

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2002

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [7.44 pm]: This debate enables members to comment on any issues they wish to. I do not propose to speak directly about the budget; I shall talk about a number of other issues. The first one came to my attention about two minutes ago when leave was not given to deal with the remaining stages of the legislation we have just been discussing. The committee report on the Criminal Investigation (Exceptional Powers) and Fortification Removal Bill will have to be dealt with tomorrow, assuming we proceed, of course; and if leave is not then granted, the third reading will have to be dealt with next week. The Greens (WA) have obviously decided to use that strategy to ensure the Bill does not proceed any further. In the short time between now and the debate on the Labour Relations Reform Bill, I will be anxious to know what the Government proposes to do about that denial of leave. It is quite extraordinary that the Greens should take the line of action that they have to effectively ensure that that Bill does not proceed, if we stick with the current parliamentary timetable. If the House rises tonight, as planned, and that Bill has not been dealt with any further, it will disappear at prorogation, and we will either start again or I guess it could be recommitted after the break. That will be an interesting scenario indeed. I will be interested to know of the Government's plans.

A rumour is also going around that the Government does not want the Bill passed; it does not like the amendments that have been made by this House.

Hon Kim Chance: I have just checked that rumour with the Attorney General and he assures me that it is not correct.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Therefore, in the event the Bill had been passed by this House tonight, it would have gone to the Assembly tonight, been dealt with tomorrow and agreed to.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: I was asked whether the Government wished to proceed with the matter. Certainly, the Government wished to deal with the matter in the Assembly tomorrow. What the Greens (WA) did in denying leave came as a complete surprise to me. Frankly, if they had said earlier today that they would deny leave, we would not have spent hours debating the Bill.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: The minister is absolutely right. We have been, in all good faith, debating that legislation today with the expectation that it would be dealt with. Unless the House resumes next week, the Bill will not be dealt with. If that is what the Greens have in mind, that is their business. However, it is extraordinary that they should take that course of action when they had already asked the Leader of the House and me if we would facilitate their dealing with a disallowance motion today. As a result of this action, my enthusiasm for dealing with any disallowance motion has diminished quite dramatically, because I have no intention of encouraging people to be here next week. However, if that is to happen, that is how it will be. It would be a shame if the Government had been aware of what the Greens would do, but I accept the minister's assurance that that was not the case. The Greens, of their own volition, without telling anybody what they would do, have again effectively disrupted the proceedings of the House. That is not an acceptable scenario, particularly when they ask us to cooperate with them in what they want to do.

I will now talk about a couple of things on the appropriation Bill. The other night Hon John Fischer raised the issue of Monkey Mia. Yesterday I asked the minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage who would make the final decision about the situation with the Monkey Mia dolphins. The answer was that the decision would be made by the Executive Director of the Department of Conservation and Land Management. Today I asked another question; that is, whether the minister would use her powers under the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 to direct that the decision be made. The minister's answer was that she will wait until she gets advice from a range of different organisations. My view is that she should make a decision, under the powers available to her under the Conservation and Land Management Act, to direct her department to allow the situation regarding those dolphins to be resolved so that the future of Monkey Mia, Denham and Shark Bay is assured. Right now it is not assured. Anyone who does not know how important the dolphins are to Monkey Mia has not been there and does not understand the importance of that tourism industry.

I recently asked the following question -

- (1) Have you, or any of your Departments or Agencies been lobbied by CPR Communications and Public Relations Pty Ltd?
- (2) If so -

- (a) in each case, on whose behalf was the lobbying conducted and what were the issue/s or the subject of the approach; and
- (b) what was the outcome of each approach?

CPR Communications and Public Relations is quite new to Western Australia. A high profile, former Labor member of Parliament, Hon John Halden, is one of its employees. It is very actively involved in lobbying the Government of Western Australia. That is not a sin; it is a perfectly legitimate part of the political process. It is also legitimate that the Parliament knows who is being lobbied by this or any other company, on what issues and the result of the lobbying, especially when a very powerful member of the Labor movement is involved with one of those lobbying companies.

