with the people who were affected and that they had a chance to ask some questions and receive appropriate responses. A meeting was also called post the fires. Again, I compliment the shire, and in particular Kevin Forbes, for making that happen. It was really important. If there is good communication between the different agencies and the people affected, there are far fewer issues.

I will highlight, however, some tensions that exist, particularly between the volunteer bush fire brigades and the Department of Environment and Conservation, in the management of fires. I am sure that this is something that you, Mr Acting Speaker (Dr S.C. Thomas), are probably familiar with in some of the areas that you represent. I do not particularly want to go into the issues. I have mentioned this to the minister on an informal basis. I believe it is important that we promote strategies for the various groups who have those concerns to get together with the agencies to resolve them, because the last thing we want is a level of conflict that gets to the point that we do not have the response to these fires that we need. It is a concern for these people, and I am right behind them. They are volunteers. They have done this for many years and have put in a huge amount of time. We need to respect that, listen to the points they raise and respond to them. I encourage government agencies to get themselves around a table and make sure that we can find a resolution to the issues that those people raise.

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I do not have much time left. Probably one of the biggest issues that are raised with me is the old chestnut to do with roads. In my time in Parliament I have asked a number of questions regarding Muirs Highway. It is pleasing that the northern bypass for Muirs Highway is finally under way. Some shoulder work has been done on that road right out to Rocky Gully. That is certainly welcome. There has been a bit of criticism about it as some of that shoulder work is starting to break up. There is a lot of traffic on those roads, particularly from timber haulage. When the northern bypass is finished, it will take a lot of traffic away from the centre of town. Funds have also been allocated to widen and fully develop the road out to the Hay River. That is certainly a first step. I ask the minister to keep Muirs Highway a priority. It is a death trap. There have been a lot of near misses on that road. It is important that we put the necessary work in place to ensure that it is safe for all road users to travel on.

I have spent a bit of time doorknocking in the little communities of Narrikup and Redmond recently. A timber road called Spencer Road goes through Narrikup. A plan to have a bypass around Narrikup is not yet on the agenda. I encourage the government to support the Timber Industry Road Evaluation Strategy, the funding group for those timber roads, and get that bypass happening. In that little community big trucks literally go past people's front doors right up to midnight. We would not want that happening around our streets and it certainly should not happen to these communities.

Chester Pass Road still has some issues. A section through the pass itself has some permanent signs saying "This is a dangerous stretch of road". It does not have one of those little A-frames saying that it will be fixed; it has a permanent sign saying, "This is a dangerous stretch of road". Something needs to happen. I am not sure what is holding it up. A tremendous amount of haulage comes through that pass, particularly during wheat harvesting, and it needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. I could go through a whole plethora of shire roads throughout the areas that I represent and beyond that need a lot of work. Roads are one of these priority areas that we should not sell short. We need to make sure that we put the necessary investments into them. I encourage the government to look at roads very closely.

The other issue that I have raised with my colleagues - it is an issue that the member for Wagin has raised in this place before - relates to teachers and people in promotional positions holding acting positions. The community gets very frustrated when there is a big turnover of principals in particular within their schools. It probably relates to deputy principals as well in some of the district high schools. Schools could have four or five teachers in as many years or four or five teachers in two or three years. I believe there are some steps we could take to address that. The member for Wagin has taken the issue up with the Department of Education and Training. I will be talking to my colleagues about some specific responses. I will not go through those in the short time I have left but it is something that we need to take up and it is something of great concern to the communities that we represent.

As the Nationals' spokesman for water resources, perhaps the biggest issue that is on our plate at present that we are all too familiar with is the potential pumping of 45 gegalitres of water from the south west Yarragadee. The Nationals have opposed it right from the outset. I have been to a number of public meetings. The interesting thing about this issue is that the whole breadth of the community does not like this. Although some of the radical green groups often raise such issues, the whole breadth of the community does not want this to happen. I support them along with the farming community, the business community, the shires and the local government areas throughout the south west. There are some other choices. Mr Deputy Speaker, you have promoted Wellington Dam as a viable option. We believe that putting substantial funds into recycling options is another choice. I also support what the government is doing in proving up the technology of managed aquifer recharge. It has a lot of potential. That is the starting point. Once that technology is proved up, it could be used in my own electorate of Walpole. My constituents are very keen on that.

