

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 24 May.

MR JOHNSON (Hillarys) [2.46 pm]: When this debate was adjourned last week, I was in the middle of thanking various people who had worked with me during the past year or so when I was a minister of the Crown. Up to that point, I had mentioned the people from the Department of Contract and Management Services and from the State Supply Commission, who did an excellent job.

Today I also thank another group of people who are government employees - namely, those in the Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, the Acting Executive Director of which is Brenda Robbins. They did an excellent job. Brenda Robbins was a dedicated individual who helped me tremendously in that part of my responsibilities.

We have a great number of multicultural groups here in Western Australia, and I have often said that Western Australia is probably the multicultural capital of the world because of such a great number of people from so many different countries and backgrounds, with diverse cultures and religions. I thank all those multicultural groups that welcomed me during my term as a minister and shared with me their culture, their traditions and, I hasten to add, their cuisine. I thank them for their tremendous amount of input into life here in Western Australia. I have also said many times that I believe ours is the finest example of how a multicultural society should live, work and play, because in Western Australia we have a very comfortable way of life and we share that with many different people from many different countries.

Why do so many people come to Western Australia and why is this State so popular? It is not just because of our wonderful lifestyle and our tremendous beaches; it is because we have a wonderful, mixed multicultural body of people who make up our population. I believe we are the least racist country in the world; we accept people from whence they come and enjoy all they can bring to Western Australia.

I wish to say a few words about something that has happened recently. It is a pity the Premier is not in the Chamber, because I missed out on an extra question during question time when I was hoping to ask him whether it was his new policy to allow the small business people of Western Australia access to his ministers only if they paid \$1 000 to the Labor Party. A week or so ago I read with great interest, and some astonishment, that the Labor Party was charging small business people \$1 000 a head if they wanted to meet the ministers. If, in the future, this is to be the only way that small business people can meet the ministers, it is a pretty poor state of affairs. It reflects how a Labor Government behaved in the 1980s and early 1990s, when we know that unless people went to the then Government with a bagful of money, they did not receive any assistance. This takes me back to the times when one of the Burke brothers was going around touting for donations - millions of dollars - from larger businesses -

Mr Kobelke: Is the Liberal Party going to give back the thousands of dollars it received from HIH Insurance?

Mr JOHNSON: I am talking about the \$13 million that the Labor Party had stashed away - mainly in cash - in what was called the leader's account.

Mr Kobelke: Are you going to give it back?

Mr JOHNSON: That is what I am talking about. The member should give back the \$13 million and then we will talk about the other things. As I said, it is a pretty poor state of affairs when the only way people in small business can speak to ministers is if they pay \$1 000 a head. I can accept that during an election campaign it is fair game for political parties to charge a large amount per person for meetings, particularly if people such as ministers are attending, but what can small business people in Perth do if, after the Government has been elected, it charges them \$1 000 a head to meet the ministers? If those people want to get any government business in future, of course they will come along and pay \$1 000; if they do not pay the money, they will probably be black-listed on the Government's little whiteboard: "This business gave us \$1 000 so, yes, we will give it some business."

Mr Kobelke: That may be the way you operate.

Mr JOHNSON: It is the way the member operates.

Amendment to Motion

Mr JOHNSON: I move -

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

That the following words be added to the motion -

but regrets to inform Your Excellency that while in opposition, the State Government gained considerable support on the back of a hollow promise to assist investors caught up in failures within the finance broking industry to recover funds - a promise the Government is now refusing to honour

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [2.58 pm]: The finance brokers issue was a major issue during the term of the last Parliament, and I suggest it will continue to be a major issue for some time to come. The reality is that the earliest cases relating to the finance broking scandal can be traced back prior to the last coalition Government. Nevertheless, the extent of the problem emerged during the term of that Government, and it is fair to say that up to \$200 million of investors' money has either been lost or is at risk, with probably 7 000 people adversely affected. During the term of the previous Government a number of measures were taken, including the funding of liquidators as supervisors to the extent of some \$1.5 million; establishing the Gunning inquiry, which took 171 submissions, heard 87 witnesses and made 52 recommendations; and then establishing the Gunning committee implementation panel, to act upon the recommendations of that inquiry.

In addition, the previous Government ensured that the police were properly resourced - through the fraud squad - to investigate and subsequently take prosecutions. In all, as of June last year - almost 12 months ago - during the time of the previous Government, some 221 charges had been laid. I readily acknowledge that many investors regarded the previous Government as failing them in some way or other. I recognise that perhaps that Government was slow to become aware of the scale of the problem. I do not think anyone at any stage, in the media or anywhere else, anticipated how far-reaching and extensive the situation was or how numerous were the examples of failure and the investors involved.

The indications are that the events in Western Australia are more than likely to occur in other States of Australia; indeed, the issue has occurred here to a great extent but it will not be confined to Western Australia.

We accept that it was a major issue. We acknowledge the reality that the Labor Party made much of it during the past couple of years and certainly campaigned heavily on it during the election campaign. Without doubt, it is one of the significant factors that caused many people who might otherwise have voted Liberal to vote for minor parties, the Labor Party or whoever. We did not anticipate how large the issue was, and we acknowledge that we should be criticised for being slow to act. However, everything we did was proper and honourable. We acted in the best interest of those who had been adversely affected. We did not go down the path of previous Labor Governments by simply going into a bailout situation. We did not follow the mistakes made with the Teachers Credit Society, the Swan Building Society or Rothwells when the Government simply bailed out investors. The Labor Party wanted a bailout. It thought, understandably from its perspective, that the precedent of the 1980s under Labor was that the Government would simply pick up the losses. We made it very clear in government that we were not about to do that. People did not like that and voted accordingly, but it was the correct thing for the Government of the day to do.

What about the Labor Party? What the Labor Party said before, during and after the election campaign, needs to be recorded in this Parliament. There were plenty of examples in this Parliament over the past two years or so, but I will go back to 21 December 1999 - quite some time ago. The member for Fremantle, now the Attorney General, moved a motion on a matter of public interest. The Labor Party moved the motion, presumably with the support of its full Caucus at the time because it would have been considered the matter before they came into this Parliament. The motion was -

The House calls upon the Government to provide adequate funding to ensure that the mainly elderly self funded retirees who are losing their life savings through the operation of finance brokers and the Ministry are assisted in recovering their funds.

They therefore wanted funding approved to assist those people. At the time of the election my briefing notes indicate that they released a policy paper under the title "Restoring Consumer Confidence" which indicates that Labor is committed to action and that in government it will assist the victims of the finance brokers scandal to recover their funds wherever possible.

My briefing notes indicate that under the heading of "Legal Assistance" it reads -

... the State will fund -

Not "may" and not "in appropriate cases" but -

... the State will fund investors' legal actions in appropriate cases -

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Dr Gallop: "In appropriate cases" - go on!

Mr BARNETT: I will come back to it. It continues -

- to recover losses from finance brokers, company directors, valuers, banks, auditors, accountants, lawyers or anyone else who is responsible . . .

Government members laugh at "appropriate cases"; indeed, during question time the Premier implied "in cases of merit". He got it wrong because the document did not read "in cases of merit"; it read "in appropriate cases". The document reads "anyone else who is responsible for the losses", so there is no limit and no caveat on that. It is quite clear. If there was any duplicity, it was quite clear in the eyes of those investors who were affected that a Labor Government would fund the lot. It continues -

If, however, the State is held responsible, appropriate action will be taken to both compensate investors and pursue recovery of any costs from wrong doers.

That is a pretty clear document. It then comes out with a five-point plan. Is that not a classic of the now Premier? He always has a five or a two-point plan, decision zones or whatever.

Several members interjected.

Mr BARNETT: How quickly those opposite laugh at those who have lost their money.

Dr Gallop: We are not laughing at them.

Mr BARNETT: They are laughing at them all the time, and how quickly they laugh.

Let us look at the Labor Party's five-point plan. Point 1 is "Ascertain the Facts". That is what we are doing here. It reads -

"To the extent they are not known, a judicial inquiry will be established to ascertain what went wrong in the finance broking industry."

2. Legal Assistance:

"For appropriate cases, the State will fund legal actions in appropriate cases to recover losses from finance brokers, company directors, valuers, banks, auditors, accountants, lawyers and anyone else who is responsible for the losses."

3. Full disclosure:

"All government knowledge about the finance broking industry, including legal opinions and results of audits will be open to the public."

4. Facilitate Court Action to Resolve Liability:

"Currently legal action is expensive and bogged down, serving nobody's interests. A Labor Minister of Fair Trading will do everything possible to bring the legal issues to an early resolution."

5. Pay Up Where Liability is Established":

"The combination of openness and legal assistance should help in the early resolution of questions of liability. If, however, the State is held responsible, appropriate action will be taken to both compensate investors and pursue recovery of any costs from wrong doers."

That is the policy of the Labor Party according to my notes. It is clear. The Labor Party was saying to people - through its policy documents, motions in this House prior to the election and statements by individual campaigners - that it would help fund legal action and, if the State were liable, it would pay up when in government. That is the message the Labor Party was giving out consistently.

Mr Hyde interjected.

Mr BARNETT: Well, the member should deny it. He should deny it to his elderly constituents. He should tell them that he was not genuine about funding action, because the Labor Party policy document made it clear that it would fund action by these poor elderly people who had lost their life savings. That is what members opposite campaigned on. There is no doubt about it. It is in their documents. They repeated it in this Parliament, and they won votes on it. That is the point: they won votes on it. They knew exactly what they were doing; they were courting the votes of people under stress and facing financial hardship and they took their votes, but now

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they are reneging on them. Now they are deserting them. Now they are doing what Labor Governments traditionally do; that is, renege when they get into government.

In March 2001 - post election - the Minister for Consumer Affairs was quoted in *The West Australian* as saying -

We would need to look at the merits of the case but if there was an overwhelming case showing negligence on behalf of the board we will try to settle it out of court.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs is saying that if the Government is wrong or the minister is proved to be deficient in some way, it will settle out of court. Again, another level of commitment was given - another implied resolution for the restoration of funds for people who have lost money. A letter from Denise Brailey of the Real Estate Consumer Association was quoted in an article in *The Australian* on 28 May, which I am sure many members have read. In it she expresses it very eloquently when she says -

The undeniable fact is that in a written policy document, the ALP promised victims that if it won office, legal assistance would be provided to determine whether the state was liable to provide compensation.

She goes on -

Those promises were repeated by Mr McGinty at five meetings with victims.

That commitment was made by the Attorney General not once, twice, three times or four times, but five times. Denise Brailey goes on -

I attended two of these meetings and heard what he said.

It is clear. The Labor Party had a document and it argues now that its meaning was not clear, but it went out during and after the election campaign and made similar commitments. Indeed, an investor who attended one of those meetings took notes. That meeting was held in September 2000 at the Eaton Bowling Club and was attended by the Attorney General. One of the investors took notes and his record shows that the member for Fremantle - the now Attorney General - said that the Labor Party will, however, make available as much money as necessary for legal fees and that if at a later date the Government of the day is found to have been negligent, all investors will be reimbursed for their losses.

I will read that again because I would hate to mislead constituents, many of whom are elderly people who may have lost money. An elderly investor who had lost his money took meticulous notes of what the Attorney General said. I repeat his record that the Attorney General said that the Government will make available as much money as necessary for legal fees and that if at a later date the Government of the day is found to have been negligent, all investors would be reimbursed for their loss. That is what the Attorney General said. He said it in Parliament. He had five meetings. The Minister for Consumer Affairs said it and the Attorney General said it on numerous occasions. People recorded what he said, but now he has come in here and denied it. Why is the Government reneging?

Mr Kobelke: On what?

Mr BARNETT: Concentrate, pal! A number of Government members are reneging on a clear commitment that they gave to elderly people in this State.

Mr Kobelke: Those five points were our commitment.

Mr BARNETT: No. It has been recorded five times that the Attorney General said this at public meetings. The Minister for Consumer Affairs laughs easily at people's misfortune.

Mr Kobelke: That was your path, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BARNETT: The elderly people do not see it that way.

Mr Kobelke: No. They are in that position because of your previous Government.

Mr BARNETT: At a meeting last Friday of the real estate organisation headed by Denise Brailey, an investor quoted the comment the Attorney General made at the previous meeting. What was the Attorney General's response to the investor? He said, "I didn't mean it." Everyone knows that now. Everyone knows that the Labor Party did not mean what it said.

Mr McGinty: That wasn't my response. You just made it up.

Mr BARNETT: No, I did not. That was the quote I was given. The Attorney General's response was, "I didn't mean it."

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Mr McGinty: That is wrong.

Mr BARNETT: The Attorney General can respond and correct that if he wishes. We continue on in Government -

Mr Hyde: We do, you don't!

Mr BARNETT: That is correct. Statements have been made about the proposed royal commission into the finance broking industry. However, it has suddenly been found that the question of State liability no longer seems to be part of that issue. An article in *The West Australian* on 24 May 2001 said of the Attorney General, Jim McGinty, that -

He has refused to let the brokers royal commission consider whether the State Government has any responsibility for the scandal.

Mr McGinty had already announced that compensation from the State would not be provided for victims unless they could prove in court that the State was legally liable for their losses.

There are two points. The first is that the royal commission cannot now look at state liability. Yet, the Attorney General made all sorts of comments and promises to investors that if the State were found liable, those people would be compensated. The five-point plan also spoke of speeding up the legal process. However, the Attorney General has said that were it a question of state liability, investors should not go to the royal commission but to the courts, where they can battle it out for themselves. That is what the Attorney General is now saying to those elderly people. He has changed what he implied would happen in the royal commission. State liability has been limited. He has told investors that they cannot raise with the royal commission state liability issues; they must fight them through the courts. These elderly people cannot fight them through the courts. Most have lost their life savings. They do not have the time or the resources to fight them through the courts.

Dr Gallop: What is your position?

Mr BARNETT: You can listen to me. I will speak later.

In a letter of May 2001 to lawyer Doug Solomon, the Attorney General said -

It is not implicit in the five-point plan that the Government would provide funding to enable determination of the issue of whether or not the State is liable for any investor losses.

Talk about sitting on the fence, and trying to worm out and weasel around the problem! It is a disgraceful performance.

Dr Gallop: What is your position?

Mr BARNETT: Just be quiet! I will get to it.

It was reported in *The West Australian* that compensation from the State would not be provided unless investors could prove state liability in a court. At the rally last Friday, Denise Brailey said this about the Attorney General -

It now appears his intentions were to deceive the retirees in exchange for their vote. He has betrayed not only the retirees but as Attorney-General he has betrayed all those who live in this State. As Minister for Justice he has demonstrated his incapability of dispensing justice.

They are onto the Attorney General. Those people realise that he misled them. They realise that the Attorney General never intended to deliver on his promise. He simply took their vote and left them high and dry. Liam Bartlett, in an article he wrote in the *Sunday Times*, said about the Labor Government -

They were happy to exploit disadvantaged small investors to get to power and, now there, they should deliver.

It should deliver. It made a promise. What the Government said was clear to those thousands of investors, but it is now failing to deliver. I recognise that this is a large and difficult issue. It is not an issue of government making. I accept the charge that might well be levelled that in government we were slow to recognise its scale, complexity and enormity. I recognise and acknowledge that.

Dr Gallop: You sneered at them.

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Mr BARNETT: Some may have judged us to be slow, but we did what we said we would do. We were honest and fair. We did not make false promises. We never implied that we would fund all the legal action or that we would bail out the investors. We never said that. We never misled those people.

However, the Australian Labor Party promised to fund cases to recover the money. It promised to fund state liability and to recompense people. It is reneging on that pledge. Some 7 000 elderly investors in this State have lost up to \$200 million. I acknowledge that those elderly investors may well think that the coalition Government in some way failed them. However, it never misled or took advantage of the investors like the Labor Party did.

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Premier) [3.11 pm] We find it interesting that the Opposition, of all the political parties in Western Australia, has raised this issue. This was a major scandal in Western Australia, which we now believe will cost up to \$150 million. Many elderly Western Australian citizens invested with people they believed they could trust and were let down. It is our view that they were also let down by the previous Government. We do not resile from that statement. As far back as 1998, we came into the Parliament and warned the previous Government that measures should be taken to prevent an impending crisis. The Government ignored us.

The issue is how that crisis can be resolved. The Labor Government put forward a coherent plan of action to assist the investors who have been let down by the system. It is now claimed that the Government is not delivering on those promises. How does one assess this issue? We know the truth of this matter, and we have no hesitation in putting forward our side of the argument. The Attorney General fronted the public meeting on this matter in Redcliffe last week to outline the Government's position. I defend the Government's position by asking why, if it promised what the Opposition and other people are claiming it promised, there was no debate during the election campaign about the potential liability for the State? Further, if the Government promised what the Opposition and others claim, why was there no debate about the potential personal and collective liability of the former coalition Cabinet? If the Government promised what the Opposition claims it promised, those two matters would have been a point of debate during the election campaign. I illustrate it in a more directed way: the Leader of the Opposition said during his speech that the coalition Government would not contemplate a Teachers Credit Society-type bailout. Is that true?

Mr Barnett: That is correct.

Dr GALLOP: The Liberal Government's position was that it would not enter into a Teachers Credit Society-type bailout of this situation.

Mr Barnett: We told people that.

Dr GALLOP: In that case, if we had promised such a thing, why was it not a matter of debate during the election campaign? If the Liberal Party view about that matter was so strong, and if it believed the matter reflected negatively on the Labor Party, why did it not make it a key debating point during the election campaign?

The truth is that it was not our position and it was never our position, and the Attorney General explained that clearly. I repeat: if that were our position, what would we have said in the election campaign we must examine? We would have said that we would examine the legal liability of the previous Government for those people's losses. We would have to have an inquiry into the various regulatory authorities. However, the Government is not the only regulatory authority; the Cabinet, collectively and individually is also a regulatory authority. Therefore, we would have said during the election campaign that we would have a royal commission to establish whether the previous Cabinet was legally liable for the losses of those investors, because, let us face it, we cannot just leave it to the -

Mr Barnett: You can do that if you want to. This is a load of nonsense.

Dr GALLOP: I am just illustrating the stupidity of the Opposition's argument.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In all fairness to Hansard and me, will the House come to order, please.

Dr GALLOP: I conclude by saying that the Government specifically made a distinction between political accountability and legal liability. I made that distinction on talkback radio and in Parliament on numerous occasions and I do not know how many times it has been said. I made that distinction because we did not advocate, when in opposition, funding a legal case to determine whether the State was liable.

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Mr Barnett: Yes, you did. Why don't you read your policy? The Government's policy says that if the State is held responsible, appropriate action will be taken to both compensate investors and pursue recovery of any costs from wrongdoers. That was ALP policy. Read your own rotten little policy.

Dr GALLOP: We have read our policy and the people know only too well what we meant by that, unlike members of the Opposition. The Government made the distinction between political accountability and legal liability. How did we deal with the political accountability issue? Firstly, we told the people that the Opposition was responsible for this problem and the people had a choice to make in the election. How many times did I say that during the election campaign? Secondly, I said that the Labor Party was not running a candidate in the seat of Alfred Cove; therefore, the people in that electorate could have their own special accountability mechanism to deal with the former Minister for Fair Trading. Our position was absolutely clear on this issue. We said that we would examine the involvement of all those involved in the finance broking scandal - the then spokesperson, and now Attorney General, listed them - including the finance brokers, the company directors, the valuers, the banks, the auditors, the accountants, the lawyers and anyone else involved to see whether it was appropriate to fund civil action. That is exactly what we promised and that is exactly what we are doing currently. The Opposition is now trying to stir up trouble between the Government and the people we have consistently supported.

Mr Barnett: No, Denise Brailey is stirring up the matter.

Dr GALLOP: No, the Leader of the Opposition is stirring up the matter. Where was the opposition spokesman on Friday?

Mr Barnett: He was not there.

Dr GALLOP: Exactly, he was not here. Where was the previous Government over the last four years? It was not here and it did not front. It did not front for four years and it is not fronting again in opposition. The Government is doing exactly what it said it would do on this matter.

The ridiculous situation in question time earlier was that the Opposition admitted it was guilty and told us to have an inquiry into its guilt! If that were our position in the election campaign, would it not have been debated in the community? Of course it would have been debated in the community. However, it was not a matter for debate in the election campaign because the Government did not make that promise in the election campaign.

We have real sympathy for those people who have lost money and that sympathy was displayed by the performance of the Attorney General who fronted those people, unlike what the previous coalition did in government and what it is doing now in opposition.

They scurry into Parliament and try to stir up trouble on the matter when they know that the Government will do what it said it would do. The Government has outlined its position on this matter and it is delivering. I ask the question again: if the Government had promised something different during the election campaign, why did that not become a matter of debate during the campaign? It was not a matter of debate because the Labor Party did not make that promise. Whenever the matter came up and I was asked questions I always made the clear point that there is a distinction between the political accountabilities and the legal liabilities of the matter. The Government is quite happy to speak to elderly investors at any time about the issues. The Government will continue to assist them in accordance with the promises it gave. The Government is proud of the fact that it is fighting on behalf of the investors to determine what assistance can be given by the State.

MR BARRON-SULLIVAN (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.21 pm]: This debate highlights what many people consider to be the seamier and more distasteful side of the political environment. Coincidentally, I am reminded of a previous Labor Party identity who wrote a certain amount of literature and of his famous expression, "whatever it takes". In the three months since the election and as shadow spokesman for this portfolio, I have spoken to a number of elderly investors who have been affected by the finance brokers situation. I have tried to get a handle on the situation and to determine what could be done about the concerns. What is now coming through in waves is a total distrust of the current Government in respect of the situation that has arisen since the election. In the lead up to the election, I believe the Attorney General and the Labor Party said whatever it took to say in order to buy votes and con investors about the action that might be taken if the Labor Party were to attain government.

It is unfair to criticise the Opposition for taking up the issue on behalf of investors. I remind members of the Government that, under the Westminster system, it is the Opposition's legitimate role to act as watchdog and - if I am permitted to use the colloquialism - to "keep the bastards honest".

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The Premier made some interesting comments. He asked, specifically, why the matter of the Labor Party's commitment to compensation was not the subject of debate. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that Labor Party policy at the time did refer to the recovery of funds and implied that compensation might be forthcoming. From the early days of this issue, back in 1998, when the member for Armadale first moved a motion on this issue, and through to the recent election, we saw a build-up of expectation by investors. Expectations were not so much about compensation as about the Labor Party - if it assumed power - funding legal action to determine whether the State was liable. The Premier took the debate off at a tangent and started talking about other issues. The key thing that investors are looking for, and the key commitment they thought the Labor Party was making, was that a Labor Government would fund legal action to determine whether the State was liable. The House should not take my word for that. In yesterday's *The Australian* Denise Brailey is quoted as saying -

The undeniable fact is that in a written policy document, the ALP promised victims that if it won office, legal assistance would be provided to determine whether the state was liable to provide compensation.

That was one of the main things that people thought the Government said.

Mr McGinty: I did not say that and neither can the Deputy Leader of the Opposition show that the article states that I did.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: That is an interesting interjection from the Attorney General, because he is asking what his party's policy said.

Mr McGinty: I invite the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to show where I used the words to the effect that the Labor Government would fund action against the State.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I am interested that the Attorney General has placed that on the record, and I may remind him of it later on. There were two elements to the Government's actions. Firstly, there was the written word in the Labor Party policy. The Leader of the Opposition has gone through that policy quite succinctly; and the clear implication, even if it is not expressed in broad English, is that legal action would be taken to determine whether the State was liable. Secondly, there is what was said. Numerous investors have said to me that, at one or another of the five meetings, they were left under no illusion that a Labor Government would take legal action to determine if the State was liable. I will read a quote from someone who wrote to the Premier recalling the proceedings of one meeting. She writes that, during the meeting on 25 September last year at Eaton in the Shire of Dardanup, she recalled the current Attorney General saying -

We will, however, make available as much money as is necessary for legal fees, etc. to enable a speedy resolution to this long drawn out problem.

This refers to the need to determine compensation requirements. This person goes on to say that the current Attorney General said -

If it is found at a later day that the Government of the day is found to have been negligent, then all investors will be reimbursed for their losses.

People who were at these meetings were left under no illusion. That was what the Attorney General said, and now he is trying to take us off at a bit of a tangent, and to lay a bit of a smokescreen.

I want to draw the Attorney General's attention to some correspondence to an elderly investor. I quote out of that correspondence from the current Attorney General, who was then the opposition spokesperson on fair trading -

... it is my honest belief that the Ministry of Fair Trading has been remiss in its duty to oversee the activities of Finance Brokers. This is so in respect of licensed valuers, the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board, and some Finance Brokers themselves. ... I believe that the State Government had and continues to have a responsibility to all investors involved in the finance broking scandal to protect their investments.

The Premier asked how this issue could be assessed. By way of interjection, can the Attorney General say whether, in the three months he has been in office, he has asked the Solicitor General to provide legal advice as to whether the State has a legal liability?

Mr McGinty: I have not.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: So, despite the fact that, in opposition, the Attorney General had the firm view, which he promulgated both in this Chamber and in the community, that the State had a liability -

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

Mr McGinty: No!

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: - or was responsible -

Mr McGinty: That is better!

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: It does not take much to move from one term to the other. Despite having said that in opposition, and despite having been in office for more than 100 days, he has not asked the Solicitor General one very simple question to determine whether or not the State is in some way responsible, and consequently may be liable. The current Attorney General was quite prepared to talk up this issue, and to come across as the ally and friend of investors who had lost money through the various broking schemes. He was quite happy to take political advantage out of the situation, and quite happy to say - although he did not use these words - that the State had stuffed up. However, now that he is in a position to determine definitely whether that is the case, he still has not done so after three months. I raise that issue because it goes to the very heart of the genuineness of the determination of the member for Fremantle and the Labor Party to pursue a remedy on behalf of the investors, compared with the member for Fremantle's willingness to grab the issue and use it with whatever it takes to earn votes to win the election. I say that sincerely because, like most members in this Chamber, I have spoken to many investors who were strong coalition supporters but who changed their allegiance at the election because of what they regarded as a clear commitment. They now feel absolutely and utterly betrayed.