I am interested in an article written by Joe Poprzeczny recently in the magazine called *Business News*. I read the article coincidentally to the question I had asked of ministers. Joe referred to the importance of lobbying in the political process. He came to the conclusion that there should be a register of lobbyist and that the lobbyists should put in a report, I think, every six months about who they deal with, the issues they discuss and the results of those lobbying exercises. I am not saying whether that would be a good thing. However, I want to know what has been the effect of CPR Communications and Public Relations on the Government and what lobbying it has been involved in. The answers were interesting. The fundamental generic response from 90 per cent of the ministers was -

The resources required to answer such a general and ill-defined question would involve an unjustified expense. If the Member has a specific question relating to a particular meeting, an answer can be provided.

It was pathetic because it would not be difficult to find out whether, in approximately the past 18 months, this company had been involved in lobbying the Government. The question was "Have you" - that is the minister - "or your departments and agencies been lobbied by this company". That is a simple question and not difficult to answer. The Government decided not to answer it. However, it appears that some ministers were not told by the spin doctors in the middle of the organisation that they should all give the same answer. One minister said in answer to my first question, "No" and that the second part of the question was not applicable.

Another minister, who clearly had not been told of the Government's line, said -

- (1) Yes I have been.

He gave the details of how he had been lobbied and the outcome. With regard to his agencies he then added that it was an ill-defined question, too general and would involve unjustified expense.

That was a start in the right direction because the minister answered on his own behalf. Thank you; I appreciate that.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: I always answer my own questions.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Another minister had obviously not listened to what was said, because he actually answered the question, which was extraordinary. If one minister can answer it, why can the rest of the ministers not do so. To give him his due, that minister was the Minister for State Development, who is represented here by the parliamentary secretary. They both do a good job in providing information. The parliamentary secretary handled the mining legislation very well today. I give him credit for that. He has given me an answer, which is terrific. The parliamentary secretary will be in trouble because he has given an answer, and the Government has said, collectively, that it will not give an answer.

Hon Ken Travers: You just said that is not the case.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I have been there, done that; the parliamentary secretary should not tell me what happened and what did not happen. This is the Government's response: it is too ill-defined and too broad to answer, but some ministers took no notice of that, or did not get the instruction. The Minister for State Development told me that he has known one of the principals involved in CPR Communications and Public Relations Pty Ltd and sees him from time to time at functions. The minister does not keep a record of the times he sees him or the matters discussed. That is fair enough. He then gave me an answer from the various departments that, yes, in one case they had been lobbied, in another case they had not been, and in respect of a couple of other agencies the same answer is provided. Most ministers are saying they will not provide an answer, three ministers have given me part answers, and one minister has given me a full answer. What concerns me is that if one minister is capable of answering the question, then all ministers are capable. I am entitled to know what lobbying of the Government this company is undertaking. I acknowledge that there are lots of lobbyists, many of whom are former members of Parliament from both sides, who lobby all the time. I was lobbied as a minister by former Liberal members who were lobbyists. I used to say to their clients, "Why are you going through a lobbyist? Just ring my office and you can come and see me; you don't have to bother

paying anybody.” They all thought that was the way they had to go about it. I suspect that out there in the business world people understand that if they really want to get anywhere with this Government, they must talk to CPR Communications and Public Relations Pty Ltd, because that is the best way to make sure they get a response from the Government that satisfies their requirements. That is how lobbying works.

I will keep asking questions about this company because I am especially interested in it. I am also interested in other lobbyists. The Government should look at an article by Joe Poprzeczny in the *Business News* in which he refers to some register of lobbyists. The register would let everybody know who does it, who does not do it, why they are in it and the outcomes, so that we have some transparency in the process. Lobbying has been around since time immemorial. It is part of the political process - I do not criticise that - but it is important that we start giving some thought to whether we should know about it and its results. I am especially interested because Hon John Halden spends more time in Parliament now than he did when he was a member. I told him I was going to ask this question. I hope he was not involved in preparing the answer, but that is for the Government to decide. He just said, “You be very careful”, or words to that effect, as Hon John Halden would. I know as well as he does that we were lobbied as a Government by former Liberal members and also by former Labor members, which is part of the political process, and I do not have a problem with that. When I ask questions like this it would be good if the Government could get its act together and either say that none of its ministers will answer or all will answer. It would be better if they all answered.

