

Mr Matt Birney; Deputy Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Bowler; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Peter Watson

COMMUNITY POLICE OPERATIONS

Motion

MR M.J. BIRNEY (Kalgoorlie) [4.02 pm]: I move -

That this House calls on the Labor State Government to categorically reject recommendations 62 and 63 of Labor's Functional Review Taskforce, which would see -

- (a) the closure and sale of 22 community police stations across Western Australia; and
- (b) at least 145 police officers transferred from front-line policing to non-core police duties, such as prisoner transport and court security work, currently being undertaken by AIMS Corporation.

And further, that this House recognises the Labor Party's inability to meet community expectations of public safety.

I move this motion to expose a number of radical cuts that have been proposed by the Labor Party's Functional Review Taskforce. Members will recall that prior to the last election, during the heat of the debate about who would do what for the people of Western Australia, the Labor Party made all sorts of extravagant promises in order to woo the votes of the electors of Western Australia. When pushed to explain how those promises would be funded, the now Premier said, rather conclusively, that the election promises would be funded by cuts to the government sector. The Premier has followed up on that promise; in fact, it is one of the few promises he has followed up since coming into government.

Some time ago, to progress its promise of making significant cuts in the public sector, the Labor Party set up the expenditure review committee, which, of course, is a subcommittee of cabinet, with a view to making multimillion-dollar cuts - I think "savings" was the nice word used at the time - in the public sector.

Mr J.N. Hyde: What was it called under the Liberal Government?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Notwithstanding old gum banger in the background, as an extension of the Expenditure Review Committee - if that was not enough - the Premier has been spouting about finding about \$800 million worth of "savings", which are actually cuts. That figure in itself is being disputed. The Premier and the Labor Party were not happy with that figure so they set up the Functional Review Taskforce, which was charged with finding a further \$50 million of cuts across the public sector. As I said, during the last election the Labor Party made a number of very extravagant election promises that somehow had to be funded. It follows that the Functional Review Taskforce that is in play as a result of this Labor Government is an absolutely vital part of the delivery of the Labor Party's pre-election promises. The Functional Review Taskforce must deliver \$50 million of cuts per annum to allow the Labor Party to fulfil its pre-election promises. Make no mistake, this is not simply some pie-in-the-sky task force charged with running around snapping at the heels of government departments; this is the very basis of the Labor Party's election platform. It must find cuts across the government sector to enable the Government to fund its pre-election promises. It has been said that the Functional Review Taskforce simply makes a few recommendations and has nothing to do with government; the Government is divorced from the Functional Review Taskforce. I make it known that the Functional Review Taskforce was instigated at the request of the Labor Party. It is the Labor Party's Functional Review Taskforce that is charged with finding these cuts across government departments. I make it very clear that this is not some external body that has nothing to do with the Government but is looking at government departments for possible savings or cuts; this is the Labor Party's own Functional Review Taskforce.

Recommendation 62 of the Labor Party's Functional Review Taskforce is to close 22 police stations across Western Australia. What an absolutely shocking and radical recommendation. Could there be any more biting political issue than a Government that swings into power on the back of a program of cutting costs in government departments and then says it is considering closing 22 police stations across Western Australia? Could there be a more biting issue in your electorate, Madam Deputy Speaker? I do not think there could be a more biting issue in my electorate. Everybody values their local police station highly, regardless of the size of their local community. What could be the benefit of closing 22 police stations across Western Australia? What is it the Government will receive that has convinced it to close 22 police stations? To date, this has been kept a secret by the Labor Party, but I will tell members what it is. The total saving from the closure of those 22 police stations across Western Australia will be in the order of \$320 000 a year. Let the *Hansard* show that I can see a few members laughing at the idea that the annual saving from the closure of 22 police stations across Western Australia will be \$320 000. I would not be completely honest if I did not tell the House what the Government

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wants to do after it has closed those police stations, because it has also kept that a secret. I am pleased to advise members today that the Government wants to not only close those police stations but also flog them off. It wants to sell them for a one-off gain. Members might ask how much that gain might be. What could closing 22 community police stations be worth? Could it be worth \$15 million or \$20 million? The figure that the Labor Party has been hiding from us since prior to June last year is \$2 million. That is the value of the 22 police stations that this funny little mob is considering closing. Given that many of those police stations -

Mr R.N. Sweetman: It is like 30 pieces of silver.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Exactly. Is the Government that desperate? Has the Government mismanaged the State's finances to the point at which it needs to save \$320 000 a year and realise \$2 million in a one-off sale at the cost of considerable community disquiet? I submit that it is. I submit that the Government has mismanaged this State's finances to the point that \$320 000 a year means an awful lot to it. That \$2 million price tag for the 22 police stations can be received only if all 22 police stations are sold. The Opposition has received information that a number of these police stations are in remote regional areas. It would be very difficult indeed to sell off those police stations for want of a buyer. Although the figure of \$2 million is a real valuation, the sale of those police stations would realise considerably less than that. Those members who are good at arithmetic - I was not bad at it in my high school days - would know that the saving of \$320 000 by closing 22 police stations equates to about \$14 500 a community. The Labor Party is so desperate that it is considering closing police stations in regional and metropolitan Western Australia to save about \$14 500 a police station. I do not know for sure, but I predict that if the Government follows through with this recommendation, someone will probably put his hand in his pocket and find the money and help the Labor Party. That would ensure that those 22 regional police stations were not closed to save a meagre \$14 500.

Apart from the obvious financial implications, it begs the question: what would be the impact be on public safety if those 22 police stations were closed? Presumably those police stations would be closed with a view to having a police station in a neighbouring town or even in a neighbouring district cover those areas. However, the social cost would mean that response times would skyrocket; they would go through the roof. The electorates of my friends the members for Ningaloo and Greenough cover some of the remote communities whose police stations have been targeted for sale. The cost of closing those stations could well be fatal. If a police car must travel 100, 130 or 140 kilometres to attend a call-out, it would create a real crisis for public safety. Response times are absolutely vital in regional and remote communities. All members have read in the newspapers about the riots that have developed in some of those communities and we have seen footage of them on the television. When that happens, immediate police attention is needed. If police stations were closed in those smaller regional areas, what do members opposite imagine the scene would be like by the time the police arrived from 100 kilometres away to attend the riot? It would be chaos and mayhem all because the Labor Party wanted to save \$14 500 a year a police station. That sounds like a joke, but that is the recommendation that has been put to the Government.

The police officers that currently reside at those police stations will be impacted upon in other ways. Many of them are provided with housing through the Government Employees Housing Authority. The demand for GEHA housing is stretched to the limit, particularly in regional areas. We cannot just decide to close a police station to save \$14 000 and ship the coppers off to the nearest police station with a view to having them work out of that police station. That cannot be done because it would cause serious accommodation problems and there are serious commercial accommodation problems to consider. Many of our police stations are already bulging; there is nowhere to put more police officers.

I refer to the Occupational Safety and Health Act that was recently passed and its effect on the Police Service. As I understand it, that legislation provides that some of the one and two-man police stations cannot continue to operate as one or two-man stations for fear of breaching the Act. It seems to me that the Labor Party made up its mind long ago that those stations would be closed and the appropriate savings would accompany their closure. I submit to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and members that instead of closing those one and two-man police stations, they should be beefed up. Why not look at the incidents police officers are required to attend in remote and rural communities? They can be very dangerous. Rather than close stations, why not beef them up with one or two more police officers? One is talking about \$40 000 or \$50 000 a year for a police officer. In the context of a state budget of \$10 billion, I am sure members would agree that that is little more than chickenfeed.

I have challenged the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to categorically reject the recommendation in its entirety. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, may be aware that this issue has spilled over into the media in recent times, particularly in the last couple of days. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services is only too quick to jump on radio and television and say, "No, we reject the recommendation to close 22 police stations." On

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face value, it could make people breathe a little easier. However, when one asks whether the minister will ensure that 21, 11, nine or eight of the stations will not close, she runs for cover and the rhetoric is different from the categorical assurance that the Government will not accept the recommendation to close 22 police stations.

I challenge the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to here and now tell the House, and advise the people of Western Australia through this forum, that she will not close any of the 22 police stations on her hit list. Will the minister take up the challenge?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I will respond when it is my turn to speak.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The minister will not guarantee here and now that none of the 22 police stations will close.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The member for Kalgoorlie should listen more closely and stop trying to misrepresent me. I will speak in my own time. I'll not be badgered by you, no matter how bullying and rude you appear.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Let me slow my voice and adopt a more conciliatory approach and ask the minister, as genuinely as I can: will she guarantee that none of the 22 police stations on the hit list will be closed?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I will give a comprehensive response when it is my turn to reply.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Let *Hansard* reflect that the Minister for Police has refused to guarantee that all 22 police stations on Labor's hit list will remain open. A number of police stations form an integral part of the local community. Will the minister guarantee that Yalgoo Police Station will not be closed?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You're not Perry Mason, and this is not a courtroom. I'll respond in my own time to all the issues you raise. That is within the rules of debate in this House: you sit down, and I will give you an answer, but I will not be badgered by you. You're required under the standing orders of this House to address your comments to the Chair. You're out of order.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: What about the Hillarys Police Station? Will it remain open or is it one of the 22 police stations on your Functional Review Taskforce hit list? Will the minister say here and now that it will remain open?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I will not respond to your badgering. I will respond under standing orders. If you would like to sit down, you can have all your answers.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Let *Hansard* show that the Minister for Police was given ample opportunity to give a guarantee to the public that the Hillarys Police Station will remain open and is not on the hit list of 22 stations, yet she refused to take up the challenge.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind all members that this not a question-and-answer time. We are in debate. I ask the member for Kalgoorlie to address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether I can ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services through the Chair whether the Gascoyne Junction Police Station is on the hit list of 22 police stations, and whether the Minister for Police and Emergency Services can guarantee it will not be closed.

Points of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I would like to respond at length to the member, and I believe I will have that opportunity under the rules of the House. I also understand that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, gave the member some direction about how to conduct himself in the House. That is what he should be doing, rather than badgering me. He can ask me about every police station in the State, and he will get the same answer. He should sit down and wait until I respond.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Further to the point of order, I suggest that there is no point of order because the shadow Minister for Police is asking, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, which is the correct forum, the Minister for Police certain questions. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services is quite right. When she gets to her feet, she will have the opportunity to answer those questions. If she does not wish to answer those questions by way of interjection, she does not have to, but there is no point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Once again I remind the member for Kalgoorlie to address his remarks through the Chair. He has the right to raise questions in this debate, but I suggest that he also continue with his remarks and

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wait for the response from the minister at the appropriate time, because the minister has clearly indicated that she will not interject.

Debate Resumed

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The reason I am very keen to get the minister on record guaranteeing that certain police stations will remain open is that the minister has this secret list of 22 police stations that she will not make available to the public. This list has been around since prior to June last year and nobody knew it existed. Now that we have exposed the existence of this list, it is incumbent on the Minister for Police to table it. After all, these are people's lives we are playing with. We are talking about remote and regional communities and, indeed, some metropolitan communities, which value their police stations highly. I put it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Gascoyne Junction Police Station, which is about 185 kilometres from Carnarvon, is a fairly remote police station indeed. I wonder whether that police station appears on the Labor Party's hit list of 22 police stations for closure. In this instance, I am happy to take an interjection from the Minister for Police in response to that question. I know that from time to time the Minister for Police is very keen on making interjections. In fact, she would probably be the most vocal on the front bench. From time to time I get rather injured by her interjections. However, in this instance, I am happy to take an interjection if the Minister for Police can guarantee us that the Gascoyne Junction Police Station will not be closed.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Will the member for Kalgoorlie guarantee that he will not stand for the Liberal Party leadership before the next election?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I think -

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Will he answer that? No, he will not! Let Hansard record that!

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: What was the question again?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Will you guarantee that you will not stand for the leadership of the Liberal Party before the next election?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I will guarantee that for the minister if she will guarantee for me that the Gascoyne Junction Police Station will not close.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What I will guarantee for the member is that we do not propose to close any police stations in this State.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Can the minister guarantee for me that the Gascoyne Junction Police Station will not close?

