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Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Larry Graham; Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Acting Speaker; Mr Bob Kucera; Ms Sue Walker; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Matt Birney; Mr Jim McGinty

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): Today I received a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this House has no confidence in the Minister for Justice as a result of her failure to ensure the safety and security of the Western Australian public.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [2.58 pm]: I move the motion. Mr Speaker -

Point of Order

Mr L. GRAHAM: I am sorry to interrupt the Leader of the Opposition, but this is probably the most important type of motion; that is, a motion of no confidence in a minister taken as a matter of public interest. I am concerned because I wish to speak on it and the very important matters relating to a motion of no confidence in a minister. Moving this motion under the rules of a matter of public interest significantly restricts the speaking rights of Independent members of Parliament. I ask, Mr Speaker, that you grant an additional allocation of time in which members may speak to enable a reasonable debate on this very important matter.

The SPEAKER: Although I have some sympathy with what the member for Pilbara has said, the Opposition has brought forward this matter of public interest and it is entitled to bring forward this matter in this manner. It is also entitled to bring it forward in the manner that the member for Pilbara described. The time limits for debate on MPIs have been set by the House and there is no way that the Presiding Officer can influence those times. I have no doubt that the Opposition will take its small part in the MPI this evening.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. BARNETT: On Thursday last week, 10 June, nine dangerous criminals escaped from the Supreme Court. Three of those criminals are still at large. The escape and the events that followed - that is, motorists being dragged from their vehicles and escapees driving in stolen vehicles down the wrong side of the freeway - placed the public at risk. The public is still at risk today. A significant share of the responsibility for those events lies fairly and squarely with this Government, and with the Minister for Justice in particular.

The mass escape last week - and it was only last week - was by no means an isolated event. In recent times there has been a series of escapes and problems within the administration of our prisons and justice system. I will recount some of those very briefly. On 4 June, Jason Gary Cooper wandered away from an indoor cricket fixture in Maddington. He has 150 convictions. On 22 May, Lionel Robert Whitby wandered away from a work camp at Kellerberrin. He has convictions for manslaughter and burglary. Michael William Coleman walked out of the minimum-security Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison on 3 June. Dale Phillips walked out of the same facility on the same day as the escape from the Supreme Court. Philip Mervyn Quartermaine has pleaded guilty to breaching his custody and parole conditions. He claimed that he left custody overnight - that he stole a car, drove to Perth and then returned. Marc Anthony Barron, who was convicted for child sex crimes, was moved to the minimum-security Karnet Prison Farm after serving just two months of a sentence. Russell James Mitchell is an offender who repeatedly breached his parole conditions and allegedly shot and killed a young woman while on parole. I could go on and on.

What is happening within our justice system and where is this minister? Is she doing her job? No. Given the history - the litany of escapes, breaches of parole, slack procedures and the slack administration within the Department of Justice and of this minister - could it get worse? Yes, and it did. It got a lot worse on Thursday, 10 June, when nine prisoners escaped custody. Three of those prisoners remain at large. What sorts of crimes have those prisoners been found guilty of? They include armed robbery, assault, deprivation of liberty, stealing vehicles, sex offences, armed robbery, unlawful wounding, weapons possession offences and so on. It was hardened criminals who escaped.

I want to know, and this Parliament and the public need to know, what happened. The Speaker is not in the Chair, which is regrettable. This Parliament needs to know what happened. The Premier said that the Government would get the facts out. When asked a straightforward question by the Leader of the National Party, the Premier refused to answer. So much for getting the facts out and accepting any level of responsibility!

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We know that at around 11.00 am last Thursday, the prisoners overpowered the security guards, took the keys and escaped through the Supreme Court onto Barrack Street. They stole cars by forcing drivers from their vehicles. A high-speed chase ensued down Beeliar Drive and on the wrong side of Kwinana Freeway. This Government wants to blame everyone else. The question must be asked: why were three civilian employees of the AIMS Corporation Pty Ltd left in charge of 11 dangerous criminals? Those employees were not armed, they did not have a certain level of training and they were not sworn officers. It was hardly their fault. Yet, this minister, this Premier and this Government want to blame those three civilian employees of AIMS. What in the world was going on with this Government, this Department of Justice and this minister for three civilian employees, who are meant to do relatively low-security tasks, to be left in charge of 11 dangerous criminals who were all herded into one cell? Is there little wonder that things went wrong? Premier, that is the sort of issue we should be looking at. What were three civilians doing in charge of 11 dangerous criminals in one cell? What was this minister doing? No doubt she was having another meeting with the national executive of the Australian Labor Party; that is all she has done for the past month.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What a load of rubbish.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We will hear from the minister. Was there any warning? We know that this is not an unprecedented event. In recent months there have been a series of failures under this minister. We know that this event is unacceptable, but it is not the fault of AIMS or those three employees whom this minister seeks to blame. Was there a warning? Yes, there was. In November 2001, the Inspector of Custodial Services presented a report to this Government, which by then had been in power for some 10 months. This report pointed to the inadequate facilities. It also made the point that the State's most dangerous offenders go to the Supreme Court, which is what the prisoners in this group were. The report made a series of findings. Its three major findings related to the design of the sally port, public accessibility to custodial activities and the need for master planning. However, I make reference to one aspect of the report of the inspector of prisons. I wonder whether the Premier has bothered to read this report? The fourth point on page 47 of the report states -

As a matter of urgency, the Department should cease the practice of placing high security escort prisoners into the custody of Contract staff. Prisoners who have been assessed as posing a high risk should remain in the custody of specialised officers at all times.