The second issue I wish to raise relates to Hon Tom Stephens’ air charter arrangements. The only reason I asked about his air charter arrangements was because his use of the government jet is legendary. That is the aircraft that he described as being a slimy jet when he was a member of the Opposition. He actually said to me on one occasion when I saw him at one of the ports in the north west, “Did you get here on the slimy jet?” For some reason he just hated the thought that a Liberal minister would fly around in a jet; this is the same fellow who used to sit in the minister’s office when he was a parliamentary secretary and look out the window and imagine what it would be like when he was a minister. Now he is there and he uses the trappings of office in a way that no other minister in history has ever contemplated, let alone done. I have seen the gentleman in action. I asked him a question about his flights, which states -

- (1) Will the Minister provide the following details of all Ministerial air charter flights he has engaged in since his appointment to the Ministry after the February 10 2001 election -
 - (a) date of each flight;
 - (b) destination and duration of each flight;
 - (c) type of aircraft used . . .
 - (d) names of passengers . . .
 - (e) cost to the Government . . .
- (2) If not, why not?

The answer I received states -

I refer the Hon Member to the answers he provided in response to Questions 1019 of 5 May 1999 and 426 of 11 October 2000.

As stated in the Hon Member’s answers, provision of this information would require some research which would divert ministerial staff away from their normal duties. If the member has an enquiry relating to any particular matter of concern, I will endeavour to provide a reply.

I had a look at the questions to which I gave answers as a minister, both of which were answered in my capacity as the Leader of the House representing another minister. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich asked me, as the Leader of the House representing the Government, whether I could provide all the information about every long service leave entitlement of every public servant in every agency.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I am still waiting for that answer!

Hon NORMAN MOORE: She probably is! There are probably 20 000 public servants still working on it! It would have taken an inordinate amount of time to gather that information. The answer gave some information but said that it was not readily available. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich’s other question asked me, as the Leader of the House representing the Premier, whether I could provide information about every credit card ever issued by anybody in history. My answer asked the member to put the question on notice because the information was not readily available.

As the reason he should not give me an answer to my question about his air travel arrangements Hon Tom Stephens has used those two examples. It seems to me that his ministerial office staff would have spent more

time trying to find those two answers than it would have taken them to provide me with an answer to the question! They would have gone through *Hansard* from the time I became a minister until the end of my time as a minister to find an answer that the minister could use to justify his not answering the question I asked. He is not even in the Chamber! He is never here! He is outside somewhere. Whether he is in the bar or watching *Big Brother*, I do not know; however, I suspect it is the former. The way he was asleep in question time today means that he has to be in the bar.

Hon Barbara Scott: He is probably watching *Sesame Street*.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: *Sesame Street* would be too sophisticated for the minister. He would not watch that. He has probably spent more time finding an answer to divert him from giving an answer to the question than it would have taken him to give an answer to the question. It is important for us to know what his flight arrangements have been since he has been minister. I am told that the jet is permanently in the sky. The only time it is not in the sky carting him around is when it is being serviced, which is about every three months. If that is not the case, the minister can make very clear to all of us what he does and answer the question. Now I will have to send \$30 to his office and tell his staff that I will use the freedom of information process, so he needs to provide that information to me.

Hon Ken Travers: You have the Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich handbook, haven't you?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I do not mind spending \$30 to find out this information. That sort of answer to a question is very simple; it can be provided. The answer the minister gave me, and the answers and questions to which he referred me, suggest that telling me how many flights he has been on and the details of those flights is somehow equivalent to the accumulated long service leave entitlements of every public servant in history and every credit card that has ever been used by a public servant. If there were so many flights and so much information that it equates to those two answers, heaven help us because the Government will go broke! The Government cannot keep an aeroplane going for that long at that expense; it is just impossible. I want to know what the minister has been up to and why he has not given me an answer.