Several members interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I have just said that I will; I am happy to guarantee it. However, it is one for one; we must be fair. I am absolutely delighted to guarantee that, providing the minister will guarantee for me that the Gascoyne Junction Police Station will not close. Let *Hansard* reflect that once again the Minister for Police has refused to guarantee that the Gascoyne Junction Police Station will not close and that it is not on the Labor Party's hit list. Our job is a little difficult given that the minister will not make this secret hit list of 22 police stations publicly available, which of course flies in the face of the Premier's constant rhetoric about accountability and transparency by this Labor Government. Notwithstanding that, we have had a look at a few police stations around the State. Unfortunately, we have had to identify a number of police stations that we think might be on that chopping list because of their size and the number of police officers at those stations. One of the police stations that I have identified is the Coolgardie Police Station. I wonder whether the minister might like to guarantee me by way of interjection that the Coolgardie Police Station is not on the Labor Party's hit list of 22 police stations for closure.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I am not proposing to close any police stations. I have no proposal to close a single police station.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Is the minister saying there is no proposal in the review to close 22 police stations?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We are not proposing to close any of those police stations.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Will the minister give the House a categorical guarantee that the Coolgardie Police Station will not be closed?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Will the member give me a categorical guarantee that he will be here in five years? The member is just scaremongering.

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Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Let the *Hansard* reflect that, once again, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services refused to guarantee that the Coolgardie Police Station would not be closed.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The members interjecting are making it very difficult for other members, Hansard and me to hear what is being said. Members should show some courtesy so the member on his feet can be heard.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your protection from the goon gallery. I know that from time to time they like to weigh into these debates, albeit with little or no knowledge of what is happening!

I am particularly concerned about the Nedlands Police Station. I have very real concerns that that station may be on the Labor Party's hit list of 22 police stations to be closed.

Mr J.N. Hyde interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Sometimes it is better for the member to just sit there and look silly rather than open his mouth and prove it!

By way of interjection, will the Minister for Police and Emergency Services guarantee that, as a result of the Labor Party's Functional Review Taskforce, the Nedlands Police Station will not be closed?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The Functional Review Taskforce does not suggest closing the Nedlands Police Station. I have already said that I have no proposals in front of me to close any police station. The member is talking nonsense. The sooner he sits down the better.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Let us clear that up. Does the list of 22 police stations not contain the Nedlands Police Station?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Keep in mind that the member's party closed the Hilton Police Station. I have told the member that I will give full answers when I stand to respond.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I would like the minister to clarify what she just said to me. Did she just say that the Nedlands Police Station is not on the list of 22 stations recommended for closure by the Functional Review Taskforce?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I will not give the member the list of 22 police stations. I have made that patently clear.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Is the Nedlands Police Station not on the list? Will the minister clarify that?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: To the best of my knowledge, there is no proposal before the Functional Review Taskforce to close the Nedlands Police Station.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I thank the minister for telling the House that the Nedlands Police Station is not on the hit list. I am very concerned that she refused to confirm that the Yalgoo, Coolgardie, Gascoyne Junction and Hillarys Police Stations were not on the hit list. I thank the minister for telling us that the Nedlands Police Station is not on the hit list. I am genuinely very pleased about that. The people of Nedlands can rest a little easier in the knowledge that their police station will not be closed as a result of the Functional Review Taskforce.

Members should make no mistake that this list will be around for a long time to come. It was first requested by the cabinet expenditure review committee, a subcommittee of the Cabinet established by the Premier to find \$800 million in savings. It was then handed over to the Functional Review Taskforce. It is incumbent upon the minister to make the list public.

I will make one final point about this issue. The previous Liberal-National Government built 27 new police stations during its eight years in office. It makes a stark contrast to what we are seeing at the moment as this Labor Government is looking to close 22 police stations after eight years of hard work by the previous Government. This mob wants to wipe out three-quarters of the work that took the previous Government eight years to achieve. This Government will stand accountable at the next election for this little play.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I think the Minister for Police wants to interject. Has she suddenly found her tongue?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What I have found is that you are talking absolute nonsense.

Point of Order

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Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The Minister for Police continues to interject on me after saying that it is very important -

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do not test the patience of the Chair in that manner. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I was merely bringing to your attention that the Minister for Police had previously said that members should be talking through the Chair.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Are you canvassing the decision of the Chair? Do you know the rules of the House?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I think the Minister for Police is doing it again.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will move on now to a fairly important part of the secret Functional Review Taskforce - recommendation No 63. That recommendation of Labor's Functional Review Taskforce is for the Police Service to take back the transportation of prisoners and the court security work currently being undertaken by Australian Integration Management Services Corporation Pty Ltd. I understand that the recommendation is to increase the police budget by \$3 million to facilitate that change. The effect of that recommendation on front-line policing would be absolutely devastating, were the Labor Party to adopt it. The Labor Party's rhetoric to date indicates that will probably be the case but I will shortly give the minister a chance to categorically reject that.

Currently AIMS Corporation has 295 employees - 107 full time, 78 part time and 103 casual - undertaking the duties of prisoner transportation and court security work. If the Government accepts the recommendation to take over the transportation of prisoners and court security work, it will have to pull a significant number of police officers away from front-line policing to stick them in prison vans and courtrooms around the State. My information is that the 295 staff employed by AIMS would equate to about 145 police officers. Therefore, for this recommendation to take effect - members should make no mistake - the Labor Party will pull from the front line at least 145 police officers and stick them in prison vans and courtrooms. I am sure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would agree that that simply is not good enough.

What about the families of AIMS Corporation? We have read in the newspaper the nasty things that the Attorney General has said about AIMS and the Minister for Police has said it was an expensive flop and all sorts of things. What about sparing a thought for the families of those 295 people, many of whom are part-time and casual workers, who open up the paper almost monthly and read about this lot saying how incompetent and useless they are and that they are about to issue them their marching orders?

Let us think about this recommendation. To take 145 police effectively from the front line and stick them in prison vans and court security would just about negate the Labor Party's pre-election promise of an extra 250 police officers. Members should be aware that at the last election, a major plank of the Labor Party's pre-election policy across all portfolios was to increase the number of police in Western Australia by 250. If the Labor Party accepts and adopts this recommendation - and every indication tells us that it will - in one fell swoop that promise of an extra 250 police officers will all but be wiped out at the expense of front-line policing.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It will be wiped out because the Government will replace a lot of civilians with front-line police officers.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: That is correct. Members may be aware that the pre-election promise of an extra 250 police officers has failed to materialise. I would not be honest if I did not tell members that it was a four-year promise and the Government has four years to put that promise of an extra 250 police officers into effect. However, we are at the halfway mark and one would presume, quite correctly, that if the Labor Party promised 250, there should be an increase of 125 at the halfway mark. Let us say that the Government has hit a few hurdles and could not get the whole 125. Let us be generous and say that it should have increased numbers now at the halfway mark by at least 100, or let us say 80 just to be sure. I will give the House some figures. After Labor's first full financial year in control of this State, police numbers went backwards by 38. As at the end of the last calendar year, police numbers were down by 31 or thereabouts. Therefore, far from having an increase of 125, 100, 80 or whatever one thinks is appropriate, police numbers have gone backwards under the Labor Party. If the Labor Party adopts this recommendation, police numbers will go backwards even further, to the tune of at least 145 police officers.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: Does that include all the non-commissioned people in Northam who have been sacked - the people who used to look after the courts and provide secretarial services at the police office?

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Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The Leader of the National Party raises a very good point. However, I will give the House some interesting figures. In 1999 there were 4 850 police officers in Western Australia. In 2000 there were 4 869 police officers - an increase. At the end of 2001 there were 4 993, and at the end of 2002, Labor's first full financial year in charge of the State, there were 4 955. It was the first time in four years that police numbers had gone backwards. What coincided with that reduction in police numbers? Dare I say it; it was a change of government.

In 1999 under the Liberal Government, there were 204 police recruits. In 2000 the figure increased to 220. In 2001 police recruits increased to 290, and at the end of 2002, Labor's first full financial year in charge of the State, they dropped to 120. That is a drop from 290 to 120. That in itself is a significant issue, but it is compounded by Labor's rhetoric at the last election that it would increase police numbers by 250 police officers. It is absolutely ridiculous.

I refer to the recommendation to pull coppers off the streets and have them drive prison vans. I would prefer to have our police officers catch crooks rather than chauffeur them around, which is what the mob opposite would have them do. It is very demoralising indeed for those fine, upstanding individuals who choose to join the Police Service and who manage to jump all the hurdles to become a police officer to have to sit in a courtroom for eight or nine hours a day or to have to drive a prison truck from the prison back to the courthouse. Make no mistake about it, if this recommendation is adopted, it will have a dramatic and immediate effect on police morale. The last Government identified it as a non-core policing duty and did not require police officers to undertake it. Of course, that is why the AIMS Corporation contract was let.

I will provide the House with a bit of history about the AIMS contract. The last Government was of the view that more police officers were needed and that there were a number of ways to go about recruiting them. The Government could simply shell out a heap of money on a recurrent basis and employ more police officers. However, it became evident to the last Government that to employ security officers instead of police officers would be considerably cheaper. Therefore, rather than just shell out a heap of money for a lot more police officers, the last Government decided - in an innovative way, I might add - that it would pull all those police officers back from those non-core policing duties of driving around prisoners and would put them into front-line policing, and for a considerable saving in wages it would employ security guards. It makes a lot of sense, does it not?

In August 2000 the AIMS contract was let. Unfortunately, there were a few problems immediately. The initial contract was for some \$11.7 million per annum and was for 351 000 man-hours. AIMS was required to fulfil that requirement under that \$11.7 million contract. Of course, government agencies demanded much more than the 351 000 hours. In fact, in that first year they demanded that the AIMS workers work 462 000 hours, which the AIMS workers duly did because they did not want to neglect their duties. Therefore, straightaway there was a dispute about the amount of money that would be paid to AIMS in that first year. The Government said that it wanted to hold the company to the \$11.7 million. AIMS Corporation was of the view that it was a cost-plus contract and took the contract to arbitration. If it cost the company X amount of dollars, the company would add a small percentage onto the cost - I believe it to be about 1.5 per cent plus bonuses - and that would be the final figure. After a massive dispute with the Government, AIMS emerged the victor and the arbitrator decided that the AIMS contract was a cost-plus contract. What have we got now? The Minister for Police was quoted in Saturday's newspaper as saying that AIMS had been an expensive flop. The Attorney General has said that the relationship has reached low levels and there is a lack of trust and confidence in the contractor. All this because of a dispute in the first year about how the contract should have been read. It was essentially a legal dispute, which was sorted out by an arbitrator. Now we have two government ministers who are upset and angry that they read the contract upside down. The arbitrator has found the opposite. The people working for AIMS are now being told that they are incompetent rorters, when the truth is that the staff from AIMS are performing their duties very manfully. They are performing particularly hazardous and dangerous duties with compassion and conviction, and they should be seen in that light.

I will return to the \$11.7 million that was the payment for 351 000 hours of work. The AIMS staff worked 462 000 hours in the first year, so the first year pre-margin figure came in at \$16.9 million. AIMS billed the Government for this amount of money in the first year prior to adding its 1.5 per cent margin onto the figure. That figure went to arbitration. The Government paid the company a part of that \$16.9 million but never paid the entire amount. In the second year the AIMS contract came in at \$16.6 million, a reduction of \$300 000. For the third year - the current year - expectations are that AIMS will be in on budget, around \$16.5 million. We have listened to the Attorney General's rhetoric that the AIMS contract has been a massive blow-out when, in fact, AIMS expenses have decreased from \$16.9 million to \$16.6 million, and will hopefully further reduce to

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\$16.5 million this year. The Attorney General has used creative accounting. The Government did not pay the full amount in the first year - it withheld that money - and added it onto the second year figures and, low and behold, the price looked like it had gone up. In actual fact, if the Government had paid the full \$16.9 million in the first year, the price would have decreased in the second year. It is important that members understand that, as complex as it may be.

Mr B.K. Masters: And deceptive.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Yes. I will get to the financial case in a minute. In terms of AIMS's performance, it must meet a helluva lot of benchmarks set by the Government.

Mr R.C. Kucera: They are all coming home to roost.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Sorry, what did the Minister for Health just say?

Mr R.C. Kucera: All your private contracts are now coming home to roost.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: It was this Government's ministers who read the contract the wrong way. The arbitrator found against the Government. The Minister for Health should think about what he is saying.

The contract was put in place with a number of benchmarks. If AIMS exceeded those benchmarks, that would provide grounds for resuming the contract and for financial penalty. I will quickly read through the benchmarks for the benefit of members present. The first deals with death in custody. Obviously, zero is the benchmark set by the contract and, so far, there have been zero deaths in custody. The benchmark for escapes is two. If AIMS achieved - I am probably using the wrong word - in excess of two escapes for the year, it would incur a financial penalty on a sliding scale. During the year there were two escapes, although one has been disputed. However, the figure was no greater than the benchmark. The benchmark for self-harm is zero and, yes, that is the single benchmark that the company has exceeded. Two people engaged in self-harm. The benchmark for assault on a judicial officer is one; there have been no incidents. The benchmark for loss of control is one; there have been none. The benchmark for failure to report an incident is two. There have been two incidents, so AIMS Corporation has still not exceeded the benchmark. The benchmark for assault on a member of the public is two; there have been none. The benchmark for assault on client agency staff is two; there have been none. The benchmark for assault of a person in custody is one; there have been none. It goes on and on. The point I am trying to make, without wanting to hold up the House for too long, is that AIMS Corporation has come in under almost every benchmark set by its contract, with the exception of about one benchmark, which was for self-harm. AIMS Corporation's performance has been very good.

