

**APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2001**

*Second Reading - Cognate Debate*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR HYDE** (Perth) [3.50 pm]: The Premier has rightly pointed out that we are in a new world order, and this budget allows the tourism industry to adjust to that. The small regional centre in Oregon called Ashland has 15 000 residents. It is a major tourist destination that receives 200 000 visitors a year to the Ashland Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Hodson-Thomas) I am having difficulty hearing the member for Perth. Members who wish to continue their conversations please take them outside the Chamber.

Mr HYDE: Whitewater rafting also attracts many tourists to Ashland. Ashland combines the arts and sports for the purposes of tourism, and that must be done in Western Australia. I am glad that the tourism budget has been allocated an extra \$2 million for regional tourism initiatives. We should examine how Western Australia can differentiate its tourism product from that of other States. Members should not forget that the backpackers and caravan travellers put more money into the Western Australian economy than big package tourists who come from overseas and who pay with overseas dollars, which keeps the money and the profits over there. Backpackers put money into the delis and restaurants. That is the market we should aim for in this new world order.

I have invested in regional Western Australia, as have other members. It is remarkable to hear from the Opposition that they fear that nobody on this side of the Chamber has any knowledge of business. Like many people over the past 10 years, I did not survive on a wage; I ran three small businesses. Most of us involved in the tourism industry must adapt. People have approached me with stories about how their Ansett tickets are no longer valid. I know people who paid for a flight to Bali for their honeymoon. However, because of what happened to Ansett, they cannot go. That couple now wants to visit Denmark and other regional places in Western Australia. Those of us involved in the local tourism industry are offering discounts of up to 50 per cent to make it more affordable for people to travel. We must provide those types of advantages in Western Australia.

I will conclude on the advantages my electorate has received from the budget. Libraries in this State have been given \$4 million, \$1 million of which will be given this year. Importantly, \$500 000 has been allocated for the electronic infrastructure and distribution system. Each year, over 2.4 million items circulate throughout the library system in this State. A great advantage of this budget is that it ensures that people in Kununurra, Esperance or Northbridge are able to access the same information.

Another advantage of the budget is that 52 000 small business owners, particularly in regional Western Australia, will not pay land tax. Some small business owners have two or three businesses - as I did - that provide small turnovers which, when combined, equal a wage. Not having to pay land taxes on one or two of those businesses, such as a delicatessen, makes a big difference to those small business owners. This Government will make sure that the real economy engine drivers - small businesses - are driven. It is important to acknowledge that 52 000 people are better off from this budget because they will not pay land tax.

Our budget will advantage the work done in security of payments that was started under the previous Government and will be carried through by this Government. We will boost turnover in the construction industry to make sure that the money turns over quicker, and we will also make sure that the money gets down to subcontractors. This Government recognises the new world order of employment. This State leads the way for self-employment. We must ensure that subcontractors and others who are self-employed in this State are paid quickly and efficiently. They must not be duded or misused by those with economic power in society.

I will conclude on the issue of affordable housing. I commend the Minister for Housing and Works for the money that has been put into affordable housing and for the new partnerships that are being created for community housing. The days of a centralised state system that provides all housing no longer exists. The Government will work with groups, including the Perth Inner City Housing Association and local councils, to deliver a better product and more suitable, affordable housing to the people in the areas that need it. In my electorate, a great partnership between the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the Minister for Housing and Works will result in a new park and affordable housing for people with disabilities; that is a good outcome for the community. In Glendalough, local residents in state housing are being consulted about their new homes, and neighbours are also being consulted.

Budgets are not only about figures and black and red ink. They are about the quality of where the money is spent and about quality outcomes. This budget screams of quality outcomes. The outcomes in the budget match what is needed in society in the twenty-first century.

**MR JOHNSON** (Hillarys) [3.56 pm]: I will try to keep my comments on the budget brief because I know there is an agreement to try to finish the business of the House by five o'clock. I promise members that I will not talk for the full 45 minutes allocated to me because I know that two or three other members also want to contribute to the debate.

I have listened to all the members opposite who in their budget speeches have exalted the virtues of the budget. Of course, I would not expect them to say anything other than that because it is their budget and they are stuck with it. Last Thursday I listened carefully when the Treasurer brought down the budget. By the time he finished I likened him to Arthur Daley trying to flog an old banger. This budget is a "robbing hood" budget. The Government is trying to attack those people who it thinks are rich; however, those people are not rich.

Mr McGowan: You should give credit to Alston for that.

Mr JOHNSON: If the member for Rockingham wants to make an interjection, he should sit down in his seat and make a sensible one. I do not mind interjections if they are sensible.

Some of the people whom the Government has attacked who it thinks are rich are the people who bought a block of land and built a house that probably cost only a few hundred pounds in those days. Today, some of those houses could not be given away because they are in urgent need of repair. However, because they are in prime locations, the Treasurer and the Gallop Labor Government want to punish those people who fought in World War II, who have done so much for their country. They have paid taxes all of their lives and the Government has hit them with this new tax because these people want to stay in their homes. They could have sold the land for redevelopment a few years ago if they wanted to make money. However, they did not do that because they chose to live in the house in which they have spent most of their married lives.

Most of those people are elderly and this heartless Government wants to attack them. The majority of them do not have high incomes. Perhaps a small percentage of those who live in some areas in Dalkeith who built multimillion dollar homes would own land that is valued at over \$1 million. Those people could well afford to pay \$10 000 or \$20 000 a year or whatever it might be on that land value. I do not think that is fair, but they could afford it. Hundreds of people will be affected by this heartless tax. It will force many of them to sell the property for redevelopment and subdivisions, which is the only way they will be able to get out of paying the tax, although selling is not what they want to do. Many of them will have wanted to use the land as their pension a bit later in life. Most parents try to leave their children something when they are gone. The Government and the Treasurer cannot argue with the fact that it is a death duty tax.