As far as agriculture is concerned, we have come out very strongly in support of the single desk marketing system for wheat. A number of my colleagues and I have taken the time to attend some of these consultation meetings that are happening around Western Australia. I think they have now finished. I must compliment the convenors of these meetings on that process of engaging the farming community to get feedback about how things are going. There seems to be very strong support for the single desk. There is perhaps a slightly more mixed reaction about the structures that might be in place to support it. It is a case of "watch this space" and see what response the federal government takes. We have been right behind those farmers and their support for the single desk system of marketing wheat.

The other issue that is dear to my heart is biofuel. Members will be aware that I am a member of the Biofuel Taskforce, which is due to report soon. This matter does not get the attention from government that it deserves. There is little doubt that biofuel will be part of the mix of transport fuels in Western Australia. There is a whole raft of other options, including gas and electric cars, but biofuel will have to be a part of the mix. It is important that we start now to get the processes in place to develop a successful biofuel industry down the track. When I

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say we must start now, I refer to things like turning over the car fleet. It takes 10 years to turn over the car fleet to vehicles that are more compliant with biofuel. Unless we start now we will not get the benefits down the track. I am a supporter of some form of mandated market, whether it be a blend of ethanol or an undertaking by government to purchase so much for stationary engine use and energy production. It does not really matter, but it means a market will be forced to exist. Investors will be able to have some confidence that there will be a market, and get the industry started. There will then be the production capacity to put biofuel into the domestic market, becoming a key part of transport fuels in Western Australia. Biofuel has an environmental benefit and is renewable. It has all the factors that say that it must be good. Right now there may be a bit of concern about viability. I think it is right on the edge, particularly in the on-road use market. The federal fuel tax bill has killed off the off-road market for industrial users, but there is still the opportunity to get this industry going in Western Australia.

Two other little concerns sitting right on our doorstep, at either end of the state, are cane toads and starlings. These are two pests we really do not want. I fear that, no matter what we do, we will probably lose the battle, because the way these animals breed and move presents a huge challenge. That should not mean that we do not give it our best shot, particularly in the case of starlings. I believe we have a greater opportunity to hold up the movement of starlings than of cane toads. It is appropriate that we invest whatever resources we need to stop the impact they will have on agriculture in particular.

Some debate is beginning federally about some sort of carbon trading scheme for greenhouse gas emissions control. The debate will come over to the state level soon. We have perhaps not had the opportunity in Parliament to ease into some of these debates, but the community is getting a strong feel for this issue and is looking for some sort of action and response. I know that the government and the Premier will be announcing the state's response to greenhouse issues. I would support some sort of scheme that puts a cost on carbon. I understand that we need to lead our industries into it. We cannot just dump something on industry and tell it to wear another huge tax. We will be working in a carbon-constrained world, so we need to introduce something that gets us used to working in that environment. I would support something like what is happening in New South Wales, with the greenhouse abatement cap and trade scheme, targeting the energy sector. It is a way of introducing us to a carbon-constrained world. It will be required in the future. We need to think about that. Obviously, something that works on an international level is better than something that works only nationally or on a state level. However, in the absence of the others, we need to look at moving forward in this regard and getting ourselves and our industries used to working in a carbon-constrained world. That sums up the issues that relate to my electorate and the various portfolio areas I represent. I thank the house.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon) [6.30 pm]: Unusually for me, I will not make an Address-in-Reply-type speech on this occasion. Rather, I will deliver a considered paper from me and my office about agriculture. I have titled the paper "From Plant to Plate". I suspect I will not have time to deliver the entire paper in the next 30 minutes, but I will get into it.