We have all seen in the media the business about the number of escapes that have occurred. These have been highly publicised escapes. In fact there were six escapes in the first year of the AIMS Corporation contract. In the second year of the contract there were two escapes.

Mr J.N. Hyde: What is the benchmark?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The benchmark is six. In the third year there were two escapes, although one is disputed. The figure for escapes is disputed for the year immediately leading up to AIMS Corporation taking over the contract. Peter Foss was quoted in *The West Australian* some time ago as saying that the figure for escapes prior to AIMS Corporation taking over the transportation of prisoners was 60. The Attorney General disputes that; he says that the figure was 10. If we take the Attorney General's figure of 10, in the year that AIMS Corporation took over that role there were six escapes, in the year after that there were two, and in the year after that there were two. AIMS Corporation has been under or at least on the benchmark for almost every category. Far from being an expensive flop and a problem contract, in my view AIMS Corporation has done a terrific job and should continue with that job. The problem, of course, is that AIMS Corporation is prohibited from talking to the media. That prohibition is written into its contract. On the one hand the media reports these escapes and on the other hand the contractor cannot say anything at all to the media.

It was Joe Berinson, the Labor Attorney General, who in 1990 first moved to pull police officers out of the courts. He is on the public record as saying that police officers should not be hanging around in courtrooms. He made the move in 1990 to remove police officers from courtrooms.

Finally, I will explore the financial case. Sure, if the Government accepts this recommendation, it will probably save in the order of \$14 million. The saving may be a little less than that. However, at what cost will that saving be? How will the Government tell the people of Western Australia that it will pull a minimum of 145 police officers from the front line to stick them in prison vans and on court security? On the one hand the Government will make a pretty big saving. That is a big carrot for the Treasurer and the Minister for Police. On the other

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hand front-line policing will be decimated in Western Australia. I am not the only one to think that. There are officers in our Police Service who share that point of view. The financial case is interesting because, effectively, AIMS Corporation spends about \$12.2 million a year just on staff wages. Obviously there are other associated expenses, such as vehicle leasing and the like. Our information is that in order for police to undertake those same duties, a financial contribution of \$16.5 million would be required, because police officers are paid more. The real kicker is that the \$16.5 million worth of police officers are already employed. That \$16.5 million is already being paid because those police officers are already employed by the State Government. On the one hand the Government can say that it will not write out that cheque for \$12.2 million to pay the wages of AIMS Corporation employees, because it will use existing coppers, which would be at no cost. In fact, there would be a saving of \$14-odd million. Let us think about that. If we really want to take the cost into account, we should consider that it will involve \$16.5 million in wages plus an extra \$3 million in budget allocations for the Police Service. That comes in at \$19.5 million. So if the Government accepts this recommendation, the net cost will be \$19.5 million for police to undertake prison transport and court security. At the moment the AIMS contract, in total, stands at about \$17.4 million. There is a considerable disparity, in real terms. The way the Government is viewing the process certainly shows a saving, because it does not have to make a cheque out to AIMS any more - it just uses existing coppers. The real kicker is what those existing coppers are doing at the moment. They are out there catching crooks, stopping juveniles from breaking into houses, and walking the beat in Northbridge, Fremantle and Kalgoorlie. If the Labor Party has its way, at least 145 police officers will be pulled away from front-line policing and placed in prison vans. That is not acceptable in anyone's book. The Government needs to get the message that public safety is not for sale, and cannot be put up for auction. The Opposition understood this when in government, which is why the previous Government employed AIMS. The company has met every benchmark, and it will cost \$19.5 million for the police to take back that contract. I urge the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to tone down her rhetoric in the newspapers, have a good look at the contract, and understand the financial implications for the Government.

MR J.N. HYDE (Perth) [4.52 pm]: With the odd change, I may be able to support the motion that has been put up today. I am very concerned about State Governments that close police stations. I ask the House to deal with realities. Let us not talk about public servants drawing up or not drawing up lists in some mythical bean-counting exercise with mythical names. Let us talk about State Governments that close police stations. What would members say about a State Government that closed down the police station in the postcode with the highest level of crime in this State - 6003, Northbridge? Northbridge had a police station, and the previous Government closed it. Where is the member for Moore? I would love to hear him rant about that. The previous Government closed down the police station serving the postcode with the highest level of crime in this State. That was the reality - police stations being closed down by the coalition Government.

Now we have a Labor Government, and what has the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the Labor Government done? She has opened a police station in Northbridge. She has opened a police station in the area with the highest level of crime in the State. She has done that so that police are on the beat. Police can walk out of the police station and not only are they where crime was happening - the crime rate has come down under the Labor Government - but they are also acting as a deterrent. The extra police are there on the street. Let us talk about the previous Government. Under the coalition Government, the Perth central district was 20 per cent under strength. Under the Labor Government it is at full strength. Let us talk about the real cuts that happened to real police stations under a coalition Government. The only commitment being given by the Opposition is for a future coalition Government to close more police stations. The ex-President of the National Party said last Friday on radio that Nedlands Police Station should be closed. That would be the view of a coalition Government. I am sure that the people in the western suburbs will be very pleased to hear that that is coalition policy if the coalition is ever returned to government in this State!

Apparently for the member for Kalgoorlie it is fine that 10 murderers who are not under police supervision are escaping from Australian Integration Management Services Corporation Pty Ltd custody and are on the streets of Perth. It is perfectly fine for him that 10 convicted people who have gone through the court system are able to avoid custody.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You said 10 convicted murderers.

Mr J.N. HYDE: There are murderers, rapists and people involved in crimes against children. That is all right according to the member for Kalgoorlie. He has not mentioned in his fuzzy maths that he has presented today the accounting that occurs when the police must try to catch the escapees from AIMS custody. We have already established who has form on closing police stations. Let us not talk about Dongolocking one-man police station or other police stations closed under a Liberal Government; let us not talk Big Bell Police Station, which served

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4 000 people and was closed under a Liberal Government. The Liberal Government had form on closing police stations.

Let us talk about the police station that serves an area with the highest crime rate of any postcode area in Western Australia. Why does it have the highest crime rate in Western Australia? It is because of the very high number of people who visit the 6003 postcode area of Northbridge. Many of those visitors are regional people. They tell me when they visit my electorate and when I visit the wonderful places in regional Western Australia that they feel safer seeing police on bicycles and horses in Northbridge; that they feel safer seeing the police station reopened in Northbridge under a Labor Government and police walking across Beaufort Street and through the cultural centre; that they feel safer because they are seeing proactive policing and proactive indigenous policing; that they feel safer because they see indigenous people from country Western Australia undertaking indigenous police courses and other efforts to ensure that there is stronger, more targeted policing throughout the State.

A number of figures on police recruitment have been raised. I remind the member for Kalgoorlie and other members who do not have an overall understanding of royal commissions in Australia that if one looks at the history of the Wood royal commission in Queensland and other royal commissions, police are not recruited during a royal commission. While a royal commission is sitting, hundreds of children in schools are not saying that they want to become a police person. A Government does not waste its police resources during the sitting of a royal commission by attempting to create a massive influx of police. It has never happened in the history of royal commissions. When the first royal commission was held in 1086, there was no advertising for police recruits and applicants were not flocking in!

This Government has made a number of pledges to get more police on the street. It is getting more police into the areas where they are needed, and it is delivering on its commitments. I am perfectly happy to see no flood of applications to join the Police Service when a royal commission is sitting at year two during a period of a four-year commitment. We must look at the reality behind the ridiculous statistics being thrown about by the member for Kalgoorlie.

I refer to the issue of prostitution in the Perth central district, which is in my electorate. It was not until the dying days of the coalition Government that the real issues regarding prostitution, such as the role of organised crime, were addressed. That was the result of some local government incentive and prodding; the wonderful Opposition at the time, the Greens (WA) and others; and the introduction of a private member's Bill by the member for Midland. I pay credit to both sides of the House for passing some legislation that dealt with that issue and gave our police the ability to do their job in a more effective way. That is one of our responsibilities as parliamentarians. Our role is not just to look at the bare figures of how many police are in the field or behind a desk. We must ensure that the police who are doing investigative work in an office, on a phone or on the beat have the legislation and the ability to deal with not only crime but also the causes of crime on a whole-of-government basis. I commend the previous coalition Government for, in its dying stages, starting that process in a very small way. I also commend the Labor Party and the Greens for supporting it. That work has gone on a plenty under this reformist Government. Police have been given the powers to do their job properly and really tackle the issues of crime. We are seeing that result in the real figures and the reduction in crime rates in the communities.

I am the local member for the electorate that contains the postcode with the highest incidence of crime. That crime is committed not by local residents but by others who are attracted to the many attributes and wonderful things that happen in Northbridge and are with their friends. We are able to deal with those issues, and this Government is dealing with them in a proactive way.

The statistics the member for Kalgoorlie raised neglect what happened under the coalition Government; that is, the closure of the small one-person police stations and the duress those police were put under. I caution the member for Kalgoorlie. During December and January I visited a number of very small towns in the wheatbelt, and a number of people praised the work of police officers such as the one in Dumbleyung. He does incredible work. The statistics on which the previous Cabinet based its decision to close those stations did not reflect the important role that one-person police stations play in deterring crime. The very fact of having a local police officer live in a country town in regional Western Australia is a deterrent to crime in that town. Those officers are in touch with the community. Their kids play footy and basketball and participate in other activities with the local children. They go to school and the pool together. When a bit of strife is happening, people are able to let the police officer know quickly. The officer is able to detect a situation that is about to develop. However, a crime statistic is not recorded because no offence has occurred. Crime has been averted because of positive policing. It is important to realise that in its two years in government, the Labor Party has respected the

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important morale role of police. Today, the Opposition, through the member for Kalgoorlie, is putting fear into a number of rural communities.

Mr M.J. Birney: We just want the facts.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The only fact we have been able to establish from this debate is what a future coalition Government will do. The National Party has committed to closing the Nedlands Police Station. That is the only fact that has emerged from this debate today. The ex-President of the National Party said that on radio. The Liberal Party and the National Party may have their own party rooms, but they had better sort out the coalition arrangements as it appears the National Party is making commitments about Liberal Party electorates. That is an important point.

With regard to finding cuts, let us look at the form of the Labor Government. This Government has not made cuts to policing or police stations. No cuts can be found there. Cuts have been made to Rhonda Parker's tea set, ministerial drivers, Matrix and the waste that occurred because of the finance brokers scandal, which had a real impact on the people of Western Australia. Let us talk about the massive belltower, for which Western Australians are still paying. That edification is a symbol, particularly to regional Western Australians, of all that was wrong with the previous coalition Government. The belltower is still an encumbrance around the necks of Western Australians and we are still subsidising it. This Labor Government is trying to ensure the best use for that edifice. That was another loss inflicted on us by the previous coalition Government.

The Labor Government is finding cuts in appropriate places, including ministerial largesse, ministerial tea sets and ministerial cars. This Government has made cuts to a range of extravagant expenses across government. This Government has good form when it comes to making correct and proper cuts into government largesse and waste.

I refer to policing and important targeting conducted by this Government under the previous Safer WA fund and the new Office of Crime Prevention. Instead of massively funding private security firms, the Government has targeted funding at crime prevention and reduction strategies that local communities want. We have consulted local communities and they tell us that lighting in their neighbourhood, for example, is having a real, measurable effect in decreasing crime. The Government helped to build a skate park in Northam, which has had an effect on juvenile antisocial behaviour and crime in that area. Those interventionist activities under the Gallop Labor Government have been sharpened and increased. Through our new system, the Office of Crime Prevention, we have increased funding for interventionist activities that have a real effect.

The local people on community crime groups are very happy with us. People do not want to have to go through 17 levels of committees; they want to go to the big kahuna. They want to go through their local councils and talk to local people who know the solutions to local crime. They want access to their local police, council and community groups and leaders. They know that fixing crime is a whole-of-government activity. The Government has increased funds to disability services, housing and works, and is targeting the health and safety of indigenous communities. We give credit to the swimming pool program started by the previous Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. That program, which was targeted at Aboriginal communities, has had an impact on not only the health but also the antisocial behaviour and other crime-related matters.