I also raised in this place the question of one particular use of the government aeroplane. I saw Hon Tom Stephens in a meeting at Cue the day before the last federal election. He flew to Cue in a government jet aircraft. I travelled in a charter aircraft that I had hired with my charter allowance as a member for that area. The minister flew on to Carnarvon that day, where he spent the Saturday of the federal election. He then flew home to Perth that afternoon in the government jet. While he was in Carnarvon, he hired a motor car, at ministerial expense, and spent most of the day carting Aboriginal voters to the polling booth. He did that at government and ministerial expense. That is outrageous. It is a total waste and misuse of taxpayers' money through his ministerial account. That is the person who will not answer a question about how often he flies around in government aeroplanes. I look forward to receiving the freedom of information documents I propose to get from him so that we know once and for all what he has been up to. He is on notice, because the way he behaves in the electorate during elections is outrageous. For many years I have watched him manipulate Aboriginal votes and Aboriginal voters. At the last federal election he used a government-funded motor car to ferry Aboriginal voters to the polling booth. In my view, that is not acceptable at all.

I do not have a lot of time. I say to the Leader of the House that we need to find a better way of dealing with the budget debate. The budget is now handed down around June, and the House normally finishes sitting at the end of June. If major legislation is before the House, we do not have enough time for a proper budget debate. There must be a way around that. Maybe we should set aside a week in which to hold this debate. I suggest that the Leader of the House think about that seriously. Many members will not be able to make a contribution to the budget debate on this occasion.

The last thing I want to talk about is an issue that affects my electorate; that is, the Tom Price-Karratha road. During the estimates committee I asked Mr Martin, the Commissioner of Main Roads, whether the road from Karratha to Tom Price would be sealed in its entirety during this term of government. Mr Martin replied -

No, it will not be completed from Tom Price to Karratha.

My question related to the Government's commitment at the last election. The commitment was made by the Speaker, the member for Burrup. I went through my files and dragged out an Australian Labor Party policy document called "Working for Burrup", which was released before the last election. It states -

\$100 million for the construction of the Tom Price to Karratha Road.

I acknowledge that the Government has provided that \$100 million -

Despite the Court Government's promises at the last election, construction will not begin until 2008/9. Labor will construct this road in the first term of government;

The answer I received during the estimates committee is that it will not be constructed in that time. It is a broken promise. Governments are entitled to break promises. It contributed \$100 million. It was told at the time that it was not enough. It said it would construct the road during its first term of government, and now it says it will not. That is a broken promise. More importantly, the member for Burrup, who is now the Speaker, went on local television day after day saying that he would resign from Parliament if a future Labor Government did not construct that road in its first term of government.

Hon Robyn McSweeney interjected.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: He thought it was right at the time. Now he knows that it was not right at all. I suggest to the Speaker, through you, Madam Deputy President (Hon Kate Doust), that he should contemplate his next occupation. If he is not true to his word and the Government does not complete the sealing of that road by the end of its first term - its only term - he will be denying those people the fulfilment of a promise he made personally. The ball is in the Speaker's court. He might tell us he did not mean what he said. After I received the answer to this question, I asked people in the region what they thought of the Speaker's commitment, and they all said that they thought it meant that the road would be sealed during the Labor Party's first term of office. That will not happen. The Speaker should get himself organised and look at the employment sections of the newspapers and start working out where he will be in two years. In any case, I suspect he does not want to be a backbench member in the next Opposition. He is probably already looking in the employment sections of the newspapers. The fact of the matter is that the Government has broken a promise, and the commitment made by the Speaker will not be delivered. The Speaker should be very angry about that, I might add.

Those are just a few of the issues I wanted to raise in the budget debate. There are many other things I would like to talk about, but I understand other members want to talk about things tonight, so I will close now. However, I repeat to the Leader of the House that we need to work out a process to enable members to speak on the budget debate, and not on the last night like this, when we are given 10 minutes in which to speak. That is not an acceptable scenario. I do not blame the Government. It is a matter of circumstances and the way in which the budget process has changed. However, the House needs to reflect that change and put in place a process that will enable us to have a proper debate on the budget. With those comments, I support the budget, obviously, in a technical sense, although I think it is a heap of rubbish.

