

Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr Mike Board; Dr Geoff Gallop; Deputy Speaker; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr Rob Johnson; Ms Sue Walker; Mr John Hyde; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan

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## **GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL AGENDA**

### *Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER** (Mr 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 condemns the Gallop Labor Government for pursuing its divisive social agenda at the expense of managing and growing the economy of Western Australia and its failure to honour its election promises in the key areas of government responsibility.

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 BARNETT** (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [2.47 pm]: I move the motion.

I think the words in the motion express what this Government has been about in its first year of government. The Labor Government has been in power this year. It has come in here with a social agenda. There is nothing wrong with social items; they need to be addressed. However, the priorities of this Labor Government, as illustrated by its legislative program, have been gay and lesbian reform, de facto legislation, changes to our electoral system and a Community Drug Summit leading to the decriminalisation of marijuana. That has been the prime agenda. The major items of debate in this Parliament have been the Bills relating to electoral change and gay and lesbian reform. They have been the two major items of legislation that have dominated this Parliament.

Dr Gallop: Is that wrong?

Mr BARNETT: The Premier should look at the speaking and debating times. They have been the major items. There has not been any sense of clear economic development or direction. Health is one of the two prime areas of social policy. It has been a disaster. The health system is always difficult to manage. We do not deny that we had problems and challenges in dealing with health. However, what is happening to our health system under this Minister for Health is an absolute tragedy. He wanders around saying that managers will manage and people will keep to budgets. He has been discredited. I tell the Minister for Health one thing: by the end of next year, he will no longer be the Minister for Health. He is already recognised as a hapless Minister for Health who will not survive.

The other area of social policy is education. Education has had a wasted year this year. The record of the coalition Government shows that it implemented kindergarten and preprimary programs, the Curriculum Council, a new curriculum, a technology program in schools, major capital works and a growth in vocational education from three per cent to 27 per cent of students. Recurrent spending went up by eight per cent year in and year out for the past five years. Under this Government and this minister there have been real cuts to education spending. What is worse, not only has this Minister for Education done nothing of any consequence throughout the year, but also he has seen one of the best directors general of education this State has ever had leave that position. He has interfered in the administration of education in this State. The great Department of Education is now tearing itself apart with internal squabbles and dissension. Morale in schools is dropping. It is happening because of the interference by the minister in the administration of education.

Mr Carpenter: The Leader of the Opposition had fewer students finishing school at the end of his tenure as Minister for Education than when he was first appointed.

Mr BARNETT: That is not true. Next year will be the minister's year. He will be chopped up piece by piece as he is an incompetent, interfering Minister for Education who is running down government schooling in this State because of his own selfish, narrow, little political agenda. He intimidates staff and manipulates staffing positions in the department. The year 2002 will be his year. He will be in the same position this time next year as the Minister for Health is now - hapless, incompetent, ridiculed and without any standing in his portfolio!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr BARNETT: In 1997, the Asian economic crisis occurred. We survived that crisis even though people predicted it would bring this State to its knees. The coalition Government got the State through the crisis. The current Government inherited somewhat of an upsurge in resource development projects. It inherited the west

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Angelas project - which had already commenced - and train 4 of the North West Shelf project. Hopefully there will be train 5. The deals were in place; they had already been done. The Government inherited them; good luck to it. It also inherited the Onslow Salt project, although it did not turn up for the opening. It also inherited other projects. To get major projects over the line requires a Government to get in and push a project to conclusion. We have seen projects fall over and get wobbly since the Labor Government assumed office. The Ord River stage 2 project has fallen over, energy supply for the Kimberley has fallen over and the Wagerup project is in all sorts of trouble. We will probably see more - Syntroleum is in trouble. We will see projects that are yet to be completed fall over under this Labor Government because it has a Minister for State Development who has no idea about development. He is an ex-union official - a former head of the Trades and Labor Council - running economic development in this State. The projects are falling over. Project proponents are not even dealing with the State Government. They have given up on this State Government and deal with the federal Government. This Government has lost the ability to manage economic development in this State. The Treasurer jumped up today and said that things were looking good because the unemployment rate dropped a little this month. That is good, but the unemployment rate is exactly what it was 12 months ago. The Treasurer should be conscious that full-time employment has fallen over the past 12 months. He should be conscious that the level of job advertisements has dropped 15 per cent in three months and that the participation rate has dropped and bottomed out. That is what I predicted in February. There is no slack left in the labour market. There are no spare jobs left in the market. The economy is headed for a very flat and difficult period. We have seen corporate collapses and unemployment in the tourism industry. The forestry industry will lose 4 000 jobs.