In November 2001, the inspector of prisons said that high-risk prisoners requiring high security need to remain in the custody of specialised officers at all times. Eleven high-security prisoners should not have been left in a cell under the guard of three civilians who were unarmed, unprotected and at risk. Those AIMS staff were at risk! They were very lucky not to have been bashed in that escape, as were the staff of the Supreme Court and the members of the public when the prisoners rushed out of the Supreme Court building. Given the events that took place, it was a miracle that a motorist was not killed on the road. The community is still at risk because three dangerous criminals are at large. Given the series of events in the justice system and the warning that was given to this Premier and this minister two and a half years ago, there was a precedent.

Dr G.I. Gallop: Are you going to deal with the warning given to you in 1993?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Premier will have a chance to speak and be accountable. He should answer the question from the Leader of the National Party; he should provide that information, place it on the Table of the House and let us have a look at it. That is the Premier's opportunity to be accountable.

We have had all the excuses from this minister. She said that the work had not been done but that it would be done. She said that a Supreme Court recess was needed to do the work. Hang on, this report came out in November 2001. What happened to the recess in the summer of 2001-02? What happened to the recess at the end of 2002? What happened to the recess at the end of 2003? Is the minister going to do the work at the end of 2004? Having received a formal report from the inspector of prisons, this minister and this Premier have done absolutely nothing for two and a half years. They are both responsible for this situation, which is why the Premier must remove this minister. We have had two and a half years of inaction, and, as a result, the public has been placed at risk, and it is still in danger today. Then the minister, having tried the excuses, tried the blame game. The minister and the Premier sought to blame anyone they could. They started by blaming the judges. They said that the prisoners should not even be there; the court hearing should be done by videoconferencing. The prisoner, facing trial, should not appear in the court. Videoconferencing should take place. Then the Government sought to blame the Opposition, which is standard - blame the previous Government. Has the Premier not twigged that he has been paying himself \$245 000 per annum for the past two and a half years - one of the highest salaries of any politician in Australia? It is about time he started doing the job. Then they tried to blame the Department of Justice. The minister tried to blame public servants in her department. It was their fault. The incompetent, ineffectual and lazy minister says, "Blame anyone but me". Then she tried to blame the

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justice system. Now, as of yesterday, it is all the fault of AIMS Corporation, the private security firm. The report to the minister from the Inspector of Custodial Services said that civilian security staff should not be in charge of high-risk cases, and there certainly should not be 11 prisoners in one cell with just three unarmed civilians in charge of them. The minister appeared on television the other night with someone dressed up like Rambo. Suddenly we have security! What an absolute joke! After two and a half years of inaction, the minister appears with Arnold Schwarzenegger, or someone like him. The minister and the Premier just do not get it. They do not get their responsibility for the safety of people in the courts, the security staff, the people on St Georges Terrace, the motorists travelling on the freeway and, now, the whole city of Perth, with three dangerous and desperate people at large. The minister and the Premier want to blame everyone else and find excuses.

This has been a massive failure of security. Does the Premier get the point? Does he get the point that under him and the minister, 11 seriously dangerous criminals were left in the charge of three civilians in the Supreme Court in the middle of our city? Does he get the point that those prisoners escaped fairly easily? Does he get the point that they dragged motorists from vehicles and drove down the wrong side of the freeway, and it was only by good fortune that someone was not killed? Does the Premier get the point that police officers put their lives at risk trying to stop that speeding vehicle? Does the Premier get the point? I do not think he does; he is up there in his ivory tower, failing to understand the basic responsibility of providing safety and security for the people of this State. When he was asked a direct question by the Leader of the National Party, and he had an opportunity to be factual, truthful and honest in this Parliament, he refused to answer. Every member of Parliament saw that. He was asked a straightforward question to provide information, and he refused.

This minister has not done her job, by any standard. Why? It is because she is doing another job. The Premier pays her \$191 000 per annum to do the job of a minister of the Crown, and she has not been doing that. Everyone in this Parliament knows she has been spending her time as State President of the Australian Labor Party. She has been trying to sort out the rorting, the branch stacking and the false declarations. She has been trying to prevent national intervention, or perhaps she has been trying to encourage it. She has been trying to sort out the wrangles over preselections. I do not doubt that that is a big job, particularly in the Labor Party. That is what she has been doing; she has not been doing her job as a minister. What does the Premier want to do? Does he pay the minister \$191 000 of taxpayers' money to do her job as Minister for Justice, or does he pay her that money to be President of the Labor Party? She cannot do both.

Mr Speaker - the Speaker is not here.

Dr G.I. Gallop interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Premier laughs, and the Speaker is not in the Chair. The Speaker should be in the Chair.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Making such a remark reflects on the Speaker. It is unparliamentary, and should be withdrawn.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The Leader of the Opposition made no reflection on the Speaker. However, this matter is a no confidence motion in a minister of the Government. The point that was being made is that it would be appropriate for the Speaker to be in the Chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A. Templeman): Members, I rule that there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will conclude my comments. This minister has clearly failed in her responsibility. There has been a series of break-outs and parole breaches, culminating last Thursday in a mass break-out of extremely dangerous criminals from the Supreme Court. This minister's response was to make lame excuses and then to provide a series of blames: blame the Opposition, blame the judges, blame the department, blame AIMS, blame anyone. The approach of this minister is to blame anyone but herself. The Premier, "Good News Geoff", was absolutely missing in action. When it comes to the crunch, he is not there.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Mr Speaker, you have made it quite clear that it is unparliamentary to address members by anything other than their appropriate title. The Leader of the Opposition is well aware of that.

The SPEAKER: I have ruled on that point of order on numerous occasions. I was in the process of returning to the Chair and did not hear the comment. However, I am sure that if the Leader of the Opposition has called the Premier by any other name, he will withdraw it.