HON BILL STRETCH (South West) [8.10 pm]: I guess I should start where my leader finished. I also support the budget in principle, but I wish to take a few moments to make some brief comments about road funding. We need to take a long, hard, objective look at road funding. Roads are probably the most important structure that keeps our State productive and running. All sorts of things have been said in the past about how roads are the backbone of the country, or whatever it is, but the reality is that the movement of freight and passengers around the State is an issues that should attract more government attention than anything else. When we think about it, there is nothing that we eat or use in industry and in the home that does not at some stage travel by road. Although dedicated rail freight has a place, at the beginning and end of most journeys we have road transport. In my view, the argument that we should downgrade our road system to produce better rail systems and move freight off road and onto rail is Dreamtime stuff. The sparseness of our population and the concentration of commodities is such that we will always need the road network.

I believe that in the future, we will need to put more money into research, not into getting traffic off road and onto rail, but on working out how to cart a greater quantity of freight more quickly, cheaply, and safely on the roads that we have. It seems to me that with an economy the size of ours, we will not get concrete autobahns from one end of the State to the other serving every district. In the future a lot of our research will need to be directed at tyre technology and vehicle suspension. Developments have been made that allow heavy transport to travel on unmade roads at pretty high speeds and pretty safely. A lot of that depends on tyre structure, but it depends also on vehicle suspension, because with the vehicle suspensions we have now it is very hard to keep heavy vehicles in one piece for many years. The road transport industry is probably trying to adapt too much of its technology from Europe and the United States. We possibly should be looking more at what Australia will need in the future in coping with its transport task. A lot of the engine technology we will get from the developed countries. However, I think the task of constructing the permanent solutions that will be needed in the future to the standard that we would like will be unsupportable with the size of our current economy.

I guess that one of the main arguments of the conservation lobby and others is that the cheapest way to move freight is on rail and that the way to build more railways is to get more money out of the road system, which means taxing heavy transport further. I submit we have got to the taxation limit; in fact, I believe we have gone past it. Certain members of this Government and certain sectors of the bureaucracy seem to believe that heavy haulage transport is an inexhaustible milch cow and that they can go on putting taxes on it. What they do not seem to realise is that when road transport charges are increased, the cost is increased for every piece of cereal on the breakfast table, every loaf of bread and every other commodity that is consumed or used in industry. As I

said originally, everything we touch spends a certain amount of time on road transport. There is no train running to every door of every house, and a railway line does not run to every source point of the products we use. We must be realistic: rail transport will only ever be used for dedicated bulk freight routes.

The argument that if trucks are taken off the roads, the roads will become safer for car travel is equally the stuff of fairyland. I know that the size of a road train intimidates some people, but many people have put the argument, particularly my friend Hon Murray Criddle, that it is better to pass one road train than three or four separate truck-trailer combinations. Provided that we look further at ways in which to utilise cheaper construction methods for roads, we will improve traffic flow. I hesitate to say that we will bring freight rates down, but we can at least arrest the increase in charges that we are facing now. There will always be the demand for roads, which will come mainly from motorists. Car traffic will always be with us. Governments will always be called upon to supply a road network for cars.

The challenge is to construct roads to an acceptable standard so that they can safely handle both modes of transport. We cannot go back to the 1900s when any vehicle travelling over 10 miles an hour had to have a man in front of it carrying a red flag. People found that 10 miles an hour was a bit fast for a man carrying a red flag so they slowed the speed. Some people in the community think that slower traffic will make the roads safer. That may be so in certain circumstances, but the effect is limited, and I think we have reached the limit now.

I guess I could be accused of being a bit biased because I have lived in rural areas all my life. I know only too well the importance of road systems and what they mean to country life. Some people tend to say that it is all right for people who live in the bush, but they must realise that every cent that is added to the costs of country transport is reflected in the costs of food, clothing or any other commodity. Government has an incessant greed for money and thinks that if it does not raise it from transport, it must raise it somewhere else. As I have said, I guess that I could be accused of being a little biased in this matter.