With a population of less than 80 000, the wheatbelt punches way above its weight, with an estimated \$5 billion contribution to the state of Western Australia in 2005-06. In that same year, the input of the wheatbelt was just \$3 billion less than the entire agricultural economy of the state of Victoria. My research shows that agriculture in not only the wheatbelt but also, indeed, the whole of Western Australia can look forward to an enormously positive future, if allowed to develop in the right direction. In fact, agriculture in this state has an outstanding future. This is despite the fact that the wheatbelt does have problems. Most of those problems are not of its making. Some of these problems are well documented. Others are denied, or swept under the carpet. Without lateral thinking by government, industry and farmers, the wheatbelt could change from a food bowl to a dust bowl within a couple of decades. I am not saying that will happen, but it is a risk that we face. This will certainly occur if no meaningful programs are put in place for crop enhancement and diversification, and the development of added value bio-energy and biotechnology industries based within the region.

The trigger for the need to re-assess the direction in which agriculture is heading in the wheatbelt is the massive recent increase in costs. Some of those costs are for fuel, fertiliser, oil-based products and equipment, and off-farm transport, including intrastate, interstate and overseas. The problems in the wheatbelt have been massively compounded by this state government's total lack of interest in the future of the wheatbelt. In fact, I believe the state government has lost its belief in agriculture. Since this government took office, it has provided no proper financial assistance for any agricultural purpose, whether it be new industry infrastructure, social and economic development, or anything else. The government's platitudes mask its pitiful performance in meeting its duty of care to one of the top 10 grain producing regions in the world, and the third most populous region in Western Australia.

Everyone is aware of the creeping problem of climate change and its detrimental effects. Everyone in the wheatbelt is aware of a range of issues that represent the greatest threat to its future. Those issues are the loss of

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the young adult people to the city; the difficulty in gaining and training a permanent skilled agricultural industry work force; the lack of financial support to the Wheatbelt Development Commission; the unbelievable difficulty in getting heavy haulage licences for off-farm transport; the poor to nil road maintenance; the reduction in the grain freight transport network and in grain storage facilities; the massive state taxes that are imposed on transport; the lack of an adequate electricity supply; the lack of cheap domestic and commercial LPG and LNG supplies; the huge and inequitable cost of headworks for improved water, sewerage and electricity supplies, and the provision of reticulated gas; the lack of upper schools and teaching staff, and appropriate apprenticeship schemes; the lack of doctors, nurses and dentists - particularly dentists - and mental health care professionals and childcare; the lack of social and entertainment facilities; and the lack of adequate policing, which occasionally gives rise to extreme antisocial behaviour within some communities.

There are also the impacts of free trade agreements and internal commercial arrangements that have the overall impact of creating unstable prices for agricultural goods on the international market and inequitable competition from heavily subsidised United States and European agricultural produce. Both of these problems have been exacerbated by expensive and inefficient Australian port facilities and their linked road and rail systems. There is also the impact of an enforced minimum price regime for local produce by large supermarket chains such as Coles and Woolworths in state and national markets and the effect of competition from lower priced Asian and South American imports. A final negative effect can be the impact of some local government shires and town councils. They largely lack competency in dealing with new businesses, land and housing development, and a range of other essential services, such as power and water. They lack the ability to manage finances, which causes them to become technically insolvent or to operate close to insolvency. They also lack the ability to adequately market and promote their communities both to tourists and potential ratepayers.