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Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes. The good news -

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I repeat my point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is well aware of what he said. He has been asked to withdraw.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If I have been asked to withdraw, Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is a Premier who is known publicly in Western Australia as "Good News Geoff". That is the term that is used for him. We find that when there is a tough issue of a break-out, this Premier is not there. Here is his chance. He failed in question time to make any commitment to provide information. We know that the Inspector of Custodial Services has said that the facilities were inadequate. We know that the Inspector of Custodial Services has said that contract staff should not be in that position or expected to do those tasks in those circumstances. This minister failed to read the report, let alone act on it. This minister must be removed. Unless the Premier does that, he will be saying, "To hell with the public. I don't care about public safety." If he is going to put this minister, who is in her two jobs for one salary position, ahead of public safety, he will be judged for that. This minister is spending all her time doing Labor Party work.

MS S.E. WALKER (Nedlands) [3.17 pm]: I fully support the Leader of the Opposition's motion of no confidence in the Minister for Justice. The justice portfolio is a serious portfolio. When I was phoned while in my electorate office on Thursday and told that nine high-risk offenders had escaped, the first thing I did was reach for report No 7 - of 23 reports - by the Inspector of Custodial Services. I wonder about the truth of what this minister says when she comes into the Chamber. Today I asked her in a supplementary question whether she had read this report and she said that she had never read it before the prisoners escaped. During the budget estimates hearing on 18 May 2004, she said of Professor Richard Harding -

He undertakes his role with the utmost independence. I am certainly very pleased with the reports he has provided.

Has the minister read them or not? I knew that the recommendations by the inspector would not have been put in place. I was very confident of that. Why? I was confident of that because of the litany of errors and the shambles that now makes up the Department of Justice. Four prisons were in crisis when the current Minister for Health left the justice portfolio and gave it to this minister. Who could forget the high-risk parolee who allegedly murdered a girl while he was on a community-based order? Why? It happened because this minister failed to take account of the Auditor General's report of 2001, in which he said that high-risk parolees were not being supervised in the community. I had supreme confidence that the recommendations contained in the report of the Inspector of Custodial Services would not be in place. Also in this report - this has not surfaced in the Press - was a recommendation that a master plan be implemented. Where is the master plan? It does not exist.

I listened to the minister when she appeared on *Stateline*. She had the hide and the temerity to suggest to the Western Australian public that the Supreme Court was getting a new \$110 million court complex. What a load of nonsense! During the budget estimates committee the Attorney General made comments about that complex. I asked him questions about it. I had a briefing on that court complex just prior to the budget estimates committee. A plan is not even in existence. The Attorney General said in that committee hearing -

The commitment is to a complete refurbishment of the Magistrates Courts and a dedicated court so that the Central Law Courts, as they are currently known, will become dedicated Magistrates Court facilities. A new building will be erected to house the District Court, and construction is due to be completed in mid 2007.

That new court complex is ostensibly for at least 14, as I understand it, District Court courtrooms and a couple of Supreme Court courtrooms. We had the Premier -

Dr G.I. Gallop interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I will answer the Premier. He stood this afternoon and read from a 2001 report about what the Chief Justice said in 2001. In the budget, the Government has split the Supreme Court a third way. It will put some of its courts in the new building in 2007, if it ever materialises. There are courts on the corner of William and Barrack Streets, and there are some in the Supreme Court building. I will read what the Chief Justice said in 2002. He stated -

The Court is also itself forcefully advocating necessary improvements to court security generally and, in particular, to its custodial facilities following the report of Professor Harding, the Inspector of Custodial

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Services, dated 26 March 2002, on Metropolitan Court Custody Centres. That work would involve "internalising" the sally-port and other improvements to our custodial facilities.

The total cost should not exceed \$1 million.

Some of the \$1 million, of course, was spent on the Premier and the Attorney General's pursuit of politics in the one vote, one value matter. That could have been used to upgrade the facilities at the Supreme Court. I note what the Leader of the Opposition said. I first raised the issue on the Paul Murray show, I think. It struck me one day after hearing time and again from the Minister for Justice what she was not doing in her portfolio. This was also raised in letters. I have raised in this Parliament the difficulty I have had getting responses from her and her department; and on the Leo McVeigh question there was fudging, and it took me eight months to get a response.

I looked at the Department of Justice web site today, and I saw the biography of the minister. It states -

From 1987 until 1994, Michelle worked in the State Public Service, and at the time of her election to Parliament in 1994 representing the seat of Glendalough, she was a Senior Policy and Research Officer with the Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare.

During this time, Michelle served as a Perth City Councillor for 7 years, and was Deputy Lord Mayor in 1992/93

Let us face it; the minister is used to doing another job, or she is being paid to do another job.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Yes, it is true. She is not doing her job.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms S.E. WALKER: There it is in black and white. As a lay party person, I know what it takes. The minister is not doing her job, and she is used to not doing her job. In addition, the minister -

Mr J.A. McGinty: Forgery is not a crime for you, is it?

Ms S.E. WALKER: The Attorney General should not start. The minister has tried to deflect blame.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms S.E. WALKER: I was called by a Supreme Court judge today. He said that he and the other judges were sick and tired of being verballed by this Government about this issue. They had a meeting a couple of years ago

Mr J.A. McGinty interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: We expect that from the Attorney General. A couple of years ago the judges of the Supreme Court had a discussion on this topic.

Mr J.A. McGinty: I don't think you're telling the truth.

Ms S.E. WALKER: We know what the Attorney General did with the Lewandowski affidavit.

Mr J.A. McGinty: A Supreme Court judge rang you and said that he was sick and tired of being verballed?

Ms S.E. WALKER: Yes, verballed by the Attorney General - absolutely.

Mr J.A. McGinty: A Supreme Court judge said that to you?

Ms S.E. WALKER: Verballed by this Government.