Through that whole-of-government approach, we undertake to find a solution to crime in this State. It is also very important that we do not look only at the affect of police statistics in isolation. Clearly this Government is committed to a whole-of-government approach.

The previous coalition Government and the previous Minister for Local Government downplayed the role of Neighbourhood Watch to create the Safer WA structure, which had some wins. However, community groups are saying to us that, overall, that structure has become too cumbersome and bureaucratic. They want their local police to advise them on delivering the funds directly to the local communities. The Government is working very hard on that matter. It is very important that government members talk to the local community so people are not spooked by the scaremongering from the member for Kalgoorlie. The important role of many police should not be downplayed. The role police perform in community development through community groups and elsewhere is very important. A police presence has an incredible effect; I refer to not only having police "on the streets," using the hackneyed phrase, but also in other places they are needed. This has an impact on crime. Look at the real crime figures in West Perth, which is close to the parliamentary precinct. When we came to government, we inherited an incredible surge in the theft of computers and other commercial crime in the area. That was specifically targeted by police.

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Policing is a complex matter and is being undertaken and handled incredibly well by the Minister for Police. As I stated, this Government has form in providing positive policing and getting police to where they are needed. This Government put the police central district in my electorate up to strength for the first time ever. The coalition Government left that district at 20 per cent under strength. The coalition Government created AIMS and funny contracts. The fine print in the St John Ambulance contract probably reveals that Australian Integration Management Services works with a four-day weekend, so St John Ambulances must enter prisons and pick up people from hospitals and elsewhere! That contract was a folly and a great waste that occurred under the previous Government.

DR G.I. GALLOP (Victoria Park - Premier) [5.13 pm]: The Leader of the Opposition asked me in question time whether I was aware that any of my cabinet ministers had been named in the Kennedy royal commission, and, subsequently, whether the name of any cabinet minister had been suppressed. I gave an undertaking to approach the royal commission, and I can now provide a response to Parliament. Commissioner Kennedy has provided me with the following letter, which I will table. I quote -

Dear Dr Gallop

I advise that on occasions, where necessary, I have made orders pursuant to s12 of the *Royal Commission (Police) Act 2002* to the effect that names of persons referred to in evidence, or any information, evidence, photographs or representations that might identify those persons, are not to be published.

To avoid contravening those orders, it is inappropriate to provide any information concerning the persons who have or have not been the subject of orders under s12 of the Act. As you would be aware s12(2) provides a penalty for an offence of making a publication in contravention of a direction given under the section.

End of quote. It is worth noting, that the penalty under the Royal Commission (Police) Act for breaching a suppression order -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Are you quoting the justice?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: No. I said "End of quote."

It is worth noting that the penalty under the Act is 12 months' imprisonment and a fine of \$4 000, which is an indication of how seriously the law regards these matters. From the outset, I have made it clear that members of this place have a responsibility not to interfere in the workings of the royal commission. It must be allowed to do the job it was established to do. We saw from the Leader of the Opposition earlier today a deliberate and dangerous attempt to undermine the work of that inquiry. What is more, he sought to do so under the cover of the privilege of this Parliament. For that he stands condemned and should be brought to account by his colleagues.

Let me finish by repeating what I said in question time. Should I be advised at any time of any matter before the royal commission that requires me to take action, I will do so.

[See paper No 797.]

Several members interjected.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Rockingham accused me of breaking the law. I ask him to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): The member for Greenough has the call.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: The Premier has just come into this Chamber and received the call. He never asked to give a personal explanation. He just stood and stopped the proceedings of this Chamber without seeking your call, Mr Acting Speaker, to speak to a matter that was not related to the matter of public interest that is before the House. Further, the Leader of the Opposition has asked for the withdrawal of a comment made by the member for Rockingham and he has refused to do so. It is a very serious allegation and he should withdraw.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It was very clear, Mr Acting Speaker, that when the Premier gained your eye ahead of other members, it was not to do with the matter being debated in private members' business. It was very clear that a personal explanation was being made. Secondly, it was very clear that there was no debate under way when the

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alleged comments were made by the member for Rockingham. I could hear a number of conversations across the Chamber but no clear comments could be heard by many members.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Although the member for Rockingham might have been about to clarify the matter, the words that were heard by those on this side of the Chamber were quite clearly the member for Rockingham indicating that the Leader of the Opposition had broken the law. As such, he has impugned the reputation of the Leader of the Opposition, and I suggest, through the Chair, that the appropriate course of action is for the member for Rockingham to withdraw that comment.

The ACTING SPEAKER: With regard to the Premier making a statement, it was a matter that related to the police. The matter of public interest relates to the police, so it is allowable. On the member for Rockingham's comments, I did not hear them, but, if he passed comment, I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [5.17 pm]: I support the motion moved by the member for Kalgoorlie. I wish to bring a country-rural perspective to the debate. Any staff cuts in the Police Service are seen as having yet another negative impact on rural Western Australia. I say to the minister, through you, Mr Acting Speaker, that there are perceptions in country electorates, and certainly in my electorate, that there will be staff cuts and possibly the closure of certain stations in those electorates. I will enlarge on that. A newspaper article in *The Geraldton Guardian* only four or five days ago was headed "Mingenew fight police cutback". Mingeneu is one of the shires in my electorate. It has a police station, as does Kalbarri, Northampton, Mullewa, Morawa and Dongara. As far as I know, all those police stations, bar the Mingeneu Police Station, are at full strength. The Mullewa Police Station has had problems over the past two years and has finally managed to find an extra staff member. However, the perception is that stations will be closed. The Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Mingeneu was quoted in the *Geraldton Guardian* as saying that it is possible that one man may be withdrawn from Mingeneu and the police station may be closed. In fact, the one remaining officer - as there are currently two in Mingeneu - may be moved and housed in the local government building. That is the current perception.

It is important to understand how the withdrawal of any government service from a country town impacts on the town. Most police officers have families and buy their food, fuel and clothes locally. They get involved in local sports, either through playing or coaching, and are very involved in the local communities. They join local service clubs such as Rotary and Lions International. I am aware of one officer who is a councillor for his local shire. Police officers are very much an integral part of country communities. The towns I have spoken of are very much a cross-section of society in what they reflect. Kalbarri and Dongara have tourism-related industries. Northampton, Morawa and Mingeneu are farming communities. Mullewa has a fairly large Aboriginal population and a possible mining operation that may come on-stream in the future. That illustrates the diversity that the Police Service has to handle in my electorate. The police officers in my electorate are very special people in the community and play a very important role. Any town would be at a loss without some form of police presence. People want to see a police presence in the town. Morawa is a one-officer station. Obviously, the officer has to have some time off. If there is a break-in, as there was last weekend, an officer may not be available to handle the situation. The situation is often critical in country areas. Mingeneu has heard it will lose an officer. As the minister is now back in the House -

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I have not left the House!

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: My apology; I did not see the minister in her seat.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I did not leave the House!

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: I was attempting to apologise to the minister. If she was at the back of the House, I withdraw the remark. The minister is certainly a bit touchy today. I look forward to the minister's response, although not necessarily now, to give me a definite commitment that police stations, particularly Mingeneu Police Station, will not be closed. There is anxiety in the town that the station will be closed. The town understands that it will lose one police officer, who is to be transferred to Dongara. The remaining officer is to be housed in the shire office. That begs the question as to who will pay for him to be there. Will the local government have to pay or will it be the Police Service?

The member for Kalgoorlie has covered this issue in far more detail than I can. If police officers are tied up in attending court proceedings and operating prison vans, it is probably stating the bleeding obvious that they will

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not be in the community enforcing the law as necessary. That is important for all communities in Western Australia. They should be able to expect a police presence on their streets, whether they live in a town as small as Mingenew or in a metropolitan city like Perth. We all expect that service. It is the Government's role to ensure that the finances and budgets are in place to make that happen.

I remind the member for Perth - who accused the coalition Government of closing down police stations left, right and centre - that the adjoining seat of Geraldton has a spanking brand-new police station that was built by the coalition three or four years ago. It also has a very good and very modern police and citizens youth club that was also built by the coalition. I put that on record because I believe the last coalition Government was very responsible in building police numbers, police stations and other ancillary services. It is a misnomer for government members to tell us that the coalition Government went around knocking down police stations.

Mr A.D. McRae interjected.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: Regardless of whether the member for Riverton thinks what I said is rubbish, it is the truth.

If the Government's razor gang will go through the State, I ask the minister to be receptive to country people's desires to ensure they have an adequate police presence in their towns and communities; that is very important to them. They have the same anxieties that any person does, as I said before, no matter where they come from. In smaller country towns the police are part of, and lend a lot of support to, the community.

There are traffic patrols in Mingenew, Dongara and Northampton and, therefore, traffic cars are based in those towns. At times those traffic cars sit in their garages for long periods simply because there is not enough money to run them or the fuel to refuel them. I say that as an aside again because the minister may be unaware of that. As I said, I support the motion.

DR E. CONSTABLE (Churchlands) [5.28 pm]: I am not sure whether I will support this motion and I will wait to hear what the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has to say. I would be alarmed if the Government decided willy-nilly to close 22 police stations. I would be equally alarmed to know that 145 police officers were diverted from front-line duties. As I said, I will wait to hear what the minister has to say.

I wish to raise an important matter with the minister about the state of many police stations, particularly the police stations in the western suburbs, because this goes to the crux of this motion. Last year the minister approved a visit by three members in the western suburbs to look at the local police stations. It was a very worthwhile visit and I thank the minister for that. I was able to visit the Wembley, Subiaco and Claremont Police Stations. I am sure the minister will agree with me that the conditions under which police officers must work in a number of old police stations are appalling. I take my hat off to the officers of the local police stations in those areas for the job they do under the conditions in which they work. They are cramped. Male and female officers share bathroom facilities. In fact, when we spoke with the detectives at Wembley, one of the female detectives said that not only must the male and female officers share the toilet facilities, but they must also share that one toilet with the crooks when they are interviewing them. Her words were "with the crooks". That is not acceptable, and I am sure the minister will agree with me. In fact, I surmise that she agrees with me because a review has been going on. I am not sure whether it has been completed. However, in the current budget there is certainly funding for a review of the facilities at these police stations. I am anxious to know the outcome of that review and what action the Government is proposing to take. It is simply not acceptable for our police officers to be trying to carry out their duties of modern policing in cramped conditions in little old houses that were built 60 or 70 years ago - they might have been appropriate then but they are not appropriate now - in which the corridors are blocked with their gear.

Anyone who takes a cursory look at the facilities at Wembley would say that occupational health and safety issues certainly need to be addressed. Probably the best way to address those issues is to close down the existing Wembley Police Station and build a modern facility. One of the solutions may well be - I put this forward as a suggestion and I do not know whether it will happen - to say that the facilities at Subiaco and Wembley are not suitable. The idea would be to close down those two facilities and build a good, modern facility between the existing locations that would last for the next 20 or 30 years. It is appalling that these police officers are being required to perform their duties under the existing conditions. It amounts to successive Governments over several decades simply not having budgets that allowed them to upkeep and maintain these facilities in the right way. I would be the first person to thank the minister if in the next budget she found the money to do something about this area. It really is terrible. I say to the minister that my one proviso is that the facility should be located slightly to the west of the railway line.

Mr Matt Birney; Deputy Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Bowler; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Peter Watson

Mr M.W. Trenorden: Is that in your electorate?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, it is not in my electorate. In fact, the existing Wembley Police Station is in Cambridge Street. The boundary between the electorates of Nedlands and Churchlands is Cambridge Street, so it is just across the road.

I know that some effort has been made in the past decade to do something about some of the facilities. A new police station has been built at Scarborough. I am not sure which two police stations were combined. Was it South Perth and -

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Victoria Park.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I believe the situation is probably similar to that which I am describing with Wembley and Subiaco, in that two existing police facilities were closed and a new one built. The Kensington station has been opened, has it not?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It will be officially opened on 6 March, I think, so that the member for South Perth can return for the opening.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is very good. Obviously, I have not seen the facility, but I assume it is state of the art, with all the equipment that a modern Police Service requires.

When I visited the police stations, the members for Nedlands and Cottesloe were also present. At least one of the police stations did not have an interview room. What is the point of having a facility in which the police work if they cannot interview crime suspects? Another police station did not have a holding cell. The waste of resources in being required to go to another location to put a suspect in a holding cell is just silly, and it is time that something was done about it. In certain circumstances it is very difficult for police officers to do their job in these substandard conditions. I venture to say that sometimes their safety is at risk in these old facilities.

I am waiting for the minister's explanation regarding this motion. I am very pleased that the minister has recognised the problem and that a review has been carried out in the western suburbs. However, I am anxious to know what plans she has for the future of policing in the western suburbs because it is time something was done about it.