It is a "robbing Hood" budget. The Government is attacking people it thinks are wealthy, but are not. However, the Government is not giving that money to the poor; it is giving nothing to the poor. It is increasing taxes on the poor as well. The Government is increasing the expenditure by many low paid workers in this State on certain charges. The abolition of the immobiliser subsidy will not hit a person who owns a Jaguar, a Rolls Royce or a \$50 000 car; it will hit low income people who might need to buy or sell an old banger that might be worth only a few hundred dollars. The subsidy makes a lot of difference to those people. The Government is not helping those people whatsoever.

What else has the Government done? It has increased payroll tax. What will that do? It will put people out of work. Unemployment will increase because employers do not have a bottomless pit of money. I have been in business all my life, as have some of my colleagues in this Chamber. Those who have run a business and employed people realise that it is not a simple thing. It is a big responsibility. It is not just the wage costs -

Mr D'Orazio: The goods and services tax kills you!

Mr JOHNSON: This nonsense about the GST is a big furphy. If my friend the member for Ballajura took into account the wholesale sales tax that many -

Mr McGinty: How long have you been out of business?

Mr JOHNSON: I am still in business. I have been in business for many years.

Mr D'Orazio interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Hodson-Thomas): Order, members!

Mr JOHNSON: It may have been about three per cent in overall terms to businesses.

Mr D'Orazio: Net.

Mr JOHNSON: No, it was not net.

Mr D'Orazio: Do you know how much it is?

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Mr JOHNSON: The member for Ballajura should listen. The wholesale sales tax must be taken out. Many goods that were hellishly expensive before the introduction of the GST are now cheaper to buy in this country. Computers, televisions, fridges, whitegoods and so many other goods are cheaper. The federal Government provided compensation for the GST, so the GST input has made no difference to most people's way of life. Many people raise prices by 10 per cent and nobody bats an eyelid, but because somebody calls it a GST, Labor members jump on the bandwagon and say that it is the evil of all evils. My friends on the government benches are wrong.

They were wrong about the Northbridge tunnel. When their colleagues were on this side of the House, all they ever did was whinge, whine, carp and moan about the Northbridge tunnel. I remember that the member for Perth was at the opening of the tunnel with his mates and his banners. It was an absolute sham. I did not hear one person criticise that tunnel once it had opened. Government members know that what I am saying is true.

Mr Watson: Ask the people in the country.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Albany does not care about country people; he would not vote for one vote, one value if he did. There is no fairness in that. I am getting off the subject a bit, but I do not mind because I love interjections - they feed me. I am happy to respond.

Mr Whitely: You spoke about payroll tax. What did the Court Government promise? Did it say that it would abolish payroll tax?

Mr JOHNSON: It said that it would abolish payroll tax. However, that was in relation to the GST that John Hewson was to introduce. It could have done it under that.

Mr Whitely: The promise was clearly made. You are right; that is the reason you broke the promise.

Mr JOHNSON: It was clearly dependent on whether the GST was introduced.

Mr Whitely: You never said that in 1992.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, the Government did. Has the member for Roleystone run a business?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr McRae): Order!

Mr Whitely: I have worked in a business.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Roleystone has worked in a business! He has not run a business or employed people.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Hillarys should continue with his debate.

Mr JOHNSON: Certainly, Mr Acting Speaker. I miss the Acting Speaker not being in his seat, because he normally gives me a bit of curry.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I will protect you from here.

Mr JOHNSON: Will you really? That is great.

The budget has hit low income people as well as those who cannot afford to pay this new super tax on premium land.

Mr O'Gorman interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I will not take any more interjections because I must cut my time on this debate short. I have a lot of things to say.

Members often talk about issues of equal opportunity and inequities in our society that should be addressed. I will bring to the attention of the House and the Minister for Community Development a problem that was brought to my attention a week ago by one of my constituents. This issue concerns profoundly deaf people, who I know experience many problems throughout Western Australia. A group of profoundly deaf people came here in July and pleaded with the Government and the minister to allocate funding to give them an equal chance to access many services and opportunities that members in this House take for granted. If we are ill, we can all tell a doctor how we feel and we can hear what he says. However, as well as being profoundly deaf, many deaf people cannot write well because their language is Auslan, which is like an abbreviation of the English language. I do not know whether members realise that English is like a second language to people who are profoundly deaf.

Those people desperately need interpreter services. The constituent who came to see me is married and her husband is also severely hearing impaired. She has two children - a nine-year-old son and seven-year-old daughter. Both of the children have medical problems. They both suffer with chronic eczema, asthma and associated problems - I know a bit about that problem because one of my children had eczema when he was

young. When she goes to the doctor with her children for medical treatment, she cannot understand what is going on. Profoundly deaf people cannot speak properly. Members would not understand most people who are profoundly deaf unless those people had been given enormous training, which is difficult. She is not being given an equal opportunity.

I will highlight some of the areas in which she believes she is being disadvantaged. There is nothing in this budget to help provide interpreters to the profoundly deaf. When this group came to Parliament, the minister agreed to give them \$35 000 to assist in the fundraising efforts of the Western Australian Deaf Society. The group has fundraised in the past and has supplied interpreters to members of the society to help carry out aspects of everyday life. The society does not have the money to do that now. Anybody who is involved with a charity, as I am, knows that fundraising is hard to do these days because so many different charities are rattling the can and asking for money. People have only a certain number of dollars to give away. The Western Australian Deaf Society helps people who are profoundly deaf or who have serious hearing impediments.