Mr J.A. McGinty: You are not telling the truth, member.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I am absolutely telling the truth.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms S.E. WALKER: The Supreme Court judge rang me today to tell me that what the minister was saying with regard to the chief justice and the judges of the Supreme Court was a load of nonsense. He told me that they sat down two years ago and decided that they would not have videoconferencing facilities for people who were being sentenced, because it was a public occasion, and nor would they have videoconferencing facilities for a plea of guilty, because it was a public occasion, but they would use videoconferencing facilities for status

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conferences. We need to remember that the prisoners who came to the court on Thursday were there for a status conference. The Supreme Court judge said to me that the videoconferencing facilities that are used in the Supreme Court are also used by the Court of Petty Sessions, and there is a difficulty with regard to that issue. The Supreme Court judges are tired of being verballed by this Government. Not only do the coalition, and the members of the public, as judged by today's *The West Australian*, have no confidence in the minister, but also the judiciary has no confidence in the minister. I am not sure whether the Inspector of Custodial Services has any confidence in the minister. I fully support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

DR G.I. GALLOP (Victoria Park - Premier) [3.26 pm]: I oppose the motion. I want to raise two important facts in this debate.

Several members interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Ask the questions, and we will answer them.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: You have no accountability!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: It is good to hear from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: You are all noise!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! Premier, I say again that the current structure of the people on my left is that the member for Avon is the Leader of the National Party, the member for Cottesloe is the Leader of the Opposition, and the member for Mitchell is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: He is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but he is not sitting in the seat!

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Premier to order for the first time. I urge all members to refer to members by their appropriate names.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The member for Avon interjected. I say this to him: if the Opposition asks any questions requiring any information, we will be only too happy to answer those questions.

The first fact I raise is about security. There has been a 50 per cent reduction in prison escapes since the change of Government. That indicates the performance of our Government as opposed to that of the previous Government. The second fact is that it is the Labor Government that has committed to the new justice complex, and it is the Labor Government that has committed \$4.2 million for an upgrade of the Supreme Court so that it can carry out its functions properly. As I pointed out during question time, it is very interesting that when the previous Government had the chance to deal with this issue in 1993, having inherited a budget commitment from the Lawrence Labor Government, it refused to do it. The responsibility for that lies with the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Kingsley, because they failed to act.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Excuses, excuses, excuses!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: They are not excuses. As I have explained to the Leader of the Opposition, they are facts. First, there has been a 50 per cent reduction in prisoner escapes. Secondly, we have committed the money not just to the new justice complex but also to the Supreme Court upgrade. They are the facts. Nevertheless, there was a very serious breach last Thursday. The response of the Government, on behalf of the people of Western Australia, was to look into every aspect of that issue so that we could reach a complete and comprehensive understanding of what went wrong. That is our responsibility as a Government. The issues we are now pursuing are court processes, particularly in respect of procedures like status conferences, for which we believe videoconferencing would be appropriate, and we are having that discussion with the courts, initiated by the Attorney General, and through the Solicitor General. It is an important discussion to have in the context of what has happened. This morning I received two interesting calls on talkback radio from people asking why the Supreme Court cannot engage in videoconferencing for status conferences. That is a perfectly appropriate question. There is also the question of the performance of AIMS, which has responsibility for security by way of a contract. The Department of Justice has made a preliminary assessment of the issue and determined in the first instance -

Mr P.G. Pendal: Your people have been shown up. It is shocking.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We get a report on the matter, and what is the response of the members of the Liberal Party? Their response to a report by the department into this major issue is to defend the private contractor. That is their immediate response. That leads me to ask the question: what is the relationship between AIMS and the

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Liberal Party in this State? Why is it that whenever an matter arises and we need to examine the issue of AIMS, Liberal Party members come to the defence of AIMS? What is going on?

We will continue looking into the matter. The Director General of the Department of Justice has reached the conclusion that those duties of AIMS should be suspended while we continue to have a full investigation into what went wrong. In the interim, the Department of Justice made a decision on Thursday afternoon, which was implemented on Friday morning, to toughen security measures for prisoners. The Minister for Justice announced that on Friday morning. There was therefore an immediate response to the problem. As I said in question time, it is obvious that the Opposition will play "let's whack the minister". That is its objective in this matter. What the Government of Western Australia will do is examine this issue and come up with some solutions to the problem. The Government is doing what the public of Western Australia wants it to do. It is examining all aspects of this issue. It will act on the basis of that information to make sure that the deficiencies that are revealed are acted upon. That is what the minister and the Government are doing.

I repeat: the facts are that under the previous Government's watch these matters were not dealt with when they could have been. We have committed funds to bring about the interim upgrade of the Supreme Court and to have the new justice complex that will deal with criminal trials.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland - Minister for Justice) [3.33 pm]: It is very important to put on record what our Government's response has been to the issues at the Supreme Court. It is interesting that the member for Kingsley, a former Attorney General, said that there have been issues at the Supreme Court since Moses was a boy. That may well be the case. I do not think it came as any surprise to anybody in the community that there were issues with the Supreme Court, including security issues, and that it needed an upgrading. Those issues have been in the media and have been reported on for more than a decade. Indeed, the Premier highlighted during question time today that the Lawrence Government, and I think then Attorney General Joe Berinson, responded to concerns back in 1992. I do not think those concerns were first raised in 1992; I suspect they were raised even before then. In April 1992 the Lawrence Government Cabinet, with Attorney General Joe Berinson, made a commitment to extensions to the Supreme Court to deal with the issues that had been raised. My understanding is that having made that decision, had a Labor Government been re-elected, those works would have been completed. Members opposite, who have been barking the loudest during the past few days and criticising the Government for not acting, canned the action of the former Government. As a result of the incident the other day there is to be an immediate \$100 000 upgrade to the Supreme Court custody area. That is our response to assure the people of Western Australia that we want to avoid a repetition.