What can we do about the range of those negative impacts I have just raised? I am not a great supporter of negativities. We need to look towards not only a sustainable future but also an economically viable future. We need a non-emotive attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we need to do that on a logical basis. We need an overall increase in federal and state rural investment funds, particularly private funds, and the undertaking of properly constituted public-private partnerships. When I say "properly constituted", I am talking particularly about superannuation investment funds. I spent some time last year speaking to many large superannuation funds that are seeking places for their funds. We need to develop rural-based industries, including biofuels, energy and biotechnology; to relocate and/or locate high-tech development and industries into rural areas; to develop rural economy-based education precincts involving universities; and to develop improved wind power, biomass and solar energy for agriculture purposes, including the reclamation of artesian waters and demineralisation and desalination. I also throw in there a non-agricultural issue that has not been spoken about. There is substantial opportunity in this state for wave power. Wave power can produce power certainly somewhere between solar energy, wind power and base load. We need to develop inland ports and reduce transport costs. We need to develop more professional local government councillors and administrators and reduce the number of councils. We need to develop a highly focused and well-resourced Regional Organisation of Councils. We need a massive reduction in the state government agencies involved in rural affairs, or at least the amalgamation of the remaining agencies, so that they can cede their powers and responsibilities to ROCS or be relocated within rural areas within ROCS. We need to create a senior, stand-alone ministry of rural, regional and remote affairs to be responsible for the performance of ROCS. We need to develop apprenticeship schemes based on rural industry, rural energy and technology development, and not on the demands of unions and other industries. We need to develop current crops and other crops to cope with climate and soil changes, and to meet the changes in consumer tastes and demands and the demand for crops for industrial needs. What I think needs to happen is the linchpin in what I will say next.

We need to meet the newly developing international consumer tastes and demands, which have the overall description of "slow foods", while retaining mass export markets. Western Australia's agriculture industry will be a world leader if we focus on slow foods. It will mean a twenty-first century agrarian revolution, which will amuse a few members opposite, and include a change from a monoculture, or near monoculture, broadacre cropping system to both a mass market and premium niche market cropping regime.

Slow foods is the new baby boomer industry. It is driven by the baby boomers and it is sweeping the world. Slow foods now encapsulates all generations in the marketplace. The originator of slow foods is an Italian left-wing journalist Carlo Petrini who, in 1986, led a campaign to stop a McDonald's fast-food franchise from opening near the famous Rome tourist attraction, the Spanish Steps. In 21 years that campaign has grown into the fastest growing volunteer organisation in the world. It is revolutionising the world food industry. The reason behind it is a health conscious, ageing global population fully aware that almost 60 per cent of the population of Western nations suffer from obesity and related serious health problems and 15 per cent are glucose intolerant.

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In future, the demand will be for fresher, healthier, seasonal, natural and traditional food that contains chemicals and vitamins that are anti-ageing and disease inhibiting. Slow food is top quality, in-season produce that is to be prepared traditionally and consumed in a convivial atmosphere amongst friends and family, with no time constraint on preparation or consumption.

A slow-foods retailer caters for a special market through a closed supply chain. The producer provides the retailer with small volumes of high quality, unprocessed natural produce for which he is paid a premium price. It provides for a larger group of producers to specialise in demand foods for the marketplace and the development of quality food chains, producers and retailers who can support each other to provide the best quality produce to the consumer.

The slow-foods market is hugely substantial in the Western world. Research carried out by Professor David Hughes of Imperial College, London, indicates that at least 47 per cent of adult shoppers in a European-United Kingdom population of 518 million will buy premium quality produce at a premium price. If the same demographic is applied to the United States and Canadian markets, it will equate to 47 per cent of adult shoppers in a population of 330 million. In an Australian market it will equate to 47 per cent of a population of 20 million. This is a potential premium price, niche market in excess of 400 million people who will look for quality at a price suitable to them or feel comfortable with demanding quality and will be prepared to pay a higher price. They will demand a premium quality irrespective of price.