MRS C.L. EDWARDES (Kingsley) [5.35 pm]: I also rise to speak on the motion, particularly with respect to the impact that the cancellation of the Australian Integration Management Services contract and police officers transporting prisoners will have on the Joondalup region. When one takes into account that there is a court in the region, the impact is likely to be even greater.

I will refer first to the Functional Review Taskforce headed by Michael Costello, who submitted his final report to the cabinet expenditure review committee by 31 December 2002. I will refer to parliamentary question on notice 170, which was answered on 5 December 2002. The cost of this review was in excess of \$1 million. As yet, the interim and final reports have not been made public. Some announcements have been made as a result of the recommendations of the review, but we have not seen the review.

Mr M.J. Birney: I have a press release from the Premier dated 26 June 2002 in which he announced the review and said that it was expected to cost \$350 000.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The answer to the question on notice stated that the cost of the review would be -

- Consultancy costs for members of the Taskforce as follows:
- Michael Costello: \$180,000 . . . plus travel and accommodation expenses.
- Allan Skinner: \$100,000 . . . plus travel and accommodation outside the Perth metropolitan area.
- Consultancy costs for reviews of asset management, procurement and corporate services: \$630,000.
- Other incidental costs to date total \$125,000.

Of course, that excludes all of the other administrative support positions or support staff for the task force seconded from public sector agencies, with those agencies meeting the costs.

When a report makes recommendations and the cost of making that report is in excess of \$1 million, that report should be made public. Taxpayers have paid for that report. The recommendations will impact on the services

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provided in Western Australia, particularly by the Police Service. Therefore, the report should be made public, and quickly.

The test of any recommendation of any review or task force is: will we be better or worse off? Taking into account the fact that the cancellation of the AIMS contract will take an estimated 150 police off the front line of duty to carry out the functions covered under the AIMS contract, will we be better off? We no longer have a contract, so will we be worse off? Absolutely. We will be far worse off because we will lose 150 police from the front line. Where will those police come from? The Joondalup district has a court, so it cannot afford to lose any more police officers. These police cover 817 square kilometres and service 231 000 people in the area. At the moment, only 260 full-time officers serve that region. If one takes into account those who are on sick, annual or study leave or those who have been seconded into other regions, fewer than 260 full-time officers cover 231 000 people and 817 square kilometre in any event. We have already lost 15 officers from that region since Labor came into government, plus a further 20 probationary constables. That is a total of 35 officers. We are talking about a growing region. Labor cannot be trusted with its pre-election promises to make our suburbs safer and put more police on the beat. That does not ring true in the Joondalup region. The Joondalup district has established an extremely good track record for reducing the crime rate. If the Government keeps reducing the number of staff, as is happening, all the gains that have been made in that region will be put at risk. Again, members should keep in mind that it is a growing region.

Mr M.F. Board: There is no incentive to reduce the crime rate if you are going to lose staff as a result.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: That is right. The police will not be able to reduce the crime rate. The response time will be far less. In fact, the police will not get out at what is regarded as a lower priority response rate. A man wrote a letter to the editors of the local community newspapers saying that his wife and children had gone out one evening and that some thug, as he called him, and his girlfriend had rammed into their car as it was parked in the car park of a shopping centre. The damage to the car was so bad that it had to be towed away. The police did not attend on that occasion.

Members can imagine what the police response would be like in the event that police numbers were even further reduced as a result of police officers having to perform other functions, such as transporting prisoners and sitting in court twiddling their thumbs. That is not to mention the number of police cars and other vehicles and motorcycles that will be taken out of front-line work. The only possible conclusion one can draw is that it will be very tough indeed for those diligent and hardworking officers of the Joondalup district, who have a proven track record in reducing crime, to maintain that level of achievement. It is not fair to put those diligent and hardworking police officers under that pressure, and it is not fair to the 231 000 people who rely on the police for their security. That says a lot for Labor's pre-election promise to put more police on the beat and make our suburbs safer.

Mr M.J. Birney: Are you aware that during the election campaign, the member for Joondalup towed around a big trailer with a massive sign on it that said, "More police, better health for Joondalup"?

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: I am also aware that the current Minister for Health went around with candidates prior to the last election dressed in his police uniform and said how much safer it would be.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: No. We have photographs. Do members remember? There were photographs of a person at a security door with the current Minister for Health.

Labor does not seem to comprehend or care that fast-growing areas need a greater police presence and not one that will constantly shrink. The concern is that this will be the case. We are talking about the member for Joondalup. When police numbers were to be reduced in the Joondalup region, he was quoted in the local community newspapers as saying that he had taken the concerns about the cutbacks to the police minister, Michelle Roberts, who had told him that resource allocation was a senior police responsibility. This is not about police responsibility now; it is about government policy. It will clearly be a responsibility of the minister and the Government. I suggest that the member for Joondalup take his concerns back to the Minister for Police. He should tell her that the AIMS Corporation contract had better be renewed because those 150 police are needed on the front line and should not be babysitting prisoners in the courts and doing absolutely nothing. That would also tie up police vehicles. That move will not put more police back on the streets. I suggest that the member for Joondalup take his concerns back to the police minister. This is government policy. This is not, as the minister said, a senior police responsibility. This is clearly a decision that the minister will have to make.

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We heard the Minister for Community Development earlier today in question time. I am sure it was actually a slip when she said that going to the expenditure review committee was a democratic process. I thought it might have been a slip, so the minister should change that when she checks her *Hansard*. Whenever I went before the expenditure review committee, it certainly was not a democratic process. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services must be extremely strong - and I understand that she holds a senior position in the Cabinet - and pull her weight and make sure that she gets all that she wants. She must tell the Cabinet that the recommendations from the Costello report are nonsense and do not meet the Labor Party's election commitment. Irrespective of the philosophical problems of having a contract with AIMS, taking 150 police out of the front line will not work for Labor, and will not work for the community.

I am concerned that the people of Kingsley will be duded by this Labor Government. Police have already been lost from the Joondalup region since the Labor Government came into power, and the number of police stations has declined. The allocation of resources to the Joondalup region may be the responsibility of the district superintendent, but if he has less to play with in response times and following up on particular matters, people will be less well served than they are. I urge the minister to be strong and to make sure that she tells the expenditure review committee, "No, no, no", that its recommendations will not be accepted, and that those 150 police will stay on the front line and not babysit prisoners all over the place.

MR J.J.M. BOWLER (Eyre) [5.48 pm]: I oppose this motion. When I first read the article in the newspaper, I was concerned, because I have, in terms of voter numbers, the smallest electorate in the State. It is large in area but very small in numbers, and has a number of small towns. I thought that if 22 police stations were to be closed, a couple might be in my electorate. One that comes to mind is Menzies. That is a two-man station, as is Leinster. I was very relieved when I found out from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services that my fears were unfounded, and that as far as she was concerned, there were no plans to close any of those stations. In fact, this Government is actually opening a police station in our area - not quite in my electorate, but in our area - at Warburton. Earlier, the member for Kalgoorlie spoke about the fact that if - it is a big "if" - a station were closed, people would have to wait another hour or half an hour for police to arrive from a station further away. That would be a genuine concern, if it were to happen. Currently, if something happens, people in Warburton must wait five to six hours for a police patrol from Laverton. This Government is opening a station in Warburton that will cut down that travelling time, not by one hour, or half an hour, but by five to six hours. The Opposition should be applauding the Government rather than throwing scare tactics about what may or may not happen.

Mr M.J. Birney: Are you aware that the Minister for Police referred to the closure of Coolgardie Police Station during my speech?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I listened to all of the member's speech. Why did the member ask the minister if the central station in Perth was to close?

Mr M.J. Birney: It would be impractical.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Why Coolgardie? These are scare tactics.

Mr M.J. Birney: It is a small police station and the area it covers could easily be serviced by Kalgoorlie Police Station.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Does the member want to close Coolgardie Police Station?

Mr M.J. Birney: No, you do.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: If the member does not want to, why raise it? Why did he pick on Coolgardie Police Station?

Mr M.J. Birney: One would assume that if the Government is looking at police stations that it could close, it would look at police stations that are close to a major regional centre. The inference would be that the major regional centre could service that area. Coolgardie Police Station fits that criterion.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: The member therefore thinks that Coolgardie Police Station should close, does he?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I wonder why the member picked Coolgardie Police Station. Obviously the officers at the station will be very concerned if they read that the member has raised the spectre of their station being closed if the member gets into government.

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Mr M.J. Birney: They would be concerned that the minister refused to rule it out.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I am glad that the member for Kalgoorlie was talking about police, because one of the main planks of our election platform in the goldfields was better and more policing.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: Why didn't you do it?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: We did, and if the Leader of the National Party listens he will find out about it. Just for once he should listen. One of the main aspects of our election campaign in the goldfields was that we promised to extend country policing to the goldfields, which included Coolgardie Police Station, which the member for Kalgoorlie seems to want to close, the Kalgoorlie Police Station and the Kambalda Police Station. That is at a cost of \$2 million a year every year for four years.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: My friend the member for Eyre either intentionally or inadvertently has misrepresented what I said. At no stage did I say that I wanted the Coolgardie Police Station to close. What I said was that the Minister for Police had refused to rule it out.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.P.D. Edwards): I am prepared to listen to the point of order, but until I can hear what the point of order is, I will not be able to make a decision on it. I ask members to allow the member for Kalgoorlie to speak.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I was saying that my friend the member for Eyre either intentionally or inadvertently indicated that I had said that I wanted the Coolgardie Police Station to be closed. Nothing could be further from the truth. He has misrepresented what I said. What I said was that the Minister for Police had refused to rule out the closure of Coolgardie Police Station as a result of Labor's Functional Review Taskforce.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: There is no point of order. The member for Eyre was simply repeating the same phraseology that the member was using during his attack on the Minister for Police.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! So many conversations were being carried out across the Chamber that, quite frankly, I did not hear anything. I took it that the conversations were in good humour; that was the way I approached the matter. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: There is always good humour between the member for Kalgoorlie and me. As I said, one of the main planks of the election campaign was that we would spend \$2 million a year on these three police stations. We did in the first budget of our Government, we did it in the last budget, and we will do it in the next budget and the budget after that. That will mean \$8 million for extra police in the goldfields. As a journalist before I entered Parliament, I remember often going into the Kalgoorlie Police Station where on the wall was a list of the 90-odd officers. There were little red dots next to the vacant positions. There were always about eight to 10 vacant positions, which meant that there were 90 instead of the 100 police officers that the station should have had if at full strength.

Since this Labor Government has introduced country policing to the goldfields, the numbers of officers in Kalgoorlie are always at full strength. No longer is there a shortfall of eight to 10 officers at Kalgoorlie Police Station, although there may be one or two at Coolgardie and one or two at Kambalda. Better still, there is a waiting list of officers around the State wanting to come to the goldfields because this Government has introduced country incentives to the goldfields. The Government has effectively increased the number of police officers in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Coolgardie and Kambalda by about 10. All those officers have gone from a 40-hour week to a 44-hour week. Therefore, 100 officers divided by a 40-hour week means that effectively there are another 10 officers. We have gone from 90 to 100 to 110. That is in my town; my electorate. I cannot talk about the rest of the State, but that is what is happening in the goldfields.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You are very privileged, because we have lost officers from Joondalup.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: The member should join the Labor Party and see what happens. This happened because the Labor Party made some election promises and kept them. The member opposite must get his party to make some election promises, and then his party must win government.

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Another thing this Government has done to reduce crime in the goldfields is donate \$50 000 to Gerard Neesham's football academy, Clontarf Aboriginal College. It might not sound like a method to reduce crime. Members might ask how giving \$50 000 to a football academy will help reduce crime. Some people in my electorate have asked me why we are giving the money to one group of people and not spreading it around so that other kids in the goldfields who play football can receive it. They ask why it is going to only Aboriginal kids. The answer is that those kids were not going to school. In the past year and a bit they have started going to school, and they are starting to learn. Their attendance rates have increased. They now not only care about playing footy - some of these kids may go on to play in the Australian Football League - but also are starting to take pride in their school work. The great thing is that instead of being out in the streets, causing problems and breaking into houses, they are at school. The crime rate in Kalgoorlie-Boulder has decreased as a result. An article in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* reports that there had been big falls in goldfields crime statistics, and that burglaries had decreased from 202 in January 2002 to just 89 in January 2003. That has happened because we do things such as give money to football academies and proactive policing. We have put extra police on the beat. The number of police in the goldfields has gone from 90 to 100 to effectively 110. The number of burglaries has halved. The previous Liberal Government did nothing. It simply spoke about it. There was a lot of hot air. There was also a lot of hot air from the previous Government about the suburb of Adeline, which is in the electorate of my friend the member for Kalgoorlie. The previous Government announced that it would spend a couple of million dollars doing up the suburb. I know that the member for Kalgoorlie has done a lot of work to try to resurrect that program. The previous Government spent a lot of money on a big sign. As people drove into Adeline they saw a huge sign that proclaimed that the coalition Government would spend \$2 million. The only thing the Government spent money on was that sign! I do not know what the sign cost. It might have been \$5 000 or \$6 000. Would that be the guess of the member for Kalgoorlie?