The point is that if the minister had been genuine in his intentions before the election, it would not have taken him three months to send a note to the Solicitor General. He has been caught holding the baby on this issue and has demonstrated that it was not about looking after investors but about whatever it took to win the election.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to and quoted from a document titled "ALP Approach to Finance Brokers", which is the first version of the so-called five-point plan handed out to people at meetings and sent with correspondence to people, and so on. However, the document is clear about the Labor Party's commitment. Clause 5 reads -

The combination of openness and legal assistance should help in the early resolution of questions of liability. If the state is held responsible, appropriate action will be taken to both pay investors and achieve recovery from the wrong doers.

Those are not two paragraphs under two headings; they are two sentences in one block with one sentence immediately after the other. It is a long time since I studied the English language but my understanding is that those two sentences are related. It says to me in plain English that legal assistance will be provided and, if the State is held responsible, action will be taken to achieve recovery. I cannot see how one can read that in any other way.

However, it is not what I believe that matters; it is more what the investors, to whom the Attorney General and members of the Labor Party spoke, believe that matters. It is not only the written word of the policy or the five-point plan that matters, but also the message that those people received at meetings from the current Attorney General. The Attorney General has been quick and slick to say it is not what the Labor Party said and it is not what the five-point plan said. He is a little too clever by half because it is not only the five-point plan that matters. I have with me a copy of a letter from the Attorney General to someone who set out his concerns about the fact that the Government has gone back on its word. The Attorney General is very clever in his letter in answer to these concerns. He said -

The Government's commitments in its policy "Restoring Consumer Protection" -

That was the name of the policy -

- are clearly set out in the five-point plan. It is not implicit in the five-point plan that the Government would provide funding to enable determination of the issue of whether or not the State is liable for any investor losses.

First, I take issue with that. However, the point is that the Attorney General has not referred to all the other messages sent to the community verbally in meetings and in letters, which left people under no false illusion as to the Labor Party's commitment. It is all very well talking about a five-point plan, but one must consider the five-point plan in the context in which it was sold, promoted and explained to the community. I shall refer to how they feel and what they consider the minister said, because I made a point of talking to a number of investors. I shall use one example, simply because it was near my electorate office in the township of Eaton, where the then Labor spokesperson on fair trading matters - the current Attorney General - addressed a meeting on 25 September. I shall read a couple of paragraphs of a letter sent to the Premier from an elderly couple who

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attended that meeting, which details how the elderly investors view the Government's action. It does not matter what we on this side of the Chamber say; the letter sums up what elderly investors are saying to me. It reads -

On Monday September 25 last year, we attended a meeting at the Eaton Bowling Club to hear the now Attorney-General, Mr McGinty, address a group of people who had lost most of their lifesavings in the Investment Brokers debacle. At that meeting I remember Mr McGinty saying, and I can quote almost verbatim:-

“I cannot tell you what you want to hear and that is that if we are elected to power at the next election, we will reimburse you for your losses. We will, however, make available as much money as is necessary for legal fees, etc. to enable a speedy resolution to this long drawn out problem.”

He also went on to say:

“If it is found at a later date that the Government of the day is found to have been negligent, then all investors will be reimbursed for their losses.”

The constituents continued in their letter -

On the strength of Mr McGinty's address we gave your party our vote but, as yet, have neither read nor heard anything about money being made available to help facilitate an early settlement to our problem. In fact, we are hearing quite the reverse.

To say that we are disappointed and disillusioned with our new State Government would be a gross understatement. We feel we have been duped by Mr McGinty and that he solicited our votes under false pretences.

That is the current feeling of investors. I spoke to a number of other people who attended that meeting and the consensus was that Labor would fund action to determine whether the State was liable and that the Labor Government would take responsibility if that were the case. Those views came directly from people who were at that meeting. They reinforce what I read in a newspaper yesterday where Denise Brailey went on the record and said that it was also her understanding and that she had attended two of those meetings. As members know, Denise Brailey has closely followed this issue all the way through. She and Doug Solomon, another consumer advocate who is familiar with this issue, believe the Labor Party made the commitment to support legal action to determine whether the State was liable. The implication is there in plain English and I do not see how the Attorney General can wriggle out of it. The Minister for Consumer Affairs was totally evasive when answering a question without notice on this matter today.

I return to the point that if the minister was dinkum and truly wanted to look after those investors, why three months after the election has he not simply picked up the phone or sent a fax to the Solicitor General asking whether the State is liable in this situation? The people affected by the mortgage brokers situation anticipated that the Attorney General would do that; they are feeling mightily frustrated today because he has not. In fact, the feeling is much stronger than that. I must ask: if the Attorney General is saying that he did not say that when all these other people say he did, and if the consumer advocates and elderly investors who attended those meetings are not lying about what they heard at those meetings, who is lying?

MR TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [3.38 pm]: I shall start my comments in this debate where the Premier left off. This is a core issue and recently in my electorate it was an issue about which everyone wanted to talk to me. The Premier in his dissertation a few minutes ago said that if the position outlined by the Leader of the Opposition were true, why was it not debated in the campaign? I can tell the Premier why it was not debated in the campaign: we were losing that argument 10 to zip. If one increases the scale to 100, we were losing it at 100 to zip, and if one increases it to 1 000, we were losing it at 1 000 to zip. There was nowhere for us to stand in that debate, let alone win it.

The Doug Shave saga cost the conservatives many votes. The fact that the previous Premier would not deal with him cost the coalition Government a large slice of its constituency. No member would deny that. This issue caused many people in my electorate to change their vote. Even now, many of my constituents say, “Max, we like many of the coalition's policies regarding transport, community development, regional development and policing, but we could not support you on this issue.” During the last week or so of the campaign - I cannot remember the exact timing - when the ex-member for Geraldton pitched into the debate, we had absolutely no place to stand. It is ludicrous for the Premier to say that if what the Leader of the Opposition said had been true we would have debated it in the campaign. No-one wanted to listen to us. Frankly, I am now happy to say that I had no defence for Doug Shave. During the campaign I was asked how I could stand behind him, and I admit

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that it was hard to find a reason, particularly when Bob Bloffwitch got involved. We had nowhere to hide; we were on a hiding to nothing.

I had no doubt whatsoever that the member for Fremantle - now the Attorney General - was telling people that a Labor Government would assist them to recover their money.

Mr McGinty: You are three-quarters right, and you would have gleaned that from the debates in the Chamber as much as anything else.

Mr TRENORDEN: That is correct. The member did a fantastic job on Doug Shave - he murdered him. He also did a fantastic job on the Premier. He lured many conservative voters who would normally never support the Labor cause. In fact, many did not - they voted for the Greens (WA) or One Nation - but the Labor Party still got the votes in the end. The member should be congratulated for that, but he must also live with the consequences. Every action causes a reaction, and the Attorney must now stand by his commitment. I warn him: the voters do not believe him. I am not trying to be hard on the Attorney - he and I have been around for a long time - I am merely telling him the truth.

No doubt the member for Fremantle - now the Attorney General - made those promises in opposition. The voters will now seek to take out their anger on not only the Attorney's hide but also the Premier's and the Government's hide. This is not simply a question of the millions of dollars required to cover the cost of a court case; it is also about the other promise on which the Government has reneged. The executive summary refers to restoring consumer protection and the establishment of a judicial inquiry with "broad terms of reference". The inquiry we are now hearing about involves only 40 to 50 cases. What happened to the "broad terms of reference"? In fact, where are the terms of reference? They are not to be found.

It is all very well to present arguments and to participate in debate in this place - I will concede again that he did that extremely well - but the Attorney must live with the expectations he raised. He cannot behave like Pontius Pilate by washing his hands of the issue and telling people to apply the letter of the law. He might be trained in the law, but he does not present himself as a practising lawyer. It is not the role of a member of Parliament to say, "This is the letter of the law." This is about people and the Parliament and being responsible. The responsibility rests squarely with the Attorney General. Brailey and Solomon were high-profile personalities during the election campaign. The Attorney used their profile, and that is fine - so he should. We on this side of the House will use the same strategy during the next four years. However, he cannot now put those people in concrete boots and drop them in the harbour.

The Government has a serious problem. We can debate this as much as we like, but the people know what the Attorney promised - or at least what they believe he promised. The Premier's assisting him - which he is morally bound to do - will not help the Attorney either. He is starting to resemble Hon Richard Court.

Mr McGinty: Don't put that on him!

Mr TRENORDEN: I have a lot of time for Hon Richard Court. He was a genuine, hardworking Premier of this State. The current Premier is trying to be the same. I do not believe there is a malicious bone in his body. I would have said the same about Brian Burke when he started out.

MR MCGINTY (Fremantle - Attorney General) [3.48 pm]: I welcome the opportunity to put the Government's position on the record. I will also deal with the position taken by members on this side when in opposition. This important matter has occupied a considerable amount of time and space in the media. I will take up the points the Leader of the National Party has raised and address the important questions associated with the way in which this Government will offer assistance to the victims of the finance broking scandal.

There is no doubt that during the middle and second half of the 1990s finance brokers in this State engaged in some extremely corrupt practices. There is also no doubt that the relevant regulatory bodies failed in their duties. It will come as no surprise - members have heard me say this hundreds of times in opposition over the past two years - that the tragic consequence of that failure is that people in this State, mainly elderly, self-funded retirees, suffered massive losses. The generally agreed estimate of the total loss is \$150 million. Some people say it is more and some say that by the time assets are sold off it will be less. However, there seems to be a consensus that the approximate value of the losses inflicted on about 7 000 of our senior citizens is \$150 million. The tragedy is not simply that in many cases these people lost either part or all of their life savings; they also lost their dignity. Throughout their working lives they planned and prepared for a lifestyle in retirement that would ensure they would not be dependent on social security payments because they did not believe in them. They wanted to be independent, but the finance brokers scandal stole that dream.

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Over the past two years this Parliament has played a significant role in exposing what went on in the finance broking industry. Case after case revealed to this Parliament the fraudulent behaviour of, mainly, finance brokers, but, often, borrowers, valuers, and financial institutions that allowed trust accounts to be overdrawn in a most negligent way. The Opposition chronicled that in great detail in this Parliament over that time. Arising out of that, I addressed a number of meetings in different parts of the State. I attended meetings in the electorates of Avon, Merredin, Mitchell and in other electorates. I addressed these people and heard first-hand their stories. The story was consistent, and we sought to relay that to this Parliament; that is, the victims of the finance broking scandal were not to blame. It was not their fault. Systematic fraud was perpetrated on them, while the regulatory authorities overseen by Doug Shave failed to properly address those issues. That called for a response. I had discussions with Denise Brailey, the President of the Real Estate Consumers Association, and also with Doug Solomon - a lawyer for whom I have great admiration - who, in addition to being an excellent commercial lawyer, has shown a real social spirit in taking up the cudgels to fight a political battle on behalf of his clients and others who fitted into that general class of clients. I must have spoken on hundreds of occasions with Denise Brailey, on maybe a dozen occasions with Doug Solomon and also on numerous occasions with a raft of people who lost money through these fraudulent schemes. Arising from discussions, on behalf of the Opposition I put together a five-point plan of what the Labor Party would do in government to offer concrete assistance to these people to get their money back and to ensure that the people who were the wrongdoers were brought to justice.

Graham Grubb was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for stealing \$5 million. The losses that Grubb caused totalled \$22 million. Grubb was charged with only a portion of the losses that he caused. Nonetheless, the courts dealt with him severely. I suspect that one of the side effects of that will be that people will not be so keen to plead guilty in the future, because they know they will be treated severely by the courts, as was Graham Grubb. However, I put that to one side. As a result of actions taken by the commercial crime division - the fraud squad - just under 400 charges of fraud, stealing and dishonesty offences have been laid against finance brokers and their professional advisers. Those cases will no doubt proceed to the courts.

I am told that a major task force is still working in the Police Service pursuing the people who committed offences against the Criminal Code. That is a real credit to the police, because things of this nature are often hard to prove. No matter what the extent of the fraudulent transactions, it is often difficult to find evidence beyond reasonable doubt that would put people in prison. The fact that almost 400 charges have now been laid and, as far as they have gone, have been successful, is a credit to the police. I urge the police to keep up the good work they are doing in this area.

The other point of which we were critical in opposition was the formation of the Gunning inquiry. We criticised that inquiry because it was always intended by the previous Government to be a limited inquiry. It was set up under the Public Sector Management Act to contain the focus of its deliberations to public sector agencies. The Gunning inquiry could not inquire into the minister's involvement - in other words, the political dimensions of this argument; however, it could examine the involvement of the Ministry of Fair Trading and the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board. It was roundly critical of, in particular, the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board. That resulted in the resignation of the chairman of the board, John Urquhart. While we were still in opposition, I met the new chairman of the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board, Peter Jooste QC. Had Mr Jooste been the chairman of the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board five years ago, I doubt we would have the problems that were caused by the finance brokers scandal in this State. He seems to be getting on with the job, albeit after the horse has bolted. As best I can judge from a distance, he is doing a good job.

As a result of those experiences, every week debate on the finance broking issue took place in this Parliament in the form of a question, a matter of public interest, or in some other form. The member for Avon is right about the political effect of that debate.

Mr Barnett: It is quite appropriate that we raise it now.

Mr McGINTY: I do not quibble with that.

Mr Barnett: The Premier chastised the Opposition for daring to raise this issue. I am glad you at least agree it should be raised, because it is still current.

Mr McGINTY: I understood that the Premier was a little surprised, given the extent of the failure on that side - perhaps, even a little bemused - that it was raised by the Opposition; however, that is history.

Mr Barnett: I believe you were a Minister for Fair Trading in the previous Government.

Mr McGINTY: No, that was Yvonne Henderson.

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Mr Barnett: Some of the cases relate to before the coalition came to power. I am not absolving us of responsibility, but some of these cases go back a long time. It was the scale of the problem that caught people by surprise.

Mr McGINTY: I was following up a point that was raised by the member for Avon. Bruce Stone, who is an academic at the University of Western Australia, has written the first analysis that I am aware of from an academic point of view on the state election. It is in the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* that was published only this week. He said there were four reasons that members opposite are now sitting on the opposition benches. The first reason was the coalition's lukewarm approach to accountability and the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Government. The coalition rode into power on that. It then left a lot of the recommendations untouched and did not show any great enthusiasm for that reform. The second reason was the provision of government services such as health, education and the like. The third reason, which occurred particularly over the past 12 months, was described as being suicide by the coalition. As the member for Avon said, Bob Bloffwitch's contribution was the most spectacular example of that. The fourth reason was the finance brokers issue, which there were two dimensions. One was the failure of the Premier to deal with Doug Shave. That reflected badly on the Premier and the Government. The second was a seeming refusal to offer a helping hand to thousands of elderly people who had lost their life savings, and had been treated so badly. I agree broadly with Bruce Stone's analysis.

The five-point plan that I put together arose out of all of those discussions and experiences. The five-point plan was, first, to hold a judicial inquiry to find out what went wrong in the finance broking industry. So far as activity by government was concerned, the police were doing an excellent job of picking up those people who had committed fraud and the Gunning inquiry had looked at the operations of the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board; however, what had never been done was to compel the finance brokers and their professional advisers to answer questions and subject them to scrutiny to find out what went wrong, where the money went and what caused that failure. The Government has honoured that commitment. Ian Temby has been appointed, and will be an excellent royal commissioner. We are making sure that we do not exclude from the terms of reference the role played by the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board and the Ministry of Fair Trading in that process. The second commitment was that we promised to open up the books. Members will remember the secrecy surrounding this issue last year. The Government would not release opinions or information that it received. In opposition we were constantly critical of the Government for that. My colleague, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, has consented to an order in the Supreme Court to provide disclosure of those documents that are relevant to the matter of government liability from the Ministry of Fair Trading to Doug Solomon and to the investors. That is important, because there are secrecy provisions in the Finance Brokers Control Act, and an order of the Supreme Court was needed to overcome them. The Government has consented to that order. I understand that the issue of exactly what has been disclosed is currently being sorted out between the lawyers for the respective sides. The Government wants to honour that, and there will be further disclosure in the course of the Temby royal commission. Therefore, the Government has honoured commitment No 2.

Point 3 is the essence of the issue that has been raised in this debate today. Point 4 is to expedite legal action. The action taken in the Supreme Court before Justice Neville Owen by the supervisors of Grubb Finance and Global Finance Group Pty Ltd had become bogged down with extensive legal argument and was going nowhere, and all the investors were sitting there not knowing where they stood or what action they could take. My commitment was to do what we could, if we came into government, to fast-track that litigation. I have sent a copy of the letter that has been quoted here today to the Crown Solicitor, asking him if he can do anything to facilitate an expediting of those matters, appreciating that the Government cannot become involved in directing the courts or anything of that nature.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Why don't you put a PS saying, "Is the State liable?"

Mr McGINTY: I mention this in the context of expediting the legal action which was under way and which formed the factual background to the promise we made to facilitate that very legal action. Therefore, again that commitment has been honoured.

The fifth commitment was to pay up where liability is established. What the Government meant by that is exactly what the words say. The Government will not adopt an adversarial approach to this matter. If a court determines that the State Government is liable for the losses - in other words, if the Government has to find \$150 million - it will not take advantage of legal forms and will not take a confrontational approach on these matters. If it is established that the State is liable, it will pay up. It was not meant to imply that the Government would pay up short of a court order, because the Government used the words "where liability is established".

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Mr Cowan: I think it was meant to imply that. There was a great spin during the election campaign, and you did it very well.

Mr McGINTY: Unfortunately, I have only a short time available on this matter. However, I remember an occasion in this Chamber when there was an exchange with the former Premier on this very issue. He asked me whether we would pay compensation to these people, to which my answer was a categorical no, not short of a court order, and the reason for that is very simple. After the Rothwells bailout -

Mr Cowan: Not short of a court order, and you were encouraging every mechanism by which the Government's liability could be challenged and exposed - every mechanism. That is the difference. You can talk about these things and say, "No, I wouldn't have done this unless there was a court order." The truth of the matter is that you said, "The Government is liable. You should be able to recover your money, and the sooner it happens, the better." That is what you said. The Press bought it - it loved it - and we know what the outcome was. However, the truth of the matter is that it was all a pack of lies because it was never going to happen.

Mr McGINTY: No, far from it. I am sorry, I understood that I had a 10-minute extension of time available to me. The Clerk has just assured me that I do not.

Mr Barnett: That is why we did not interject much.

Mr McGINTY: I will run through this very quickly. I thought I had more time to be able to deal with the interjections.

I refer to the payment of compensation. It is interesting that two weeks ago in the media it was reported that some people were saying that McGinty promised that if Labor was elected it would pay compensation. I attended and spoke to Friday's meeting of the investors. It is interesting that Doug Solomon stood up and said, "That is wrong. McGinty never said that. In fact, we raised it with him before the election, and he never gave that commitment that compensation would be paid by the State." Therefore, to the extent that that story had been run in the media, it was wrong. That brought the argument back to only one matter in which it was alleged that there was an issue associated with legal assistance. As stated in my letter to Mr Solomon, the commitment which was given on legal assistance and which the Government will honour was -

For appropriate cases, the State will fund legal action to recover losses from finance brokers, company directors, valuers, banks, auditors, accountants, lawyers and anyone else responsible for the losses".

I appreciate that members opposite pick on the last few words in that statement. I simply ask this question of anyone in the Opposition: was the previous Government responsible for the losses?

Mr Barnett: No.

Mr Trenorden: It wasn't your view, though.

Mr McGINTY: If the answer to that question is no, there is no commitment to fund legal cases against the State, because the commitment is to fund cases against people responsible for the losses.

Several members interjected.

Mr McGINTY: I am sorry, I do not have time to take interjections.

In a sense, that is a glib point. However, if the Labor Party had meant that it would fund legal action against the State, it would have said so. The five points would have become six points. If the Labor Party had meant to say that it would pay compensation, the five points would have become seven points. It did not say that, and nobody has been able to stand in this place and say that it did, notwithstanding the fact that we debated this issue every week that Parliament sat. Nobody has been able to tell me where in *Hansard* I said that the Labor Party would fund legal action against the State, because it has never been said. All members opposite can do is to argue by implication that, on a proper construction of the words used in the Labor Party's commitment, that is an interpretation available, because it was never said. That is the crucial point. The Labor Party would not have committed to pay \$1.5 million, which is Doug Solomon's estimate of how much it will cost to mount that case against the State, without saying so directly. More importantly, as the end result of that legal action, the Labor Party would not have committed to pay \$150 million damages or compensation that would be awarded by the court if the State were liable without saying so.

Mr Cowan: We know all that. The only problem is that the implication was that you would do all that.

Mr McGINTY: If the member wants to say that people thought there was an implication in that, that is an inference people might draw. However, if we had meant it, we would have said it. If we meant to incur a

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liability, we would have said it. Nowhere was it said. In these matters, the current Government will do a lot more to help these people than those guys opposite ever did when they were in government.

Mr Cowan: You haven't done anything.

Mr McGINTY: The royal commission will do that. The Minister for Consumer Affairs is currently drawing up guidelines for legal assistance. The Government will fund cases against people who are responsible for the losses.

In conclusion, the five points that I have outlined will provide practical assistance to the victims to help them recover the losses caused to them during the 1990s. That practical assistance to those people was sadly missing when the Leader of the Opposition and his erstwhile *bête noire*, Doug Shave, were sitting on these benches.

Amendment on the Amendment

DR WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [4.07 pm]: I move -

That the amendment be further amended by deleting the words "hollow" and "refusing to honour" and substituting the words "failing to provide complete support" for the words "refusing to honour".

Point of Order

Mr BARNETT: The member may not be aware that during the Address-in-Reply, an amendment cannot be amended.

Mr McGINTY: I think it can.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): A motion to amend an amendment can be moved.

Debate Resumed

Dr WOOLLARD: During the election campaign, I gave an assurance that, if elected, I would support members of my community affected by the finance broking scandal. Since then, members of my electorate and I have met with the Attorney General and with the Minister for Consumer Affairs. They have individually given some reassurance to those people on their five-point plan and stated that they will follow up issues and concerns that have been raised.

I also point out that it was reported in *The West Australian* on Saturday, 26 May, that Mr Solomon said that one of the royal commission's terms of reference should be to consider whether the State should accept responsibility. His response was that he accepted that the Australian Labor Party never promised - as an election promise - to get into government and pay compensation. However, in the lead-up to the election many people were led to believe that Labor's commitment was to fund legal expenses for those affected by the finance broking scandal. The promise was somewhat misleading. People honestly believed that the commitment included legal support to pursue any avenue, including the Government itself, and the Government seems to have a clear moral obligation to provide additional legal assistance to these people.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara - Leader of the House) [4.12 pm]: The Government will not support the proposed amendment to the amendment. This amendment is somewhat more honest than that proposed by the Opposition; nonetheless, it is not supported by the facts. The intent of the amendment proposed by the member for Alfred Cove indicates that there was an advantage to the Labor Party in opposition in the promises it made, and those promises were accepted by many people as offering some hope. That part of the amendment is correct. Therefore, removal of the word "hollow" makes that a correct statement. The Opposition is somehow suggesting that it was a hollow promise, but it has not been able to substantiate that.

The second part of the amendment proposed by the member for Alfred Cove states that the Government is now "failing to fully fulfil" those promises. The Government rejects that on the basis that it is making a good attempt to fulfil those promises, and in the course of time will fully fulfil those undertakings. There may be an argument that people want this to happen more quickly - I can understand that because a lot of people are suffering a great deal due to the collapse of the finance brokers.

I return to the promises made. The first was to ascertain the facts and establish a royal commission. That has been initiated; it is not fully up and running, but it has been initiated. It was not a hollow promise; it is taking place. The next promise was to give legal assistance. Again, that is happening; not as fully as we would like, but we have given an undertaking that we will look at the merits of individual cases. That will happen. It is not complete and, therefore, there is some credit in the member for Alfred Cove's suggestion. However, it is wrong

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[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 29 May 2001]
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to say that this Government has not fulfilled that promise. It is about to fulfil that promise and clearly it has started.

On the question of full disclosure, whereas the previous Government imposed on the other parties every possible delay and cost by going through the courts and failed to deliver, we have entered into consent judgments. Up to five officers have been working for weeks on 500 files, getting them ready to be turned over to the appropriate authorities. Clearly we are fulfilling the undertaking of full disclosure. We are also moving on facilitating court action to resolve liabilities. Again it is a legal quagmire and we are discussing with a whole range of people how we can speed up that process. Those discussions are taking place, both with authorities such as the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and with individual plaintiffs who are seeking to bring cases forward. Although there has not been full delivery on that, we have started to work on it. As for paying up where liability is established, if there is establishment of liability through various processes that can be put to the test, it cannot be done at this stage. Therefore, on that basis the Government does not accept the amendment on the amendment and it will also reject the amendment moved by the Opposition.

MR DAY (Darling Range) [4.22 pm]: The Opposition agrees with the Government on the amendment to the amendment. We think that removing some of the words in the amendment will water it down excessively and, therefore, the original meaning of the amendment moved by the Opposition will not be clear. This is an important issue and people have very strong feelings about it. The Opposition has put a very good argument in favour of the amendment. The amendment and the evidence that has been brought forward by the Opposition bear out the strength of the words in it. Therefore, we also oppose amending the amendment.