Ms S.E. Walker: When are you starting it?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We started last weekend. Members opposite have been asking why we did not commence work on something in 2001. What did their Government do? It sat on its hands for eight years. It now asks why we have not done something about it. The fact is that our Attorney General had been dealing with this issue ahead of the Inspector of Custodial Services.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is impossible for the minister to progress her speech when dealing with a relay of interjections from members on my left. I call the member for Nedlands to order for the third time. I suggest to the member for Kalgoorlie that he has been called to order three times, and I am reluctant to call him to order for the fourth time; however, he is getting very close to being called.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is interesting that members opposite are very keen to say that no-one else can be blamed; that is, the minister is the only person who can be blamed. Why blame the minister? The key point is that they say that this is because the report was not acted upon.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Nedlands was screeching on television last night, "Why didn't she act two and a half years ago?" The fact is that I was not the responsible minister two and a half years ago. Also, the report had not been tabled in this House two and a half years ago. It was tabled in November 2001, when I was probably dealing with school bus contracts with the member for Carine.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The key difference between us and members opposite in government is that we have taken this issue head on. The member for Kingsley has admitted that this issue needed addressing a long time

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ago; it has been around since Moses, it was said. Members opposite did not address this issue when in government. In 2001, our first year in government, our Attorney General started to address the matter. He wrote to the Chief Justice in October 2001 as follows -

Thank you for your letter dated 14 September 2001 regarding Supreme Court accommodation.

I appreciate your concerns over the current inadequate accommodation for the Supreme Court in both its existing and leased accommodation. I also appreciate the inefficiencies and disadvantages of operating from two separate locations.

This reference was to our Government in 2001. The letter continues -

The Government has therefore made a commitment to start construction of the proposed new CBD Courts facility in 2004. This facility is estimated to be completed in 2007.

As you are aware, the facility will accommodate the District Court and Supreme Court criminal matters. On completion of this facility, the Supreme Court lease at the AXA Centre can be retired.

To improve the situation in the short term, I understand that the Department of Justice is currently reviewing the Supreme Court leased accommodation with a view to improving functionality of the existing tenancy area. The Department will prepare a project proposal and cost estimates for internal funding approval.

The final paragraph refers to "I appreciate your continuing interest" and so forth.

Point of Order

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I ask the minister to table the letter.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It was my intention to table the letter. I table it now.

[See paper No 2433.]

Debate Resumed

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The letter was sent on 11 October 2001, well ahead of the inspector's report. The Government was already getting on top of the issue before the inspector's report was released. The letter at that time indicated that the proposal had been through its first budget process and a plan of action had been put in place. In fact, money had been put into the budget to deal with those inadequate court facilities and to commit to the new court complex. In addition, \$4.2 million was allocated in the 2003-04 budget forward estimates for upgrading work at the Supreme Court.

The advice is that the Department of Justice has worked with the key stakeholders since 2003; that is, it has worked with the AIMS Corporation and representatives of the office of the Inspector of Custodial Services to design and improve the security area at the Supreme Court. Both the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services and the AIMS Corporation have been involved in that work. Security upgrade work worth \$1 million was due to commence later this year. The sad fact is that in its whole term in office the former Government never spent or provided in the budget one cent to upgrade security at the Supreme Court despite the fact the member for Kingsley said that the Government knew it was a problem. Boy, did it know it was a problem. When looking back through its history, which I will do in a moment, it will be seen that a number of members opposite have commented on this matter in the past. In addition to these works at the Supreme Court, the Government has budgeted \$8.5 million for a new court at Kalgoorlie, and work has started on a new \$20 million court complex in Albany. This is because the Government takes these issues seriously and is committed to providing appropriate facilities.

In contrast, in 1997 the Director of Public Prosecutions advised in his annual report that the court building jeopardised the safety and security of staff. I repeat: in 1997 the DPP advised members opposite that the building jeopardised the safety and security of staff, juries and witnesses attending the court. The DPP, John McKechnie, QC, said that the State Government needed to make up its mind on plans for a new Supreme Court. Mr McKechnie warned -

"I don't have an official preference as to how it's solved but it needs to be solved quickly."

One would have to wonder at the hypocrisy of some members opposite when they say that the Inspector of Custodial Services had produced a report on which the Government did not act. The fact is that the inspector produced a report that was in the process of being acted on and the money for that has been provided for in the budget. The DPP reported exactly the same concerns to the former Government in 1997. What was the response of the former Government? Then Attorney General Hon Peter Foss responded to the claims by saying that they

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were inaccurate. He hoped that the recommendations on how to proceed would be forthcoming and he also said that it would be difficult to proceed. I have the article with me; it could not be easily missed. It was written on 22 October 1997 and was headed "DPP says security threatens top court". That is the Supreme Court. The DPP told the former Government that the Supreme Court was an immediate security threat back in 1997. What did the former Government do? It did nothing.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: In this Government's first year in office we moved to do something.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time and suggest that he not interject by raising his voice to levels at which no-one else can be heard.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The fact is that those members opposite who were then in government are in denial. When asked about the appalling conditions at the Supreme Court in 1998, the former Attorney General said that the description given by Hon John Halden of the internals of the cells was accurate.

On 22 October 1997 Hon Derrick Tomlinson asked then Attorney General Hon Peter Foss -

- (1) Is the Attorney General aware of an article by Grace Meertens in *The West Australian* this morning under the heading "DPP says security threatens top court", in which it is reported that the WA Director of Public Prosecutions, John McKechnie QC, has warned that the safety of juries, witnesses and court staff is at risk because of security problems at the Supreme Court?
- (2) Has the DPP advised the Attorney General of his concerns?
- (3) Have those concerns been evaluated?

Mr Foss replied -

"Once again inaccurate" is probably correct. He and I suggest that if members want to know what he advised they should read the paper tabled in this House.