Mr M.J. Birney: I have a point related to that. Next week is the opening of your project in Adeline. It is a parliamentary sitting day. I asked Hon Tom Stephens if he would give me a lift in his plane to go to the opening and then return. He refused. Can you take up the issue with him for me?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Is the member sitting next week? In which Parliament?

Mr M.J. Birney: It might be the week after.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: It might be that the member will simply be in Perth again, where he normally is.

Mr M.J. Birney: Would you talk to Hon Tom Stephens about getting me a lift? It is very uncharitable not to do so. It is a big, beautiful plane and only he and you will be rattling around in it.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I will look after it. The member should not worry, he is safe with me. As always, I will look after his electorate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.P.D. Edwards): Member for Eyre, address your remarks to the motion.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: The previous Government promised to spend \$2 million in Adeline, but all it did was erect a sign saying that it was going to spend \$2 million. We promised to do the same thing, but - lo and behold - we are doing it. We have started spending a lot of money, and are having some success. The police are telling me, and probably the member for Kalgoorlie, that some of the problems in Adeline have already started to cease because people in that suburb have gained a sense of pride. They know that the Government is worried about them and that it is starting to do something about the issue instead of talking about it and putting up a big sign. There has been a big fall in the goldfields crime statistics. That is fantastic news and is a result of what the Labor Government and I have achieved.

Mr B.J. Grylls: Are you putting pressure on the minister not to close 22 stations?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I do not need to. She just said that that was not going to happen. Did the member not listen? Did he just walk into the Chamber?

I end on a sad note. I coached the member for Kalgoorlie when he was a young basketball player. I found that he was a talented player, although he dribbled the basketball a bit too much. Some would say that he still dribbles too much. I would not say that. However, he always showed a lot of talent, and I think he has shown a bit of talent in this House. The Government always needs a strong Opposition to keep it on its mark. It is a crying shame that today my friend the member for Kalgoorlie said that he would not stand for the leadership of the Opposition. We all know how bad the Opposition is, so we are hoping there will be some change and that the Opposition will bring the fight back up to us as a result. Will the member for Kalgoorlie tell us now that he has changed his mind in the past half-hour?

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Mr M.J. Birney: If the Minister for Police is prepared to stand and categorically have a go -

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: This is between the member for Kalgoorlie and me.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.P.D. Edwards): I remind the member that it is not just a matter between him and the member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I will end on this note -

Mr R.F. Johnson: I don't think you have seen the polls lately; you are not doing too well.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I do not think that we can cuddle him any longer. He is like a bookie covering a cup favourite he knows cannot win the race.

Yesterday, the member for Southern River gave what I think was the best speech by one of the new chums in this House in the past two years. His message was aimed at the Opposition generally and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in particular not to play on the fears of the mothers and fathers of Brookdale - do not dance on the fears of their children's lives. The member for Southern River got the message through far better than I have on this occasion. However, I again say to members of the Opposition, do not dance and play on the fears of the husbands, wives and children of all the policemen and women stationed around Western Australia. Do not suddenly cart out each of their names every time members opposite have a chance to play on their fears that their livelihood may end. That is all members opposite have done. Shame on them for that. Shame on them for the speeches they gave on Brookdale. I wish they had learned the lesson from last night when they all sat shamefaced. Obviously they have not learned the lessons, and they will continue to do it again today.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [6.02 pm]: I could not let the last few words of the member for Eyre go unchallenged. It is interesting that when members move from the opposition benches to the government benches, they see a flash of light and the inspiration of pure government appears to them.

I remember when the members for Armadale and Fremantle sat in front of where I now sit and they spoke untruths day after day. It is a joke for those people to tell us now that the practice is unacceptable in this House. There was some concern after the departure of Brian Burke that because he was such a dominant person in this Chamber, he had taught many members how the process works. He was a brilliant performer in this House. However, we also know that he was corrupt. Some members opposite want to take a holier-than-thou attitude. However, members who do not want to be questioned and challenged, which happened yesterday over the Brookdale incident, for example, should look very closely at themselves and the operation of the Government.

I thank the member for Eyre for his speech. He just clearly said that police stations in Labor Party electorates will not close but police stations in Liberal or National Party electorates will.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Member for Albany.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: How many people have left the Department of Agriculture in Albany? Why does the member not defend the Department of Agriculture in Albany? How many businesses in Albany have closed or do not open on public holidays because of the Government's workplace relations legislation?

Mr P.B. Watson: No businesses have closed.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Members cannot get a meal or a coffee on a public holiday in Albany because of the great service that the member for Albany has done to his community.

Mr P.B. Watson: When was the last time you went to Albany?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The member knows - I ran into him in the main street and his jaw nearly hit the ground.

Mr P.B. Watson: It was about six months ago.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Just before Christmas.

Mr P.B. Watson: I had to introduce you to people so they knew who you were!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I do not remember that. When I ran into the member in the main street, I had never seen anyone look so shocked before in my life. I do not remember the member introducing me to anyone. Anyway, I have a speech to deliver.

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In this House yesterday the Minister for Police backed down on the Gallop Government's proposal to close 22 police stations, as she did earlier with me in an interview on ABC radio. Such government announcements should not be made on ABC radio; they should be made in this House. The only announcements of any importance are those made in here.

Let us be clear: the plan for the closure of 22 police stations was put together by the Executive of this Government. We know that to be the case. It is not a plan by the Commissioner of Police or some group within the Police Force. It is a plan by this Government to save \$2 million. We also know that the plan was presented to the Police Force. It did not die in the minister's office. She took it to the Police Force.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: No, I didn't.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes, the minister did. The minister should deny it in her speech. A range of people are prepared to say that the minister presented the plan.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Tell me who those people are.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It might happen. If the minister denies it, we might happily do that as part of the process.

Mr P.B. Watson: More lies! More lies!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Albany!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I will not ask for a retraction because those comments were made by the member for Albany. It used to be the member for Peel who was known for making such comments, but it is becoming the member for Albany.

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): I ask the member for Albany to withdraw those comments about more lies.

Mr P.B. Watson: I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I was not going to pick on the member for Albany, but if you want to follow the procedure, Mr Acting Speaker, it is okay by me.

Mr P.B. Watson: I should ask for a withdrawal for the comments about the member for Peel.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I will do so because it was a pretty lousy thing to say to someone.

The minister was asked to prune her budget by \$2 million. In the typical fashion of this Government, where does it go to make the cuts? It goes to rural areas. We were told by the member for Eyre that the pruning does not occur in Labor Party seats, only National and Liberal Party seats. That plan is on paper. I went to a meeting in Pinjarra two weeks ago to which 63 or 65 local councils and 150-odd councillors turned up expressing grave concerns about how this Government is affecting regional and coastal communities. A large concern expressed at the meeting was the closure of police stations. As a result, everyone with a one-person, two-person or three-person police station believes they are on the hit list for closure. We know that all such stations represents more than 22 police stations; nevertheless, every one of those communities with three or fewer officers in their stations believe their station could be on the list. That list is a live list. The minister has said that she will not act on those stations. She said on ABC radio that no station closures would occur, but later in the interview the minister got nervous about that statement. We know that once a Government develops a plan, it has a tendency not to go away.

Sadly, many of those communities are working hard to improve the relationship between their police officers and the superintendents in charge of the region to ensure the community is working with police, and that the policing role is made easier. There was a gap not that long ago between local government and police officers carrying out their functions. However, country local governments have now built houses for police officers and become involved in assisting funding for policing in this State. Does that happen in the metropolitan area? Can members name a local government body that has built a house in Perth for a police officer? It does not happen. What is the reward for those communities? Their police stations are closed.

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We will not get off the minister's back. We want these 22 police stations named; if there are 23 police stations, we want them named. Whatever the number is, we want the names of those communities, not because we can blow our bags and say that these are the 23 police stations. Frankly, we can do that with 50 or 60 communities now. Those communities should have the option to negotiate with the minister, the Commissioner of Police, the superintendent and their police officers about what they need to do to regain the confidence of this Government, because obviously they have lost the confidence of this Government.

This is a very important issue. I live in a town with a population of about 8 000, and another 5 000 people live in the surrounding area. If one arrest is made in the town of Northam, there is no policing for two or two and a half hours, because it takes the whole police presence off the streets in a town the size of Northam. If someone from Dowerin or Wyalkatchem - the member for Moore and I have a great passion for Wyalkatchem - rings the police, he will not get a police officer from Northam because the police there are fully locked into Northam. They cannot handle or control what is happening in that community.

About two weeks ago, the hotelier from one hotel locked the doors of his hotel to keep the patrons in because people on the street were threatening mayhem when they went outside the door. I thought, "What is so different about that?" That occasionally happens in hotels. Patrons have a little too much to drink and there is a problem. However, then I found out that the people waiting outside were eight to 16 years of age. They were not the drinking patrons, but they were drunk, had been taking drugs and were under age. Their greatest fun for the night was to confront the patrons coming out of the hotel. On that night, one person lost most of his teeth because he happened to be picked on when he walked out the door. From what I have been told by the people I have spoken to about the incident, it was for no other reason than that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. That person will have to live with that for the rest of his life. The police could not attend that incident, which was half a kilometre from the police station, because they were doing something else.

It is nonsense to say that people can be pulled out of a community and moved to another community to provide it with a service; it is just not true. Wherever the police are, they will be locked into that community because the size of the task will be beyond what the resource can cope with. The Labor Party does not understand that. The minister certainly does not understand that. This live plan for the closure of police stations shows that no compassion is felt by the Labor Party and the minister for the people in regional areas. If they felt any compassion at all, this plan would never have surfaced. It would never have seen the light of day. It must have gone through the minister's office to get the credibility that it has. What was coming was common knowledge in Pinjarra. It was in *The West Australian* and the *Sunday Times*.

Ms S.E. Walker: That is true; it was from her office.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: That is right. We all know that; I do not have to say it. The chief executive officers, the presidents and the councillors of those councils all know that, because it was driven by her office. We do not usually argue about the separation of powers between the Commissioner of Police and the minister. We often debate in this place the functions of the commissioner and those of the minister. It is often argued that the role of the commissioner is outside the role of the minister. In this case, it was driven by the minister.

We need to know where are the 22 police stations under threat so that the affected communities can plan for the future. As part of its platform, the Labor Party said that it would communicate with local government. Where is the communication with the 22 communities? Not one of the 22 communities has been consulted about what life would be like without a police station.

When the minister gets to her feet we need a categorical statement from her that no rural police station will close. She gave the assurance on ABC radio but we want it repeated in this House. We want to know what is the Government's position on the secret report. It is a disgrace that the report has got as far as it has without any community input whatsoever.

Mr B.J. Grylls: We also need to know where the money will come from if the Government is not going to close the police stations.

M.W. TRENORDEN: The money will come from somewhere. Police officers in the wheatbelt are performing the duties of community services people. The wheatbelt is so devoid of community services people that the police are forced to do it. It requires two police officers to escort a mental patient to Perth. The officers have to drive for hours and make sure that the patient is appropriately housed in Perth. That creates a total removal of police services from the community. That is not a role that police officers should be involved in. Cut after cut to community services forces police officers to do those things.

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Mr M.J. Birney: The Government could extend the contract to AIMS to allow it to transport juveniles and others in country areas.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It certainly should not be police officers, but that is the case because country areas are so devoid of community workers. There is no-one else to do it. It contributes to a reduction of police services.

The National Party has been concerned about the closures for some time. It wants to know which police stations are involved. It will keep on asking the minister because it is totally unreasonable for the minister not to supply the information. If she does not, every police station that has one, two or three officers will believe itself to be under threat of closure. How will the minister meet her \$2 million worth of cuts?

Under this proposal, the Gallop Government has again demonstrated clearly that it has no interest in retaining services in country areas. A good example is the Safer WA program. Every local government in Western Australia that I am aware of - the Leader of the Opposition and I have been on tour visiting councils - is highly concerned about the proposal for Safer WA. There is a crisis. Some regional communities are at extreme risk. One has only to visit Geraldton for a few moments to know what is happening in that community. The same applies to Mullewa, Meekatharra and - I hate to say it - Northam. There are many examples in which policing cannot meet the requirements. Not only that, it is considerably far from it. The member for Eyre held up some statistics. The statistics for breaking and entering in Northam are excellent. They are excellent because for about 10 years the police got involved with the community and the community advised police officers who was committing crimes. Unfortunately, violence is on the rise and the capacity of police to attend incidents is declining. There is great alarm at what is happening.