Amendment on the amendment put and negatived.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (18)

Mr Barnett	Mrs Edwardes	Mr McNee	Mr Sweetman
Mr Birney	Mr Edwards	Mr Marshall	Mr Trenorden
Mr Board	Mrs Hodson Thomas	Mr Masters	Mr Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr Cowan	Mr House	Mr Omodei	
Mr Day	Mr Johnson	Mr Sullivan	

Noes (28)

Mr Bowler	Mrs Guise	Mr McGinty	Mr Ripper
Mr Brown	Mr Hill	Mr McRae	Mrs Roberts
Mr Carpenter	Mr Hyde	Mrs Martin	Mr Templeman
Mr Dean	Mr Kobelke	Mr Murray	Mr Watson
Mr D'Orazio	Mr Kucera	Mr O'Gorman	Mr Whitely
Dr Edwards	Mr Logan	Mr Quigley	Dr Woollard
Dr Gallop	Ms MacTiernan	Ms Radisich	Ms Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)

Pair

Mr Waldron

Ms McHale

Independents

Dr Constable

Mr Graham

Amendment thus negatived.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

MR SWEETMAN (Ningaloo) [4.26 pm]: I am delighted to participate in this Address-in-Reply debate. I congratulate you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Andrews), on your election to the post of Acting Speaker. It is a position that I occupied in my first four years as a backbencher in this Parliament. I think the position was then called deputy chairman of committees. It is a great opportunity to learn about the processes of Parliament and, of course, to be impartial. I also congratulate you on your election to the seat of Southern River. You replaced a

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colleague and good friend of ours, but that was the will of the people, and certainly you have our congratulations.

I also congratulate the Speaker, the member for Burrup, and wish to say some pleasant things about his endorsement as Speaker of this House. It would not be proper if I did not mention the honour that has been bestowed upon him, because I intend to make some comments about his pet project in his electorate - the shopping road from Tom Price to Karratha - but I will do so later in my speech.

Ms MacTiernan: You are opposed to spending money on country roads, are you?

Mr SWEETMAN: I am simply saying that the Government must get its priorities right. As long as Nullagine and Marble Bar do not have a bitumen road, I will continue to oppose a luxury like the shopping road from Tom Price to Karratha. There is already a sealed road from Tom Price to Karratha - the journey just takes an hour and 50 minutes longer. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure may not be aware that Nullagine and Marble Bar were out of circulation for over a hundred days last year. I do not believe that Tom Price or Karratha were out of action for even half a day during that period. That says something about the prospects for those small communities, and is this Government committed to regional development?

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr SWEETMAN: The minister should not fret, I will get to her shortly.

Ms MacTiernan: We promised that road during the election.

Mr SWEETMAN: That is right. The minister should have a cup of tea and a lie down!

It is appropriate at this time to give recognition to the people who helped me secure my position in this Parliament. I pay special tribute to my campaign committee, which was chaired by Ken Baston, a long-time friend and a long-time loyal supporter of the lay party and of community affairs in the district of Carnarvon. He was ably supported by Scott Sturgess - who has now returned to Queensland, I regret to say - Trevor Cook, Peter Broad, Jenny Scott, Gail Thomason and Rod Williams. They have been tremendous supporters who have worked hard. They have not only given me a hand, but also been dedicated to and passionate about their cause so much so that, as the local candidate and member, I felt obligated to be successful.

I will now work around my electorate, which has 11 towns and all or part of 13 shires, to pay tribute and recognition to people in the outposts who gave me a hand during the past four years, and particularly leading up to the election itself. I will start with Newman, which has a special place in my heart. I recall visiting Newman in 1989, when the Robe River dispute was at its fiercest, and the reception I got at some of the doors when doorknocking on behalf of our candidate at that time, who, as most members know, was unsuccessful at that election. To get a buffeting at those doors during that dispute was not a pleasant experience. However, it is like being in Opposition: what does not kill one makes one stronger. The Liberal Party received only 16 to 17 per cent of the vote back in 1989. We buttered up again in 1993 and improved our position in Newman to about 23.5 per cent of the vote. That was an improvement but nonetheless devastating as, once again, we did not win the seat. The boundaries were re-drawn during 1994 and 1995, which became the boundaries for Ningaloo which we contested in December 1996. Small changes were made to the old seat of Northern River. Basically Wiluna, in the east of the electorate, went out and a part of the Shire of Ashburton came in which brought Onslow into my electorate. It was a minimal change and we went to the election with similar numbers and basically the same communities making a decision. I am happy to say that in 1996 Newman voted 39.5 per cent our way. It was still a handsome flogging but it was an indication a change was on. In the most recent election our vote in Newman increased to around 44.5 per cent. Again, we were still beaten. However, what I find special about Newman is that very few indecisive people live there. There is no grey area. One can knock on doors and, as Keating said, "The person you can believe is the one who looks you in the eye and says he won't vote for you." Many people are like that in Newman but many other people gave me their encouragement and support. I have enjoyed my visits to Newman and the relationships and friendships I have built with people there in the past four years.

I pay tribute to one couple whom I got to know well over there, Morris Lee and his wife Mary, who are stalwarts of the Labor Party. They are terrific people and when they left town only last year to settle in the member for Mandurah's electorate, the retirees in the town went from seven to five, although the senior citizens association is still in existence. If they have not already introduced themselves to the member for Mandurah, he would do well to meet them. They are special people and were involved in everything that went on in Newman. In addition, Morris was involved in the shire and was shire president for about two years. He is a decent man and although he did not hide his political affiliations, I enjoyed many conversations with him and I believed

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wholeheartedly in many of his philosophical absolutes. Newman was the poorer for his and Mary's leaving and I will miss him, his fellowship and the opportunities to discuss community issues when I go to Newman. I wish him well in his retirement in Mandurah.

I shall talk about my supporters in Newman. Craig Eaves gave me a hand during the campaign and again on voting day. He is a marvellous fellow who knows at least two-thirds of the community in Newman. He did a great job for me. I thank Peter and Gail Robson who run a small business in Newman and who have been terrific supporters in the past four years. I thank Barb and Peter O'Driscoll. I was not to know, when I phoned Peter with the final results exactly a week after the election, that it would be the last time I would speak to him. He died from a heart attack only a week and a half later. That was disturbing and it was even more disturbing to realise that he was only my age. Barb has my best wishes as well as my condolences.

Moving across from Newman is Onslow, which is an interesting town. It has been said - it is a fact - that in all areas of this State, and even in Australia, big is the enemy of small. Small certainly believes so! Perth is the enemy of Geraldton; Geraldton is the enemy of Carnarvon; and Carnarvon is the enemy of Exmouth. I have said previously that Onslow is one of those rare small communities that basically hates everyone! It is very high in my affections. Again, it has forthright people. Those who hate me do so with a passion and those who love me choose to support me just as vehemently. I would not have achieved the result I have but for Debbie Allen. Roughly, we halved the result in Onslow, only just losing that booth. Debbie Allen put in a 14-hour stint standing on that booth for every hour that it was open. She then buttered up again to be present as a scrutineer at the count. She did an extraordinary job. She is involved in everything in the Onslow community and I do not believe the community there would function in the way it does without her. Her husband is the officer-in-charge of the police station. For obvious reasons, he could not be involved in the election and remained impartial. He is an extraordinary fellow, an old-fashioned officer in charge, who works as a beat sergeant. He does a great job in the community of Onslow and is very well respected for his efforts.

I would like to pay tribute to Kim Tapper, Larry Burkett and George King who put in long, hard hours in Exmouth. I found Exmouth to be a difficult town, and the Government will find it equally difficult. It is a town that I provided a personal service to in my four years as the local member and I do not believe I was rewarded or got my just desserts there. It will be interesting to see whether this new Government is everything that Exmouth hopes it will be. I would say that no amount of money, pledges, infrastructure, capital works or whatever that go into a town will ultimately secure a Government's position. Bunbury has always been a great example of that. It is one of those towns, regardless of the amount of money spent on it, which makes up its own mind about who it will support. Money has very little sway in the way people vote there. Exmouth is very much the same as Bunbury. We did everything we could as a Government. The previous Labor Government pledged to Exmouth the moneys from the sale of all the navy houses. That was a marvellous gesture and although it did not cost the Government anything, it was a decent thing to do. The funds from those sales set up a trust fund which that community used wisely over a long period until the fund was finally exhausted with the construction of the international airport terminal at Learmonth. It was a relief to the shire because it had so many requests for money from that fund and there was simply not enough to go around for all Exmouth's needs. There are many issues in Exmouth to be dealt with. Prior to the election the previous Liberal Government pledged to construct stage 2 of the marina. This Government is now finding it difficult to get its mind around that pledge. It is essential that the project go ahead, otherwise Exmouth will plunge into a deeper recession than it is in currently.

Moving to Carnarvon, I am buoyed by the support in my home town. As a lifetime resident of Carnarvon, I made no secret of my disappointment at my poor vote in Carnarvon at the 1996 election. I was reassured after this election when my vote increased in all three booths in Carnarvon, including the booth at Mangala village. That means in my home town I have at last received recognition or I am at least well thought of. At last, I have the support of those who are mine - a community I consider family. I am grateful for that support, particularly from the grower fraternity, which I have represented vigorously and fairly over the past four years. I attracted 60 per cent of the vote at the booth at which most of the growers cast their ballot.

Shark Bay is an interesting town, but many issues need to be sorted out. The Monkey Mia development has been a negative for the area. It is an example that planners should use to determine whether it is appropriate to allow developments like that to go ahead when infrastructure already exists in a nearby town. We should ask whether such a development would be a positive or negative for that neighbouring community.

The Great Northern Highway services the small towns of Mt Magnet, Cue and Meekatharra. I campaigned solidly prior to the 1996 election and discovered an air of despondency in Cue and Mt Magnet and, to a lesser extent, in Meekatharra - the mine in that town was still operational and the work force was at its peak. Going back to those towns four years later during the recent election campaign was interesting. Such a visit is a good

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opportunity to do an audit of whether one has or has not done well in an area. Many things have happened at Mt Magnet. The vanadium mine has now commenced operations at Youanmi, which is about 55 kilometres from Mt Magnet; the gas pipeline has been extended to the town and a lateral from that main has been constructed to Windimurra to provide gas for furnaces to maintain generating capacity. Vitality has been reintroduced in that region and it has additional prospectivity that was not there four or five years ago. I do not have a major population centre in my electorate. Carnarvon is the largest settlement, with approximately 7 000 people; Newman is the next largest, with about 3 500 people; and Exmouth is next largest, with between 1 800 and 2 000 people.

The introduction of a one vote, one value system will undermine good representation in an electorate such as mine. I make no secret of the fact that over the past four years the number of voters in my electorate has decreased from 11 000 to 10 000. I acknowledge that city electorates have many more voters; in fact, Wanneroo has about 38 000 voters. That is not right and it should be addressed. However, electorates covering the wheatbelt and the mining and pastoral areas need representation equal to that provided in city electorates. That is difficult to achieve. My electorate is split along two distinct corridors, the North West Coastal Highway and the Great Northern Highway, with no real connection between the two. Country members receive a limited charter allowance that they must manage carefully. It is not fair that constituents who want to see me in Mt Magnet cannot do so for three consecutive weeks or whatever. I have to make up some feeble excuse, but the reality is that I do not have the money to get there. I do not have the time to drive there and the charter allowance will not allow me to fly there three times in three weeks because I will blow my budget. Like other country members, I have a travel allowance of approximately \$17 000. We cannot make it go far enough even though we are reimbursed the "commercial equivalent", which means the charter allowance is topped up by whatever it costs to fly a route using a commercial service. The irony is that Cue, Onslow, Sandstone and Yalgoo have no commercial services. It might cost \$2 500 to fly to any of those towns by charter but, as there is no commercial equivalent, there is no top up. Members must manage their allowances carefully when they want to travel to those towns. That is not fair. Those constituents are disfranchised when I cannot get there when they want me. My response to their requests should not depend on my charter allowance.

The Premier is quoted in *The West Australian* as stating on election night -

We've emerged victorious through the politics of principle, eschewing cynicism, fighting for the people of Western Australia.

That is hollow and cynical when one considers the Premier's tactics. He circulated a pamphlet entitled "My guarantee". It makes interesting reading, and I will remind him of it as we get closer to the redistribution. It states -

My Guarantee

To the electors of Carnarvon

"Carnarvon will always be represented by a member of the State Parliament. The importance of the Gascoyne Region demands it.

Remember, only a Labor Government guarantees you a Minister for the North West to directly represent you in Cabinet."

It is signed "Geoff Gallop, State Labor Leader". It further states -

KEEP THIS CARD AND HOLD ME TO MY WORD.

I will, but I suspect that it is not worth the paper it is printed on.

Several members interjected.

Mr SWEETMAN: That was a product of the one vote, one value campaign.

Several members interjected.

Mr SWEETMAN: It was cheap enough, but I have reproduced it. I have framed the real one and it is in a safe. I will need to remind the Premier about this.

Mr Hyde: Did we not go to the election with a commitment to implement a one vote, one value system? We have a mandate.

Mr SWEETMAN: That is true, but the Labor Party was spooked. Members opposite went to the people saying, "Trust us; you will always have a representative." In other words, they were saying, "Read our lips: we will not

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take away your representation.” Even if we had only two members in this place, members opposite could still claim that Carnarvon had a representative.

Several members interjected.

Mr SWEETMAN: Reference has been made during question time to the Labor Party’s web site. I wonder how many members in this place logged onto the site and read some of the promises it detailed. It contained some unbelievable statements.

Ms MacTiernan: Unlike yours, they were all funded.

Mr SWEETMAN: I will refer to that in a minute. I do not know how quickly the site was purged. The Liberal Party was very keen to download the content of that site after the shock of its loss sunk in. However, on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning, we logged onto the site only to discover that the cupboard was bare. The site address was www.votelabor.org, and it contained an orgy of promises. I was sad that it had been deleted, because it was one of the great literary works of our time. That site must be restored. In fact, if it is not restored in its totality, I will create my own site labelled “Caspar”, because everything at the Labor Party site disappeared so quickly. The content will not disappear from my site: it will be there for four years and will become a reference point to judge the Government.

Several members interjected.

Ms MacTiernan: We try to spend money and you criticise us for doing so. We went to the people with these policies.

Mr SWEETMAN: The member’s interjection is wasting my time. I cannot get an extension of time in which to speak and I desperately need to get to that shopping road.

Ms MacTiernan: We went to the election with these promises.

Mr SWEETMAN: We have promises about all sorts of things, and they are supposedly fully costed. The problem is the perception or the spin in the document. There is a beauty about the Mt Magnet, Wiluna, Meekatharra and Cue water supplies. One of Labor’s election promises reads -

Water quality is an issue in towns such as Mt Magnet and Meekatharra with water quality in those places being well below World Health Organisation (WHO) standards. This, of course, places the residents of these towns at considerable risk.

Accordingly, a Labor Government will:

review water supplies to all towns in Ningaloo and where standards do not meet the WHO guidelines, implement strategies to immediately improve water quality.

That will cost \$10 million! I told the people of Murchison that World Health Organisation standards were unattainable. The water contains nitrates, but that is a problem only for infants under three months of age. In those circumstances, the Water Corporation and the nursing post will provide water to nursing mothers. That was an appropriate course of action. I told them that prior to and since the election, and I have convinced them that that is the appropriate thing to do. I have saved the Government’s bacon; it does not have to honour that election promise. During the election campaign the former Government tried to get the story through. Bill Atteo, the principal environmental health officer from the Shire of Meekatharra, and I were trying to explain - almost single-handedly - that their water did not have problems, and it was only because the World Health Organisation can now more thoroughly examine the water that more uglies were being found. It was not appropriate for the then Opposition to be mischievous and say that there was a problem with the water, when the then Government had said that a better water quality was unachievable, expensive and unnecessary at any price. Now, the residents accept that argument. However, as the Government still has that as one of its election promises, why should it not be called on to fulfil that promise?

I will move on because time is running away and I need to get to the Government’s transport policy.

Mr Hyde: Where did you get that from?

Mr SWEETMAN: I got it from the former Minister for Transport because I could not find it anywhere else. It is titled “Getting transport back on track” but a better title would be “getting transport on the turps”. It includes five pages on public transport - about buses and trains - compared with about a page and a half to two pages on roads. I have heard the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure say in this place that the coalition Government did not run a transport portfolio, it ran a roads portfolio. If we did have a bias towards more roads, it was

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because we levied the public to build more roads. It seemed that we had a skew towards better transport corridors, because we taxed the public to do it.

Ms MacTiernan: What did the people think of it? They did not think very highly of it, and that is why you were voted out.

Mr SWEETMAN: That is perhaps so, but I accept that verdict. What is the minister going to do about it? Will the minister refund that money? Will she refund the 4c a litre levy that we introduced in February 1995? Will that 4c a litre go back to the public? If the Government fiddles with the roads, it should give the money back.

Ms MacTiernan: I suggest that if you use the computer with which you accessed that web site to access the Howard Government's web site, you will find that we have had a goods and services tax. As a result of the goods and services tax, we no longer have a state fuel levy. It is gone. How about that!

Mr SWEETMAN: That was the result of the High Court decision. Are we at cross-purposes, minister? I refer the minister to motor vehicle registration fees. They are levied specifically to provide road funding. Does the Government intend to reassign that to public transport?

Ms MacTiernan: We do not.

Mr SWEETMAN: Will it go to consolidated revenue, minister?

Ms MacTiernan: I give you this commitment: we will not change legislation, and vehicle licensing fee money will continue to be put towards roads.

Mr SWEETMAN: I will put that on my web site. That is an interesting addition, but I do not know whether people will believe the minister.

Ms MacTiernan: You are boxing at shadows, comrade.

Mr SWEETMAN: I need to talk to the minister about the shopping road; I hope she will be quiet for a minute. It is an indictment of the Government that towns like Marble Bar and Nullagine, which have been in existence for well over 100 years, do not have bitumen roads.

Ms MacTiernan: What did you do in the past eight years? We have been here for only three months.

Mr SWEETMAN: I will tell the minister what the previous Government did. For one thing, we did not sign off on the shopping road.

Ms MacTiernan: You promised to. You lied to the people of that electorate. You lied to them in 1993.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr TRENORDEN: I have a point of order.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr SWEETMAN: I refer to a letter from Mr Phil Anning, the Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Shark Bay, and previously of the Shire of East Pilbara, and what he had to say about the shopping road. I hope to read Mr Anning's letter in its entirety. It reads -

Dear Sir

As a past Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of East Pilbara I express my serious concern at the election promise made by Labor member Fred Reibling MLA to guarantee the construction of the road from Karratha to Tom Price to the detriment of far more important roads in the Pilbara Region.

The 2020 Roads Study, a Regional Road Development Strategy for the Pilbara Region, clearly states the number one priority for the Pilbara Region is the Port Hedland-Marble Bar-Newman Road.

Ms MacTiernan: If it is so important, why did you not build it in the past eight years?

Mr SWEETMAN: The road has reached to within 25 kilometres of Marble Bar, but now there is uncertainty about whether we will get the remaining 25 kilometres in the next four years. We were on the ball. Later, the letter continues -

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It is totally unfair that a promise made totally for election purposes by a member who represents a small portion of the vast Pilbara Region should result in Main Roads WA being forced to abandon a developed strategy to meet the demands of a Government supporting one of its members. While it is not argued that the Karratha-Tom Price Road will have benefit, it does not have the priority of the Marble Bar Road and its main beneficiary will be Hamersley Iron.

Many years ago the Great Northern Highway, which was originally part of the Marble Bar Road, was rerouted from Newman to Port Hedland, mainly for the benefit of the mining companies and to the total detriment of the towns of Marble Bar and Nullagine, and again those people are to be neglected because of pork barrelling by Reibling.

In his election speech the Premier Geoff Gallop stated that Labor would govern for all the people and this action clearly demonstrates the lie of that statement.

The Pilbara Development Commission has already come out strongly in support of the Karratha-Tom Price Road, supported by members of Hamersley Iron on the Committee despite a clear conflict of interest and with total disregard for the 2020 Strategy or the people of the East Pilbara Shire. Main Roads WA has no option as

it is directed by the Government to find the funds to honour Reibling's promise, and other priorities will obviously suffer.

In recent wet seasons Marble Bar and Nullagine have been completely cut off for weeks, businesses have closed and people abandoned the area. Tourists who went to visit one of the loveliest areas in the Pilbara had no suitable access and development of the rich mineral areas of the East Pilbara are being held back by this road. Yet the Labor Government is happy to try to shore up an unproductive politician like Reibling and ignore the East Pilbara to construct a tourist road with little priority.

That is interesting reading from a former CEO of the Shire of East Pilbara, who is now the CEO of the Shire of Shark Bay, and who had obviously participated in a strategy to construct the more important roads in the area. It would have galled him to write that; nonetheless, it was factual.

I have touched on only some of what I wanted to touch on today. I am thankful for the opportunity to be in this place again to enjoy the combat and the banter with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. I am sure that will be something in which we will revel for the next four years - or for as long as the Premier dares leave her in that position. I thank the House for this opportunity.

MR BOARD (Murdoch) [4.58 pm]: As this is a general debate, and one of our early debates in the life of the new Government, I reiterate the comments of other members and congratulate the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Acting Speakers for their election to office, and all the new members of Parliament who fought very hard to win their seats. I wish them all well for the coming four years of this Parliament.

I want to put on the agenda some issues in relation to arts and culture in Western Australia. I feel that for far too long the arts area has not been the subject of parliamentary debate. It has certainly not been a major focus of the Parliament for some time. It was just over a year ago that I assumed the position of Minister for Culture and the Arts. During my time as minister, the Opposition seldom raised the arts issue in the Parliament. Of course, it was focusing on what it considered to be the important issues of the day, and so be it. However, it is important that the Parliament consider the area of arts and culture. It is important that it is considered in this Parliament and not just in some of the traditional forums in which it is dealt with, and that the agenda of the arts is raised, particularly leading up to the budgetary rounds this year. I say that because for far too long the arts has been at the end of the food chain. I will deal with capital works later. However, the lack of recurrent funding over many years - the previous coalition Government was as guilty as other Governments - has seen the arts starved of the resources it needs to continue its work and to expand. In real terms, because of its recurrent funding position, the arts is in a worse position today than it was probably 15 years ago. I take pride in the fact that the previous Government put considerable amounts of money into capital works for the arts, and that as a result of some strong building projects, the arts went through the development phase it needed.

It is important that we now look at the long-term future of the arts and what it provides in Western Australia. In those years when the coalition was in government, the arts fought hard in many ways to maintain its position with a recurrent level of funding. However, such are the pressures on government, particularly in health, education and law and order, that extraordinary amounts of money went into those services in Western Australia, and justly so. With the budget coming up and with the opportunity to re-examine the needs in the arts

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community, I want to make sure that this Government knows that it will have the support of the Opposition when it deals with the arts around the budget table.

The arts is far more important than many people realise. The reason it has been at the bottom of the funding food chain for some time is that it has not had a great deal of political muscle. That is because in many ways the arts has been separated by its particular persuasions. In other words, those involved in the performing arts, in the visual arts, in our important museums, in the screen industries, the writers and those involved in training within the arts in many ways did not come together and support themselves as an industry, thereby being able to apply pressure to government for the funding that was required. As a result of the establishment last year of an advisory committee to the ministerial council, chaired by Kevin Campbell, we hope there will be coordination and cooperation between the various disciplines within the arts portfolio and that that will raise the profile of the arts, not only within the community but also within government. It is important that government recognises the extent of the arts.

The arts is a sleeping giant. It might surprise members to know that twice as many people attend an arts function on a weekly basis than attend a sporting function; yet many of the major resources, particularly from the private sector, do not go into the arts. A large amount of advertising goes into the sporting arena, yet the arts is not seen as somehow sexy enough to invest in or to get a return from. It is incumbent on this Government, with the Opposition's support, to reverse that cycle, as the previous Government endeavoured to do during its last few years in office.

The arts is involved in more than just entertaining, creating a vision and exhilarating our community; it generates a large number of dollars. It is estimated that some \$2 billion is generated each year in Western Australia through the various arts areas. The arts employs something like 13 000 people directly and about another 30 000 people indirectly in Western Australia. The arts is a great source of tourism revenue. Many overseas and interstate people who visit towns in Western Australia involve themselves in the arts, some as a result of an arts area in which they are involved and others as a result of spending money while they are in this State. The arts adds to the essence of tourism; hence it is a viable and important industry.

Another area of great significance for the arts is as a trainer. The arts is now recognised throughout our community, particularly in the education area, as a great trainer in personal development. Although that is the case in the disciplines such as the performing arts and visual arts, there are many other areas of the arts in which schools now recognise that for personal development, for self-esteem, for the ability to communicate and for team building, the arts has become an important trainer; hence, during the past two years, one of the largest curriculum take-ups, in percentage terms, within our secondary schools was performing arts. That is great for the future of not only audiences but also our future generations in understanding the importance of the arts.

However, in dealing with and knowing about that, it is important that we do something about it. During the last few years of the previous Government, the importance of our museums was recognised. We were able to provide capital funding of about \$45 million for the creation of the new Fremantle Maritime Museum, which I know this Government will take great pride in opening. That was a great initiative of Richard Court and his Government - one in which the community and tourism will take great pride. That is supplemented by the new museum in Geraldton, which cost an additional \$8 million to \$10 million, and by support to other museums in this State. The previous Government was also successful in building and supporting the new Mandurah Performing Arts Centre, which is of great value to that area and which joins with a number of performing arts centres around this State. However, in many ways Perth needs support, and it is now time for capital works in the arts area.