The reply goes on to say -

(3) The Government has for some time -

In 1997 -

been endeavouring to obtain agreement from the various parties involved in the -

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite are embarrassed. They do not want me to read out this paragraph because they are hugely embarrassed. I will start from the beginning -

The Government has for some time been endeavouring to obtain agreement from the various parties involved in the construction of courts on a method by which to proceed towards a collocated Supreme Court and District Court. I hope that such a recommendation acceptable to the Government will be forthcoming. Until it is, it is difficult to proceed.

That is what Hon Peter Foss said in 1997 when the same issues were raised by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: What was your position in 1997?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member can have a look at all the questions asked by Hon John Halden, the then shadow minister for prisons.

I would like to put on record some of the things we have done in the justice portfolio to address issues.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: We don't want to hear about what you've done.

The SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the National Party!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That would embarrass the member. In terms of the AIMS contract, we acted immediately upon receiving an interim report.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Director General of the Department of Justice has received an interim report and he has acted immediately upon that. Those Supreme Court security duties will be undertaken by the Department of Justice. An independent inquiry will be undertaken into the Supreme Court incident and the AIMS contract. The current contract with AIMS is being renegotiated to not only bring about better value for money, but also deliver better services. We are focusing on ensuring better service standards for security and safety, whilst also ensuring some savings. Why does the Government have to do this? Because of the previous Government's record.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Boring; dull; colourless!

The SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The court security custodial services contract was designed to be the flagship of privatisation under the former Government. The Opposition police spokesperson on 7 April 2004 stated that the AIMS contract had actually been undertaken particularly well by AIMS; it had met just about every performance indicator put before it by the State Government. Over the last three years AIMS has failed to meet its contractual targets as part of its custodial services contract.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Nedlands!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It has in fact lost nearly \$100 000 in performance-linked fees. It has been a hugely expensive and costly exercise, and our Government has had to sort out the mess.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Kalgoorlie!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The fact of the matter is that those opposite defend AIMS at all costs. They do not want to blame AIMS for anything. Members opposite should look at the history of this matter. How short a memory do opposition members have? I refer to an article from *The West Australian* of 30 December 1998, which states -

Six violent prisoners escape in stolen car

Six prisoners escaped from Wooroloo Prison Farm yesterday morning, making a total of 11 WA escapees on the run - the highest in more than two years.

Six prisoners, described by police as dangerous, walked out of Wooroloo Prison Farm about 2.15am after one stole a car from the Wooroloo townsite and returned to the prison to collect his accomplices.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite do not want to remember this, do they? The next article is headed "The Prisons Crisis." This is the record of those opposite when in government.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No wonder you can't do your job. This break-out happened last Thursday. Three dangerous men are at large and you are talking about the mid-1990s. You are a joke!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This is the record of the Opposition when in government.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time and suggest that he has made his contribution on this matter. He does not get a second shot at it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The next article is headed, "55 escape jail in 6 months" and states -

Minimum-security escapee convicted last year of killing elderly man.

Four more prisoners, three of them described as violent, have escaped from WA jails, taking the number of escapes since July 1 to 55.

The Justice Ministry budgeted for 55 escapes in the 1998-99 financial year but that figure was reached yesterday, six months early. . . .

The public was warned yesterday to steer clear of the Pardelup escapees, who were all serving sentences for violent crimes. Whitby was jailed for eight years last year after he was convicted of the manslaughter of 77-year-old Beckenham man Michael Larkin in 1996.

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The next article is headed "Prince backs prison moves" and it states -

Acting Justice Minister Kevin Prince has defended the transfer of criminals convicted of violent crimes to low-security prison farms.

This is the record of those opposite. The next article of 7 January 1999 is headed "Union threat over safety" and refers to the record number of prisoners on the run.

Ms M.M. Quirk: How many?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Fifteen prisoners were on the run at once - all missing at the same time. The next article, referring to the prisons crisis, is headed "More police join hunt", and there is a lot more.

I am raising that by way of contrast. That is the kind of mess members opposite presided over. What has happened since the Labor Party came to government? It has halved the number of prison escapes from 100 in 1999-2000 to 50 in 2003-04. It has reduced the number of escapes from maximum-security prisons from 12 in 2000 to one in 2003. It has reduced the number of escapes from Wooroloo Prison Farm from 20 in 1999-2000 to seven in 2003-04. It has reduced the number of escapes from Karnet Prison from 12 in 1999-2000 to six in 2003-04. We were faced with problems at Wooroloo Prison Farm. What was our response? We clamped down on security at Wooroloo by announcing the introduction of electronic monitoring for all prisoners and we have implemented other security measures there.

Some of the incidents have been embarrassing but many of those incidents are surely beyond the control of the minister. No-one was injured in the incident that involved a group of prisoners at the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison engaging in a shooting spree with air rifles. I asked the department how a prison superintendent, albeit in an acting role, could allow that to happen? A range of activities are allowed and not allowed under section 94 "Approved absences under activity programmes" of the Prisons Act. The answer from the Department of Justice was that it did not think a superintendent would consider that weapons training was an appropriate section 94 activity. Quite simply, that is why it is not proscribed in the regulations. This Government has changed that.

We must consider what we have had to address as a result of the actions of members opposite when they were in government. Prior to 2000, sex offenders served a third of their time in a maximum-security prison, a third in medium-security and a third in minimum-security. The former Government decided to trial a new system. It considered that sex offenders should be individually assessed to determine where they would be best placed. In 1999, under the direction of Hon Peter Foss, the new system was trialled first at Bandyup. It was then rolled out in 2000 at every other prison in the State. That system has been in place since Peter Foss gave that policy direction. Our response was not to create a crisis; no-one escaped. However, we inform victims what offenders are up to. In one case the victim's mother was informed and she was rightly outraged when she found out that someone who had been convicted of child molestation had been transferred to a minimum-security prison within two months. I told the department to forget the former Government's policy of individual assessment and overlay on it the fact that every sex offender in this State must serve at least a third of his sentence before he can even be considered for a minimum-security prison. That is the kind of tough action that this Government has taken since it took office.