When the minister responds we want her to tell us that lives are more important than money. The minister has given a message in the past two months that money is more important than lives, services and families. I therefore want the minister to make the commitment that lives, services and families are more important than money. I do not dislike the minister as a person. She is one of the better ministers in this Government. Her Government won the election and she has every right to govern, and I wish her well. That does not mean though that I will not front her on these issues, and on this issue she has dropped the ball. It is not the Commissioner of Police or anyone else who has dropped the ball; the minister has dropped the ball and we will take her to task on this issue.

There are four outstanding issues for Safer WA. Until the review process has concluded, I will not jump in to say that Safer WA is dead. However, I am prepared to say that I am very concerned about it. If we are to fix up these communities, we must deal not only with policing but also with communities. Programs in those communities need to be implemented to allow people to interact, as the member for Eyre said; for example, programs that involve youth and people who have been unable to handle their lifestyle, and to give communities some strength. Those programs require resources, which is what Safer WA was doing.

The first issue is the clarification of the decision-making power and control of resources; the second clear issue is the full costing identification of adequate resourcing for the new scheme; the third issue is the clarification of the roles, responsibilities and boundaries of the scheme; and the fourth issue is whether the proposal will result in any transfer of police from the State to local government. Those issues remain unresolved. I am prepared to leave them until I see how the minister will measure them through the process of local government. I know that she knows that places such as Geraldton, and even Northam, should have the capacity to raise resources so that the community can act to try to heal itself. We can never totally win that argument, but a community needs the capacity to get in and act within itself for its own good.

Mr T.K. Waldron: That is needed in our small communities too.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes, right down to the smallest community. In country areas, taking kids to the beach or to cricket or football matches is an important factor because, in addition to giving them a good time, it provides opportunities for kids to mix in one location with responsible people and gives them role models. Those factors do work. The National Party therefore wants answers to those questions.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland - Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [6.22 pm]: The motion before the House this afternoon -

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I presume members opposite want a comprehensive answer from me in the time available. I am a little disappointed with the carry-on by the member for Warren-Blackwood.

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The motion before the House is nonsense. Debate on the motion has been about the recommendations of the Functional Review Taskforce. Those recommendations represent neither the Labor Party's position nor the Government's position. They are exactly what they are labelled - recommendations. It is up to the Government to decide whether to accept or reject those recommendations and whether they are in the interests of the community of Western Australia. I have said clearly - the Premier backed me up - that closing police stations as a cost-cutting measure is not in the interests of the community of Western Australia and we will not therefore adopt that recommendation.

Members opposite have engaged in a scurrilous campaign to strike fear into the hearts of country communities. It is very sad that those members have tried to increase their re-election chances -

Ms S.E. Walker: You have done that. I've listened to some of your speeches. Goodness me!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Does the member for Nedlands think it is okay to do that?

Ms S.E. Walker: You've done it. Don't be hypocritical. You are accusing us of something that isn't true, but you did that when you were in opposition.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Thank you, member for Nedlands, I will not put up with that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Acting Speaker, we have heard some good speeches this afternoon, particularly from the member for Eyre who made an excellent contribution, as did the member for Churchlands who made one of the most sensible contributions this afternoon. However, unfortunately, a number of things have been said that I reject.

I can understand why the Leader of the National Party might be fervent about protecting his constituency. However, to say that neither I nor the Government has any compassion for regional communities is just a nonsense, because nobody has been stronger than I have been in looking after those country communities. As I will explain in my comments, this Government has done more for those country communities than has any Government for a long time.

It has been suggested that the Government will close 22 stations as some kind of great cost-cutting measure. The Leader of the National Party's suggestion was that I had either developed this list or sent it to the Police Service. I advise the Leader of the National Party that either the Functional Review Taskforce or Treasury sent the recommendations to the Police Service. They were not sent from my office.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You have acknowledged that they will be sold and you don't know anything about it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have acknowledged quite openly that the Functional Review Taskforce has come up with a list of 22 stations, and the Government has rejected it.

Mr M.J. Birney: All 22?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite have called on me to guarantee that those 22 stations will not be closed and nor will any other police station in this State. Earlier they spoke about people who were hypocritical. I remind them that, when in government, they closed the Hilton and Brunswick Junction Police Stations and replaced them with nothing.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: Go on the record: will you close any police stations?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Government has already closed the Victoria Park and South Perth Police Stations, and they have been replaced with Kensington Police Station. Some members opposite were not in the Chamber when the member for Churchlands made her contribution. I assure her at this time that I will deal with the points she raised, because she made some good suggestions.

Members opposite seemed to have a great deal of interest in the Nedlands Police Station. I was also asked to guarantee that that was not on the Functional Review Taskforce's list of 22 stations. The Nedlands Police Station, along with others in the western suburbs, is on a separate list.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite can laugh. Those police stations are on their list - the list that the former member for Albany was examining. That is when that list was commenced. As the member for Churchlands quite sensibly said, we have a responsibility to look at all our police stations to see whether they adequately meet the needs of the community. She has taken a sensible approach to things. As she pointed out, some stations in her electorate and neighbouring electorates are not up to standard. This is a legacy that the current Government inherited. The member for Churchlands said that those stations had not been up to standard

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for about 10 years, and that although they had been under review, so far nothing had happened. I assure the member for Churchlands that I will look seriously at the proposition she put to me. In coming months, I expect to get a report from the Police Service on all the stations in the western suburbs. It might mean that there will be station closures. However, it would also mean that replacement arrangements would need to be made so that the community would be properly policed.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Acting Speaker, I am addressing my comments to the Chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Yes. Members, the minister has the call.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have a lot of material that I want to get through and put on record.

Many speakers have said that the Government is after some petty cost cutting. In fact, the member for Kalgoorlie started his speech by saying that the Government needed to cut costs because the series of expensive promises that the Labor Party made as part of its election platform must be met somehow. I must ask the member for Kalgoorlie which one of those promises would he cut? Are there some with which he disagrees? He said that this Government made lavish promises that we must now fund. What are these lavish promises?

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Let us consider what has happened to the police budget. We announced a boost to the police budget of \$36 million. That brought the total police budget to \$530 million for the current financial year. The increase in the police budget has left the community with a better equipped and more improved Police Service.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The noise in the House and the heckling opposite is making it nearly impossible for me to be heard.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): I am also finding it hard to hear the minister with the noise being made by the fan. Therefore, I will not hesitate to call members to order if need be.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The additional \$36 million in the current year's police budget takes the total increase over the past two years to \$70 million. A \$3.5 million Kensington police station has been provided for as part of that funding, which will create bigger and better facilities and enable local detectives to be housed in the Kensington police station instead of the Cannington district office. I am confident that that will have a positive impact on the people who were previously serviced by the Victoria Park and South Perth stations.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: At least the member for Churchlands is interested in hearing my comments, as are members on this side of the House. I am sure it is hard for members to hear me, despite the fact that I am talking as loudly as possible.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member being the case in point.

That is a clear demonstration of good public policy -

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have had some really inane interjections from the member for Kalgoorlie. He just does not want to give me the opportunity to set the record straight.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Kalgoorlie!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Kalgoorlie should sit and listen. Perhaps he might learn something and not move such inadequate motions in the future.

Early next year construction will begin on a \$9 million Albany police station as part of a new \$20 million police and justice complex.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the member for Kalgoorlie to order for the first time.

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: In Opposition -

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members for Warren Blackwood and Albany!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The former member for South West - Hon Bob Thomas - and I raised questions with the former Government and with the former member for Albany, the then Minister for Police, about when the Government would make progress on a new police station in Albany. I visited the station, which was in a dire condition and was an absolutely abysmal place in which to expect police officers to work.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The members opposite are interjecting with untrue comments that are also pathetic and annoying. The fact of the matter is that as part of this Government's election campaign commitment, the member for Albany came out strongly in support of a new police station. It is largely because of his lobbying together with my clear impression of the absolute need for a new station -

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Warren-Blackwood!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Later this year work will also begin on a \$3.5 million Newman police station. Following that, work will commence on a new station in Wanneroo. Next year we expect to begin work on a \$3.5 million station at Laverton. A large amount of expenditure is planned for the area of policing. I do not know whether those are the lavish promises that the member for Kalgoorlie was talking about, but I think it is money that is really needed for those purposes. Our Government is also injecting more than \$25 million into building a new forensic facility at the Midland operations support centre, construction of which is due to begin in July-August. The Government will also commit \$11 million towards implementing occupational health and safety legislation. That is something that the former Government stalled on for the whole of its eight years in office. This Government reopened the Hilton Police Station in 2001, which was closed by the former Liberal Government in 1998. This is a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to ensure that the Police Service can deliver its services efficiently and effectively across the State.

We also announced a \$2.3 million plan to replace police revolvers with new, more effective pistols. Members of the previous Government were absolute masters at paying lip-service to operational police officers, but they did not provide those officers with the resources that they needed to do their job, nor did they provide them with basic occupational health and safety measures. Further, the previous Government left police officers in a situation in which they used about six different models of guns. Officers needed to be continually retrained.

Mr M.G. House interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Member for Stirling!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Under the previous Government's budget, not only was there to be no new police station in Albany, but also the Police Service was to continue using guns that were more than 20 years old. How responsible was that?

This Government has met its commitment on police numbers. It has already engaged the first 100 of the 150 new police officers it has promised, and the first 10 of the 40 new Aboriginal police liaison officers. A further 10 APLOs will be engaged in the near future. The Government has deployed 19 APLOs to regional centres. That is a \$5 million program to bring 40 extra officers into the system. The authorised strength of the Police Service on 31 January 2001 was 4 812. On 31 January this year it was 4 921. That figure is up by 109. The head count on the ground on 31 January 2001 was 4 870 and on 31 January 2003 it was 4 962, which is an increase of 92. I seriously do not know how the member for Kalgoorlie did his arithmetic. He tells me that he was quite good at maths at school. I actually taught maths in schools, so perhaps I could give him some more tips.

The Government has enhanced the effectiveness of the Police Service in the past two years. We have done a number of things. People would be aware that the Government has opened the new police academy at Joondalup. That has certainly modernised our training procedures.

Mr J.H.D. Day: You are not claiming credit for that as well!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Government has also ensured what the member for Darling Range and the former member for Albany did not ensure; that is, that all our officers will be up-to-date with their essential training.

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When in opposition, I asked questions on a number of occasions on how up-to-date our officers were in their competency with guns. We found out that rather than officers being retrained and their competency tested every six months, it had blown out to every couple of years. That is a very serious community safety matter.

This Government has also upgraded the canine section of the Police Service as part of its high profile crime-fighting program. Not only has the Government upgraded the canine section, but also it has made sure that this section has been deployed to regional centres. We have provided more dogs for patrols and to detect drugs. The canine section plays a key role in fighting crime in the community, not only through its involvement in specific drug and rescue operations but also by conducting routine patrols, which apparently has proven to be an effective crime deterrent.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Minister, just to bring you up to date on events while you have been busy, one of your dogs, back from a tumour operation this afternoon, was involved in catching an escaped convict. On his first day back on the job, one of the canines got his man.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is fantastic. I have been to visit the canine section, which is based at the old Maylands police academy. Some very good information is available about the benefits of the canine members of our Police Service. One example I saw was a demonstration in which some drugs were planted in a house on the former police academy site. It may have taken officers between 10 and 20 man-hours to locate those drugs. I was amazed how quickly a dog was able to discover the drugs. They can prove very valuable.