I will deal with some of the issues and put them on the agenda so that the Minister for Culture and the Arts knows that she will get great support from the Opposition when she bids in Cabinet for the resources that will be required to support the arts, particularly in a capital sense, in Western Australia. Without doubt, the first priority is a new home for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. This State will find itself in a very embarrassing situation in the next 18 months if immediate action is not taken to house the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. It is an icon orchestra - one of three in Australia. It is respected not only in this State and nationally but also around the world. I will not spend time talking about the importance of the orchestra because I am sure all members know that. The important thing is that it needs to be housed, and housed well - where the members can not only put their instruments but also rehearse, play and train.

Mr Hyde: How can we convince our Government when for eight years you were not able to convince your Government? I am asking this in a genuine way. How do we convince the bean counters?

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Mr BOARD: The issue of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra only came up late in the term of the previous Government. In fact, when the ABC had been corporatised and made a decision to downsize its operations in Adelaide Terrace and to go into the new digital world, it did not see a future for the symphony orchestra. As a result, a number of people were looking for opportunities for the orchestra. As the member would be aware, the University of Western Australia came up with a magnificent proposal, which would see the orchestra housed in a way that suited not only the university but also the tourism industry, education and so forth. The housing of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra in a music access centre at the University of Western Australia did not suit everybody. A number of people, including some of the players within the orchestra, the Lord Mayor of the City of Perth and the people who maintain and run the Concert Hall, felt that the relocation of the orchestra to that site was not in the interests of the totality of the Western Australian community. Hence, the jury is out on its location, but it remains to be seen whether it goes to UWA, the Perth Concert Hall or to another site where the Government may have a vision for its location. The fact is we need to do this now. We need to have these plans in place and be working on them, because whatever this Government decides, the reality is that the orchestra will be in a temporary position until it is properly housed. This Government has an opportunity to sit down with those people and with an Opposition that is prepared to help in this regard, and I hope with a federal Government, to ensure long-term security. The Government should make this a major focus.

Western Australia, particularly Perth, is crying out for more performing arts venues, but here in Perth the highest priority ought to be given to a performing arts centre.

Mr Kucera: Is that as well as completing the second phase of the belltower?

Mr BOARD: I am glad the member raised that issue, because the profits from the belltower will go into performing arts.

Mr Kucera: It has to make a profit first.

Mr BOARD: It will, because in my opinion it is a tourism icon. The Government should appreciate that those bells had to be housed in an appropriate manner. They could have been put in a twelfth century belltower somewhere - money still would have been spent - but the Government of the day, our Government, had the vision to house them in a twenty-first century manner for the benefit of tourism and the people of Western Australia. We used those bells in a way that we think adds value to the community. It is a tragedy that the present Government tried to use that issue to indicate that the previous coalition Government had its priorities wrong.

This Government has a number of responsibilities. The member will find that his Government will need to make some decisions to support tourism and the arts in this State. A performing arts centre will need to be built, whether on the foreshore, at East Perth or in Northbridge. It is an opportunity to upgrade facilities for those wanting to attend theatre and view performing arts in Perth. It is a long-term issue that needs to be resolved. This Government has four years and ought to be looking at it now; there is no point in putting it on the agenda for the next election in four years.

Mr Hyde: There was nothing in the Liberal arts policy for that commitment to a performing arts base.

Mr BOARD: The coalition Government had a commitment that the convention centre would have a flexible performing arts space.

Mr Hyde: But you did not keep Multiplex to the deal.

Mr BOARD: The convention centre contains the flexibility for a performing arts centre. I agree that it will not be the total theatre - the important icon that it needed to be - but it will be an addition to performing arts facilities in Western Australia. It was a way of gaining independent and private sector support for some more government assets in this State. I thought it was an excellent opportunity, although not the only opportunity we needed to pursue and not the total resolution of this issue, and if this Government wants to make that a more permanent theatre I would support that effort.

A number of theatres in Western Australia need upgrading, particularly those in Perth, such as the Subiaco Theatre Centre, Regal Theatre, The Blue Room and Rechabite Hall. Technology at His Majesty's Theatre needs to be maintained and improved. The previous Government upgraded that theatre, but it needs some technological improvements to attract the sorts of shows it wants to put on. A major issue is the ownership of and support for the Perth Concert Hall - an under-utilised facility in Western Australia and one that needs the support of the Government to attract some major events. The Concert Hall needs revamping and the Perth City

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Council should look at its ownership, maintenance and long-term use. This Government may be able to solve two problems in one hit by relocating the West Australian Symphony Orchestra to the Concert Hall. If the Government goes through the proper process it will find adequate plans in place.

The museums are an important part of the arts in Western Australia, not only for educational purposes with some 150 000 school children visiting them each year, but also from the point of view of tourism with 700 000 tourists visiting them annually. We take great pride in the fact that we have revamped and supported the growth of museums in a capital works program in Perth and throughout the State. However, a major issue facing the Western Australian Museum is that it is riddled with asbestos. The Government is faced with the fact that access is restricted to some areas of the Museum because of the presence of asbestos. That asbestos is being maintained, it is not a danger to the Western Australian community and - I do not say this in an alarmist sense - it is not a danger to the workforce there, but it is an issue that must be dealt with and cannot be left for another three or four years. It must be dealt with in a constructive way over the next 12 months, and the Government will receive the Opposition's support on that matter.

Storage space in the museums is an outstanding issue. Museum staff are looking for a joint storage facility in the Perth metropolitan region, possibly with the Western Australian Art Gallery and other heritage facilities.

I was disappointed that, in its very early days, the new Government made some decisions that indicated it was walking away from the opportunity to create a screen industry precinct in Perth. The previous Government made a major announcement on this issue and indicated it would be an early priority during its third term. The creation of a screen industry precinct would provide an important opportunity to attract digital production and greater content in this incredibly expanding area. We should put on the agenda the issue of the merging technologies of screen; that is, feature films, television, digital production, the Internet and mobile communications. The merging of the Internet and free-to-air television on the one screen will provide a second-chance opportunity for Western Australia to get into production. Western Australia may not be a destination for major feature films, but it has great technology and support, and we can create a second-chance opportunity in digital production.

Mr Hyde: It was a great idea indeed that your Government promised \$1.7 million for it, but the Liberal Party did not commit to it.

Mr BOARD: The concept the Government was pursuing was that very little public money would be required for the creation of the screen precinct. Government land was available, and I think at the time Channel 7 and various other players were prepared to come together and merge. They were prepared to give up some land to refurbish the Perth Entertainment Centre. There was an opportunity to sell off some land for residential purposes and fund what would have possibly been an Australian first. By having that screen precinct, we would have been able to attract a number of the larger players from around Australia, and indeed some international players, to Perth, which would enable Western Australia to become a leader in the creation of digital production. If the Government dallies with that opportunity, it will miss it because it is only a narrow window of opportunity. The Government should pursue it with haste. If the Government sits down with some of the major people in the industry, it will find they can help the Government fund and support the screen precinct so that the Government can bring that production to Western Australia.

Mr Hyde: We are talking about digital cartooning people now, so they may be coming.

Mr BOARD: That is fine. We have great credentials in that worldwide. If the Government wants channels such as Discovery, Asia, and so forth to relocate to Western Australia, to have some of the major players come, to have Channels 9, 10 and 7 share production studios, to have training studios, to introduce young people into this industry, which will create jobs here and opportunities around the world, it should create the precinct, which will not be done by allowing people to go off and do their own thing. The Government should act as a catalyst in this regard. It can pull this together without a great deal of government resources, but it will take some coordination. I implore the Government to do that.

There are other capital works issues, but I want to address some of the recurrent funding issues that are of importance to the arts area. There are some 23 performing arts groups in Western Australia. Some of the icon groups were mentioned earlier - the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, the West Australian Ballet and the West Australian Opera. I mention particularly the ballet. The West Australian Ballet has not been treated particularly fairly through the Nugent inquiry. Its debt restructuring and its ability to perform and to put on the sorts of shows that the ballet requires will require a recurrent funding boost. Over the past couple of years, we were in a position to support the ballet and to help it in its debt restructuring. However, it has not crawled out of the hole by any means, and the Government should give top priority to supporting the West Australian Ballet.

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Mr Hyde: We are giving it an extra \$1 million.

Mr BOARD: I hope the Government does so. The West Australian Ballet is an icon that is nationally respected. It is important that it tour not only in Western Australia and nationally but also internationally, if it is possible. One of the issues that we were addressing with the federal Government, which I would support this Government pursuing, was the funds required for touring. They are laid down by the Playing Australia funds. Performers must cross state boundaries before they can access those funds. We had the federal Government on the ropes at one stage: because of the size and peculiarity of Western Australia and the difficulties involved for some of the performing organisations to reach some regional towns, these organisations should not have to cross boundaries to access those funds. It is an important issue for this Government to pursue. It is important for not only the ballet but also a range of other performing arts groups that need to travel the equivalent of the length of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland to perform in their State. If that funding could be achieved, we would be able to support our regional areas at the same time.

A range of issues exists when considering the support of the other performing arts. Volunteers run many of the smaller companies and put on their performances. Those companies struggle on a week-to-week basis. The people involved put a great deal into entertaining our community. They are not rewarded well for what they do. More often than not they do it for love and passion. In many ways they are a very important and integral part of the arts in Western Australia. They provide the learning and teaching grounds for many of our young people. They put on alternative performances and fringe festivals. In many ways those people are the lifeblood and vitality of our community. Although in many ways that aspect of the arts may not have the high political profile of education and health, the people involved are equally worthy of government support because of what they do for our community. I can only implore the Government to think of a way to increase the recurrent funding for the arts community. It will come back to the Government in spades, not only in better performances but also in the vitality of our community overall, particularly our young people who now, as I said at the outset of my speech, see the arts as a vital part of our community.

History judges societies not by their education or health systems or the strength of their police forces, which are notable, but by the culture and arts they leave behind. When people look back on our society, I hope they will see that the arts played a vital part in our daily lives. The opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games were seen by billions of people around the world. Had it not been for the vitality, variety and importance of our arts and visual arts, we would not have been able to put on those spectacular ceremonies; we would not be able to impress the people of the world with what was happening in Sydney and Australia. The same applies to many of the events that occurred while visitors were here from overseas. Many communities throughout Australia put on vivid, vital artistic performances to entertain visitors, who left Australia thinking that our society's approach was well balanced.

It is important that we put the arts on the agenda for the Government's four-year term. The arts has not been raised and discussed in this Parliament on a regular basis. My intention as shadow Minister for Culture and the Arts is to do so. I want to make sure that questions on all the disciplines in the arts are raised and that we are able to look to the Government and hold it accountable. The people of Western Australia, particularly those involved in the arts, felt that a Labor Government would treat them kindly, fairly and generously during its four years of government.

Amendment to Motion

Mr BOARD: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but regrets to inform Your Excellency that the State Government seems disinterested in providing country people with adequate police resources and calls on the Government to fund a new police station and justice facility at Albany

MR OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [5.29 pm]: This is a straightforward amendment, which refers, first, to the Government's attitude to providing country people with adequate police resources and, second, to a new police station and justice facility in Albany. Although last week in Parliament the Opposition jolted the Government on the police numbers in country Western Australia, the Minister for Police reluctantly acknowledged that an increase in police numbers was needed. I quote from page 488 of *Hansard* -

... through the RADAR guide, it has emerged that some areas in this State are very much underpoliced. They include the south west, Peel and the Kimberley. Those areas have a real claim to more police officers. I was interested to see that the members for Dawesville and Murray-Wellington

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had the guts to stand in this House and say that their areas need the extra officers. The member for Murray-Wellington said he wanted a fair shake of the tree. That is a reasonable request.

She goes on to talk about Dawesville, Mandurah, Mitchell, Warren-Blackwood and the south west requiring more police. I am referring not only to more police resources but also to the Albany police station and justice facilities. It was interesting to note that the new member for Albany was quoted in the media a week or so ago calling on the Government to provide a new police station and justice facility. The Opposition concurs with the member and asks him to support the amendment to the motion.

The previous Liberal and National Party coalition Government has a proud record of the provision of resources to police in Western Australia. I shall not refer to the whole amount of money allocated to police as I mentioned that in my address on police numbers in country WA; however, I shall refer to police stations. In the eight-year history of the previous Government, 28 police posts, stations and district office complexes costing in excess of \$58 million were opened across the State from Carnamah to Kununurra, Meekatharra to Mirrabooka and Hillarys to Halls Creek. Other stations included Australind, Ballajura, Bayswater, Belmont, Cannington, two in Clarkson, two in Dunsborough, Forrestfield, Geraldton, Gosnells, Kellerberrin, Kwinana, Leeman, Morley, Murdoch, Nullagine, Rockingham, Roebourne, Scarborough and Wiluna. The Bunbury district office and the Busselton Police Station have since been opened. The Bunbury district office includes a justice complex. The Busselton complex was opened recently by the new Government but I was unable to attend that opening. We on this side of the House believe the Opposition has good credentials to ensure adequate facilities are provided for police to be housed in Western Australia. The resourcing of those facilities will be a challenge for the current Government. I was most interested to see the member for Albany already on the front foot calling for a new police station and justice centre. We on this side of the House agree with that call and hope the Government does not seek to oppose the amendment to the motion. It is a straightforward amendment and one with which it could easily agree. I am sure the members of the Government will agree to this amendment to the Address-in-Reply motion.

MR HOUSE (Stirling) [5.33 pm]: I shall make a brief contribution to this debate to support the amendment for a couple of reasons. First, I pay tribute to the police officers who work in rural Western Australia. Some very far-flung areas of this State are manned by very dedicated coppers who do a good job under difficult circumstances. I shall return to the part of the amendment about the Albany Police Station in a moment; however, I ask members to consider the people who work in the Police Service in Albany, whose closest country police station is in Ongerup to the east, a small two to three-man police station. The next police presence is in Esperance, to the east of Ongerup, with many small communities in between, such as Wellstead, Bremer Bay, Jerdacuttup. Those places are serviced by officers travelling very long distances at all hours of the day and night, dealing with some situations in which most people would not wish to be involved. I pay credit to those country policemen and policewomen who do that job under difficult circumstances. In particular the superintendent in charge of the Albany Police Station, Merv Pegler, is an outstanding police officer who has made some significant changes in that region. Under trying circumstances, he has tried to deal with issues such as leave so that he can cover officers in far-flung areas of the State when they go on leave. His area goes as far north as Lake Grace and he has done a very good job in trying to shift the resources there to best accommodate the needs of the region. Until recently, the nearest police presence for the small town of Walpole on the west side of my electorate was in Denmark, approximately 80 kilometres to the east of Walpole, or in Manjimup, about 100 kilometres to the north west. Merv has managed to find a solution to that problem by shifting resources, and I give him a great deal of credit for that.

I particularly want to speak about the Albany Police Station. Having said that those people work under very onerous circumstances sometimes, most members who have been to Albany would know that the Albany Police Station was built by convicts. In fact, the façade of the Albany Police Station is wonderful. Members who have been there would know that behind that convict-built façade are beautiful archways that are a testament to the people who built that structure.

Mr Pandal: Some very good people descended from those convicts, you know!

Mr HOUSE: Some of them are not in their right place. I say to the member for South Perth that a few of them have ascended to positions above their natural status! However, behind that façade members would see that the police station is in desperate need of further resources. The amendment moved by the member for Murdoch deserves to be supported because the member for Albany rightly suggested in his maiden speech that Albany needed a new police station. As a member who represents the region of Albany, I support that sentiment. I look to the new Government to deliver that undertaking because the people who work under those difficult circumstances and have to put up with substandard conditions have done so for long enough. When the

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Opposition was in government it made a significant undertaking. In fact the planning had begun for a new structure to be built on Stirling Terrace, which structure would serve the modern needs of the modern community that extends over that large area. It is a growing community with all the associated problems, such as isolation, which the police deal with in a positive and structured way. It is beholden on this Government to ensure that the appropriation for the building of that new police station is included in this year's budget.

I understand this year's budget will be introduced in August, which in itself is disturbing. Having been in a position to see the way in which government departments work, I can assure the Minister for Police, and other ministers, that if their departments do not know what their appropriations will be until August, there will be mayhem. They will be telling their ministers that they cannot stick to their budgets because a quarter of the year has already gone and they will have difficulty bringing their budgets back under control. In addition to that, I understand the Government intends to return to bringing the budget into the Parliament in April, which means there will be two budgets in about nine months. That too presents difficulties.

Nonetheless, in all sincerity, I wish the Government the best, because the finances of the State are important and must be dealt with properly. It would have been better had the budget been brought down as quickly as possible to address those issues.

I fully support the appropriation for the construction of a new police station at Albany. I am sure this move has the support of all the people of that far-flung region. It is important that those working for the Police Service have the best modern facilities. I am pleased to support the amendment.

MRS ROBERTS (Midland - Minister for Police) [5.42 pm]: The situation at the Albany Police Station is not good. It is a scandal that the former Government did nothing to build a new station during the past eight years. For many of those years, Albany was represented by the coalition's Minister for Police. I am advised that the Newman Police Station is in even worse condition. Unlike the previous Minister for Police, I have drawn the condition of both stations to the attention of the Commissioner of Police and told him that I want provision in the budget for new facilities at both locations.

This amendment surprises me because for the past four years only one member in this House has raised the issue of the Albany Police Station; only one member is on record asking questions in the House and during the estimates committee process to establish whether the minister was aware of the problems. I was that member.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: The member should not interject with such arrant nonsense. Unlike members opposite, this Government is interested in ensuring that country areas have adequate policing facilities. However, it has been left a woeful legacy after eight long years of utter neglect.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: Members opposite have known for years about the state of the Albany and Newman Police Stations, but they have done nothing.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: Why do we not ask the police officers at the Newman Police Station whether it is close to adequate?

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: The member obviously has not read the motion if he thinks that under any circumstances this Government would support an amendment claiming that it is not interested in providing country people with adequate police resources. That is the difference between this Government and the previous Government and their respective policies. We on this side of the House promised more police officers, and we will deliver on that.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: We could appoint the member as an extra copper in his town. We could give the member for Moore a police hat and call him "The Old Bill".

Mr McNee: We do not have enough police officers.

Mrs ROBERTS: That is because during the past four years the coalition Government did not train one police officer over and above the number required to match the attrition rate. It was a disgrace. I have never heard

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such a poor plan proffered by an Opposition. Members opposite have decided to criticise the new Government for all the things they did not do. They did precious little about policing.

It is interesting that not only did none of them raise a complaint about the Albany Police Station when they were in government - not one of them tackled their minister on the topic - but also they were silent about resourcing issues in country areas. When I raised these issues in opposition, I heard not a murmur from those opposite representing country electorates. Do members know why?

Mr McNee: We were getting things; you are just taking them away.

Mrs ROBERTS: Perhaps the member would like to speak. It is interesting that those few conservative country members left in this place have now found their voice. They performed so badly in the provision of basic services, including police services, in country areas that half their number lost their seats. That is why the former members for Albany and Bunbury are not here - they did not deliver for country communities. Everyone should have been aware of the problems at Albany Police Station, but not one member of the coalition raised the issue, least of all the former member for Albany. Now we have a good and competent member for Albany who is taking up issues on behalf of his local community.

During the week after I was appointed Minister for Police, two people knocked on my door: the new member for Albany, and Hon Bob Thomas, who was then a member of the upper House. They both requested a new police station and justice complex at Albany. That is why the other ministers, the Premier and I decided to make Albany the target of our first country cabinet meeting. It was one of the most neglected electorates under the previous Government. I am astounded that members opposite have had the audacity or stupidity to highlight the total inadequacy of the previous Government.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: I thought the member for Warren-Blackwood was smarter than that and that he would be able to speak for longer than four minutes about a policing issue.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: We have members opposite who were ministers in the former Government and who know the processes. They know about the parlous state in which they left the finances of this State.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: Unlike members of the previous Government, members on this side will be proud of our record and we will have something to show for our efforts.

Mr Barnett: The previous Labor Government is known as the worst Government in Australia's history.

Mrs ROBERTS: The Leader of the Opposition, who was a member of the coalition Cabinet, makes blithe statements that the State's finances are in good condition, everything is budgeted for and so on. We have a long list of things that members opposite said they would do in government, but they were not included in the forward estimates. It was stated in question time today that the Delta and community and technology program faces an \$80 million shortfall.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: Talk is cheap. Members on this side have embarrassed members of the former Government about the parlous state of the Albany Police Station. As I have advised the House, representations were made to me by the Labor member for Albany and Hon Bob Thomas in my first week as Minister for Police. I followed that up with a visit to the Albany Police Station to check on the conditions there, and I spoke to the officers working there and to the officer in charge. As a result of that I have asked that work be advanced on replacing the Albany Police Station. I commend the member for Albany for raising this as one of the most important issues in his electorate, and I agree with him wholeheartedly. That is why the Albany Police Station, along with the Newman Police Station, will be considered by the Government as part of the budget process.

Mrs Edwardes: Considered?

Mrs ROBERTS: The member for Kingsley knows the system. She knows that we will not stand here, a couple of months ahead of the budget coming down, and make announcements. Members opposite will hear every one of those announcements when the budget is brought down. It will be a tough budget because of the very shoddy way the former Government handled the State's finances. However, the Government will deliver on policing.

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 29 May 2001]
p575d-627a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (18)

Mr Barnett	Mr Edwards	Mr Masters	Mr Trenorden
Mr Birney	Mr House	Mr Omodei	Dr Woollard
Mr Board	Mr Johnson	Mr Pental	Mr Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr Cowan	Mr McNee	Mr Sullivan	
Mr Day	Mr Marshall	Mr Sweetman	

Noes (26)

Mr Andrews	Mrs Guise	Mr McRae	Mrs Roberts
Mr Bowler	Mr Hill	Mrs Martin	Mr Templeman
Mr Brown	Mr Hyde	Mr Murray	Mr Watson
Mr Carpenter	Mr Kobelke	Mr O’Gorman	Mr Whitely
Mr Dean	Mr Kucera	Mr Quigley	Ms Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr D’Orazio	Mr Logan	Ms Radisich	
Dr Edwards	Mr McGinty	Mr Ripper	

Pairs

Mr Ainsworth	Ms MacTiernan
Mr Waldron	Ms McHale
Mrs Edwardes	Dr Gallop

Independents

Dr Constable	Mr Graham
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Amendment thus negatived.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

MR TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [5.56 pm]: The first thing to do in any Address-in-Reply debate is to recognise who won the election. I congratulate the Australian Labor Party on a substantial and resounding win. It is fact.

The one thing on which all of the 57 members in this place can agree - particularly those who occasionally look outside the Western Australian borders - is that we have a magnificent State. We have our disputes in this place, but when we put it to the people to decide every four years, other than moan and groan, we accept the election result. The Labor Party won the election. It is entitled to govern for the next four years. For the sake of the State, I wish the Government well. I do not wish harm on any individual in Western Australia, and I hope the State progresses for four years. As the Leader of the National Party, I am sure that members of the National Party and all members of the Opposition will be keen for the Government to do well and for Western Australia to prosper in the next four years.

In his absence, I congratulate the Speaker of the House. One of the things that we do not do properly is give due recognition to the presiding officer of the House. I remember a media debate run by the ABC a few years ago in which we were asked why we bowed to the Speaker - that was two Speakers ago - when that individual did not deserve it. All members in this House would know that members do not give the nod to the person, we give it to the position. If members did not accept the role of the presiding officer, we would not have a Parliament. That is sometimes lost on the general public and on people who view the Parliament. I hold the position of Speaker highly. I congratulate the Speaker for attaining that office, and also the other office holders in this place.

I take this opportunity to thank ministers of the previous Government - some are still around. In general, the service that I have received from ministers over the years has been outstanding. I expect the same from the current Government. I am sure that every minister in this place who has taken the oath knows full well that they are here to represent all Western Australians and not just Labor Party members. I know that does not have to be said. Unfortunately, it is sometimes said in the community, and people do not hold ministers in as high regard as they should, because favouritism does occur. Apart from one or two occasions, I have been served well by ministers and I appreciate that.

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Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Mr TRENORDEN: As a person who has been through a number of elections, I can say that the last election was a particularly difficult one. I can show the bloodstains on my shirts! It was an unpleasant election, because there was a lot of bitterness, which is unusual in a country electorate. Much of the bitterness around Northam was centred on Dr George O'Neil's naltrexone clinic, which is a disaster for the town. Many people outside of Northam support Dr O'Neil's clinic in Northam, but they need to go there and see what he is trying to do. He is trying to set up a clinic in the central business district, in an old hospital, which will cost \$15 million to be made habitable. He is set up for failure. He could have purchased land at several places around Northam, and set up a much more viable operation. During the election campaign I got into a fair bit of strife over the naltrexone unit, because I made it very clear that I was strongly in favour of assisting heroin addicts. As a result, a lot of people in Northam assumed I supported every aspect of that clinic, which I do not. If George O'Neil operated a business, subject to the normal criteria applied by government for assistance to such ventures, he would not clear the hurdles. He is a very decent man with a very decent intent, but his business plan is not viable. Anyone who spends five minutes looking at it can see that it is doomed to failure. Early in the campaign I proposed that Dr O'Neil be assisted to set up his clinic somewhere else. At the time an old army property, which had been converted into a school camp, was available. It had basketball courts, a swimming pool, a six to nine hole golf course, and 30 acres of open space for riding horses and for other outdoor activities. Addicts tend to be in the 18 to 28 year age bracket, and Dr O'Neil is proposing to lock them into a concrete building and not allow them out. It is illogical that young people, addicts or not, should be treated in that way. The issue of naltrexone burned very fiercely in Northam, and continues to do so. It has split the community. Many in the community want to support addicts. Northam, unfortunately, does have its drug addicts and dealers, and drug addiction is a major issue. Like all issues of this nature, it should not be handled on an ad hoc basis, and with all Dr O'Neil's good intentions, his is still an ad hoc approach.