On the other side of the ledger, 39 per cent do not look for quality, but at the price. Fourteen per cent do not look for quality or at the price. However, that leaves 53 per cent of the market that remains part of the mass market; that is, the traditional fast-food market. It was developed in the United States and is accepted globally. In the past four decades of the twentieth century it became all encompassing. It has well and truly reached its peak. It is in decline and has lost a fair slice of its trade. There is no particular demand for this food to be healthy or of good quality but, supposedly, it must be fresh. It is usually recognised and accepted globally. It must be competitively priced and is often processed. It does not necessarily contain natural ingredients and is often ready-to-eat. It is not required to be consumed in a convivial atmosphere and there may be - there usually is - time constraints on its preparation and consumption. Indeed, one can see that by watching television. A retailer caters to a large-scale mass market through an open supply chain. A producer provides a retailer with large volumes at a competitive price that is usually in the best commercial interests of the retailer. This food culture is considered to be the key factor in obesity and related chronic illnesses, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, even in young children. The culprits are usually listed as fast-food outlets, such as McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Some prominent Western Australians have suggested that these fast foods should be taxed in the same way that alcohol and tobacco are taxed, because they cause greater economic harm to society in general. Philosophically, I do not adhere to that opinion. However, if that happens, Coles and Woolworths should also be taxed. They both promote potentially bad eating habits. They are also deceptive in their advertising because they state that their perishable produce is "fresh". That is not so, especially when one compares their idea of fresh with the true meaning of the word. These companies are purely profit-driven and they have little interest in the public good. They specialise in creating demand for the produce they wish to sell and in not being answerable to consumer demand.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: What does the wheatbelt have to offer slow-food consumers? First, wheat for flour, bread, noodles, pasta and brewing is available on the mass market and in the slow-food market. Wheat is one of the most healthy cereal crops on earth. It contains substantial protein and has no fat or cholesterol. It also contains all the eight essential amino acids and vitamins A, C, E, K, B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B8 and B12. Further, it contains calcium, iodine, iron and zinc.

Mr T.K. Waldron: Does it contain B-careful?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes, that is in there too!

Like wheat, barley is considered one of nature's great health foods. It contains all the vitamins, minerals and protein required in the human diet, and it has seven times the vitamin C component of oranges. It has five times more iron than spinach, 10 times more calcium than milk and 15 times more protein than the equivalent amount of milk. It improves stamina, sexual energy, thought-processes, skin texture and pliability. It also reduces addiction and fights cancer. Most wheatbelt barley is grown from malting. The bulk of it is used as animal fodder. Despite the fact that barley is similar to wheat in human nutritional value, it is used in flour, as a rice extender, as a food and sauce thickener and in porridge and soups. Lupins, like wheat and barley, are used to create the same foods and may well have a major impact as premium produce in the world's slow-food market. However, for that to occur the benefits that are suggested in research papers must be heavily promoted in the market place. Lupins bear a nutritional resemblance to soya beans, and, as some members will know, that has

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been debated in the community. Lupins are high in protein, much higher in dietary fibre and low in oil content. They help reduce the potential for obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease and serve as an appetite suppressant. They lower cholesterol and hypertension, protect against bowel cancer and are used in skin-restorative cosmetics. Lupins are rapidly becoming important in several traditional Asian dishes, such as miso, a Japanese sauce and soup, and tempe, a traditional Indonesian soya bean dish. Lupins have been substituted for soya beans because of a lower glycaemic index. As traditional dishes are usually eaten by the whole family, there is a market of up to 372 million people.

Canola is the last crop I will speak about. The oil it produces is considered to be the most nutritionally balanced of all cooking oils. It is a major constituent in margarine, being high in mono-unsaturated fats and omega 3 fatty acids, and low in unhealthy saturated fatty acids. Its positive fat content is important for energy, warmth, vital organ protection, brain function, growth in infants, improved food palatability and increased appetite satiation. Canola oil reduces the effects of type 2 diabetes, and its omega 3 fatty acid content reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke.

So what does the wheatbelt have to offer through its agricultural produce? It is a staple ingredient for much of the basis of slow food, including traditional foods such as breads, pasta and noodles. What are the properties of the produce? I have pages of information here, which I will not read out given the time. These four wheatbelt crops have everything necessary to be attractive to a niche, premium slow-food market. We need to promote them worldwide. There is already a possible traditional market in Japan and Indonesia, which have a combined population of 372 million. If we find a market for traditional food ingredients in China and India, we could add another 2.4 billion potential customers. As health and healthy eating habits become an even greater focus in the future, we should remember that wheat and barley crops can be harvested both as grass and grain. Grass provides highly nutritious liquid extracts, and I have already outlined the benefits of grain. Wheatbelt farmers, indeed all Western Australian agriculturists, must in the future realise that knowledge of produce and commitment to its acceptance in the market does not end at the farm gate. The new slow-food culture will open up a potentially massive premium price economy that demands variety from even a single plant species.