My constituent faces a list of barriers every day. I think the Deaf Society wrote to the Attorney General about them. One thing those people have difficulty accessing is health meetings regarding topics of interest. For example, my constituent is interested in eczema and its treatment, but she is unable to go to the meetings about this subject which affects her children because she cannot understand or hear what is going on. These groups do not have the facilities to provide an interpreter for deaf people. Access to a solicitor or a lawyer is also difficult. Unless a person has a case that falls under the umbrella of Legal Aid, he has no way of accessing a legal service, because the legal service will not provide an interpreter. I understand that solicitors are supposed to provide interpreters in that situation, but many do not. I had to provide an interpreter for my constituent to converse with me and I was happy to do that. It cost me about \$50. I am happy to spend that amount whenever a person who needs an interpreter wants to see me. It is a crazy situation because the Government provides funding for interpreters for migrants, but it is not prepared to fund interpreters for those people who were born and grew up in Australia and who are profoundly deaf.

My constituent told me that her family gets together once every five years. However, because her family members are not all profoundly deaf, only a few can do sign language, so she cannot enjoy the benefits of meeting other family members and understanding what they are saying. She has no way of communicating with the rest of her family. Although her son is learning sign language, she cannot get her thoughts across to her brother, sisters and parents. It is not as though she wants someone permanently on call. She is asking for access to an interpreter for special purposes. Her youngest son is not profoundly deaf, but he is learning sign language. Her son goes with her to the doctor and interprets for her as best he can. However, if the visit relates to an intimate matter and her son is there, she is not forthcoming about her health problem. I can understand that, as, I am sure, could most people in this Chamber. It would be far better for her to be able to access an interpreter to go with her instead of her son.

It is difficult for her to book a holiday. She is unable to get an interpreter to go with her to a travel agent so that she can learn about places of interest, compare prices and ask the questions hearing people would ask. She has problems at social events to which hearing friends are also invited, such as Tupperware, book, lingerie and jewellery parties, to name a few. She cannot go to any of those places because she is unable to understand what is said. When she and her children go to the dentist, she is unable to understand what work needs to be done. Interpreters are not provided for counselling, whether it be for stress, depression or other things. Kinway Relationship Counselling and Education Services and Centrecare are two organisations that do not provide interpreters. She cannot access an interpreter service to help her open a bank account, change banks or do whatever people do in banks.

These people cannot afford to have interpreters on call, but it would be a very small cost to the Government. My constituent brought many things to my attention. I have pages of notes. I would like the Minister for Community Development to read this speech and take some action. Profoundly deaf people have the same rights to opportunities as do hearing people.

My constituent has managed to save for a computer. She would love to access the Internet, but no technical and further education facilities teach Internet access and various other computing skills to profoundly deaf people. The Minister for Education might want to take this on board. Such a program would not cover its costs, because the classes would not be very big; however, the State has a social obligation to be aware of these issues and make services available to profoundly deaf people so that they can learn how to use the Internet. I hope the minister will take that on board. It is a serious social issue.

Mr Carpenter: We take these issues seriously, and the Disability Services Commission's budget has been increased by almost 10 per cent, following on from the very good work of the former Minister for Disability Services. He was a very good minister. We want to ensure that we maintain that quality. The departmental

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budget has been increased substantially. It is one of the areas we made sure was quarantined from cuts. The Minister for Disability Services is as committed as the former minister to providing every possible assistance.

Mr JOHNSON: It is not a criticism. I accept the Government has increased the budget.

Mr Carpenter: You had eight years to do all this.

Mr JOHNSON: They did not have a problem in those eight years, because they were fundraising. They did not want to ask for a handout.

Mr Carpenter: Member -

Mr JOHNSON: The minister is getting political. I am being fair. Those people did not ask for money in the past eight years. They realised this year that they need money because fundraising has dropped off. We would normally have funded this. These are very proud people. The minister should not make a political point out of these people. They are asking for simple things.

Mr Carpenter: That is what you're doing.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I am pleading with the Minister for Education, who is responsible for technical and further education, to look at this area and help these people. I ask the same thing of the Minister for Community Development.

Mr Carpenter: She has done a fantastic job in increasing the budget by such a large amount under such difficult circumstances. She should be congratulated.

Mr JOHNSON: Obviously the minister is not interested in what I have to say about these people. He is trying to make political points. That is unbecoming.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr McRae): Member, please direct yourself to your task.

Mr JOHNSON: I was pleading with the Minister for Education in the hope that he would listen to me and perhaps give a commitment to see what he could do about providing Australian Sign Language interpreters. Obviously that will not happen.

Mr Carpenter: I am more than happy to do that.

Mr JOHNSON: I could say much more about that issue, but I am conscious of the time.

This budget has not been as easy to follow as previous budgets. Many agencies have been split, including ones for which I have shadow responsibility. For example, works is in one area, and the information technology part of the Department of Contract and Management Services is now part of the Department of Industry and Technology. It is difficult to follow and hard to compare the allocations with last year's figures. The same thing has happened with the Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. Prior to the election, the Premier made a big hoo-ha about the importance of that department. He said that in a multicultural society, the Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests was so important that he would personally take responsibility for it. There has been much hypocrisy. The Government has not only tried to lose it in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, but also reduced its budget by 20 per cent.

Mr Carpenter: Who is the responsible minister?

Mr JOHNSON: The Premier.

Mr Carpenter: Exactly - that shows its importance.