The electorate of Avon is still very angry. Many different issues are making country people angry, and the Government will be feeling some of them, because that anger will not simply go away. The gravity of what they have done is just dawning on country people. They have elected a Labor Government, but many of them did not vote Labor. My two party preferred vote in the electorate of Avon went down by about six per cent. I was amazed to find, as the poll was being finalised, that the Australian Labor Party almost ran third to One Nation. One Nation came within 160 votes of exceeding the vote for the Labor Party. Northam was a Labor Party stronghold for 53 years, until I won the seat of Avon. Labor has suffered a substantial turnaround in Northam, which does not give me any joy. Every political process must have people on both sides. Northam had been a strong Labor town for many years. Before the Second World War it had the largest railway establishment in the State; it was larger than Midland. There was not a great deal of pleasure for me in watching the outcome of the election, even though getting returned is always gratifying. I was pleased to be returned, because the seat of Avon, despite the contrary statements of the Minister for Police and others, is really on the move. A lot of very good things are happening there. The lifestyle is improving, but I am not going to run through all of that.

After a period of time, and struggles with the previous Government, the Avon Industrial Park is up and running. Now, \$550 000 is needed for electric power, and it will be interesting to see whether this Government comes good, as the previous Government did, over infrastructure for that industrial park. If that \$550 000 is not obtained, about 100 jobs will not be created in Northam in the next six to nine months. The Government will feel these pressures from the electorate of Avon. There is also considerable trouble with an electric power line from Narrogin to York, the capacity of which fluctuates enormously, to the extent that light industry cannot operate. Two major industries that have just established in the area have had to build their own power stations, because they could not be reliably supplied by Western Power.

The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will have to come to grips with roads that are used for transporting agricultural lime in the area around Toodyay. Those who travel the State will know that very few places provide an east-west route north of Perth. One of these routes is an attractive road called the Bindoon Dewars Pool Road, running into Toodyay from near Bindoon, which will experience a large increase in traffic as a result of the transport of agricultural lime. Lime transport will cause only a small proportion of the increase in traffic, because the area is growing at more than two per cent a year and that will create activity. That road will come under considerable pressure, but at the moment the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has placed a stop-work order on it. Unless the minister removes that order, Toodyay will become a copy of what Northam used to be, when the town centre was full of trucks. This has created great pain for that town. Local residents agitated for 35 years to get the bypass. The bypass will work wonders for Northam, and even though in the short term the town will take a dive, like all communities after the construction of a bypass, it will pick up. When trucks are not going through the heart of the town, there will be major benefits. Toodyay now has all the local roads

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funnelling into the centre of the town, so all traffic has to pass through, which will dramatically increase the pain, unless something is done.

The biggest issue in my electorate, and I hope it will be resolved in the next few days, is the rostering of doctors at Northam Hospital. Northam Hospital must become a regional hospital, with emergency services for an area some 200 kilometres to the north and to the east. Most of the towns in that area do not have doctors, and where they do have them, the doctors deserve time off on weekends, and people need to be certain they can go to a hospital and get treatment. If I were sick and heading for Northam Hospital I would have no idea whether I would be able to see a doctor. I hope that matter will be resolved in the next few days. If not, I will speak to the Minister for Health about it.

Although it has not been confirmed - I hope that a few Labor members will be on my side - I hear that the commitment to community banking from the Labor Party no longer exists and the money earmarked for it has gone. As the father of community banking in Western Australia, that is a hot issue for me. Approximately 17 communities are lining up to implement community banking. I went to the opening of the Bayswater Community Bank and stood among the crowd.

Mr D'Orazio: Will you go to the next one?

Mr TRENORDEN: I have attended every opening to date. As members probably know, I introduced community banking to Western Australia.

Mr Pandal: A very good job too. Many people say you fathered a very attractive child!

Mr TRENORDEN: That is a reasonable statement, member for north Toodyay. I should not call him the member for north Toodyay; it is west Toodyay.

Mr Pandal: Certainly not with my constituents in the House.

Mr TRENORDEN: The Midfield Group and Roediger Bros Pty Ltd are considering establishing an export beef abattoir in Northam. That will be excellent for the area because at present there is no beef export abattoir north of Harvey. Such a facility north of Perth would be excellent for the country people in that area. One shift involves 300 jobs and two shifts involve 600 jobs. In a community like Northam that is not to be sneezed at.

The National Party will be watching very closely how the State Government deals with some of the wider issues. One such issue - health - was referred to in the Press today and members have had a fair amount to say about it. I was disappointed to hear the Minister for Health say that country areas have not been accountable for their health dollars. That is nonsense. Over the past decade, the performance of country hospitals has been benchmarked. Their health funds have been pruned substantially while the spending by teaching hospitals in Perth, where benchmarking has not occurred, has been out of control. Fifty-five per cent of the health budget goes into teaching hospitals.

Mr Barnett: This Labor Government is supposed to have the most effective front bench the Government can provide. It is its responsibility to govern and attend Parliament. It is showing absolute arrogance by not having a minister present on the front bench now.

Mr TRENORDEN: I agree. In the eight years that the coalition was in government Richard Court spent much time sitting in his seat in Parliament. The previous Deputy Premier and member for Merredin, Hendy Cowan, sat in his seat for almost the entire time that Parliament sat. I am sure that if we quantified his time, we would find that no-one sat in here more often than he did. It was a credit to him. We must give credit to those members who spent a lot of time in here, despite their very busy programs. The Leader of the Opposition's reference to the absence of ministers in the House at this time is valid. This place is run by the Government, therefore its members should be present.

Health is a red hot issue for the Government. The minister may wish to deny it, but the allocation of money for health is being reduced in country areas. In my area, where two health budgets are managed, funding has been cut. Money for the Western Health Service is being reallocated to prop up the metropolitan budget prior to June. That is outrageous. The Government has said that small businesses will have their bills paid within 30 days, but at the same time it is directing country boards not to pay their bills. That is the epitome of hypocrisy. Money is being taken out of country health funding to bolster a system that has been raping Western Australian taxpayers for as long as we care to remember. I listened to the rhetoric of the Minister for Health and I wish him well. People have been struggling with the health budget for many years. However, those teaching hospitals must be brought into line.

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When I made inquiries about two years ago, Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and King Edward Memorial Hospital had between them about 40 accountants on their books. Much of the funding does not go directly into health activities; it goes into sundry expenses. In the past, every time a Government has announced in the Press a possible tightening of those budgets by suggesting closures of wards the public has gone berserk and marched on the streets. The teaching hospitals know they do not have to be accountable. I say to the minister, even though he is not here, and other members of the Labor Party that the same thing will happen to them. It is a game plan that has been played for decades. I would like to see a bipartisan approach to health to force some of the teaching hospitals to come to order. They alone are funded to the tune of \$1 billion.

The issue of roads will be interesting as it unfolds over the next few months. The 2020 program referred to earlier by a speaker involved canvassing Western Australian communities from Kununurra to Esperance to assess priorities for roads. As a result a 10-year road program was prioritised. People may scoff and say, "Who cares? That was a coalition Government's priority that we can change." That would be a poor attitude because local government and industry have made plans based on those priorities. Once those priorities have changed they will not affect only what may have been the previous Government's policy.

Mr Ainsworth: The 2020 plan was devised in cooperation and participation with those communities. It was not just a matter of the Government imposing its policies on the community; it was the community imposing its ideas on government and the two cooperating.

Mr TRENORDEN: At a meeting in Moora a few days ago, local government was concerned about spending tens of thousands of dollars out of its own budget only to find that the priorities could be changed and the money would be wasted. Anyone who knows anything about local government will know they cannot afford to spend \$10 000 or even \$5 000 on misguided priorities.

I was interested to read in *The West Australian* a couple of days ago an excellent story about the Perth police on the beat. The practice referred to is exactly what has been happening in rural Western Australia for 10 years. I doubt very much that Perth districts will have their police numbers reduced due to the success of the interaction with the metropolitan communities. However, my community will have its police numbers cut because they have been successful. That will not be worn by country people. The Government may want to try to shove that criticism onto the minister, but it will not be able to do that successfully. People are very concerned about their lifestyle in country areas.

There is also a great deal of concern about the amount of expenditure that will occur on capital works in schools. That is yet to be seen.

I apologise to the member for Perth for biting his head off one day last week when I called him a drop kick. I did so because of the passion I feel about this issue. He said my area was in steep decline and did not deserve services. My area has collectively grown by one per cent a year over the past five years. It does not help its cause to have the Minister for Police or the member for Perth say that my area is in full decline. If it is true, let it be, but it is not. A publication from the Ministry for Planning last year lists population projections for all the regions outside the metropolitan area. None of the 44 communities in the wheatbelt region is in decline. That is why I get angry when members who should know better make comments like that that affect my constituency. Many public servants and other people believe that because my part of the world is over the ranges, it is in full decline and that they need not worry about it. The projection in that publication goes to 2016, and it projects very strong growth. A planning document called "The Avon Ark" was produced last year

The member for Ballajura interjected.

Mr TRENORDEN: For many purposes, Northam is part of the metropolitan area. The member has been to Northam - many members have not. As a National Party member, many people ask me what I am doing there because it is an urban part of the world that will become more urbanised. If I relied on farmers for my position in this House, I would have been dead a long time ago. The percentage of farmers in my electorate is very small.

The growth rate is high in Northam, and so are the services that go with that. Northam's growth rate is greater than the metropolitan area. I get angry when members say that Northam does not deserve more services even though its growth rate is greater than the areas represented by members who demand more services. The document to which I referred lists Bassendean and Canning as being in decline. I wonder whether those areas lack services. Members do not talk about taking police out of Bassendean or Canning.

The member for Ballajura interjected.

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Mr TRENORDEN: The member can play whatever games he likes in the metropolitan area; he should leave my part of the world alone.

During the first few weeks of sitting, it has been interesting to hear the crows' nest on my left interjecting all the time. The Acting Speaker is one of the people in the crows' nest. I point out to members that eight years ago, it was called the vegie patch. If one took a photo of the vegie patch eight years ago and showed it to members of the House today, one would not find too many of them left. I have dubbed members opposite the crows' nest because they crow all the time. I have no objection to members opposite crowing. Those members have been elected to this place and should be enthusiastic in representing their electorates.

From time to time, I try to throw a few words of caution to members of the Government. They will not crow so much in two years after they have had to deal with a couple of crises. That happens to every Government. Although members opposite might be passionate, many members on my left say that because they won the election, resources must be taken out of the country and put into the city. If members opposite keep saying those things, I will tell my constituency.

The Labor Party must get one vote, one value through this system, because country people will not vote for the Labor Party. The vote of the Labor Party in rural Western Australia is ordinary. It is good to see the ALP represented across the spectrum through the members for Albany, Collie, Bunbury and Geraldton. The challenge for those members will be to stay there. The voters have discovered that no longer does 80 per cent of the people elect the Government; rather, 10 per cent of the people make sure who is not in Government. The Canadians discovered that 20 years ago and have been booting people out of Government since then. Western Australians and Australians have now learned that procedure. One must only read *The West Australian* and letters to the editors elsewhere to understand that people have learnt that they have that power. Although they cannot decide who will form Government, they can decide who will not.

The negative vote will always be cast against the Government of the day. That was members on this side four months ago. In four years, it will be this Government. That is why I caution members opposite; they can throw it to the wind, I do not care. I am not here to give them advice. If members opposite continue to carp and harp on about what country areas have in the area of health, about which the Government is raping country areas -

The Minister for Health interjected.

Mr TRENORDEN: The money has been whipped out of Northam and the great southern region. The minister may say that is not happening, but it is. We know because we talk to the people.

Mr Watson: We have money in Albany.

Mr TRENORDEN: That may be the point. Maybe I should go back to my constituents and tell them that some ministers favour some members over others. Members opposite must have been sound asleep if they do not understand that country people across Australia want equity and fairness in the process. Members cannot tell them that the Government will give them one vote, one value and increase the cost of fuel by 10c a litre. The Government is heading down that course.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs is in the House now. He is on a hiding to nothing on the fuel issue. The public's expectations have been raised through the roof, and the minister must deliver. Perhaps the minister will not feel the pain, but the members for Albany, Collie and Bunbury will. The people are expecting the Government to solve the fuel pricing problems.

I congratulate all the new members of the House. From time to time we work together and do things on a cooperative basis. I look forward to the committees working together, although I will not be on any of them. I look forward to a functional Parliament for the next four years.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [7.27 pm]: The Address-in-Reply in response to His Excellency's speech allows members the opportunity to speak widely about what His Excellency had to say. It also allows me to comment on the priorities of this Government and on what it has done in its first three months in office. I will be interested in knowing how true these comments prove to be in three and a half years. I am willing to bet they will be close to the truth.

I recognise that the Government has been in power for only three and a half months; therefore, it is still early days. Nevertheless, some patterns of behaviour and priorities are apparent. I will consider the initial task of the new Government to form Cabinet and its structure. When Labor came to power, the Premier made great play about how the Government had reduced the size of Cabinet from 17 members to 14 members. I recognise that that measure will produce some savings. Obviously, there will be three fewer ministerial officers and fewer

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ministerial staff. However, those savings are largely symbolic. They are not large in the context of a Western Australian government sector, the operation of which costs approximately \$10 billion. The claims by the Premier that savings of \$20 million will be achieved over four years are far from the reality.

It was also stated that under the Gallop Administration, ministerial officers would be restricted to 10 staff. That promise has already been broken. Ministerial officers already exceed 10 staff and I will be interested to find out the number when that information is made available. I have no objection to a ministerial officer having more than 10 staff, but the Government should not promise that there will not be more than 10 staff and break the promise immediately. Indeed, it is one thing to reduce the number of ministerial officers and ministers and to pretend that the number of ministerial staff has been reduced; however, if the Premier were here, I would pose to him the question: does the policy unit in the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet already have some 35 officers working in it? If that figure is true, what is the point of talking about fewer ministers or ministerial officers if it has a policy unit with 35 people after just three months? It is exactly the pattern of the Government of Brian Burke; it is exactly the same Labor Party form of administration.

On the structure of the Cabinet as it was first announced, it is obvious to many people in the community, particularly in industry, that there was no designated ministers for tourism, small business, women's interests, seniors or youth. Indeed, there was no clearly identified minister for the mining and resources sector, the most significant economic sector in our economy. Within about three weeks, it was necessary to add various titles and reassign titles to overcome that glaring shortcoming. Even as we stand here today, there is no minister with the title of mining or resources development. It is simply subsumed in the general title of state development. This State depends on the mining and energy resources sector for its economic welfare for investment, development and export. It is the dominant component of our economy. If there is one thing that makes Western Australia special and of world significance, it is our mining and petroleum industry. People often boast that this State has 10 per cent of the population and accounts for 26 per cent of exports. That is true. What they must also recognise is that about 70 to 80 per cent of those exports are accounted for by mining and petroleum alone. It is a dominant export sector. I will buy a bottle of good red wine from the electorate of the member for Warren-Blackwood for any member who can find the original source of that quote.

Again on structure, when the Minister for Education was the opposition spokesman he boasted that he, unlike me at the time - he accused me of being a part-time education minister - would be a full-time education minister. However, what do we find? He is Minister for Education; Sport and Recreation; and Indigenous Affairs. Perhaps he is capable of handling that load. I do not mind. However, the commitment given to the education sector was that there would be a specialist Minister for Education. That commitment was immediately broken the day the Cabinet was announced.

Let us look at the Premier's workload. The Premier has responsibility for public sector management, federal affairs, science and citizenship and multicultural affairs. All of those areas are important. Essentially, public sector management is handled by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and a few other key agencies. Federal affairs is part of the normal role of a Premier; it is not an agency or a department. He probably has one or two advisers working in that area. Science is a new portfolio, and I congratulate him on identifying science as an area of importance. That is a wise move. However, there is no state department of science as such; there are bits of science within Agriculture Western Australia, the Health Department, the Department of Minerals and Energy and so on. The areas of public sector management, federal affairs, science and citizenship and multicultural affairs are, by definition, four very small areas of government. This Premier has the lightest portfolio workload of any Premier in the State's postwar history. It is little wonder that some of his ministers are not coping with their portfolios and are overworked. The Premier has taken on an extraordinarily light workload. He has relatively minor responsibilities. I recognise that the role of Premier is an important and busy one. However, all Premiers in the postwar period have taken on substantial ministerial responsibilities, with the exception of this Premier who has virtually none. He has very lightweight responsibilities.

There is another area of the cabinet structure about which I have spoken before, so I will not labour the point. When we heard of the belated and dragged-out disclosure of the appalling road safety record of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and of her losing her licence three times, instead of disciplining the minister, the Premier made the decision to split the transport portfolio. He got it wrong and had to redo it twice; it is probably still not right. It has imposed substantial confusion and costs on the public sector. Instead of disciplining the minister or relieving her of the transport portfolio, he sought to do the worst thing; that is, reorganise and split the portfolio. The costs of that are still being borne throughout the Administration. Hopefully, the next time

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there is a ministerial change, which will not be far away, that will be corrected and we will have one minister for transport, not a T1 and T2 situation.

If members talk to the people in industry and in community groups, they will find that this Government is absolutely unavailable. Ministers are not available and I have received complaint after complaint from organisations and prominent people in this State that they cannot get access to ministers. Too many ministers are doing a nine-to-five job. The job of a minister - I did it for eight years - is a difficult one; it is demanding and stressful. Ministers cannot do it on a nine-to-five basis. Ministers cannot have their staff open a bottle of red wine at four o'clock in the afternoon. It is not on. Ministers cannot allow those things to happen. Yet that has become the trait of this Labor Government. People and ministers must work hard. The continuous advice to my office from organisations is that people telephone a minister's office and are told they cannot see that minister for two or three months or that the minister will get back to them, but he or she never does. Correspondence is not responded to and telephone calls are not answered. It is early days and the Government might get it right. At the moment, the administration of ministerial staff and at a ministerial level is very poor. There are demands; the pressure is enormous. For example, literally dozens of telephone calls and correspondence are received every day in the education portfolio, and it must be attended to. It is not being attended to under this Government. The honeymoon period is over. The Government has been in office for three and a half months. It needs to roll up its sleeves, start seeing people and start dealing with groups and issues. It is not doing it. Some of the ministers are doing okay, but the majority of Cabinet is not. We all know that if people want access to a minister under the Labor Government, they can pay \$1 000 and go to an ALP dinner. That is the reality. The Labor Party held a dinner last week for which members of the public were charged \$1 000 to have dinner with a minister. What a standard to set! We did not do that when we were in government. We never dared, nor were we so arrogant or disparaging of the public, to say that people could meet a minister by paying \$1 000. It is disgraceful.

A government member interjected.

Mr BARNETT: The 500 Club does not do that. It never happened. The 500 Club holds lunches, which are wide public events attended by 200 or 300 people. They might pay \$50 or \$100 to be part of an audience. When I was a minister, I did not take part in an event like the one held by the Labor Party. It reflects poorly on the Labor Party when it must tell people to pay \$1 000. I know people did; of course they did. Many people in business are supporters of the Liberal Party and, in reality, they must now deal with a Labor Government. If those people want to have contact with the Labor Government and to continue their business relationship with it, the implication is to kick \$1 000 into the ALP, go along, have a bit of a nosh-up, put their snout in the trough with the Labor Party and they will get access to a minister. That is an appalling message to give to the community of Western Australia. However, the Labor Party did not hesitate. Again, it was à la Brian Burke; it is exactly the same style. Not much has changed. So-called new Labor is looking very much like old Labor of the 1980s.

I have said a bit about ministerial conduct and again I will make a brief comment. We heard many self-righteous, pious comments by the Premier, both before and during the election campaign, about the Labor Party's having the toughest code of conduct in Australia, and on he went. Yet, when the first incident arose in the first two weeks or so - that is, the driving record of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure - he failed to act. He will never be forgotten for that. That will always be remembered by the voters of Western Australia. It was made worse when the minister concerned failed to divulge the true extent of her appalling driving record. She effectively concealed it from the public. The Premier knew about it, but he did not make it known either. Indeed, he went to the media and complimented and congratulated the minister for being open and accountable when he knew she was not telling the full truth, and he helped her conceal it. On the first test of accountability he failed totally. As I said previously, his response was to create absolute confusion by trying to split the transport portfolio as an alternative to disciplining the minister. The Premier should have taken the member for Armadale out of transport and put someone else in charge of that portfolio. There was another minor issue. I will not labour this point; however, there was a lot of discussion about the member for Innaloo conducting court cases. That is his choice. I do not mind if the member for Innaloo does that. The point is that I do not think it is the right thing to do. However, that is a judgment I would make for myself and for members on this side of the House.

Mr Quigley: What about Hon Peter Foss and Dr Kim Hames?

Mr BARNETT: The point I want to make is that when challenged on the issue, the Premier responded that it was okay. Where is his standard? I do not have a particular objection to anything the member for Innaloo does.

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Ultimately, he will be accountable to his electorate and to his party colleagues. It is not for me to comment on what the member does because other members have business and farm interests and the like. However, when he was challenged, the Premier was dismissive of it and said that it did not matter. He was the person who boasted two or three months earlier about how strong he would be on standards of conduct for ministers and parliamentarians. He had two opportunities to show that there was some substance to those claims. He missed those two opportunities; he failed. That is the measure of this Premier.

It is the early days of this Government and all ministers will make the odd mistake as they come to grips with being ministers; however, the conduct of some ministers so far has not been all that flash. Almost immediately on becoming a minister, the Minister for Police found herself in a public brawl with the Commissioner of Police about patrols in Northbridge. It was an unseemly, tacky little episode. It was not the sort of conduct that one would expect from a Minister for Police, who was clearly interfering with the operational role of the Commissioner of Police. She had been opposition police spokesperson for some time and knew the correct protocols.

The Minister for Education has really distinguished himself. He has managed to lose from the education system the best director general that this State has had for a long time. The director general was applauded as an outstanding leader of education throughout government, private and Catholic education institutions. He was acclaimed, admired and loved by teachers throughout this State. Yet Peter Browne, the director general, mysteriously resigned within two months or so of the new minister taking office. Is that a coincidence? Clearly it is not. This State has lost an outstanding director general and education in this State is left with a mediocre minister.

The Minister for Education also made a spiteful, vindictive and political decision to break up the relationship between the Education Department's VacSwim and the Royal Life Saving Society. It was something he argued about in opposition. If members do not believe it was spiteful, they should know that he announced it in a press release that was embargoed until 10.00 pm on a Friday. He did not even have the courtesy to properly inform the Royal Life Saving Society. The Royal Life Saving Society is not some cowboy outfit, but an institution that is over 100 years old and the premier, outstanding institution on water safety in this State and in Australia. That was a great opportunity for the Education Department and its 800-odd schools and 260 000-odd students to develop a partnership on water safety with the nation's leading water safety organisation, the Royal Life Saving Society, but that has now been fumbled. That opportunity would have done wonderful things for the safety of children and for the development of swimming, water polo, yachting and other sporting groups. That arrangement was overturned out of pure political spite. There was no valid reason for his breaking the partnership. There was no attempt to deal constructively with the Royal Life Saving Society. The decision was made out of political spite. The only saving grace was that the surf lifesaving, swimming and sporting communities of this State recognised it for what it was and it will not be forgotten. Spiteful, political, nasty!

The Minister for Labour Relations did not take long before he found he had some industrial problems. Kevin Reynolds and the boys were flexing their muscles on building sites and the "No ticket, no start" signs went up. Clearly, they were illegal. However, what did the minister say? He said it was fine; that it was just union advertising. What an appalling response! The head of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union described him as a weak bastard in the print media. I do not like to use those terms in Parliament, but I must say that Kevin Reynolds has been proved right. No action has been taken by either the minister or the Premier to do anything about the lawlessness that has emerged on building sites. Organised crime figures from New South Wales have some sort of relationship, whatever that might be, with the building and construction industry in this State. There have been reports of intimidation, money changing hands and the like. It is a difficult industry. It has a rough and violent history. It requires strong government and strong ministers to keep it in place. Yet, almost within two weeks, this Government lost control.

This House had a debate about the Attorney General and the finance broking industry today. The Government has backed away from, reneged on and abandoned in a major way commitments that the Opposition believes were made to victims of the finance brokers issue. Under the Westminster system of government, the Attorney General operates from a unique position. He is a cabinet minister, but he is also the first law officer of the State. He also has a responsibility to protect and preserve the separation of powers between the Executive, the judiciary and the Parliament. He knew that; the member for Fremantle is not naive. He is an experienced member of Parliament, a former minister, and a lawyer. Yet what did he do in the midst of a coronial inquiry? I admit that it was an entertaining coronial inquiry, if not bizarre. However, the Attorney General described it as a circus. He commented on court proceedings. He, above anyone else in this State, must ensure the independence of the judiciary. He has the responsibility to protect the independence of the judiciary. However, he did not do that.

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He compromised it by criticising it with a throwaway line - he called it a circus. What made it worse was that the Premier of the day backed him by also saying it was a circus. Some things in government do not have a lot of politics attached to them. However, there are some responsibilities to which the Government must adhere. One of them is protecting the separation of powers by recognising the independence of the Executive, the Parliament, and the judiciary. Yet, in three months, that independence has been badly compromised by the Attorney General.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage jumped for joy after the election, which I can understand, and announced in her role as minister that the proposed sale of part of the former Maylands Police Academy would not go ahead. When challenged in Parliament and in the media, she had to concede that she did not have ministerial responsibility to make that decision, let alone to announce it. Yet she jumped in as Minister for the Environment and Heritage and announced something that was subject to approval by the Western Australian Planning Commission. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the minister responsible for the Planning Commission, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. It may be no big deal, and I am sure that the Government would have announced that position anyway. However, the point I make is that ministers have clearly laid down statutory responsibilities. They must understand those responsibilities and adhere to them. Yet in the first three months of this Government, ministers have been all over the shop. These are experienced members of Parliament. Members can be excused if they do not have much experience, but if they have experience, and have access to Crown Law and other advice, it cannot be excused. Their performances have been ordinary.