MR L. GRAHAM (Pilbara) [3.53 pm]: Unlike others I can make up my own mind how I will vote on motions. I feel duty bound to explain why I am not going to support a motion of no confidence. Firstly, I have not seen before - it may have happened - a motion of no confidence moved during a matter of public interest. This Parliament can do nothing more important than take a vote of no confidence in the Government and, secondary to that, a minister. To move a vote of no confidence as an MPI trivialises a vote of no confidence. I listened with interest to the rhetoric, of which there was a lot and I listened to the explanations of which there were many. However, nowhere did anyone address how nine people were able to escape from jail and "terrorise" Western Australia. The public has a right to know. I did not get any of that information from this debate; I got the normal political rhetoric about members doing such and such when they were in government and not doing things when they were in government and what they would have done had they been in government. Without being pompous or pontificating, I think both sides of this House have grossly misread the public's view on this matter. It is interesting to note not only that people are ringing talkback radio on this matter in almost unprecedented numbers that any adult can remember, but also the tone and tenor of their comments. Whether people are pro or anti on the issue, everyone is outraged that nine dangerous criminals were able to escape and find their way out of the Supreme Court of Western Australia and back onto the streets of Perth. Members opposite know that I start with a natural bias in having said on the first day of this Parliament that I will not vote against the Labor Party in votes of no confidence unless there is overwhelming evidence of some wrongdoing or illegality. I have honoured that commitment to the ALP. That does not mean that my vote cannot be got. On

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matters like this it can be got, but only when people put forward a clear case that demonstrates some degree of ministerial irresponsibility and impropriety. I have not seen that. A case could be expanded and developed, but it was not. I will vote with the Government against the motion of no confidence.

MR M.J. BIRNEY (Kalgoorlie) [3.56 pm]: I am not quite sure where to start. The absolute bland hypocrisy being displayed by the Minister for Justice is breathtaking. I do not mind admitting to members that before I came to this institution I was a little naive or green. I was predisposed to believe what the heads of major political parties said. I know it sounds strange now, does it not? Leading up to the last election, I recall the Premier - then the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party - saying ad nauseam that a future Labor Government would be premised on two principles: transparency and accountability. I remember the Labor Party going on about coalition ministers and their apparent failings, and saying that Richard Court should have sacked them. How often did we hear that from the then Leader of the Opposition? The Premier's time of reckoning has arrived. He has on his hands a bumbling, incompetent minister who is more interested in seeking publicity for herself than dealing with the issues of justice and law and order in Western Australia. Before I move to the substance of my contribution, I will pose a question to the Premier. I am not sure whether he is listening. He said he would be an open and transparent Premier. I repeat what was asked of him by the Leader of the National Party at question time: will the Premier table in this House by tomorrow all correspondence from AIMS Corporation to the Department of Justice relating to court security and the custodial arrangements for highsecurity prisoners, as well as any minutes of meetings between AIMS and the Department of Justice relating to the same, and any departmental budget submissions on court security? Will the Premier table that information by tomorrow? Did the Premier hear me?

Dr G.I. Gallop: I think I have already answered the question.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Will the Premier table that information for us by tomorrow? It is a simple question. I have reason to believe that the paper trail between the Department of Justice and AIMS might tell a different story about what happened at the Supreme Court in Perth. Is the Premier prepared to table that paper trail, so that everyone can look at it and make up their own mind?

Dr G.I. Gallop: Ask your questions and we will answer them.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Will the Premier answer the questions?

Dr G.I. Gallop: Ask those questions and we will answer them.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Let it be known and let it be recorded in *Hansard* that the so-called transparent and accountable Premier refused to table the information we requested on a very important matter. I will move on and deal with the subject of the press release issued by the Minister for Justice.

Mr N.R. Marlborough: Can I ask you a question? Is your mate in AIMS a member of your branch of the Liberal Party?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Would somebody give that man a lolly and pat him on the head?

Mr N.R. Marlborough interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your protection from that babbling fool.

Mr N.R. Marlborough interjected.

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

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I move on now to the subject of the press release issued by the Minister for Justice. In it she lists her reasons for suspending AIMS from the court security contract at the Supreme Court. In the past couple of days this Government has thrashed about and blamed everybody, yet has not taken any blame itself. I have only four minutes, Mr Speaker, so it would be a good thing if you would protect me from any babbling fools who want to interrupt me.

The first dot point in the press release states -

an AIMS security co-ordinator apparently rejected a request for additional staff on the day of the escape after security concerns were identified about the group of prisoners;

That is untrue. In fact, a member of the AIMS security detail rang in sick at the eleventh hour and was replaced by a member of the general security support team. The three AIMS security officers who were required to be there were, in fact, there. That deals with the first dot point.

The second dot point states -

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on the day, the AIMS supervisor apparently directed that cells only be unlocked with a minimum of three staff.

AIMS' policy is to unlock cells with two staff. Notwithstanding that, three staff were in the area, two of whom were standing at the cell door. One staff member was locking a bailee into the interview room so that the cell that he was in could be used for a lawyer to discuss a case with one of his clients. Of course, 10 minutes later that client was on the run. The second dot point is not true.

The third dot point states -

the duress alarm was not activated . . .

If members had seen the cell in question, they would know that the door swings open, I think to the left. The two security guards were pinned against the wall with the door just about on top of them. The duress alarm was on the other side of the room; there was no possible way that those AIMS employees could get to the duress alarm. The minister then said in her press release -

key control was so poor that AIMS did not report a missing set of keys . . .

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The press release refers to a whole day having gone by before the missing keys were reported. Mr Speaker, the missing set of keys were stolen from the prison guards by the crooks who escaped. In fact, a key audit was conducted within half an hour of the escape and another one was conducted within another half hour. Once again that dot point has been exposed as little more than a myth. The minister then said in her press release -

two steel-plated doors in the escape path, also under AIMS control, appeared to have been blocked open.