Mr JOHNSON: I said before the election that the Premier would not have the time to do the job as he would be much too busy with other things. He was lobbying for the multicultural vote. He obviously got it in some areas. However, he has not carried through with it, like so many other things he promised. Next week during the budget estimates I will ask how many invitations to functions he has received from multicultural groups, and of those, how many he has attended himself and how many have been attended by representatives. We will then see the sort of commitment he has to multicultural groups in Western Australia. I go to most of the functions, and I see him at only a few. I see many colleagues, who represent him. It is the old furphy. One must be committed to being the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. Such a minister must be dedicated in more ways than -

Mr Carpenter: He is.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister is bound to say that. The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests must be dedicated to multicultural interests. Further, it is probably one of the busiest portfolios because of the number of nights and days ministers must spend at functions. It can burn ministers out. I accept that. Many former multicultural interests ministers would agree that it is a very busy portfolio, although it is a small portfolio in

budgetary terms. That is why I am staggered the minister has cut that budget. He has cut the funding on which multicultural groups rely. It is hypocritical for the Premier to say that a portfolio is so important that he will take it on, and then dish it out to other members. Some multicultural groups are very unhappy that the Premier does not turn up at functions and sends one of his backbenchers to represent him.

I also want to mention some of the promises that the Labor Party made in my electorate just before the election. The Government has actually come good with some of these promises, although not always with regard to the timing. One of those promises was that Labor would spend \$500 000 to increase the parking facilities at Hillarys marina. The budget provides \$250 000 this year and \$250 000 next year. That is good. I support that absolutely. I do not have a problem with that. However, the Premier said also that Labor would suspend any relocation to the harbour of the Department of Fisheries facility currently located at Waterman, pending a full review of the impact of the proposed development on opportunities for expanding parking and facilitating other access points. We are told in a line in the budget that that relocation will cost \$15 million, and the Government will spend about \$1.25 million this year. I cannot see any forward estimates of the amount the Government will spend in the three years after that. The Premier gave the people of Hillarys the impression that Labor would suspend the relocation of that great big building that a lot of people do not want and that will certainly inhibit the provision of the extra parking spaces that are needed desperately. However, he had not been in government five minutes when the bureaucrats got to him and said that facility had to be relocated to Hillarys, and he just went along with it. I give the Premier another warning. I would like a full review of the impact of the proposed development, because I doubt very much whether there has been a review; and I will be asking the Premier that question as well. Apart from that, I am pleased that \$500 000 will be spent on parking, because that is needed desperately in that area.

I also wanted to talk about the justice portfolio, but the Attorney General is not in the Chamber at the moment, and time is getting on, so I will save that for the estimates committee.

**MR WATSON** (Albany) [4.24 pm]: Firstly, on behalf of my electorate of Albany, I pass on my condolences to all the people in the United States of America. We need to look not only at what has happened in America but also at what is happening to our children in this State. A lot of us saw on television all the things that happened, and it was a very trying experience. I have a 15-year-old daughter, and she has found it very traumatising and upsetting. When these sorts of things happened when I was a child, we read about them a couple of days later in the newspaper. However, today, children can see on television people jumping off buildings and dying, and they find it very traumatic. I ask all members not to forget their children, because our children are our future, and experiences such as this can scar them for a long time.

I now turn to the boat people. My opinion about the boat people is rather different from that of some other people. Last weekend, a young Muslim man from Afghanistan came to my house for a barbecue. My wife teaches English to immigrants, and she also teaches them how to get around and do all sorts of things that they are not used to doing. It opened my eyes to have that young man in my home and to find out what he had to do to get to Australia. His father in Afghanistan has three children. Two of those children have families, so he sold all his assets so that his third son could escape. This young man escaped over the mountains through Pakistan on the back of a fruit truck, and he was then smuggled to Indonesia. He was put on a boat. This young man had never seen an ocean before. He had never heard of Australia. He did not know where he was going. He was on that boat for two weeks, and for every minute of that time he and the other people on that boat thought they were going to die. They reached an island on the other side of Ashmore Reef. It was a very small island, with only 60 inhabitants and nothing but sand. They were very lucky that they were spotted by a boat. This young man was given political asylum because 60 per cent of his tribe in Afghanistan had been killed. He has since found out that some members of his immediate family have been killed by the Taliban; he does not know about the rest of his relations. He has made a life for himself in Australia. He works in the local Fletcher International WA abattoir, which employs a number of Muslims for the killing process, and he is a productive member of the Albany community. Those people who classify all Muslims as terrorists need only to talk to someone like that young man to see that we cannot classify all Muslims into the same group.

Albany has suffered a bit over the past six months - perhaps that is the kiss of death for a new member - with the closure of Albany Spinning Mills and Princess Royal Seafoods, and the virus that has gone through the mulie industry in the past 18 months. The Fletcher abattoir used to run two shifts, but it now runs only one shift. We have had the drought. We are tough in the country, unlike members of the Opposition, who are all doom and gloom. We look forward to looking forward, not looking back and going crook about things around us. People in the country are a bit different. When I look at the Leader of the Opposition's attitude towards the airline crisis, and towards everything we have tried to do to improve Western Australia, I categorise him as the sort of person whom I would not like to have coach my local football team. If he were to coach the Essendon or Collingwood football teams, they would not get off the ground. He has no inspiration, and we can see from his

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opposition colleagues that he does not give them much motivation. A good leader leads from the front. The Leader of the Opposition's negativity is having an effect on not only the Opposition, but also Western Australia.

Mr Marshall: You have only been here a few months. You do not know anything about football.

Mr WATSON: I think Peel Thunder should be reinstated in the West Australian Football League.

Mr Marshall: You are a champion!

Mr WATSON: I can be bribed!

The Gallop Labor Government cares. When this Government was first in office, government ministers came to Albany and listened to the people of Albany. Geoff Gallop walked the streets of Albany and spoke to the people. When the Leader of the Opposition came to Albany, he went on the chardonnay set tour. He did not find out what people wanted, or anything like that. It was just, "I am better than them; I know better." I have been told in the House that I am not good enough to speak in the same conversation as the Leader of the Opposition. I would probably accept that, because I do not have any letters alongside my name. I came up in the school of hard knocks and the university of life. I think I am better off meeting the real people and knowing what is going on in my electorate of Albany.