I will now talk about some of the financial aspects of governing this State, the business of government. It does not matter what a party's policy is; once it is in government, its members must run this machine called the Western Australian Government with its 100 000 employees, its departments and its \$10 billion turnover. Running that machine, making decisions and administering it is a demanding task. It wears out ministers more than anything else does. There is no doubt that it is hard yakka. Some ministers are probably starting to find that out. However, on matters of finance, government members have been bleating to the point of boredom that every issue that has arisen has been the fault of the previous Government. The Opposition knew that the Government would do that and members decided that they would cop it for six or 10 weeks; yet still the Government goes on and on. At some stage - I hope it will be soon - the Government must accept the responsibility of being in government. It must accept responsibility for financial management. Its members cannot go on and on saying that every mistake belongs to the previous Government. I have said four times already since this Parliament resumed and I will say it again: when the 2000-01 budget was presented there was a projected budget surplus on the operating balance account of \$42 million. The mid-year review conducted -

Ms MacTiernan: Full of lies! Where was the \$60 million for the southern transport corridor? It is not there.

Mr BARNETT: The Acting Speaker's job is to administer this House, not to support a minister.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): I call the member for Armadale to order!

Mr BARNETT: The Acting Speaker should be bipartisan, which I am sure he is.

The midyear review was to assess the state of the budget at the time of the calling of the election. It showed that despite commitments made by the previous Government, revenues had risen more than expenditure and the budget position, the projected budget surplus at the time of the election, was not a surplus of \$42 million but a surplus of \$98 million. That is what the Treasury told everyone in Western Australia that the Government inherited. Yes, there are problems and attitudes that the Government must manage.

Governments are responsible for what has happened, not for what may happen. It has to manage "of the day". That is what this Government must now do. It inherited a budget that was in surplus at the time of the election. It also inherited a level of state debt of roughly \$4 000 million, \$4 billion less than what we inherited when we came into government in 1993. If the effects of inflation and interest rates - which are probably half what we had to deal with - are subtracted, the Government has a vastly reduced debt servicing problem compared with the coalition Government. It is probably a debt servicing saving of a quarter of a billion dollars a year. It has about a \$250 million head start in expenditure. The member should not shake his head. He should go to Treasury briefings and learn about the Parliament. He should do some homework and attend the Treasury briefings that I am sure the Treasurer makes available so that he can start to understand the accounts of this Parliament and the State. None of the government members yet understands public finance. Very few new members do for a while. My advice to the Government is to do the homework. Then, it will start to understand the situation. It has issues with financial management. The Labor Party made all sorts of commitments during the election campaign. As I

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said last week, it costed its commitments during the election campaign at \$756 million. The Liberal Party said that, no, they were worth \$1.1 billion. The Under Treasurer, the permanent head of the Treasury, has come out in print and said that Labor's commitments are worth \$1.2 billion. The Government's financial problem lies in trying to deliver \$1.2 billion on top of what I agree is a tight financial position. However, I urge it to stop boring the public of Western Australia. It should start governing and start accepting responsibility. The Labor Party is in government. It is making decisions. It started making them the day it came into power. Those decisions are costing money and it should bear responsibility for them.

Public sector restructure is worth doing. I regret that we did not do more when we were in government. We did some things, but we did not do enough. The Government has announced it will reduce the number of departments from 46 to 23. It is a mistake to try to do it all in one hit. Those sorts of changes should be made progressively. They involve people's jobs, livelihoods and careers. The Premier said the only job losses would be those of 60 chief executive officers. He effectively denied that public servants would experience job losses. It was only under pressure that the Treasurer was honest enough to admit that jobs would go. I quote from *The West Australian* of 23 March -

Treasurer Eric Ripper has admitted there will be job cuts in the WA public service but the Government will still not reveal where

Nor will he reveal how many jobs will be lost. At least 1 000 jobs will go. The Government has a responsibility to make that clear to the public service. It has a responsibility to make redundancies available. No-one knows how many jobs will be lost, and morale in public sector has plummeted. There is widespread confusion. I do not object to changes in the administrative structure, although I do not think the Government has it entirely right. Most of the changes are reasonably sensible. The Government needs to manage the process, but there is little sign of that happening. Of course jobs will go. If departments are amalgamated, receptionists, information technology operations, budget departments and public relations agencies will all be affected.

Ms MacTiernan: How many public service jobs were lost under you?

Mr BARNETT: I do not object to public service job losses. However, if the Government wants to reduce the size of the public sector, it should be honest and tell the community, particularly the public sector unions and workers, how many jobs will go and what conditions will be offered. Reports are already coming in that people in some departments have been told their jobs will no longer be there. There is already discussion about who will take redundancies. The Government should come clean and tell us how many jobs will be lost and from what areas. It will not get a hard time from us. All we are saying is that the Government should be fair to the individual. The Premier laughs again. He should think of his constituents, the public servants who know their careers are to be terminated under his Government. He should at least tell them the truth.

Mr Murray: You just put them in a shed and treated them like animals.

Mr BARNETT: Member for Collie, I will talk about energy in a minute. Mr Acting Speaker, I again remind you that your job is not to laugh with your colleagues but to administer this Chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): I ask the member for Collie to come to order. I am not laughing; it is no source of amusement to me.

Mr BARNETT: I refer to economic development and the structure of Cabinet. I understand the Government is a socialist-based party. However, a Government must have an appropriate balance between development and social issues. The Cabinet has only one minister with a clear development responsibility.

Dr Gallop: That is rubbish.

Mr BARNETT: Some ministers share bits of it. Only the Minister for State Development has a clear development role. He is the business minister. Only one out of 14 can claim that. Yes, the Government has a science portfolio and a Treasurer with responsibility for energy. However, only one minister has a clear development responsibility working with industry.

Ms MacTiernan: That is rubbish.

Mr BARNETT: I am sorry; that is the reality. That one minister has responsibility for what were the commerce and trade, small business, minerals and energy, resources development and tourism portfolios. I think he is a good bloke, and I am sure he is trying his hardest, but he is no superman and he is not an intellectual giant. He is not capable of handling those portfolios.

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Several members interjected.

Mr BARNETT: I am paying him a compliment. He is not capable of doing it. At least two ministers should be involved. The Government should have a designated minister with responsibility for the mining, resources and energy sector. That is necessary in this State; yet this Government does not have that. It has one minister, who is doing a good job and working hard. He is the one minister who is putting in. I like and acknowledge the Minister for State Development. However, he cannot handle that workload. The tourism industry complained that last week a major tourism conference was held in Brisbane -

Dr Gallop: Don't be ridiculous.

Mr BARNETT: Oh, just go away for a while.

Dr Gallop: I'm not going away. I'm going to be sitting here for some time, so get used to it.

Mr BARNETT: The Premier should behave himself. He should stop acting like a little boy. He has a schoolboy attitude.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): Will the Government please respect the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BARNETT: A major tourism conference was held in Brisbane. The Minister for Tourism was not there, probably because he had just got back from Korea where he attended a major liquefied natural gas conference - which I think he should have attended. He cannot do the lot. The tourism industry was quite rightly annoyed that the minister was not at that conference. I do not blame him. He had just returned from, or was still in, Korea. However, the responsibilities for industry and development are concentrated in one person and one office. It is too much for the very talented minister concerned, as much as I like the guy. He cannot do the lot. It will go on. He will not be able to do it all.

The Government has shown a lack of enthusiasm towards the convention centre. I do not know whether it supports it. The only operating project is the North West Shelf, which was approved by the previous Government after much negotiation. It is a good project and will go well. The Government has boasted about the Jervoise Bay development. Again, that was negotiated by the former Deputy Premier. That is also a good project.

The Government has released its policy on energy reform, which is critical to the development of this State. The absolute - not comparative - advantage we have in Western Australia, following gas deregulation and the discovery of more resources, is gas and coal. They are our natural resources in energy. They have a huge potential and could be a major advantage for this State. This Government's policy has been written by big business. I find it extraordinary that the Labor Party has allowed that. The policy is designed specifically for a few major players - international companies - that want to get government contracts for major power stations. Good luck to them; they have done a great lobby job. I presume they offered to write the Government's business policy, and that the Government accepted. That seems to have been the case. Some members in regional areas should be very conscious of this area, because energy is a complex industry. Gas reform and deregulation was relatively easy. We will see what happens when the Government touches the issue of electricity. Members should look at the experience in Victoria, Queensland and, indeed, California, the fifth-largest economy in the world, where tighter deregulation - such as the Labor Party is promoting in its policy - left such chaos that energy costs soared nearly 100 per cent. There are brownouts in major regional centres. Do members opposite know who is the big winner in California? The only winner in California is the nuclear industry. It has never made so much money, because it is running at 95 per cent capacity compared with 30 per cent a few years ago and is producing as much electricity as it can. That huge economy has many power stations and independent operators.

The Government is proposing to break up Western Power, when what we need to do over the next decade is spend about \$1 billion on transmission and distribution, and have a clear plan to develop base-load, mid-merit and peak-load generating plant. If that is not done, power supply and economic development will not take place in this State. The new member for Collie knows the industry very well. If we do not have a clear program of development, there is not a snowball's chance in hell that an extra 300 megawatts of coal-fired power generation will go into Collie. The minister will remember well that when Labor promised a power station in Collie, it never happened; when we said we would give it every opportunity, it did happen.

Mr Ripper: You built the most expensive power station in the country - probably the world!

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Mr BARNETT: Yes, it is an expensive power station, but it is the lowest cost operator on the grid. It runs seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It is the base of the base load of the system. The Minister for Energy can make fun, but the problem he will have in his energy policy is that there is a cross-subsidy of about \$150 million. I am sure country members of Parliament are very conscious of that. They have complained, quite rightly, about lack of reliability, and three-phase power and so on in country areas. If the Government breaks up the system and takes away the economic clout of Western Power as the publicly-owned utility and brings in all the private players, who will build the infrastructure for customers who financially are not worth servicing? The reality is that we do not make money out of them; they are loss-makers. Who will build that infrastructure in powerlines and generation and ensure capacity to supply, and who will pick up the \$150 million cross-subsidy? I will tell new members the situation that under this policy they will have to face before the next election. The subsidy to get power into Narrogin, Nukarni or Wagin, or wherever it may be, is cross-subsidised by other customers, and that subsidy has to be met. Therefore, if Western Power were split up and put into a strictly commercial environment, the taxpayers would have to pay that cross-subsidy. Members opposite might think that is okay; we can pay that cross-subsidy to Western Power. However, in a deregulated electricity industry, the taxpayers will be paying millions of dollars in cross-subsidies to private power generators - international companies - and I will be interested in how the Labor Caucus and the Labor Party view that policy given the Labor Party's social agenda. The Government will have to pay out millions of dollars to American utilities to get them to maintain supply - it had better start to think about that complexity - and it will not, in an isolated system like Western Australia, be able to maintain a reliable power supply.

The Minister for Energy talked about power costs. I recognise that power costs are relatively high in Western Australia. Western Power's recent newsletter tells householders they have had a 15 per cent cut in the cost of electricity since 1995. That is not bad. However, the record shows that during the period of the coalition Government, electricity prices for business were frozen and did not go up once. In 1997, householders had one increase in electricity prices of 3.75 per cent, but in the other seven years of the coalition Government, electricity prices were frozen; and if we allow for inflation, there was a real decline in prices. In the Labor years - admittedly a period when we had higher inflation, although we have not had zero inflation - electricity prices went up every year bar one. However, under the coalition, electricity prices were frozen every year for business, and they increased in only one year for householders. If the Government can match that record, I will congratulate it and say well done. However, if the Government breaks up Western Power, as it is proposing, it will send this State into a power crisis before this decade is out, it will not get the investment in major base-load capacity, and its member for Collie will not be here in four years. The Government had better re-think that policy, and if it does want a power supply policy, it should look a bit wider than the interests of big business. It lobbied me too. I know its arguments, and I stood up to its interests because I was interested in getting a good service for the State.

I now turn to the Government's policy in general. It is early days. The Government has acted on old-growth forests, which I readily acknowledge was a major issue throughout the election campaign, and the Government can rightly claim a mandate on that. However, many issues still need to be resolved in that industry, such as quotas, and what is the definition of an old-growth forest; and already the Conservation Council of Western Australia has some alternative views. Another serious issue is the viability of the timber industry and timber towns, and jobs. The member for Collie probably knows a bit more about the reality in those towns. Sotico Pty Ltd has essentially taken 400 jobs out of the timber industry. At the end of the day, the timber workers, who are living in rented accommodation owned by the timber company, will probably be offered redundancies. Although those low-wage workers have a lot of commitment to the town and the industry, they do not own their homes and have no personal investments in the town. If they are offered a redundancy of \$50 000, \$60 000, \$70 000 or \$80 000, they will take the money and leave the timber industry and the town. That will be an important social issue, and I hope the Government is addressing it. The problem in the political sense will disappear, because the people will take the money and go. That will be the experience. However, the Government will need to be conscious of that, because it will take the population out of the south west and the heart out of those communities.

Dr Gallop: What a gall you have to raise that matter!

Mr BARNETT: The Government had better have a bit of care and compassion. I have been generous enough to acknowledge that the Government has delivered on its commitment to old-growth forest, but it should now recognise the reality that is facing the towns and communities in that industry.

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The Government, and certainly the Attorney General, said that it would act to remove inequalities in gay and lesbian issues in this State. The Government has placed at the top of its agenda what it describes as gay and lesbian reform.

Mr Ripper: What is your position?

Mr BARNETT: I will tell the minister in a moment. I find it curious that that is such an important and prominent part of the Government's policy agenda. I do not dismiss the issue, because probably five per cent of people in the community are homosexual, and I understand that for them, their friends and family it is an important issue. However, it is nowhere near the top of the agenda for members on this side of the House. We are happy to debate the issue, but it is not our priority, and the only reason I raise it is that it says something about the priorities of the Labor Party. It is the Labor Party's priority. It is not our priority. That is one of the differences between members on the two sides of the House. I imagine we will debate this issue at length, as we did some other social issues -

Dr Gallop: We would like to know your position.

Mr BARNETT: If members opposite will calm down and stop their schoolboy antics for a while, I will tell them.

Dr Gallop: We don't know your position on old-growth forests, finance brokers -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Edwards): Order! I am sure in time, Premier, the question will be answered, so please be patient.

Mr BARNETT: The Attorney General, in promoting gay and lesbian reform or equality, argues that the law must be equal. That is a nice principle - no-one will argue about it - but the substantive ethical, moral and health issue is whether the age of consent for homosexual males should be lowered to 16. We all have views about that issue, and perhaps we will have a conscience vote. Members on this side of the House probably will have a conscience vote. However, I wonder whether members on the opposite side of the House will have a conscience vote. I am prepared for our members to have a conscience vote. We will discuss that matter, but that is normally the position, and I will express my view, if members are interested -

Dr Gallop: It is because you cannot exercise leadership. That is what you are telling us.

Mr BARNETT: No. It demonstrates one of the differences between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party; namely, that on moral, religious, ethical and social issues, we expect our members to deliver a conscience vote.

Dr Gallop: It is because you are weak and do not have a position.

Mr BARNETT: It is not. It is about the freedom of individual members to make up their own minds and vote according to how they feel. Members on this side will have a conscience vote. I will tell members my view. I do not support lowering the age of consent for homosexual males to 16. As for my colleagues, I do not know their view. We will discuss it, but they will exercise their view. There is a difference. We do not support lowering the age of consent to 16 for homosexual males - boys, I might say. That is a moral divide between the Labor Party and the conservatives - the Liberal Party, and I dare say the National Party - on this side of the House.

So we cannot dismiss moral issues simply by saying that we want equality under the law. It is not equality; the issue is whether the age of consent should be lowered to 16 years. Many members on this side of the House believe the age of consent for boys and girls, heterosexual and homosexual, should be 18 years. That might be a better position. What is wrong with that? Will the Labor Party permit a free vote?

Mr Day: Will the Labor Party have a free vote?

Dr Gallop: We have a position on the matter.

Mr BARNETT: They have a position! On this side of the House we have people with minds and consciences and the freedom to express them publicly. There is a divide between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party; people on this side of the House can differ on issues and express that difference. On moral, social, religious and ethical issues we act as individuals. It is one of the key differences between the Liberal Party and the amorphous clones in the Labor Party.

Mr McGinty: What about one vote, one value?

Mr BARNETT: I will get to that. I am giving the Government a three-month report card. The Attorney General made a series of announcements about increasing penalties relating to crimes against the elderly. Everybody

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applauded the initiative and thought that it was a good idea. We find that nothing has been done to the minimum penalty and the Labor Party continually frustrated the matrix proposal. I am not saying it was perfect but it frustrated it.

Dr Gallop: The member is saying that it was not perfect?

Mr BARNETT: What I am saying, schoolboy, is that the matrix proposal gave clear guidelines on sentencing. It effectively required the raising of minimum levels. The new Government has come in with a maximum penalty that will have no effect at all. If the Attorney General is serious he should introduce legislation to increase minimum penalties. If he does so he will receive bipartisan support. The minimum and maximums should be raised together.

Speakers from the Liberal Party and National Party have acknowledged that the parties have lost a lot of support from the small business constituents in this State. It was a mistake that we made when in government. We recognise that. The reasons are for another speech on another day. We recognise that we lost contact with part of our heartland, to some extent. What has the Government done on the first issue to do with small business - the collapse of HIH Insurance? It is not the fault of this Government or the former Government. It is something that happens in the corporate and, particularly, financial sectors. A decision was made to impose a levy of five per cent on workers compensation premiums. It is not a popular thing to do and it is not the sort of measure that a Government would like to take in its early days in office. The Government had a unique opportunity; the Opposition offered bipartisan support on an unpopular tax measure. I cannot remember the Labor Party offering us bipartisan support on a measure like that over the eight years we were in government. We offered bipartisan support on a tax increase and the one thing for which we asked was a three-year sunset clause so that if the situation were paid out or resolved, that would be fine but otherwise, the Government would return to the Parliament to seek approval to continue with a five, four or three per cent levy or whatever. That was a simple accountability measure. Not only did the Labor Party impose this tax on small business and reject accountability within the Parliament, but also it rejected a genuine offer of bipartisan support. There will not be another one. The Government will not get another offer if that is the way it is going to treat it. Why would we do that? It would be easier for us to criticise the Government. The Government had a great chance but blew it.

There is going to be a drug summit; it is an important issue for the community. Although not involved directly, I believe the policies of the previous Government were very successful. There was a lot of evidence that the number of deaths from heroin levelled off in the State and did not increase as they did elsewhere. The Liberal Party retains an open mind on drug issues; it recognises that treatment methods change and that numerous family, social, health and institutional issues impact on the problem. In August the Labor Party issued a direction statement on drugs. It did not issue a policy during the election campaign. The Labor Party avoided the issue of drugs throughout the campaign. It must be noted that the Labor Party is not approaching the drug summit with an open mind. It will go with a policy as outlined in the direction statement -

We propose a decriminalised regime which would apply to possession of 50 grams of cannabis or less and cultivation of no more than two plants per household.

The Labor Party's position is concerned with the decriminalisation of cannabis and allowing the cultivation of cannabis plants. It will go to the drug summit with that background. That is where the Labor Party is coming from. That has been the debate within the Labor Party as reflected in its policy document prior to the election and the forums of the Labor Party. I do not mind, that is its position. The party has a policy of liberalising drugs. The Liberal Party will bring its background to the summit and participate in a constructive way, but it does not have a policy background of liberalising and decriminalising or encouraging shooting galleries and the like. The Labor Party policy talks about encouraging heroin trials and decriminalising cannabis. It talks about supporting injecting rooms. The Labor Party must not walk into the drug summit like Snow White. There are some different points of view on this side of the House but we do not come from a position of liberalising drugs. There is overwhelming evidence that where drugs have been liberalised drug usage and drug addiction have increased and the tragedies that flow from that have also increased. We will attend the drug summit in a constructive way but the parties are coming from different positions. They will be divided. The Labor Party will have the opportunity to get out and promote decriminalisation and shooting galleries but no support will come from the Liberal Party.

Ms MacTiernan: You are putting your head in the sand.

Mr BARNETT: I am making the point that the Labor Party has a particular point of view on drugs. The Liberal Party also has a view on drugs and it is not one of decriminalising drugs and making them more readily available

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in the community. We want to restrict the availability of drugs. The Labor Party wants to liberalise them. There is a clear policy divide on the age of consent and other issues; we differ.

I believe electoral reform will be debated for a long time. The Attorney General has been helpful, and I genuinely appreciate his help. The position of the Labor Party is a simple one: it is a bit like its position on old-growth forest. Everybody would say that saving old-growth forest is a good idea. The Attorney General's position on electoral reform is one vote, one value. It is almost impossible to argue against that. By itself, the statement that everybody's vote is equal is good. Who would argue against that? However, the application of that policy to a State the size of Western Australia would create all sorts of anomalies. I believe that most members of this Parliament and most of the community accept that the regions of this State need to be properly and fairly represented in the Parliament. That is difficult to achieve if one espouses one vote, one value. The Attorney General is trying to grapple with that dilemma. It goes beyond that. We have a bicameral Parliament in this State. As such, there needs to be a functional difference between the two Houses. Under the Westminster system, an upper House needs to perform a House of Review function. In our State the traditional role of the upper House is to represent the regions and be the voice of country and regional Western Australia. We are happy to engage in a debate about electoral reform. We are not shying away from it at all. I think we should go beyond one vote, one value - that is the principle, no-one will argue with that. Let us look at the type of Parliament we should have; how we can fairly and properly represent the country people and regions of the State; how people can realistically service their electorates; and what is the proper functional role of the two Houses. It is not just about one vote, one value; we also need to look at the way the voting system actually operates. There are issues about whether there should be compulsory or preferential voting or - as I would like to see - optional voting. I know the Attorney General is willing to look at that. We also need to look at how votes are counted - there is a prospective challenge in the upper House in the Mining and Pastoral Region. I defy anyone, even someone with the wit and sagacity of the Speaker, to understand how votes are counted in the upper House. Does the Attorney General understand the process?

Mr McGinty: I do indeed.

Mr BARNETT: Rubbish! No-one understands it, neither the Queen's Counsel doing opinions nor the mathematicians trying to work it out; it is the most complicated system. Even if the Attorney General is able to understand the system, the punters out there, the voters, have no idea how votes are counted in elections for the upper House. They probably do not even understand the procedure for elections for this House. One vote, one value is fine, but it does not reflect the geography of the State or the distribution of its population. The Government should look at the way votes are cast - the preferential issue - and at how they are counted, as well as the respective functional roles of the two Houses. This is a big task, but if the Government wishes to attempt it, the Opposition will be cooperative and constructive.

Mr McGinty: I would be delighted to take up the Leader of the Opposition on that offer. Any ideas and suggestions his party might like to offer will be taken into account.

Mr BARNETT: Thank you.

The Premier made all sorts of promises about fuel prices. He was going to do all sorts of wonderful things for regional Western Australia. With 50-50 legislation, apparently the petrol price will plummet in regional areas. The jury is out on that one and the Opposition will wait and see. The promises have been made, and the Opposition and people in country Western Australia are watching.

One of the characteristics of this Government is that it is government by committee, review and inquiry. I have never seen such a propensity to set up inquiries. The Government has only been in power for just over three months, and this is a list compiled by my office, which I am sure is incomplete, of all the reviews, inquiries and reviews set up by the Government -

- (1) Review of the public health system's administrative structure, following abolition of the Metropolitan Health Service Board;
- (2) Review of community health services;
- (3) Review of patient assisted travel scheme (PATs);
- (4) Review of penalties for people who refuse to answer questions at coronial inquiries;
- (5) Review of state-run hostels;
- (6) Review of services for people with disabilities;

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- (7) Review of planning policy for Smiths Beach;
- (8) Review of building industry code of practice;
- (9) Review of native title negotiating principles;
- (10) Review of security in public housing;
- (11) Review of laws on when children can be held to know right from wrong;
- (12) Review of private port contract at Kwinana;
- (13) Review of bus schedules;
- (14) Review of public education;
- (15) Review of Main Roads' contracts system;
- (16) Review into business taxes;
- (17) Inquiry into autopsy and tissue removal;
- (18) Royal commission into finance brokers;
- (19) Royal commission into police corruption;
- (20) Committee to develop legislative amendments on gay and lesbian rights;
- (21) Panel to recommend whether South Perth council should be dismissed or reinstated;
- (22) Task force on reform of the public sector;
- (23) Task force to scrutinise the convention centre project;
- (24) Committee to make recommendations on industry assistance to the timber industry;
- (25) Committee to fix ailing health system;
- (26) Task force on homelessness;
- (27) Task force on energy reform.

In three and a half months, the Government has announced at least 27 reviews, inquiries, committees or royal commissions, and they are only the ones the Opposition has noticed. Talk about bureaucracy; about setting up committees. The Opposition will debate any of these in due course.

Mr Ripper: I will give you another one - a technical committee on the issue of mining tenements and the backlog in native title claims.