I subscribe to the Royal Automobile Club because I live 35 miles from the nearest corner shop and, therefore, every trip out of the house is a long trip. I was interested to read the RAC's June-July issue of *RoadPatrol*. I have found that to be a very interesting publication over the years. It always contains articles about holidays that I wish I could afford to have and other interesting articles. It also contains interesting commentaries on government policies. It has been no friend of the previous coalition Government over the years and I therefore should not have been surprised to read its analysis of this state budget headlined "Ripper's rip-off". A smaller headline is titled "The State Budget is a tale of woe and broken promises for Western Australia's long-suffering motorists".

When I read the budget papers I was concerned about the amount allocated for road funding. I know that the amount is never enough, but I also know that it must always be on a steady curve, otherwise we will lose the battle to maintain our roads. The simple fact is that our roads are wearing out faster than we can replace or repair them. If Governments allow their road-funding budget to get behind, they will pass on a very expensive legacy to future generations. That is not fair; it is certainly not sensible; and it is very bad economic sense. The article in *RoadPatrol* states -

Treasurer Eric Ripper has targeted motorists as an easy mark in producing a Budget surplus of \$119.1 million.

Half of this surplus has been plucked from the pockets of motorists, with huge increases in car stamp duties.

The RAC accepts the need for CPI increases in drivers' licence fees, vehicle registration and vehicle transfer fees.

What is unacceptable is the huge increase in stamp duties on vehicles, which will raise more than \$62 million in 2002/2003.

RAC General Manager Group Policy and External Relations, David Moir, said the increased taxes would hit all motorists.

"The stamp duty on third party insurance, which every motorist pays when they renew their annual registration, has rocketed from 25 cents to nearly \$20 . . .

"And every time a motorist buys a new or second hand car, they will pay on average about \$100 more in stamp duty.

"This means a family buying a new \$20,000 car will be paying an extra \$100 in stamp duty. This is more than motorists in most other States and \$300 more than in Queensland.

“To balance its books, the State Government is using the long-suffering motorist as a cash cow. We are being treated like wallets on wheels.”

To make matters worse, says David, -

That is, David Moir -

spending on roads has been slashed.

Road funding is down about \$70 million and the State Government has siphoned off about \$20 million in speed and red light camera revenue which they promised to spend on road safety.

“Before the State election, Labor promised *Road Patrol* readers that 100 per cent of revenue from speed camera and red light camera fines would be spent on authentic projects to reduce the road toll.

“The Government is expected to rake in about \$39 million from these fines this year. We can only identify about \$19 million in road safety spending in the Budget, above existing Main Roads programs.

“The expectation of the public was that this revenue would be used to produce a real increase in road safety spending.

“Unfortunately, the reverse is true and the Budget is completely lacking in concrete plans to improve the State’s unacceptable road toll.

“The most telling figure in the Budget is that the Government estimates the number of road crash deaths will increase from 9 per 100,000 people to 10 this year.

That is the Government’s estimates, not the RAC’s estimates. The article continues -

“This means the Government is expecting an additional 18 Western Australians to die on our roads this year.”

The detail of the State Budget includes:

Motoring charges:

Drivers’ licence fees and vehicle transfer fees go up by 2.6 per cent. Vehicle registration fees go up 3 per cent for light vehicles and 3.2 per cent for heavy vehicles.

Incidentally, the RAC is not very concerned with heavy transport charges; I believe those charges have gone up a heck of a lot more than that. Back to the article -

The RAC says in a tight economic environment, it can understand the need for increases in line with CPI.

...

Stamp duty on motor vehicle compulsory third party insurance will rocket from a set fee of 25 cents to 8 per cent of the premium. This increases the cost of third party insurance by \$19.21 for a standard car.

Hon Nick Griffiths and I had a debate earlier about misleading percentages and figures. The fee has gone from 25c to eight per cent of the premium. In money terms, it goes from 25c to \$19.21 for a standard car. Eight per cent does not sound much, but to go from 25c to \$19.21 is a very big increase. The article continues -

Stamp duty will increase for all motor vehicle transfers, including new registrations, except for heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes.

In fairness, I must say that I welcome that. It continues -

For cars valued under \$15,000, the stamp duty increases by 10 per cent from 2.5 per cent to 2.75 per cent. There is a 20 per cent increase in stamp duty for cars valued at around \$23,000 and a 30 per cent increase for cars valued over \$40,000.