I do not know if this is another of the lavish promises that the member for Kalgoorlie is talking about, but the Government has actually delivered on country incentives for police officers by allocating \$8 million to country police officers, including extending the 44-hour week to Kalgoorlie. The stations at which officers receive the \$3 000 per annum incentive include Carnamah, Leinster, Perenjori, Coolgardie, Leonora, Ravensthorpe, Cue, Menzies, Southern Cross, Eucla, Mingenew, Three Springs, Gascoyne Junction, Morawa, Wiluna, Kalgoorlie, Mt Magnet, Yalgoo, Kambalda, Mullewa, Laverton and Norseman. Further to that, an additional \$1 500 per annum has been allocated for officers based at Bencubbin, Gnowangerup, Narrogin, Beverley, Goomalling, New Norcia, Boddington, Katanning, Northampton, Boyup Brook, Kellerberrin, Ongerup, Bridgetown, Kojonup, Pemberton, Brookton, Kondinin, Pingelly, Bruce Rock, Koorda, Quairading, Carnarvon, Kulin, Tambellup, Corrigin, Lake Grace, Trayning, Cranbrook, Manjimup, Wagin, Cunderdin, Meekatharra, Waroona, Dalwallinu, Merredin, Wickepin, Donnybrook, Moora, Williams, Dowerin, Mt Barker, Wongan Hills, Dumbleyung, Mukinbudin, Wyalkatchem, Dwellingup, Nannup, Yarloop, Geraldton and Narembeen. It cannot be said that the Government is not taking regional Western Australia seriously, because officers throughout this State asked the previous Government for those quite appropriate incentives year after year, and were always denied. The Labor Party made an election commitment to make those country postings more attractive for police officers, and the Government has delivered on that promise. In fact, the member for Eyre has already highlighted the fact that the situation in Kalgoorlie is now a complete reversal of that which existed before the election. Before the election Kalgoorlie was consistently eight to 10 officers down. On a couple of occasions when I inquired, the district was up to 13 officers below strength. Now, to the best of my knowledge, Kalgoorlie operates either at or very close to its authorised strength most of the time.

While the Opposition is accusing the Government of wanting to close 22 police stations - which I have said we do not wish to do - apart from the stations I have nominated at Albany, Newman and Wanneroo, the Government has committed to a \$75 million package in response to the Gordon inquiry.

Point of Order

Mr P.D. OMODEI: We have been sitting here for about half an hour listening to the minister read her notes consistently. She should really know her portfolio off by heart. It is pretty poor form.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have read out a list of stations, and I am sorry I did not actually learn off by heart all the stations that got the \$3 000 incentive and all those that got the \$1 500 incentive.

Let us talk about some station openings. As part of the \$75 million commitment in response to the Gordon inquiry, the Government has said that it will build nine new multifunction police stations throughout regional Western Australia. These stations will also employ eight specialist domestic violence police officers. New stations are to be constructed at Warburton, Docker River, Bidyadanga, Kalumburu, Balgo Hills, Dampier Peninsula, Gialong, Warmun and Kintor. That is what will definitely happen. What we have heard from those opposite is speculation about something that will not happen. Although those opposite have talked about the

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potential of cuts to the police budget, all there has been on record is massive increases to the police budget and a massive improvement in policing.

This Government has put in place some magnificent legislative reforms for police officers. As I have already mentioned, the Government has put in place occupational health and safety reforms. The new legislation will entitle police officers to information, supervision and instruction to enable them to carry out their work safely. It will provide them with protective clothing and equipment. As all other workers can, they will be able to elect safety and health representatives and establish committees.

Although the Government put legislation through this House in its first year of office, unfortunately ours was about the last State in Australia to do so because of the former Government's sitting on its hands. We put through DNA legislative reforms which will be a significant step forward for policing. As everyone in this place knows, the level of repeat offending is a serious problem. A significant means of addressing it was to put in place that DNA legislation. The Government has committed \$22 million to providing infrastructure for this revolutionary crime-fighting tool. I put on record in this House that the DNA legislation and the tool that it has now given us has already led to the arrest of 40 offenders. That is very significant.

One of the things we do know is that when a suspect or a charged person is presented with DNA evidence, the experience worldwide has been he or she is far more likely to plead guilty and not to challenge a charge in court. Members should think about the massive saving in police resources that this will bring about. We will no longer have so many police officers tied up trying to prove a case when somebody is saying that he is not guilty -

Ms S.E. Walker: In my experience that is not true.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Perhaps the member should go back to England, because when I visited England that was the advice I was given.

Ms S.E. Walker: I do not know who wrote your notes but they had better do it again.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: One of the reports that the member for Nedlands might be able to take note of is the upper House committee's report into DNA.

Ms S.E. Walker: I am talking about my experience.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is pretty limited.

Let us look at what has happened with organised crime legislation. We have brought in a raft of organised crime measures.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Why do you not talk to the motion before the House, which is what you are not doing?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Why does the member not look at the motion before the House?

Point of Order

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I request in accordance with Standing Order No 157 that the minister's notes be tabled. The minister clearly indicated previously that she is not reading from speech notes, so we can only deduce that they are some form of official briefing note.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am reading from my personal notes. This is not an official document.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Order! There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.F. Johnson: Talk to the motion.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This page of my notes contains the wording of the motion. Members opposite are interjecting with some really inane comments. They are asking me to address my comments to the motion. I will read the last two lines of the motion -

And further, that this House recognises the Labor Party's inability to meet community expectations of public safety.

I believe it is beholden to me to detail how the Government is meeting community expectations on community safety, and that is exactly what I am doing. Members opposite might not like to hear about what a good job the Government has been doing, but it has been doing an excellent job. The Government has put through more legislation and spent more money on the area of law and order than the Government of members opposite would

Mr Matt Birney; Deputy Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Bowler; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Peter Watson

ever have dreamed about. We are talking about community expectations and public safety. One of the matters I always raised when in opposition and introducing a law and order or policing debate was the crime statistics. They were always good fodder when I sat opposite, because the crime rates continually increased during the coalition's term of government. I suspect the reason the Opposition did not raise the crime statistics today is that they show a very positive trend. Members opposite will not want to know about them. However, they have moved this motion and they want to know how we are meeting community expectations, so I will detail the crime statistics for them. When the 2002 December quarter - the last completed quarter - is compared with the 2001 December quarter, we find that the number of reported offences decreased by 1.9 per cent and clearance rates for the December quarter improved by 1.1 per cent. The number of assaults was down by half a per cent and aggravated robbery by 2.8 per cent. The clearance rate for aggravated robbery improved by 10 per cent.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: He does not want to hear it. In the last quarter, motor vehicle theft decreased by 11.7 per cent, offences for receiving stolen goods decreased by 36.4 per cent and the clearance rate for the offence of receiving stolen goods increased by 12.8 per cent. That is an improvement of 12.8 per cent. Graffiti damage decreased by 47.5 per cent and possession of illegal drugs decreased by 4.9 per cent. The clearance rate for possession of illegal drugs increased by five per cent.

Mr P.D. Omodei: I do not believe you.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I suggest the member look at the Police Service's web site, because all the statistics are posted there. I have said that I thought the comments of the member for Eyre were very good. The Police Service is doing particularly well in Kalgoorlie since we increased staffing to its proper level.

Mr P.D. Omodei: It was the member for Kalgoorlie's achievement.

Mr M.J. Birney: I have rounded up all the crims!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I can tell the member for Kalgoorlie that the crime statistics for Kalgoorlie are the best they have been in three years. In January 2003, burglaries in Kalgoorlie were down by nearly 60 per cent compared with January 2002. Car theft was down by more than 30 per cent, and assaults were down by almost 45 per cent.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite have chosen not to listen. I said at the outset that the recommendations of the Functional Review Taskforce are just that - recommendations. They are not decisions by government. The recommendations were certainly not anything that emanated from my office. They came from the Functional Review Taskforce and have no greater status than that.

Mr M.J. Birney: What about the AIMS contract?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I can only reiterate that no decision has been made about the Australian Integration Management Services Pty Ltd contract. That, along with a range of other matters, needs to be considered as part of the budget process. We have heard some interesting things from the member for Kalgoorlie. He said that the Labor Government had set up a razor gang, the expenditure review committee. He said that it was our creation and that Dr Gallop had announced it in June one year. The member for Kingsley then stood - she was not the Chamber when the member for Kalgoorlie made his comment - and said that she knew how the ERC operated when she appeared before it. One member said that we set up the ERC and that it was some special Labor Party razor gang; yet, the member for Kingsley said that she had appeared before the ERC. Unfortunately, the new member does not seem to know how things operated under the coalition Government.

There is no more glaring demonstration of the inability to meet community expectations on public safety than the inability of members opposite to deal with corruption in the Police Service. We have set about restoring the integrity of police officers in this State.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is interesting, because members can reflect on the various -

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I can hear the noise of a hyena, but I can hardly hear myself speak.

Mr Matt Birney; Deputy Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Hyde; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Bowler; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Peter Watson

Recently, a member opposite said that for the past four years he had not accepted the idea of holding a royal commission into the Police Service because he thought it was not necessary. It can only be presumed that he thought that the Anti-Corruption Commission was doing a really good job.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have read *Hansard* and know that the member for Darling Range is on record as saying that the former Government was under pressure -

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): I name the member for Nedlands for the first time.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Although the member for Darling Range was not the Minister for Police - indeed, he was not a minister in the first four years of the Court Government - he made the point that from day one the then Premier and his Government had been under pressure to set up a royal commission into the Police Service, which it failed to do for the eight years it was in government. It set up the ACC to fail, which was confirmed by Terry O'Connor in today's newspaper. The Government swept police corruption under the carpet; it did not want to know about any police corruption that was occurring. Even when -

Ms S.E. Walker: Do you agree to the Attorney General's passing the affidavit to his in-law, the Minister for Health?

The ACTING SPEAKER: I remind the member for Nedlands that she has already been named once.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Even when this Government announced that it would proceed with a royal commission, members opposite opposed it. What can be more important than the integrity of the police officers of this State? While he is here, I remind the Leader of the Opposition that with regard to holding a royal commission, on 19 April 2002 he said to Liam Bartlett -

No, and I'm not particularly in favour of it today Liam.

He further stated -

To spend 15 or maybe up to \$30million on a royal commission may not result in any significant net gain in terms of law and order in this state. I would have thought there were higher priorities in dealing with crime issues in Western Australia.

I put it to this House that there is no issue in law and order that is more serious than the community being able to have confidence in the integrity of its Police Service, yet members opposite wanted to sweep that under the carpet.

Ms S.E. Walker: And you will sweep the Lewandowski affidavit under the carpet.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: On 21 May 2001, he said he believed that Dr Gallop should drop the proposal to conduct a royal commission into the Police Service. On 11 December 2001 on 720 ABC Perth News, the newsreader said -

The Opposition leader, Colin Barnett, says the royal commission will be a waste of time and money.

Mr Barnett said -

I have a great concern about setting up a wide-ranging, expensive public process of a royal commission that will not be supportive of our police service in this state.

I must ask him whether he wanted to protect people. Did he not want allegations of assault and theft, and a range of other serious allegations, to be investigated?

Ms S.E. Walker: What about Peter Mickelberg and his assault?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We are dealing with a very serious matter, member for Nedlands. This matter is about the credibility of her leader and members sitting opposite who have said, and it is recorded in *Hansard*, that they do not support a royal commission into the Police Service in this State. Talk about falling for the two-card trick. Not only did they in government deny the people of Western Australia a proper inquiry into the Police Service in

Extract from *Hansard*
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Western Australia by setting up a royal commission at that time that would have been more approximate to when the alleged corruption occurred, but also now in opposition they criticise this Government for fulfilling one of its election promises. They criticise us for trying for the first time in the history of this State to put in place some proper mechanisms, which we announced yesterday, to deal with allegations of corruption in this State and to once and for all examine a range of issues.

For the past decade all kinds of allegations of police corruption have been made, none of which members opposite ever investigated properly. The money the previous Government spent on the ACC was largely wasted because, in Terry O'Connor's words, it was set up to fail. Members opposite have never been serious about law and order; their record is appalling. By contrast, our record of legislation and funding is excellent.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (18)

Mr C.J. Barnett	Mrs C.L. Edwardes	Mr B.K. Masters	Ms S.E. Walker
Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan	Mr J.P.D. Edwards	Mr P.D. Omodei	Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr M.J. Birney	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr R.N. Sweetman	Mr W.J. McNee (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr M.F. Board	Ms K. Hodson-Thomas	Mr M.W. Trenorden	
Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr T.K. Waldron	

Noes (27)

Mr P.W. Andrews	Mr J.N. Hyde	Ms S.M. McHale	Mr E.S. Ripper
Mr J.J.M. Bowler	Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr A.D. McRae	Mrs M.H. Roberts
Dr E. Constable	Mr R.C. Kucera	Mr N.R. Marlborough	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr J.B. D'Orazio	Mr F.M. Logan	Mrs C.A. Martin	Mr P.B. Watson
Dr J.M. Edwards	Ms A.J. MacTiernan	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mrs D.J. Guise	Mr J.A. McGinty	Mr A.P. O'Gorman	Ms M.M. Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr S.R. Hill	Mr M. McGowan	Mr J.R. Quigley	

Pairs

Mr R.A. Ainsworth	Dr G.I. Gallop
Mr J.L. Bradshaw	Mr C.M. Brown
Mr A.D. Marshall	Mr A.J. Carpenter

Independent Pairs

Mr L. Graham
Mr P.G. Pandal

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 7.02 pm