Mr BARNETT: That makes 28 committees in the first quarter of the year. Will there be 100 by the end of the year? The Government will get bound up in committees, reports, submissions, discussions and alienated angry interest groups. Ministers will be doing nothing but receiving reports from committees, tabling reports, responding to them and making ministerial statements, and it will drive them absolutely berserk. My tip to the Government is to cut the number of committees, start making a few decisions and set up a few less inquiries. Ministers are well paid to do their jobs, and they should understand their portfolios by now. The new Government has a strange set of priorities, certainly a different set from that of the Opposition. Its priorities represent the philosophical, social, economic and political differences between the Labor Government and the Liberal Opposition. The differences are evident on the issue of drugs, the age of consent -

Mr Ripper: Why do you not mention the National Party?

Mr BARNETT: The National Party is its own party and is not part of the Opposition. Within this Government there is a lack of emphasis on the economy, and, over the course of the year, unemployment will rise in this State. That, in turn, will place increased pressure on the Government in the areas of social services, housing and the like, and added demand will be placed on Treasury.

Mr Ripper: Is it not true that demand in this State slumped during the last six months of the previous Government?

Mr BARNETT: There has been a dip in demand, and luckily the North West Shelf gas project, the construction project in Jervoise Bay and, hopefully, the convention centre will help insulate the State's economy. Those three

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big projects will help the Government enormously. The State got through the Asian financial crisis in 1997 because, following gas deregulation, a series of major projects began. In 1997, people predicted that the Western Australian economy would collapse. It did not, because of a whole host of major resource development projects around the State. The present Government has a couple of projects under way, and it desperately needs the convention centre, both in its own right and for the employment it will create, because the economy is dipping inevitably, and unemployment will rise.

The Government is indecisive, and I will reserve judgment on that. It has been in office for only three months, but the Government shows a propensity to form committees and reviews rather than make decisions. Too many ministers are unavailable. They are not responsive to demands for meetings or to telephone calls and correspondence. Many ministerial staff members are simply not functional. It takes some time to get a ministerial office working well, but the majority of the Government's ministerial offices are not functional, and this needs to be addressed, for the good of the administration of this State. We have heard claims about high standards of government and, in particular, ministerial conduct, but when the Government has been put to the test, it has been found wanting. My overriding conclusion - my three-month report card - is that the Government is still behaving like an Opposition. It is about time that it started governing.

MR DAY (Darling Range) [8.28 pm]: I congratulate all of the new members who have been elected to this Parliament. It is a significant privilege and honour to be a member of this Parliament and I trust that all the new members, including yourself, Mr Acting Speaker, will find their time here rewarding and satisfying. I also congratulate the Labor Party on its election win. It conducted an effective campaign. The Labor Party was assisted by a number of factors in the lead-up to the campaign and in the campaign itself. Some of those factors were entirely within Western Australia, and some were external to Western Australia and certainly did not help the former coalition Government. The Labor Party also attempted to promise the world, making election promises involving a total expenditure of \$1.2 billion, by the Treasury's estimation, and the Opposition's estimate concurs with that. It will be extremely difficult for the Government to meet all of the commitments and promises it made during the election campaign. It will be very interesting to hear, as time goes on, how the Government expects to fund all those promises. The Government made a big song and dance about how it will cut advertising and promotion expenditure within the Government by 30 per cent, where a total of \$54 million is spent on that area of government.

Given that only about \$8 million of expenditure in the advertising and promotion budget is discretionary, it is difficult to see how the Government will make a saving of anything like 30 per cent. It is also important to remember that the bulk of government advertising, in recent years at least, has been on essential areas such as road safety, important community education campaigns, and advertising by the Lotteries Commission. That is probably one of a number of fairly hollow promises made by the Labor Party in the election campaign.

As far as the election result is concerned, we on the coalition side cannot escape the fact that there was a significant reduction in electoral support for both the Liberal and National Parties, the two parties that made up the former coalition Government.

The Liberal Party's primary vote across the State reduced from 39.9 per cent to 31.2 per cent. A reduction of 8.7 per cent is significant and is obviously something we in the Liberal Party should examine very carefully so that we can restore the support we had in the 1996 election and be in a good position to win government at the next election.

The National Party's primary vote across the State fell from 5.8 per cent in 1996 to 3.3 per cent at the last election. That is a substantial reduction of 2.5 per cent. Although it is a matter for the Liberal and National Parties to address, it is also true to say that there was not much enthusiasm for the Labor Party. The Labor Party's primary vote increased by only 1.4 per cent from 1996 to the 2001 election. Its primary vote increased from only 35.8 per cent to 37.2 per cent. With a majority of preferences from the minor parties, the Labor Party was successful in winning office. However, I am sure the Labor Party also has some hard thinking to do over the next four years if it wants to be in a position to retain government in four years. An increase of only 1.4 per cent in its vote to 37.2 per cent is hardly a strong endorsement from the Western Australian electorate; nor is it a very strong mandate.

As I said, many factors contributed to the election result. In my electorate of Darling Range and the other hills electorates of Swan Hills and Roleystone, there is no doubt that one of the main issues, although not the only one, was forestry policy and the debate about logging in old-growth forests. It is true that the Liberal Party was in very much of a no-win situation on that issue. Those of us who represented the hills electorates of Darling

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Range, Swan Hills and Roleystone were aware of the strong sentiment of people in the hills and many other parts of the metropolitan area against continuation of logging in old-growth forest areas.

On the other hand, we put in place sustainable logging plans based on professional, scientific advice. A substantial change was made to the Regional Forest Agreement and forestry policy in July 1999 in response to the community concerns expressed, including in my electorate. I well recall a demonstration of about 1 000 people outside my electorate office one Sunday morning in July 1999. Following the concerns that were expressed, substantial changes were made by the previous Government in an attempt to genuinely address the concerns. On the other hand when in government, particularly the Liberal Party, we did not want to abandon people in the south west communities that depended on the timber industry for their livelihood. On the basis of good scientific advice, we had in place well-founded policies that addressed genuine conservation issues. Those policies allowed for continuation of the timber industry in a responsible way. We were not going to abandon people in the south west areas who depended on the timber industry for their income.

The Liberal Party has responsibilities on a statewide basis and it was difficult to reconcile the views of people in the metropolitan area and people in the south west communities on logging of old-growth forests. Unfortunately, that cost us electoral support in the hills electorates. However, the member for Warren-Blackwood and others strongly and quite rightly argued that the interests of their communities are also extremely important. I agree with that. Nevertheless, there was a change of government at the election. This Government has put in place changes in logging policies. I do not believe there will be any going back on the changes that have been made. We will be moving forward from this point and when the next election comes around we must address forestry policy if major issues are outstanding then. It is not my view that we will return to the forestry policies in place under the previous Government. That debate has been had; the electorate has expressed its view and we must move forward from this point.

Regardless of the result of the election - obviously it was disappointing to this side - nothing can detract from the fact that the coalition Government made substantial achievements over its eight years in office. I acknowledge the strong leadership provided by Richard Court as Premier for eight years and as leader of the Liberal Party, for ensuring that many of the major goals were achieved for the people of Western Australia. I refer to restoring confidence in Western Australia following the disastrous and corrupt WA Inc years under the previous Labor Government until February 1993; reducing the State's debt by approximately \$4 billion and restoring the State's AAA credit rating lost by the previous Labor Government. The current Government has argued that the AAA credit rating was under threat in the last year or so of the coalition Government's time in office. The reality is that the AAA credit rating is always under threat if there is not good financial and economic management in government. I have no doubt that if the coalition Government had been re-elected, the AAA credit rating would have been retained, due to the Government's continued good management of the economy.

The previous Government was also responsible for funding and completing major new infrastructure projects across the State. For example, it implemented an extensive roads program, including the Graham Farmer Freeway. That project was strongly criticised by the Labor Party in opposition for nothing other than opportunistic political reasons. As soon as the tunnel and freeway were opened, there was deafening silence from the Labor Party in opposition because it recognised that it was strongly welcomed by the many thousands of people each day who use the Graham Farmer Freeway. It has been successful since it opened. Its design is a credit to all engineers, construction workers and other personnel involved. It is of particular benefit to residents in my electorate and the other eastern metropolitan electorates, who have reason to use the Graham Farmer Freeway regularly. It has freed up traffic in the central business district of Perth and substantially reduced the time it takes to get from the eastern suburbs to the western side of Perth for people who do not need to go through the CBD. The Liberal Government was successful in implementing major facilities for other core areas of government.

We heard in debate earlier about the 28 new police stations built. As a former Minister for Police I had the pleasure of opening a significant number of those new police stations. In many cases their construction was put in train when Bob Wiese was Minister for Police, prior to my time as minister. A number of other stations were opened following my period as minister.

It very much indicates the priorities that the previous Government had to ensure that police officers who do the job on the ground in metropolitan and rural and regional parts of Western Australia were given the facilities they needed to operate effectively. The first new police station opened by the previous government was the Forrestfield Police Station. That is now part of my electorate of Darling Range. The police station was overdue

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by many years and was welcomed by the residents in the Forrestfield, High Wycombe, Maida Vale and Wattle Grove areas.

The former Government made the decision to construct a new police academy, something that has also been needed for many years. I have not seen it in recent times, but I assume it is nearing completion.

Mr Omodei: It will open in a couple of weeks.

Mr DAY: The member informs me that it will be completed in a couple of weeks. It will be a credit to the former Government in providing modern and up-to-date facilities that the police need to do their jobs and get proper and up-to-date training.

Mr Board: You will be busy over the next 12 months opening things that we put in place.

Mr DAY: The new Government is in the privileged and welcome position of being able to open - as the member for Murdoch says - many new facilities that were started to be constructed during the term of the former Government.

I am also pleased that the decision to construct and locate the police operation support facility at Midland on the site of the old Midland railway workshops was made with cabinet support while I was Minister for Police. The first stage of the project will cost \$42 million. Hopefully, the current Government will fund other stages. The construction of the project is well and truly under way. I look forward to a time when many of the police activities that have been so far located on dispersed sites around the metropolitan area, including the firearms branch, traffic operations, the forensic department and the new police communications centre will be collocated. The equestrian and canine sections will also be located at Midland and many other important areas of police support activity will, for the first time, be collocated on one site in a modern, world-class structure.

I am pleased that the decision to locate the police operations support centre in Midland has been a catalyst for other developments to be established in Midland; in particular, the Midland Redevelopment Authority, which was a decision made by the former Government. The location of the authority in the Midland area was sought by the City of Swan - as it now is - and residents of the Midland region.

Ms MacTiernan: The residents are really happy with the authority, aren't they?

Mr DAY: They certainly are. The previous Government made the decision to establish the Midland Redevelopment Authority there. I hope that nothing will be done by the current Government to jeopardise the functions or the important role of the authority. A huge amount can be achieved in Midland. It is an extremely important regional centre that is close to major rail and road transport routes and also to the main Perth Airport. The area is extremely well located and has the opportunity for many more economic and residential developments.

Currently, the fifth new hospital is being constructed as a result of decisions made by the former coalition Government. The Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital will benefit residents of the south east metropolitan area. The new hospital, which is overdue, was talked about by the former Labor Government, but it did not allocate funds to it. It was up to a coalition Government to allocate the \$40 million plus that was needed to complete that facility. It will be a \$60 million facility including the collocation of the private hospital. The hospital will be of world-class standard, and I look forward to seeing it when it is completed. The other hospitals that were completed during the time of the previous coalition Government were the Joondalup Health Campus, the Peel Health Campus, the South West Health Campus in Bunbury and the Northam hospital.

The annual budgets for essential services increased substantially under the previous Government. The health budget increased from about \$1.2 billion a year to the current level of almost \$2 billion a year; that is a substantial increase. A far higher rate of growth occurred under the coalition Government than under the former Labor Government, despite its protestations about the coalition Government not having its priorities right. An objective look at the figures will show that under the coalition Government, health spending increased by about 6.8 per cent per annum compared with the last three years of the Burke Labor Government of about only 3.8 per cent. That is a substantial difference. Police expenditure has increased from \$240 million when the previous Government formed office to the current level of about \$440 million a year. Proportionately similar increases have occurred in the education budget.

I am pleased that, in two cases, three of the decisions made by the previous Government during the past 12 months have enabled much needed projects to go ahead in the Darling Range area. I will comment on the third project in a moment. The first project is a result of the decision by the Health Department of Western Australia to acquire the former child-care centre in Anderson Road, Forrestfield. That centre was acquired by the Health

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Department - largely from Family and Children's Services and also the Commonwealth Government - to enable the Shire of Kalamunda to provide day-care services for dementia sufferers in the shires of Kalamunda, Mundaring and the City of Swan. The Shire of Kalamunda has wanted to embark on that project for two or three years. The recurrent funding is being provided through the home and community care program. Those funds have been allocated for some time. The difficulty arose in identifying a suitable location and facility. The Shire of Kalamunda identified the former child-care centre, and I congratulate the shire for its persistence in going through with this project. I also thank officers of the Health Department of Western Australia, including the Commissioner of Health, for their assistance in acquiring that building so that the project could go ahead. The conversion of the centre from a child-care facility to the intended use is just about complete. I look forward to the centre opening in the near future.

The second decision made by the former Government that benefited my electorate was the decision to allocate a grant of \$500 000 to the Shire of Kalamunda from the community sporting and recreation facilities fund to assist in upgrading the Hartfield Park Recreation Centre in Forrestfield. The total cost of that project is \$2.1 million. Apart from the \$500 000 grant from the State Government, the Shire of Kalamunda is providing the balance, and the project will provide a much-needed refurbished and modernised recreation centre. The centre was built around 20 years ago. It is in need of upgrading, improvement and modernisation, and this project will enable that to go ahead.

I am pleased that the previous Government made the grant of \$500 000. I am not aware of any decision by the new Government to change the allocation. I would be extremely unhappy if anything were done to change the allocation from the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. However, to the best of my knowledge, the project will go ahead. The community sporting and recreation facilities fund has been extremely successful under the previous. It has enabled about \$8 million of state government funding to be converted on a three to one basis into about \$24 million of important projects around the State. It has enabled new community facilities to be provided or upgraded for many communities around Western Australia, whether they be in rural or metropolitan areas.

The third decision made by the former Government in the past 12 months concerns the redevelopment of Kalamunda District Community Hospital. I was very pleased when the decision was made in last year's budget to allocate \$5.5 million out of the capital works component of the health budget so the redevelopment of Kalamunda Hospital could go ahead. That project has been sought by the local community for at least the past six years. It came close to happening in approximately 1995 or 1996, but the judgment made at that time was that there were higher priorities across the State. With the additional maintenance funds available from the health budget, a total of \$6.2 million of expenditure was made available by the previous Government. In total, those funds will allow for two new operating theatres, a day procedure unit, two new delivery and recovery units, a new central sterile supply department and the construction of a new front entrance at Kalamunda Hospital. Important maintenance will also be undertaken, in particular, improvements to the fire services, the sewerage system and the communications system at the hospital. The design work for this project has now been completed; in fact, it was completed prior to the election. When the election was announced, the project was about to go out to tender. As is normal with projects of this nature, they are not put out to tender during an election period; therefore, this project was put on hold. I am pleased to say that the Labor Party also gave an election commitment to allocate the same amount of money as the former Government - \$5.5 million - for the redevelopment of Kalamunda Hospital. I quote from the Labor Party's election brochure that was distributed in the Darling Range electorate during the election campaign. Under the headings, "Hospitals" and "Geoff Gallop and Labor will put more resources into public hospitals", there is a clear statement that says -

In addition \$5.5 million will be spent on the redevelopment of Kalamunda Hospital.

Therefore, given that the Labor Party made a commitment of \$5.5 million during the election campaign - it is now in government - and the former Government allocated the funds in the last state budget, and given that the design work has now been completed, absolutely nothing should stop this project going ahead. It will provide for much-needed new facilities. It will also enable much-needed maintenance to be undertaken, which will be necessary regardless of whether the redevelopment goes ahead. If this redevelopment is put in jeopardy, the fact remains that important maintenance will need to be undertaken. I understand that this project currently is on hold and I can only wonder what is stopping its going ahead. The only conclusion I can come to is that the Labor Government is considering reneging on the commitment it made during the election campaign. If this redevelopment does not go ahead, and soon, there will be much anger and outrage in the Kalamunda district and the Darling Range electorate generally. I will not assume that that will be the case. I trust that the Government

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shares the same commitment as the previous Government, as expressed in its election campaign. The reality is that if a coalition Government had been re-elected, the redevelopment would have been completed by the end of next year. The Labor Government is in a position to achieve the same thing. It is not too late for it to go ahead with this project in a short space of time, so, hopefully, the project can be completed by the end of next year. It is time to get on with the redevelopment of Kalamunda Hospital. All of the planning work has now been done. Nothing can be gained by putting the project on hold any longer. The Government has been in place for close to four months now, and it is time for it to get on with the project.

I also have the privilege of having opposition responsibility for the portfolios of resources development, energy and the Pilbara. These areas of responsibility, to a large extent, are complementary. There is a natural relationship between the resources development and the energy portfolios. It is true to say that the Government has created a problem in splitting those two portfolios between two different ministers.

Ms MacTiernan: Before, you were complaining that we had only one minister; now you are complaining that we have split it between two ministers. You are all over the place. Were you listening to what the other members were saying?

Mr DAY: We are saying that the Government has the groups wrong. It makes sense for resources development and energy to be handled by one minister, but there also needs to be a minister for mines as well as a Minister for Tourism so they can focus properly on those areas and put in the effort.

Ms MacTiernan: You cannot have it both ways.

Mr DAY: The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure's interjections are quite hollow. Those areas are extremely important to the future development of Western Australia, as we heard from the Leader of the Opposition earlier. One of the major issues we face as a State is how to encourage further downstream processing of our natural resources. It is pleasing that BHP made the decision some years ago to invest a lot of money in constructing the hot briquetted iron plant in Port Hedland. It is disappointing that that project has experienced the problems it has, but I am pleased that BHP has stuck with the project so far. I hope it will continue well into the future.

It is also true to say that we are on the cusp of a major phase of new development in this State. A lot of groundwork has been done by the previous Government, particularly by the Leader of the Opposition as the former Minister for Resources Development and for Energy, and a lot of that good work will come to fruition over the next few years or so. It is a reality and there is an opportunity for further downstream processing projects to be constructed within Western Australia. Hopefully, we will see the Syntroleum Sweetwater Operations Ltd gas-to-liquids project go ahead on the Burrup peninsula in the near future. There is the prospect that other major new processing facilities for ammonia and urea production will go ahead. Major issues need to be dealt with in the resources development and energy areas. In opposition, we will be questioning the Government about how it is dealing with some of those issues. The Government will need to think carefully about how it deals with energy deregulation, for example, as the Leader of the Opposition said earlier. I am sure we will have many debates and discussions about those issues in this Chamber.

Amendment to Motion

Mr DAY: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

and advises Your Excellency that the House has supported a call on the Government to construct the Peel deviation bypass with a completion target of 2005

MR MARSHALL (Dawesville) [8.58 pm]: I remind the House that the Peel deviation is a priority project not only for my electorate but also for the people of Mandurah, Murray-Wellington and the south west electorates. The Peel inner structure plan identified this project as a priority to take the pressure off vehicles using Old Coast Road. The deviation is planned to run from the north of Mandurah, east of Pinjarra and south to Old Coast Road at Lake Clifton and is estimated to cost around \$155 million. It is imperative that this project is started immediately and its completion planned for 2005.

Ms MacTiernan: Can you tell us what you actually plan to do? That would make it useful for us.

Mr MARSHALL: Planning is under way from both ends. Our Government planned to have the deviation completed in 2005.

Ms MacTiernan: You are in pixieland.

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

Mr MARSHALL: I challenge the minister to have our vision, boldness, charisma and knowledge of our electorates to see that it happens from her side of the House.

The Labor Government's pre-election promise was to bring forward Main Roads' current 10-year plan for the Peel deviation and allocate \$5 million to begin land acquisition. Five million dollars is a pittance. That was just something to throw out, like a bit of berley, to win another vote at someone else's expense. That time limit was not precise enough. That was the way the Labor Party's pre-election promises were presented for this project. There are many people in my electorate of Dawesville, and in Mandurah as well, who are sceptical about this Government's commitment to the Peel deviation. I would like to think that all members involved in the project, whether they be close to it or involved in it, will take a bipartisan stand so that we can get a firm commitment from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure that the project will be completed by 2005.

Only this morning, the *Mandurah Telegraph* displayed the headline "Rivals team to save Peel". The story was about the member for Mandurah and me working with the member for Rockingham and the Mandurah and Rockingham councils to keep Peel Football Club in the Western Australian Football League competition. I do not see any difference between that issue and the need to work together to get the Peel deviation through by that magic year, 2005. I expect the members for Bunbury, Mitchell, Murray-Wellington, Mandurah and Dawesville to work as a team to see the Peel deviation get through. It is important to all of us. It is estimated that 8 300 vehicles use the section of the Old Coast Road that is in my electorate daily. However, that number swells to 13 500 on weekends and public holidays. The traffic going south banks up on the estuary bridge. Many say that four lanes on that bridge are needed. However, if the Peel deviation goes through, the extra money for that project will not be needed. There is also a bank up of vehicles at the Peelwood Parade lights, only a kilometre and a half further south. Vehicles also bank up when the traffic slows to 70 kilometres an hour through the Miami Village shopping area. There is a further bank up of vehicles as the traffic slows over the Port Bouvard bridge. It is important for the future of road safety in this electorate to provide an alternative route south. As I said earlier, the Peel infrastructure plan identified that many years ago. That was worked on by the previous Government. There is no reason for this Government not taking that project between its teeth like a horse takes the bit between its teeth and getting on with that project.

Everyone knows that tourism, and the many Margaret River promotions, have created a traffic increase that have caught out the planning forecast needs of Main Roads and the planning departments of Western Australia. The volume of southbound traffic, combined with that of the northbound traffic going to the metropolitan area for sporting events, art shows and the like, emphasises the need for the Peel deviation. This deviation would improve safety for haulage trucks, create more employment for those living on the eastern side of the Peel region, and enable growers from all around that area to more readily get their produce to the markets. These are just a few of the pluses that can be added to the ones already known about the project.

I want a commitment from the new Government that the Peel deviation will be completed by 2005. I want a commitment from the members for Mandurah and Bunbury that they will join forces and combine in a bipartisan effort to lobby the Government so that we, as a team, can get a positive result. The completion of the Peel deviation is the most important project in my electorate. I challenge the Government to do it.

MR BARRON-SULLIVAN (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [9.04 pm]: I lend my support to the amendment to the motion and also to the comments made by the member for Dawesville, who has succinctly summed up the importance of this project. The major stage of the project is worth something like \$140 million to enable the bypass to skirt around Mandurah and ultimately link to the south west. As members know, the project has widespread community support. The chamber of commerce in Bunbury supports the project. It is no wonder that members of the community, motorists in general and the business community have thrown their weight behind this project. Those of us who commute regularly to Perth know that the Dawesville area and Mandurah are beginning to become clogged with traffic lights. The journey is taking much longer. There are also safety considerations. The member for Dawesville can correct me if I am wrong, but he said that there were something like 20 000 vehicles -

Mr Marshall: I said 13 500.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: There are 13 500 vehicles a day using the Old Coast Road in the member's electorate. It will be 20 000 before too long if the bypass is not continued. He made the point that the Labor Party's policy was to bring forward the construction of the Peel deviation; therefore, this motion is not inconsistent with the current Government's policy. That is an important point. Members on this side of the Chamber are taking a positive approach by indicating that they are happy to offer bipartisan support to this project. Members understand that \$140 million is not a small ask. However, it should be remembered that it is a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

four-year program and that the coalition Government substantially built up the road funding budget in this State, and trebled road funding in the south west region. The Opposition believes that the Peel deviation is a totally achievable target if the Government is prepared to make it one of its key priorities. The member also made the important point that not only are members on this side offering bipartisan support for this project and taking a constructive approach to the matter, but, importantly, this is probably the first test for three new members, who are not on this side of the Chamber, but who represent seats in the south west. It would be delightful if the members for Mandurah, Collie and Bunbury put the needs of their communities ahead of any party political connections, ties or affiliations and got behind this motion without trying to water it down, oppose it or whatever. The message is that south west members should stick together and have a bipartisan approach and should say to the Government that they want to get this project up and running. Completion of this project by the year 2005 is viable. South west members should get behind it.

I am sure the member for Bunbury, who is currently in the Chair - I congratulate him on his appointment as an Acting Speaker - would support the local community. As I said, the community as a whole is behind this project. The chamber of commerce is strongly behind it. As the member for Bunbury is probably aware by now, there is a protocol for Acting Speakers. As a previous Acting Speaker, I know there were times that I wanted my voice to be heard on a matter on behalf of the local community and was able to find a substitute Acting Speaker to fill in for me for a period. I understand that the member for Greenough has kindly offered to sit in the Chair if the member for Bunbury would like to be heard on this matter, to voice his support for the project on behalf of the community of Bunbury.

MR BRADSHAW (Murray-Wellington) [9.09 pm]: I support the amendment to the motion because it is an important issue. It has been debated for several years now and has become an important issue in the south west. The reason for that is the amount of traffic, which is increasing by something like six per cent a year.

Within about seven years - I forget the exact number of years - the amount of traffic will double in volume. Around 10 000 vehicles use Old Coast Road each day - even more in the Dawesville residential area. My main interest is South Western Highway, which is used by about 5 000 or 6 000 vehicles a day and which is not a dual carriageway, unlike Old Coast Road. Use of that highway is increasing by about five or six per cent a year. It is becoming very busy. A Peel deviation would take some of the stress off South Western Highway and off the people using that road. It is proposed that the Peel deviation be a dual carriageway, which will make travelling safer. There is a greater risk of accidents on single-lane highways. The deviation would appeal greatly to the people of Bunbury, Busselton and others in the south west who commute to Perth on various occasions. They do not necessarily do it every day but, when they do, they will be able travel on a much safer road and not get stuck behind trucks and other traffic.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: I think many people in Collie also use South Western Highway.