They were left open because the court so directed that they be left open so that the lawyers, judges and administration staff could, in fact, get in and out of the courtroom. Those doors are directed to be closed to create an airlock when the sally port is in use and when prisoners are being transported from a vehicle into the cells.

This press release is worth absolutely nothing. It is a desperate, scurrilous attempt on the part of a bungling, incompetent minister to thrash about and find a whipping boy for her failings. We will go on with this issue tomorrow, the day after, next week and for as long as it takes to prove that this minister does not deserve to hold a position in the Cabinet.

MR J.A. McGINTY (Fremantle - Attorney General) [4.03 pm]: It has been well known for a long time that the Supreme Court building is simply not able to provide security in a contemporary way. In 1992, reflecting that concern, the then Government, under Attorney General Joe Berinson, made an allocation following a policy decision to construct new facilities at the Supreme Court of Western Australia. We heard the Premier at question time today quote the Chief Justice in his 2003 review of Western Australian courts. The Chief Justice said -

We had high hopes following a Cabinet decision in April 1992, -

That was when the Labor Government was last in power -

which approved major extensions to the Supreme Court on the present site, that our accommodation problems would be solved. There was a change of Government in 1993 and while it recognised the need to find a solution and formulated proposals, the project has not been brought to fruition.

For eight years there were no developments at all. In fact, the only development that occurred was that the Liberal Government took the money out of the forward estimates and did not proceed with what was then regarded as a major security requirement; that is, an upgrade to the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

When we came to government next in 2001, it took us five months to get that money reinstated into the budget with a decision of the cabinet expenditure review committee in 2001 following the election in February 2001. During those five months the necessary work, which had been neglected for the previous eight years, was done to develop and formulate plans to make sure that security was paramount in the consideration of these matters. The plans we made comprised a historic decision to transfer criminal trials out of the Supreme Court. No matter what we did to that court - it being a 100 year old building - it could never be made as security-proof as would a court that was built from scratch, which we proposed then to do. Therefore, within months of coming to government, a decision was made to end criminal trials in the Supreme Court and for the first time in this State

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to construct a state-of-the-art, high-security court to handle the worst trials, such as trials that will potentially involve terrorism, bikie gangs and other major criminal activities. A total of \$140 million has been allocated to upgrade the court and to provide the State with its first high-security court. Construction will commence this year and will be completed in 2007.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr J.A. McGINTY: Nine seriously dangerous criminals escaped from the courts last Thursday. That was totally unacceptable and, as has been said time and again in this matter, responsibility for that must rest with the Government of the day. It should not have happened. There are two options. We can either go for heads on sticks - the Opposition's approach - or we can do something about the problem. Not only have we resolved the problem in the long term -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Did you do anything in 2001?

Mr J.A. McGINTY: Yes, I did.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Why didn't you tell the new minister about it?

Mr J.A. McGINTY: We have not only resolved the problem in the long term by the proposed construction of a high-security court but also put in train all the things that need to be done on an interim basis pending the completion of construction in 2007. The Solicitor General, at my request, is liaising with members of the judiciary to seek their agreement on procedures involving issues such as video links, restraints, armed guards, the proper scheduling of prisoners so that 11 dangerous criminals are not held in one cell at one time and other security matters. That matter is being progressed with the Chief Justice and other members of the judiciary. We have brought forward work on the Supreme Court - \$100 000 was spent last week. A security upgrade will occur this summer. With the benefit of hindsight, I would have preferred that it, rather than the drainage work, had been done last summer. It is all part of the upgrading of the Supreme Court, but, with the benefit of hindsight, it was a mistake to schedule the work in that way and not do it the other way around. Nonetheless, the allocation was made and people know that that work was intended to be done. The Director General of the Department of Justice has, in my view, acted quite properly in suspending the AIMS contract in the light of the interim findings that have been referred to. An independent inquiry has been established to determine those matters.

Mr P.G. Pendal interjected.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr J.A. McGINTY: If members want to allege that the Director General of the Department of Justice is behaving corruptly, they should go ahead. I do not make that allegation and I think they are wrong.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

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Ayes (19)			
Mr R.A. Ainsworth Mr C.J. Barnett Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan Mr M.J. Birney	Mrs C.L. Edwardes Mr J.P.D. Edwards Mr B.J. Grylls Ms K. Hodson-Thomas	Mr A.D. Marshall Mr B.K. Masters Mr P.D. Omodei Mr P.G. Pendal	Mr T.K. Waldron Ms S.E. Walker Dr J.M. Woollard Mr J.L. Bradshaw <i>(Teller</i>
Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr W.J. McNee	Mr M.W. Trenorden	THE V.E. BIMMSHAW (1900)
	No	pes (29)	
Mr P.W. Andrews Mr C.M. Brown Mr A.J. Carpenter Mr A.J. Dean Mr J.B. D'Orazio Dr J.M. Edwards Dr G.I. Gallop Mr L. Graham	Mrs D.J. Guise Mr S.R. Hill Mr J.N. Hyde Mr J.C. Kobelke Mr R.C. Kucera Mr F.M. Logan Mr J.A. McGinty Mr M. McGowan	Ms S.M. McHale Mr A.D. McRae Mr N.R. Marlborough Mrs C.A. Martin Mr M.P. Murray Mr A.P. O'Gorman Mr J.R. Quigley Ms J.A. Radisich	Mr E.S. Ripper Mrs M.H. Roberts Mr D.A. Templeman Mr P.B. Watson Ms M.M. Quirk (Teller)

Pairs

Mr R.N. Sweetman Mr R.F. Johnson

Mr J.J.M. Bowler Mr M.P. Whitely

Independent Pair Dr E. Constable

Question thus negatived.