The RAC says a family buying a new \$20,000 car will now be paying more stamp duty than motorists in most other States.

There is not much more but I want it all read into *Hansard* because it is a very important and objective analysis of the Government’s budget. It continues -

Road Safety:

Of the \$39 million expected from speed camera and red light camera fines, only about \$19 million can be identified as going to authentic road safety measures. This includes about \$13 million to the Road Trauma Trust Fund (the legislated one-third of revenue from these fines), \$3.5 million for the CAP

Speed Project to provide for a more streamlined and efficient infringement system and \$2 million in extra black spot funding.

The RAC says the RTTF funding is in line with previous years. The CAP Speed project addresses inefficiencies in the speed and red light camera system. The additional black spot funding, another pre-election commitment, is welcomed.

The RAC is bitterly disappointed the Budget fails to clearly identify spending in road safety and that the remaining two-thirds of revenue from speed and red light cameras has gone into a Budget black hole.

Those are the RAC's words, not mine. It continues -

...

The Main Roads budget figure has been cut from \$827 million in 2001/02 to \$755 million in 2002/03.

While the road maintenance program has been maintained at around the level of the previous year (thanks to long-term contracts entered into by the previous Government), the road improvement program has suffered a cut of 40 per cent compared to the 2001/02 Budget estimate.

The road improvements (e.g. overtaking lanes, road widening and roundabouts) are vital if we wish to improve road safety in WA.

The program for new road construction has suffered a less dramatic cut of 4 per cent compared to 2001/02.

The RAC says these funding cuts will directly impact on road safety and on the effectiveness and efficiency of the State's transport system.

That describes the attitude taken by the Government to this year's budget far more eloquently than I can. The Government has not faced up to the issues in road transport. The State cannot get by through maintaining previous spending levels. Spending levels have to be increased rapidly. The previous Government took very drastic steps to create a fund that allowed it to try to address backlogs from previous years. Every Government has to address this because it is not fair to deny the reality to voters. Taking money from road funding directly affects rank-and-file voters. It is the same as taking money from people's household budgets. It is not seen or felt but it is worse in some ways because the effect will snowball over the years as the task of rebuilding roads catches up with everyone.

In the very early years of the Burke Government, a very courageous senior man in the then Main Roads Department produced a report of what had to be spent on roads to maintain a viable program into the future to ensure that this sort of trouble did not develop. When the money started to run out in those rather unfortunate years 1986 to 1988, the first thing to suffer again was road funding. The Labor minister at the time canned that report; it was never published and was never tabled in the Parliament. However, enough reports survived for people to realise not only that the messenger was slain, but also that the message never got out. That was a tragedy for the road network of Western Australia and for the whole economic structure of the State. If this is not addressed in coming budgets, this Government may get away with it, but it is doing itself no favours in the long term, and it is doing future generations a grave disservice. The road system will not be able to support even the level of activity that exists now, much less cope with the increases that everybody is dreaming about. With those remarks, I repeat my support for the budget, but I hope to look in the future for a far more thoughtful and far-sighted look at the economic backbone of our State, one that will continue to make our State great. If the State cannot move on the roads, it cannot move forward.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

HON N.D. GRIFFITHS (East Metropolitan - Minister for Racing and Gaming) [8.32 pm]- by leave: I move -

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [8.33 pm]: I believe it is a discourtesy that no minister responds in any way to the many issues raised by members during the budget debate. This is the main debate of a general nature in which members have the opportunity to raise issues of particular concern to their electorates. To have the Bill proceed straight through without any acknowledgment from the Government that those messages have been heard and will be taken back to the responsible ministers is a pretty poor showing. Before the House approves the third reading of this Bill, I invite the minister to give the House an assurance that those messages will be relayed to ministers.

HON N.D. GRIFFITHS (East Metropolitan - Minister for Racing and Gaming) [8.34 pm]: I meant no discourtesy to Hon Barry House and other members. I was very conscious of the time, but I can assure honourable members that their contributions will be given consideration. I am aware that a number of very important matters have been raised in a very constructive way. I trust my ministerial colleagues will give those matters very appropriate consideration when they are presented to them, as I intend to do.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.