Fifty years ago there were 73 varieties of apples; now we are lucky to have five available in the mass marketplace. There is a whole raft of reasons for that. In future, the potential of the market to expand in the non-Coles and non-Woolworths markets will be enormous. The reduction in apple varieties has been caused in no small way by the fast-food culture and the enormously powerful supermarket chains. Over the past four decades people have been encouraged to adopt the notion of fast food, but where convenience is the main driver, people can purchase in convenience stores only those goods that are on offer. That is why the number of varieties of apples has declined from 73 to four or five. Because of time constraints in our non-stop, time-consuming world, the demand for fast foods and off-the-shelf produce will remain. The reality is that the Coles and Woolworths-type markets will decline to less than 47 per cent and the market that Professor Hughes talks about will grow dramatically. Coles and Woolworths will become far less relevant and prevalent in the market and will be replaced in a relatively short time by the fresh produce consumable market. They will continue to sell baked beans, soaps and other household goods but will lose market share in consumable goods such as vegetables, milk and meat.

Fresh produce markets and high-quality food outlets are rapidly expanding. That can be seen occurring around Perth today. High-quality, high-cost outlets and high-quality, low-cost outlets are attracting people in their hundreds. There is Herdsman Fresh near where I live in Selby St. Some people have told me that the cost of the produce there is high. However, when one enters the premises, one can barely move because there are people everywhere. That is not because of the number of wealthy people in the shop; it is because people are looking after their health. Recently, I was in a Coles supermarket at Floreat Forum and watched a lady and her husband aggressively search the shelves for organic vegetables. That is the mood of the public.

A few new phrases are coming into the food supply lexicon. Professor Hughes talks about Wednesday foods. Wednesday foods are caused by people having a lack of time to prepare foods because of work, parenting and social demands during the working week. Wednesday food means that individuals will buy cheap food that is quick to prepare. They quickly take it home and put it on the table so that the family can consume it. That is balanced by weekend foods. On the weekend, public holidays and when people have the time, there is an extremely powerful and positive drive and permanent change in people's eating habits whereby on the weekends they will take the time to buy high-quality food and they will take the time to eat it. That balances their diet. Wednesday food is lighter on the budget and is the less healthy food. That is balanced on the weekend by eating high-quality food that is more expensive.

Businesses and governments that consider slow foods to be just a passing fad will rue the day they made that mistake. That is the future for Western Australia. Slow food and tradition is back. The train is leaving the station and Western Australian agriculture must be on it. Obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular problems caused

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Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Acting Speaker; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr Troy Buswell; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Max Trenorden

by a poor diet are massive, multibillion dollar problems and are an impost on western economies. The slow-food philosophy is designed to improve health, prevent obesity by eating a proper diet and by consuming food in a relaxed, convivial atmosphere. It will mean a multibillion dollar income for the agricultural regions that take advantage of it. After doing a considerable amount of research, I am convinced about what I believe is the future of agriculture. I do not believe that many people who are involved in the decision-making processes in this state believe in agriculture. When the current Premier came to power, he moved the emphasis away from food and onto technology. It will be proved in years to come that the growth in food in this state will substantially outgrow any potential growth in technology. This state has enormous advantages. However, the attitude of some farmers and agricultural groups such as the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the Western Australian Farmers Federation is deficient. Not enough thought is given to the future, and agriculture is too often considered through the rear vision mirror. Slow foods are the future. They will improve the health of our agricultural industry and of Western Australians.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House)**.

House adjourned at 6.59 pm