Mr Andrews: You have three letters after your name - MLA.

Mr WATSON: Yes, and I am proud of that. Some people may say it was a fluke that I was elected, and I can accept that, because life is a challenge. Some people in the Opposition have said it will be only short term. However, while I am the member for Albany, I will be giving 110 per cent to Albany. Albany needs a kick along. It has not had much. I do not blame the previous member. It was a safe seat, and that is the law of politics.

Mr Barnett: Port upgrade, plantation project, underground power -

Mr WATSON: Westrail closed, Western Power closed -

Mr Barnett: The wind farm. That is good. That is about to open.

Mr WATSON: The wind farm is a tremendous concept. I congratulate the previous Government for that. It is a tremendous boost for Albany. I had intended to mention that a bit later, but as the member for grump has brought it up, I mention it now. On the subject of positives, we were very lucky that the Minister for Education came to Albany to explain the budget to the people of Albany. Everyone in Albany loves the Minister for Education.

Mr Carpenter: Almost everyone.

Mr WATSON: Yes. The minister used to live in York Street, the main street of Albany, and walk up and down York Street in his nappy. He is an institution, and I am proud to be a member of this House with the Minister for Education - a fine minister.

Albany did very well in the budget. About \$20 million has been put aside for a new police station-court complex in Albany. That will be a tremendous acquisition for Albany. An amount of \$200 000 has been provided for planning this year. The people of Albany will love it. The Albany Police Station and a police station up north have the worst conditions in Western Australia. The people of Albany cried out for a new facility for a long time, and the Gallop Labor Government has delivered.

Mr Barnett: Have a look at Claremont on your way through.

Mr WATSON: Does the member for Cottesloe want a jail in Claremont?

Mr Barnett: I want a better police station.

Mr WATSON: That is fair enough. However, the member for Cottesloe was in government for the past eight years and he could not get one. The people of Cottesloe should complain about that.

Mr Barnett: It is in the queue. Do not forget it. We will wait.

Mr WATSON: The member for Cottesloe had eight years to do that and he did not. How can he say now, after we have been in government for seven months, that he wants something? The member for Cottesloe looked after the chardonnay set and forgot his electorate. The member talked about the premium property tax for land worth over \$1 million that Barnett's battlers will have to pay. What about the goods and services tax? The member for Cottesloe may shake his head, because he does not worry about the small person. I have had people in Albany come to me because they cannot afford to bury their spouse because of the 10 per cent goods and services tax on coffins and everything associated with funerals; and the member for Cottesloe goes crook about people with a million dollar block of land. Where are the member's priorities?

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Hon Bob Kucera is a great Minister for Health. The health budget for the great southern area has been increased by 13.8 per cent. I would go to war with a bloke like Bob Kucera, because he is a strong man. The former Government had four health ministers! In four years time Bob Kucera will still be the Minister for Health and he will solve the problems in the health system.

Mr Johnson: Are you a betting man?

Mr WATSON: No, I do not bet; but I believe in my ministers. They do not have to look out for their backs as does the Leader of the Opposition. I believe in Bob Kucera. The health budget in my area has increased by 11.3 per cent.

Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars has been allocated for the refurbishment of the Albany Fire Station. In 2001-02 the Albany Regional Hospital has been allocated \$50 000 out of a total cost of \$1 million for an upgrade of the paediatric ward. The Albany Port Authority has been allocated \$3.9 million in 2001-02 for the No 6 berth breakwater. I congratulate the previous Government on its decision to export woodchips from Albany. It will be a real bonus to Albany. The Great Southern Development Commission was given \$200 000 for the University of Western Australia campus in Albany. This is another important project in our region. Too many of our children must go to Perth for their tertiary education. The establishment of a college campus in Albany will keep our children in Albany. This will save our children from having to go to Perth when they turn 18 or 19. Once they go to Perth our infrastructure is damaged. It is great to see the University of Western Australia in Albany. The Albany wind farm is a tremendous concept. It received a lot of criticism from some interest groups. Any member who flies into Albany will see the magnificent wind farm. People can walk down to the bottom of York Street, and see it across the water. The people who said it would be an eyesore will have to eat their words.

A lot of things have happened to industries in Albany over the past 12 to 18 months. However, Albany is not the sort of town to lie down and die. Albany is looking at tourism. Albany has some tremendous tourist attractions - beautiful beaches, natural beauty and Whaleworld, which is the only whaling station in the world that has been turned into a tourist attraction. I thank the Jaycees for that. They have done a tremendous job.

Mr Carpenter: There are whales in the harbour.

Mr WATSON: The Minister for Education and I were at Middleton Beach a few days ago and there were whales frolicking freely in the harbour. Albany's natural beauty is magnificent.

Mr Barnett: Albany has the greatest tourism potential of any area in the State, along with Exmouth.

Mr WATSON: I agree with the member for Cottesloe. Albany's tourism potential has only been tapped. That is one of the real challenges for the region.

Mr Barnett: It needs a high level of professionalism in the industry.

Mr WATSON: I agree; and it is not very often that I agree with the member for Cottesloe.

Mr Barnett: You have been here for only a little while; you'll learn to agree with me more as time goes by.

Mr WATSON: Being an ex-Cottesloe and Peppermint Grove postman -

Mr Barnett: Now I know why the mail never arrived on time! I have wondered about that for years, and now I know.

Mr WATSON: It was a long time ago, when I was a boy. I still have the stopwatch the Peppermint Grove Shire Council gave me when I left. It does not work; but I still have some links there.

The sinking of the HMAS *Perth* will occur in November, which will be a tremendous tourist attraction. The member for Innaloo and the Attorney General will be coming down to dive on the ship, so that should attract a few sharks. Albany has a vibrant TAFE.