Mr BRADSHAW: Many Collie people shoot across from Raymond Road to Old Coast Road. I see cars with Collie licence plates on South Western Highway. Once people have come up Coalfields Road to South Western Highway, they take Raymond Road to Old Coast Road. They do so because it is a dual carriageway, which is much safer and they do not get stuck behind traffic as they would on South Western Highway.

The other problem with Old Coast Road that has arisen in the past few years for reasons such as safety and urbanisation is that there are now five sets of traffic lights in the Mandurah area between the Port Bouvard traffic bridge and Gordon Road. I do not know whether other people have the same experience as I, but every time I come to a traffic light, it always seems to turn red, and I go red in the face because I get frustrated at arriving at traffic lights that turn against me. If the Peel deviation were constructed sooner rather than later, it would take a lot of stress off South Western Highway and Old Coast Road and reduce frustration. It would also save fuel, because every time motorists stop and start, fuel is expended, resulting in more pollution in the air and the environment. It would be a great thing if people did not have to go through those traffic lights.

The extension of the Kwinana Freeway to Mandurah needs to be done in conjunction with the deviation. It currently comes out in the Ravenswood area and will need to connect to the Peel deviation. The previous Government took it upon itself to extend the Kwinana Freeway and get rid of some of the traffic lights along it. I believe the extension to Safety Bay Road will open in the next few weeks. That will save many people a lot of stress. However, another 20 or 30 kilometres of freeway needs to be completed. I know roads are expensive items, but they are essential.

The Government must take into account the distribution of the population. Population growth in the south west area is much greater than in many other areas in Western Australia. It is important that the Government is aware

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of that when it considers the Peel deviation and extension of the Kwinana Freeway. I know the deviation was not on Main Roads' 10-year plan, but the pressure was on the previous Government to include it, and we were starting to hear murmurs that it would look at constructing the road sooner rather than later.

Mr Hyde: Government by murmur.

Mr BRADSHAW: It was not government by murmur.

Mr Hyde: Wasn't there something stronger: an election promise?

Mr BRADSHAW: There were certainly more than murmurs. The local members, such as the members for Dawesville, Mandurah, Bunbury, and Mitchell, were applying a lot of pressure.

Mr Hyde: Was there anything in the forward estimates?

Mr BRADSHAW: No. When the member has been around a while, he will learn that things do not happen overnight, as much as we would like them to. It is a matter of pressure, which was applied by the members for the areas that will be affected. Even the electorate of Vasse would be affected by the Peel deviation because of the influence it would have on the people in that area who drive to Perth or those who go to that area to enjoy its tourism values. The deviation is important. It would boost tourism in the south west. People often cannot be bothered visiting a place if it takes too long to get there, if the traffic is too heavy or if there are too many lights. It would make a difference if people could get there more quickly.

I live in Harvey. A few years ago, it took between two and two and a half hours to get to Perth. That time has been reduced because of better roads and quicker access. On certain days, without speeding, I can get home from Perth in an hour and a half. Improvement in roads reduces travelling time. It is very important that the deviation is included in the budget. The Government will have to move things around to fit the bill, but in the past couple of years the Western Australian Government spent about \$800 million a year on roads. This Government simply needs to rejig the figures. It should be able to fit the deviation into the budget within the four-year time frame we are talking about. It is very important as it will reduce frustration and pollution.

The Government is supposed to be the party for the environment. It should look at this from an environmental point of view. The current route produces a lot of frustration, which means driving conditions are not as safe. I support the amendment. It is very important that work on the Peel deviation and the extension of the Kwinana Freeway be completed as soon as possible.

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [9.17 pm]: I am surprised by this amendment. If the Opposition had thought this road so important when it was in government, it would, at the very least, have appeared in its 10-year road program. However, the previous Government did not consider it important enough to include it in that program. We note that in the frantic weeks before the last election, it suddenly occurred to the Government that this road might be considered an important project by the people of the Mandurah, Dawesville and Bunbury electorates. The former Premier released a Bunbury package that included the construction of the Peel deviation by 2005. However, it contained one small flaw: there was a total omission of any funding for it. The member for Dawesville, with other members of the Opposition, has criticised the Government for honouring our election commitment. Our election commitment was very clear: we would allocate some real money - admittedly, it was only \$5 million - to acquire the necessary land over the next four years and, at the same time, include this road in the 10-year road program. I assure the member for Dawesville that it has done both those things.

We will not have this road constructed by 2005. We have never said that we would. However, we look forward to the support of the Opposition as we seek federal funding for this road on the ground that it is a road of national importance. We hope we will be able to persuade the federal Government that it is a road of National Party importance, because that is basically how we get funding for federal roads these days; they have become RONPIs rather than RONIs. We have met our commitments. Just to make sure that all members opposite are absolutely clear about what their Government committed: it was a big fat zero.

MR OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [9.20 pm]: I support the amendment to the Address-in-Reply, which refers to the construction of the Peel deviation. I find it surprising that the minister said that it definitely will not be built.

Ms MacTiernan: Unless we get federal funding.

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

Mr OMODEI: Yes, unless tomorrow the Commonwealth Government decides to give the State extra funding for roads. That should be the target, and that was our intention when Hon Barry House chaired a meeting that sought to attract commonwealth funds to the State, and that was the track that the previous Government was heading down. I find it remarkable that the local members, including you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Dean), as the member for Bunbury, are not getting up to speak on this matter -

Ms MacTiernan: They have not had a chance. The debate is not finished.

Mr OMODEI: That is a very good thing. There is still plenty of time for members to raise this matter. Our previous amendment to the Address-in-Reply was about the police station in Albany, yet the member for Albany, who had been making public comments, did not even speak on it. This is a good opportunity for members, particularly the member for Bunbury and other members who represent the south west, to say something about the Peel deviation.

I travel from Perth to Pemberton at least once a week, and sometimes two or three times a week. It is three-and-three-quarter hours of travel, and what takes up most of the time is the bottleneck through Tims Thicket. The speed limit on the nice piece of new road at Tims Thicket has now been increased to 90 kilometres through to Falcon, but it reduces to 70 kilometres opposite the member for Dawesville's electorate office, and that takes up a lot of time. The roadworks to build an extra span on the Mandurah bridge are a step in the right direction, but the traffic slows down significantly for the 20 or 30 kilometres through the Mandurah-Falcon-Tims Thicket area. It appears to me to be commonsense to construct the Peel deviation as soon as possible.

A huge amount of traffic comes to Perth from the south west. The majority of the fresh fruit and vegetables, and timber, comes to Perth via Old Coast Road. On weekends, the traffic is bumper to bumper through that area for hours and hours, and particularly on the Fridays and Mondays of long weekends. This cannot be ignored by the Government or by current members, whether they be from Mandurah or further down the track such as Mitchell, Bunbury or even Collie. People may go to Collie down South Western Highway, but they can also cut across from Old Coast Road if they wish.

Mr Bradshaw: Last Easter, the road through Mandurah was made one-way so that all the traffic going south went over the new traffic bridge and all the traffic going north went over the old traffic bridge. However, all of the police were used to direct that traffic, and the people in Pinjarra who needed assistance were told that the police could not come because they were busy directing traffic.

Mr Carpenter: When was that?

Mr OMODEI: At Easter. The people to whom I spoke were very pleased about that, because for those going south it certainly broke up the traffic.

Mr Marshall: Did you ask the people who were going north? They did not like it one bit.

Mr OMODEI: The people who were going over the old Mandurah bridge were probably not too happy. The Peel deviation is an obvious project that should be progressed. The amendment is commonsense, and I expect members to support it.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 29 May 2001]
p575d-627a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

Ayes (19)

Mr Barnett	Mr Edwards	Mr Masters	Mr Trenorden
Mr Birney	Mrs Hodson Thomas	Mr Omodei	Mr Waldron
Mr Board	Mr House	Mr Pendal	Dr Woollard
Mr Day	Mr Johnson	Mr Sullivan	Mr Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)
Mrs Edwardes	Mr Marshall	Mr Sweetman	

Noes (26)

Mr Andrews	Mr Hill	Ms McHale	Mr Templeman
Mr Bowler	Mr Hyde	Mr McRae	Mr Watson
Mr Brown	Mr Kobelke	Mrs Martin	Mr Whitely
Mr Carpenter	Mr Kucera	Mr O’Gorman	Ms Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)
Dr Edwards	Mr Logan	Mr Quigley	
Dr Gallop	Ms MacTiernan	Ms Radisich	
Mrs Guise	Mr McGinty	Mr Ripper	

Pairs

Mr Cowan	Mrs Roberts
Mr Ainsworth	Mr D’Orazio

Independents

Dr Constable	Mr Graham
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Amendment thus negatived.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

MR OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [9.30 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the Address-in-Reply debate. I congratulate the member for Bunbury on his appointment as Acting Speaker. A former member for Bunbury held the same position. I believe he had trouble with something called the Back Beach - I hope the Acting Speaker does not suffer the same fate. I have listened to all the maiden speeches made in the House in this session and I congratulate all new members on their election. In particular, I congratulate Carol Martin, the first Aboriginal woman to be elected to the Legislative Assembly. I congratulate Matt Birney, the new member for Kalgoorlie and Jamie Edwards, the new member for Greenough, two new members on this side of the House. I listened with great interest to the new members talk about their electorates, their families and such things as compassion, tolerance, justice and decency. I congratulate them on their contributions so far. Being in government can be a bit more difficult than being in opposition as one can speak whenever one likes in opposition. I would like to hear the “loose cannon”, as the member for Innaloo describes himself, speak. I know that the Labor Party teaches its members to hate the Opposition. Members opposite will protest that and claim that they are compassionate. They will find, over time, that members on my side of the House are not so very different from them. They share different political views and philosophies, but have the same care and compassion for their electorates.

I congratulate the Labor Party on winning the election. The coalition Opposition suffered from the “it’s time” factor and things like the mortgage brokers scandal, the bell tower and a range of other things that happen over time. Governments tend to lose elections rather than Oppositions win them. I pay tribute to the former Premier, Richard Court. He will be remembered as one of the better Premiers to have led Western Australia. He brought the State out of a very poor financial situation. I have heard members opposite interject about the former Government selling off the State’s assets. If the assets had been kept there would have been \$400 million in interest to pay on debts of \$8.5 billion. The debt would be up to about \$13 billion by now. By any measure, had the Government of the day kept it to that, there would not have been an increase in the State’s debt and that would have been an achievement in itself. However, the debt now is \$4.5 billion and that is a major achievement. It means that the State is in a good financial position with its base level of debt. It should be maintained at that rate or even lowered so that the level of debt left to our children is manageable and will not get out of control. If there is one thing that the members of this House can leave to future generations it is a State that has a very low debt.

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

I take the opportunity to thank the people who supported me in my electorate of Warren-Blackwood. It is the fifth election for which I have stood. I lost an election in 1986 when the Labor Party held the seat by 13.5 per cent. I thank the people who supported me at all the polling booths and during the election campaign. I will not say who they are or divulge any of my election strategies as the information may be used against me in years to come. On a two-party preferred basis I hold the seat with 64 per cent of the vote. It is something with which I can live. It means that people in Warren-Blackwood support me.

I shall talk about issues such as one vote, one value and other matters in relation to other parties at some other time. The Address-in-Reply gives me the opportunity to talk about my electorate. Warren-Blackwood takes in the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River all the way up to Cowaramup and includes Gracetown, Prevelly Park, Margaret River, Rosa Brook, Witchcliffe and Augusta. It includes the Shire of Nannup and all of the Shire of Manjimup except for Walpole and it takes in Windy Harbour, Northcliffe, Pemberton, Quinninup and the small timber towns of Jardee, Dean Mill and so on. It also includes the entire Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes.

I want to place on record some of the things that have been done, are being done and should be done in the future and to touch on some of the things that I hope will be carried out by the current Government. Augusta has put a proposition to the Local Government Advisory Board to create a new shire of Augusta that would result from a split of the current Shire of Augusta-Margaret River. Currently, commissioners are running that shire. It is appropriate that the board look at the situation. Should there be a new shire of Augusta it would be as big as 60 other small local governments in country Western Australia. It would have a population in excess of 2 000 and a budget in excess of \$3.5 million. By any measure it is an opportunity for the people of Augusta and Karridale to gain an identity of their own. Augusta is a unique town; it is at the mouth of the Blackwood River. It has the Leeuwin lighthouse which is a significant reminder of Baudin's visit of over 100 years ago. A re-enactment of that is to be held this year where the two oceans meet. Baudin and Flinders were the area's major explorers. A proposal has been put forward for an eco-museum at Dead Finish. That is the place where the old sailing boats were towed in by winch to a mooring point. An eco-museum at Dead Finish would accommodate a university campus, tourism facilities and an abalone farm. There would be a mix of commerce and education, and scientific examination of the two oceans meeting and the impact of the river on Flinders Bay. The Leeuwin lighthouse is a fundamental asset and the new shire would have to control it and have access to one of the caves, possibly Jewel Cave, in order to gain income from tourism. The matters in question over the split are mainly about set up costs. There would be a cost for staff redundancies in Margaret River; however, down the track, savings would be made. The set up costs would be minimal in Augusta and I believe they could run a very efficient small local government with its own identity.

Mr House: Do you support the division of the shire?

Mr OMODEI: I do.

Mr House: What about the division of the shire and town of Albany?

Mr OMODEI: I will get to that in a minute. I support the proposed new shire of Augusta on the basis that it would be bigger than 60 other small local governments in Western Australia.

I have heard of the Government's announcement about M and B Sales Pty Ltd setting up a new complex at the timber mill in Nannup. That proposal was nearly completed when we were in government and it was only the caretaker conventions that prevented us from making a final decision. The current work force of 48 people will be maintained and a centre of excellence for drying timber will be developed at Nannup. That will help retain the working population of the town. The BRL Hardy Wine Company facility, a \$30 million project, has been established. Some problems associated with that project relate to dust, noise, light and flooding and mud affecting neighbouring houses. It is incumbent on BRL Hardy to correct those problems in consultation with the shire and the people who have been affected. That project has been a great fillip to Nannup, and along with the M and B announcement, will secure the future for Nannup for some time.

Another matter is a commitment to the construction of Mowen Road. I request the members opposite, particularly the ministers, to have a look at the cabinet decisions of the previous Government. Considered in one of the cabinet sub-committees, and later presented in a submission to the Cabinet, was a commitment to complete the sealing of Mowen Road by the end of 2003. Mowen Road is fundamental to the future of Nannup. Nannup is like a hub in a wheel, with the Vasse Highway coming from Busselton, the Mowen Road from Margaret River, the Brockman Highway from Karridale, the Vasse Highway from Pemberton, and the roads from Donnelly River, Bridgetown and Balingup. Tourists will seek Nannup as a quiet place. I understand that Nannup is your former home, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Dean), and that is something to be proud of. Nannup has an excellent school, with an excellent ethos. It is a vibrant town. The shire has a good chief executive officer,

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Jim McGinty; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Mr John Kobelke; Mr John Day; Mr Rod Sweetman; Mr Mike Board; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr House; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Ms Alannah MacTiernan

and the first woman shire president, Barbara Dunnet. Fundamental to its future is the sealing of Mowen Road, which will provide an outlet for people from Margaret River. It is almost a dead straight road into Nannup, and it intersects with Sues Road which creates a bypass for Margaret River, and also crosses St Johns Brook, where the Barrabup pool tourist project is under way. Mowen Road will bring traffic right into Nannup, and then on into the Blackwood valley and Manjimup, Pemberton and other centres further away. Sues Road is already completed as a result of the Beenup mining venture, that has since closed down. When Mowen Road is completed to the junction of Sues Road by the end of this year it will create a first-class bypass for people travelling south of Margaret River to Witchcliffe, Karridale and Augusta. It is important for the road to be completed, not only in the section that is being completed now - from Sues Road to Margaret River - but also eastward from Sues Road to Nannup.

The centre of wine excellence proposed for Margaret River is very important to that town, which is world-renowned as a wine-growing area. The centre, which is being partly funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and technical and further education, is something that should go ahead. I understand that currently \$2.5 million has been committed, with another \$4.5 million in the current budget. I hope that ministers keep to that commitment, and it will require a further boost in funding to bring it to fruition. There is at present some conjecture about the site of the centre. There is strong opposition to placing it on the high school site. The high school has its own farm and vineyard, and makes its own wine. The school community would be very upset if the centre of wine excellence were to go ahead on the school site. It is important that the centre be located on the Darch Road site, which will include an extensive education precinct as well as residential development. This is a project of world importance, and of great importance to Margaret River. Attached to that project will be a bypass, which, whether or not it is proceeded with in the near future, should certainly be part of the long-term planning.

Another issue in Margaret River is housing for teachers. The Opposition will pursue the allocation of housing from the Government Employees Housing Authority. Also the Augusta-Margaret River shire administration should be returned to local control as soon as the commissioners can sort out what needs to be done, and get on with calling elections. Another issue in this area is the Boranup lime pit, an area of great importance to not only the people of Augusta-Margaret River, but also those on the Scott River plain. The Leeuwin conservation group has been pushing to include the lime pit in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste ridge conservation zone. The lower Blackwood land conservation district committee wants to make sure that farmers have security of supply of lime for the next 100 years. The commissioners have made an interim decision, which would leave only a supply of lime for five to seven years. I have spoken and written to Hon Kim Chance as Minister for Agriculture, alerting him to the fact that those decisions should not be made without being considered on a whole-of-government basis. The Scott River coastal plain is zoned for agricultural conservation, and without a lime supply, no crops of any significance will be able to be grown in that area, so this is an important issue for the people of Scott River and Margaret River.

On the other side of the divide, the Bridgetown sports facility has been funded under a community sports and recreation facilities grant, and also by a contribution from the Warren-Blackwood action plan. That will be a boost for the community of Bridgetown. The Hampton Street bypass and off-street parking should be completed as soon as possible to improve safety. The main street of Bridgetown is quite narrow, with a bend and a hump in the middle, between all of the shops and the hotels. It is probably fortuitous that no-one has been killed there. A couple of people have been hit, but there have been no fatalities to date. The previous Government made a commitment to spending more than \$1 million on upgrading the main street of Bridgetown and providing off-street parking. This work should be done as a matter of urgency. The funds have been budgeted. The other issue in Bridgetown is a covered area for the Bridgetown High School. With the number of wet days from now on, it is imperative the school receive a covered area, as many other schools have received covered areas across Western Australia.

The Gwalia minesite at Greenbushes has been upgraded. It is the biggest deposit of tantalum and spodumene in the world, with an assured life, and significant expansion is taking place. I understand the mine is being powered by electricity rather than gas. At one stage there was talk about extending the gas pipeline from Boyanup to Greenbushes and then to Bridgetown and Manjimup. I would be disappointed if that kind of project did not proceed. It is not a very expensive project, and it would be good to see people in country Western Australia receiving some of the benefits of gas reticulation that large regional centres and the metropolitan area enjoy. The other success story in Greenbushes is the Blueleaf Corporation Pty Ltd timber processing group at the old Whittakers' site, which has been put together as a multi-purpose site, not only cutting jarrah and karri but also drying the timber and turning it into flooring and other products, including outdoor furniture. Actions of the previous coalition Government, particularly the member for Merredin as Minister for Commerce and Trade,

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played a very important part in the success of the Blueleaf timber project. Timber production under the old Whittakers Mill regime was about 110 000 cubic metres a year. About 30 000 cubic metres is being cut there now. Although it does not employ the same 170 people, it is operating very well. It means that the economy of Greenbushes is assured well and truly into the foreseeable future, as long as the mill continues to receive the jarrah and karri it has been contracted to receive.

Northcliffe has suffered since the closure of the mill about 10 or 11 years ago. The butcher, the bank and the baker have disappeared over time. The Ministry of Commerce and Trade allocated \$20 000 for a feasibility study of the Northcliffe cluster mill project to bring together small operators so that they can value add their product on one site. It is a victory for commonsense and something the Government must run with on the basis that a small country town needs that kind of support. Northcliffe has schooling for years K to 10 supported by a very good ethos. It would be a shame to see school numbers diminish due to lack of industry or the withdrawal of the supply of timber to that area.

A project called the Northcliffe Interpretive and Cultural Centre incorporating a museum, a library and an education tourist facility has applied for commonwealth funds under the rural assistance development scheme. I hope the Government will support the community's application for funds. In areas such as Northcliffe, a sawlog supply for small mills is fundamental. Although small mills do not supply select grade timber, they certainly supply a lot of scantling or flooring timber. Many small mills are beginning to value add that resource. Sawlog supply is fundamental to the future of those small towns.

Towns such as Northcliffe and Nannup require infill sewerage. The coalition embarked on a program costing in excess of \$800 million. Some of the small towns that were left out of that process need to be brought into that program so that hotels and motels, for example, can be built there. Northcliffe and the centre of Nannup, which are in fairly low, swampy areas, badly need infill sewerage. A project is proceeding in the centre of Nannup, although some of the people are concerned about the cost of infill sewerage. If the Government concentrates on those low lying and commercial areas it will minimise the cost to ratepayers.

Mobile phones are an issue across the south west, particularly in isolated areas. It is very frustrating when travelling in those areas not to be able to use a mobile phone. I wonder how many lives the use of two-way radio and mobile phones has saved in the past decade. I imagine that a significant number of people would not be on this earth had it not been for those facilities. If they are available for people in remote parts of the desert in Western Australia why are they not available in that south west corner not covered by the 'footprint'?

The other issues are Pemberton and the job losses at the Sotico Pty Ltd mill flagged in its proposition to the Government, about which no doubt members will have heard. Pemberton will lose 65 employees, a third of breadwinners in that town. The Government may talk about compassion and tolerance and looking after people who are disadvantaged, but they should imagine what would happen if a third of the people in Perth were out of work, albeit that is perhaps a poor example. It will have a major impact on Pemberton.

The proposed business incubator project must be completed and the country club sale must proceed so that a new \$2.2 million sports complex can be built. That must proceed with some alacrity. A shortfall of about \$300 000 must be met because the community will not be able to raise the \$478 000 required for its component under the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. I have discussed that with various ministers.

Land must be released for residential properties and a facility created so that the Department of Conservation and Land Management-Government Employees Housing Authority houses can be sold to employees and mill houses handed over to employees as part of redundancy or assistance packages in Pemberton.

The hydro-replica project is proceeding. The pipes have been installed, which is a step in the right direction. The pine mill in Pemberton must be relocated. They are all challenges for the Government to take on board.

Value adding industry must be moved to Manjimup. Under the Sotico proposal, reference has been made to selling Deanmill to the value adding companies. That is a step in the right direction, as would be moving the Welshpool operation to Manjimup. Significant job losses will occur because the mill, which employs about 90 people, will operate with one shift as it does at Pemberton, where the employees cut 100 000 cubic metres. Under the Government's projected cut of 40 000 cubic metres of karri, Pemberton's component will be about 27 000 cubic metres. That will mean a major reduction in the number of employees in the mills.

The other project necessary in Manjimup is the upgrade of Muir Highway, the east-west route that joins up the lower south west area on which significantly large trucks cart blue gum in both log and chip form. Much of the provedoring from the eastern States comes via Muir Highway. It is a one-strip road that runs to Mt Barker and

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Albany, then east. In winter when the trucks do not move off the bitumen, problems are created for school buses and other traffic. The new Manjimup Primary School was committed under the previous Government. It was built in 1920 and is heritage listed. A new site must be found in consultation with the community. The project must be completed by the beginning of 2004.

The \$2 million icon project, committed under the Labor Party's policy on tourism, must be completed - part of which is construction of a road at a cost of a further \$1 million - because it is essential for future tourism in that area. The upgrading of Perup Road for the new Evans and Tate winery is necessary, as is a sawlog resource for Deanmill and the production centre to maintain employment. Funds must be made available for the Moonya aged care facility, which is in financial difficulty, although negotiations have occurred between Baptist Care and other interested parties to possibly take it over. It may also require an injection of funds from the State Government.

The announcement about the wilderness area in the Walpole region was made by the Government without consultation with the local shire. Most of the land is in the Manjimup shire. The risk of wildfire in that area could destroy all of that asset in one fell swoop if the Government does not make significant funds available in this year's budget so that CALM has sufficient resources to look after the prescribed burning of that and other areas. The Government must be aware that dairy deregulation is still impacting on the district. Tourist bureaus are struggling without sufficient resources. The Shire of Manjimup, for example, has four tourist bureaus, all funded by the local shire. They are significant burdens.

I wanted to put those matters on record, but I will speak again on forest management. The Government obviously has a mandate to reduce the volume of timber cut, illustrated by its decision to stop logging old growth forest. I heard members say that the Labor Party was catapulted into government due partly to its policies on old-growth forest. I do not think that is the case. Other members have already mentioned that the definition of old-growth forest will cause the Government problems in the years to come. I will talk in detail about those things at some other stage. If we want to be a caring and compassionate community and have a caring and compassionate Government that tolerates all people, we must consider the impact of the decisions made by the Government that impact on small towns in the south west of Western Australia.

Currently, timber protesters are at Barrabup. Barrabup is a regrowth forest area. I understand that the conservationists Beth Shultz and Ken Colbung claim to have found an Aboriginal site in that area. It is a matter of concern that the heritage study of that area found no such Aboriginal site, yet people are again protesting. That is something the community can do without. It is also the source of timber for the Nannup mill. I will speak about those matters in the future.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-Reply thus adopted.