Albany has a lot of things going for it. We have to start looking up. I know that when in opposition we tend to be critical of what happens in government. However, when I coach kids in sport I always try to pump up their tyres and try to get their confidence up. That is what we have to do not only in Albany but also in the rest of Western Australia. We are going through a trying time. The more we pump up our tyres and other people's tyres the better. Everyone is jaded with what is happening in the world.

I always used to wake up in the morning feeling pretty happy. Now I wake up feeling very happy - especially when I think of what happened to those people in America who went to work that day and did not come home. Maybe they had an argument with their son or daughter and did not say goodbye before they went off to work and never came home. We have to look at our values in life. Life is very precious, and we should live every moment of it.

**MR SWEETMAN** (Ningaloo) [4.36 pm]: I wish to make a few comments in the budget debate. I concur with the last remarks of the member for Albany. Over the past week or so we have had an opportunity to re-evaluate some of our priorities, refocus on some of the things that make life special and reassess why we should appreciate the environment, the country and particularly the State we are fortunate enough to live in.

I know the Government has received a lot of accolades and credit, although some that came from government members, in particular, the backbenchers, was a little false and over the top. However, I give credit to the Government for some of the money it has allocated, particularly to regional Western Australia. I do not want in any way to detract from the money that the Government has had the good sense to allocate to projects in regional Western Australia by saying that some of those projects are a continuation of programs and allocations made by the previous Government. I will go through some of those and start with my home town of Carnarvon.

About two months ago the Gascoyne River bridge contract was put out for tender. It was originally anticipated that would cost in the order of \$12 million to \$13 million. I understand the figure is less than that, which is probably why it is nominated in the budget as \$10.5 million. The Government was in the fortunate position of knowing what the cost would be as tenders had closed. That is a worthwhile project for not only the Carnarvon community, but also the travellers on the North West Coastal Highway who have looked forward to it for 15 to 20 years. It was part of a works program in the 1980s, but was deleted when there was a major realignment of the levee system. As a consequence, the project was put off, and it was finally rescheduled and put on another 10-year works program in the early 1990s. Finally, in the fullness of time, the project will go ahead. I commend the Government on holding to that commitment to the Gascoyne River bridge, and also the road construction six or seven kilometres from the bridge to what is known as blowholes turn off. It is a major flood plain, and that road is cut off for extended periods when there is severe flooding. That road is also cut off several times a year simply because of heavy rainfall. That has been a priority program for some time, and it is great that the Government is getting around to completing it.

The Exmouth marina was another project. In December of last year, just prior to the commencement of the election campaign proper, the Premier visited Exmouth and announced funding for the project. The previous Government estimated that stage 2 of the Exmouth marina project would cost in the order of \$13 million. The figures were a little vague at that time, because it was not certain, until December, that LandCorp would be the coordinator of the work. I congratulate the Government that the \$11.5 million committed to that project will do the exact same scope of work that the previous Government envisaged would cost \$13 million. It will be great for Exmouth that the \$3.5 million allocated this year will get the project under way, and work will commence shortly after Christmas.

There is general unease in Exmouth in most years because Exmouth has two main industries - fishing and tourism. Both of them run for the same six or seven months of the year, and for the rest of the time there is not a lot of employment. Exmouth has had to adjust to this "boom-bust" cycle ever since the departure of the US Navy from the Harold E Holt communications base. The marina project will not be the answer to all of Exmouth's problems, because simply building another project and creating an opportunity for a resort developer is a noble thing to do, but it is quite another thing to actually attract someone to provide the bricks and mortar to establish the resort and the residential area.

The World Heritage interpretive centre in Shark Bay has been talked about for a long time. It almost goes back to the days when Shark Bay was first proclaimed a World Heritage area. Many promises made as inducements for the local community and the region to accept the World Heritage listing of Shark Bay. One of the promises was that, as soon as the listing took place, money would flow from everywhere, particularly from the federal Government. This simply did not happen. Most of the money that has gone into Shark Bay has been contributed by State Governments. The Minister for the Environment was at Shark Bay recently to open the Department of Conservation and Land Management interpretive centre at Monkey Mia. That project cost \$1.5 million or \$1.6 million, with the lion's share coming from the State Government. This Government has committed \$5 million to the World Heritage centre in Shark Bay, as did the previous Government. I have already spoken to Hon Tom Stephens, who is trying to make sure that the \$5 million receives some matching commonwealth money. In a bipartisan way, I am doing my utmost to make sure that federal Minister for the Environment, Senator Robert Hill, understands how important this project is, not just to Denham, but to the World Heritage area of Shark Bay. The response to date has not been good. Senator Hill is insisting that a centre such as this should not expect to receive anything more than \$1 million, regardless of how grandiose the scheme and the commitment from the State Government. At this stage, even if \$1 million is obtained from the federal Government, the value of the project will be \$6 million. I understand also that the Shire of Denham is making some contribution, because the new centre will incorporate the shire offices and some other buildings that the shire will utilise and pay rent for, if it does not put up the money for construction itself.

Mr Barnett: Successive commonwealth Governments, including the current one, have failed consistently on World Heritage listing, and really have lost any credibility or even legitimacy over the project, in my judgment.

Mr SWEETMAN: They have done so, and it is sad, because it will make people that much more cautious. Future Governments, whether they be federal or state, that initiate the listing for World Heritage areas will now be far more cautious. Carnarvon, in particular, saw it as the thin end of the wedge when the move was made to list Shark Bay, because there was a fear that, in a very short time, a move would be made to exclude trawlers from the World Heritage area. That is a massive industry, which operates out of Carnarvon. It is called the Shark Bay fishery, but most of the fleet operates out of Carnarvon. That fishery generates \$90 million or \$92 million a year, so one can imagine how concerned the Shire of Carnarvon was when the World Heritage listing was proposed for Shark Bay. A time could be foreseen when 40 or 50 per cent of the fishery would be excluded. It would then be scarcely viable, and Carnarvon would lose between 250 and 300 jobs. The fishery and the supporting services and infrastructure would collapse if that happened. Fortunately, that has not happened, through the good management of many of the companies that fish in that area. Before the by-catch - everything that is caught in the nets other than prawns - was the red-hot issue it has become today, fishing companies were working on reducing it. It is a credit to companies such as the M G Kailis Group in Exmouth Gulf. They are right up to the mark, because they also have fleets of trawlers fishing along the Barrier Reef, and they are very aware of the by-catch. In Carnarvon, Kel Brown's Nor-West Seafoods Pty Ltd has churned a lot of money back into the business. The business is profitable, but it has returned a lot of money into the community, purchasing such things as fish exclusion devices and other research that enables its fleet to reduce the by-catch.

The fishery in Shark Bay has been going for 38 or 39 years. The Department of Fisheries does not understand sometimes what the companies are on about, and thinks the companies are more concerned about the by-catch than the department is. The fishery is sustainable, and has initiated licence buy-backs over the years, which has resulted in a fishery that produces a consistent catch each year. It is a credit to the Department of Fisheries and to the participants in the industry that that balance has been achieved.

Another commitment is the \$1 million to the Exmouth District High School, which has come from the sale of AlintaGas. The money will be used to upgrade the administration area and the design and technology area. I hope that will get under way shortly, because when the previous Minister for Education was there 12 or 15 months ago pledging that money, the district office was going to work flat out to have that upgrade taken care of prior to the commencement of school this year. There have been some hold-ups, but I hope that project can be completed over the Christmas break this year, and will be ready by the start of the next school year.

I am disappointed that the Gascoyne region seems to be missing out on its share of Homeswest projects. I have combed through the minister's media releases and the budget papers with some diligence, and I have not been able to ascertain any additional or new housing programs in any area of my electorate. The waiting lists are long in place such as Carnarvon, Exmouth and Shark Bay. They are not so bad at Newman, which has problems of a different type. Although I give the Government credit, and acknowledge the amount of money being spent on new Homeswest houses, some higher priority should have been offered to the Gascoyne region. It is great to see the Government continuing with the urban renewal program, an extraordinarily popular program initiated by the previous Minister for Housing, Hon Dr Kim Hames.

I will now consider the Gascoyne Health Service. I am not sure what the confusion was in relation to the media release on 14 September, but it obviously necessitated the media release of 17 September, three days later, in which the figures were corrected. The Gascoyne Health Service is extremely concerned about the possible downgrading of the service. That must be confirmed one way or another. Staff and board members are very anxious, and it is affecting morale in the administration and the health professionals, particularly those working at the Carnarvon Regional Hospital.

Indications are that there will be a cutback of about \$1.7 million in real terms in its budget. To achieve savings of \$1.7 million the Gascoyne Health Service will require the Onslow District Hospital and the Exmouth Hospital to stop accepting in-patients. That will be an absolute disaster. Those two hospitals will effectively become nursing posts. Onslow will retain its visiting clinics and Exmouth will retain its resident doctors. It will save only \$900 000. To achieve the \$1.7 million saving, I am given to understand that the Carnarvon Regional Hospital will be turned into a single ward. The Carnarvon Regional Hospital runs a general ward, as do most hospitals. It also has a maternity unit and a permanent care unit. It is not appropriate or achievable to move permanent care patients to a general ward. They require specialised care. The objective in closing down wards is to reduce the staff complement. There will be complications, and there will be an inferior service as a consequence. When the fine print is delivered to each of the regional centres I hope they are not disappointed, particularly the Gascoyne Health Service. With the clarification issued on 17 September, it seems as though some of the other health services may be reassured. It looks as though their budgets are increasing but there is no mention in the corrected figures about the Gascoyne Health Service. I can only assume that it is likely to suffer a reduction in its recurrent budget appropriation.

A project that I took a particular interest in prior to becoming the opposition spokesman for regional transport is the Marble Bar road. I give special credit to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, as she has seen her way clear to allocate money to complete the last 25 kilometres of that project. There is also a commitment to complete another 10 kilometres from Marble Bar to Ripon Hills. It is a marvellous gesture. She knows the number of letters I have written and submissions I have made on behalf of the Shire of East Pilbara and the people of Nullagine.

Ms MacTiernan: Are they happy?

Mr SWEETMAN: They are very happy. As part of honouring the deal, I will now back off from my criticism of the shopping road, just as long as the minister does not allocate any more than the \$100 million that she has already allocated to the Tom Price-Karratha road until a lot of other roads in regional and remote areas are completed. I will then be happy.

Mr Day: Is it not the case that the Government has kept in place the funding that was allocated by the former Government?

Mr SWEETMAN: Exactly right. It is a continuation of the program.

Ms MacTiernan: Everybody knows that those who provide the money get the credit. Members from the area also deserve a lot of credit. They have made strong representations, as have shire officials. I travelled down the road and I was almost killed. I realised that something had to be done.

Mr SWEETMAN: The minister is the third minister to make the trip. We knew that it would work. Once we got her there, we knew we would get the money for the road.

Ms MacTiernan: The Treasurer was so concerned for my welfare that he agreed to change the forward estimates at the last minute.

Mr SWEETMAN: Alan Cochrane, the shire president of East Pilbara, has pushed passionately for the project over the past five years.

Ms MacTiernan: The regional manager of Main Roads has been a bit of a mate of his in that regard.

Mr SWEETMAN: He has been very keen on it and he has been a vigorous opponent of the shopping road.

Ms MacTiernan: Now that we are moving the headquarters of Main Roads to Karratha, we expect a sea change in his attitude.

Mr SWEETMAN: The minister has a way of persuading people. What was the other option - Siberia?

Ms MacTiernan: We thought Paraburdoo would be good.

Mr SWEETMAN: I am sure that once the minister said he was going there, his heart and mind quickly followed the minister's line of thinking. Never mind, we learn every day in this place.

I acknowledge what the Government has done on behalf of the people who are serviced by the Port Hedland-Marble Bar road.

I know time is running out for me to speak and I do not want to unduly delay members today. As the Minister for Indigenous Affairs is in the House, I shall talk about something related to Aboriginal affairs. The minister has received letters from me about a situation in Newman. Some ratepayers in Newman have appealed against their property valuations. It is not unusual. Many people believe that they pay too much for their rates. The Valuer General reviewed the valuations, and upheld the appeals of quite a number of people. He cited as a reason for reducing the gross valuations of the properties, detrimental factors within the immediate area. It was a clear reference to Aboriginal people occupying culturally appropriate housing or Homeswest housing. It has created problems in different areas of Newman. I have taken the previous Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Premier to Newman. We met with all parties. It was interesting to hear the views of the different groups. The Aboriginal people were initially persuaded that it was in their best interests to move from the Pumajina camp to mainstream living in the Newman town site. They now want to live at the camp. My understanding is there was a commitment by the then minister and the Premier to re-establish the camp. A determination was to be made about what exactly would take place. The shire and I understood there would be a transient camp, as well as some permanent accommodation. I am unsure what management structure was proposed. Responsibility would have to be shared with local Aboriginal bodies before the Government would agree to re-establish the camp. I hope that the minister and Hon Tom Stephens are progressing the issue, because it continues to simmer in the Newman community. Although there is still a constant drift of Western Desert Aboriginal people into Newman, that will have an impact on the social amenity of Newman. The Aboriginal people are uncomfortable

about that, and most of them do not want to live like white people. I have outlined the reasons in my letter. If they have more than two dogs, they want to have more than two dogs. If they sleep outside on hot nights, they want to do so without everyone assuming they have had a drunken brawl and have collapsed where they fell. Those Aborigines come under a lot of pressure and are often unjustifiably criticised, but that is how they choose to live. They may cook bush tucker by butchering a kangaroo in the backyard and throwing the carcass out the back, which will stink. Government agencies are trying to work through those issues to assimilate - although that is an ugly word - the Aborigines to white fellow or community standards, so that their neighbours and other Aboriginal people will think better of them. Many Aborigines do not want to adjust to those community standards; they want to maintain their traditional way of living and enjoy their bush tucker. They want to live communally in an open residential environment. That option must be available to them. Perhaps it can exist in the form of a transient camp.

Mr Carpenter: I have met people from that Aboriginal community and those views were put to me by some of its members. I discussed with the Minister for Housing how those issues might progress, and ideas are being developed. As the member will be aware, there is diverse opinion about how the matter should best be handled. However, the issue has not been left unattended. It is a difficult issue.

Mr SWEETMAN: I know it is a difficult issue. For some time yet, whoever is in government and whoever is the minister will have to deal with the problem. I encourage the Government to keep going and not be put off discussing the issue. Many people withstood the views that the shire and I had about this matter, and for a long time those people held sway. They did not want any more fringe dwellers or camps; they wanted the Aborigines to live in mainstream housing. However, the situation became uncontrollable. The overcrowding problems and the parties were not good. I encourage the minister to persevere with that matter.

I have many other matters to address, but I will leave those aside on this occasion. I have had a fair run this week and I think that members need to get out of the House. I will raise the matters that I have yet not referred to with the ministers or their agencies during the Estimates Committee.

**MR RIPPER** (Belmont - Treasurer) [5.02 pm]: I will take a few minutes to thank members for their contributions to the second reading debate on the budget. A number of themes -

Mr Barnett: We had an agreement that we would finish by five o'clock. Will the Treasurer break that agreement?

Mr RIPPER: I will finish what I have to say very quickly. I indicated at the outset that I would finish quickly, in case members were dismayed by my speaking on the debate.

A number of themes emerged during the debate. Some members argued that the cuts to public spending were not real. Some members argued that the cuts were real and that we should spend more money. Some members argued that the surplus was shaky but they then opposed the tax measures in the budget. Yet others argued that the surplus was shaky but that we should spend more money. Having listened to all those arguments, I must tell members that the Government cannot collect fewer taxes, spend more money and preserve a modest surplus at the same time. In the end, the budget must add up. What might be an ideal budget for a politician might not necessarily be an ideal budget for an accountant. Those two views must be meshed together to achieve a responsible outcome.

The Government has its priorities right in difficult circumstances. It has sought to honour its election commitments in a way that is responsible and sustainable for the future. The budget lays the foundations for a sustainable financial future. The Government has constrained the increase in debt. The growth in debt will be less than the pre-election projection statements forecast. We have had a significant effect on that all-important ratio for the ratings agencies; that is, the ratio of net debt to revenue. We have stabilised that debt ratio to around 40 per cent. The pre-election financial statements forecast debt to stabilise at around 45 per cent. We have adopted an approach that will enable the ratings agencies to preserve our AAA credit rating.

The second reading debate enables members to debate overall themes and make general comments about the budget. Next week we will hold the Estimates Committees. Members will be able to examine the detail of the work done by the Expenditure Review Committee, ministers and agencies. Members opposite will be able to question ministers about the decisions that have been made, and they will be able to hold the Government accountable for the promises it made to the people during the election campaign. This budget is responsible, and it honours our contract with the people.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.