Mr McGowan: Are we responsible for Ansett?

Mr BARNETT: Governments have to manage and govern. They have to deal with situations like that. The Government was so incompetent over Ansett Australia that the Opposition had to announce to the rally outside Parliament House that Skywest Airlines was getting back in the air. The Government did not even know what was happening in aviation and tourism. It is extraordinary.

Let us look at the wonder Treasurer, the member for Belmont. He spent six months going on about black holes and budget blow-outs and took no responsibility. He talked about a budget deficit and then had to admit a \$228 million surplus! Not quite a deficit! He introduced a budget with left wing, socialist policies. He incompetently tried to introduce the premium property tax, which was ridiculed and torn apart in this Parliament. When the federal election was announced Kim Beazley told him to scrap it. He then ran for cover and dropped the premium property tax.

Mr Carpenter: He was torn apart in this Parliament?

Mr BARNETT: His budget was.

Mr Carpenter: By whom?

Mr BARNETT: Any one of us. Read the debate to gain an idea of the Treasurer's understanding of the premium property tax. He had no idea what the tax was about. He brought down a state budget that showed an increase in state debt of 15 per cent in his first year. He dares to gloat and carry on about AAA credit ratings. He introduced a state budget predicated on an oil price of \$27 a barrel. Oil is now \$18 a barrel. What fool would bring in a budget based on an oil price forecast of \$27 a barrel when only three years ago it was \$10 a barrel? The Government worked on \$27 a barrel! No-one else in the world planned on that figure. The oil companies planned on about \$16 to \$18 a barrel - he planned on \$27 a barrel.

Mr Carpenter: Did you get that information from the oil companies?

Mr BARNETT: I did not need to; I know the information inside out. The oil companies work on \$16 a barrel. Some work on \$12 a barrel. That is the reality of the market.

Mr Ripper: They work on \$18 a barrel.

Mr BARNETT: If they are working on new projects they will look at \$12 to \$16 a barrel. The point is that the projects are falling over one by one because this Government is incapable of understanding business and driving projects to completion. The Government cannot do it; it does not know how to do it. It has a Minister for State Development who is an ex-union boss.

Dr Gallop: If the Government had taken the Leader of the Opposition's advice on the convention centre it would still be negotiating about it now. It is up and running courtesy of this strong Government.

Mr BARNETT: Is that the Premier's claim? The great lie of the election campaign was that there would be no increases in taxes and charges. The Government has increased business taxes by \$140 million. The Treasurer

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said today that the Government would review taxation. Big deal! The Government has just increased taxes by \$140 million and it now talks about a review of business taxation.

The performance of ministers has been very ordinary. The Premier boasted at the beginning of the year about his standards for ministerial conduct. He may well look away. We have the drink-driving, reckless and erratic Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. The Premier failed to act. We have the bumbling Treasurer who brought in a premium property tax, which he made a complete hash of. He backed down and threw it out only after he was ridiculed widely in the community and because of the federal election campaign. We have a Minister for Health who bumbles and fumbles around his portfolio and who has absolutely no idea. We have a Minister for Education who has interfered politically in the administration of education in this State. We have a Minister for Labour Relations who is an absolute wimp and will not stand up to the union movement. That is the Government's first year. It has been a year with a social reform agenda, but one that has done nothing for the economic development and prosperity of this State.

**MRS EDWARDES** (Kingsley) [3.00 pm]: This Government has shown a lack of leadership in industrial relations. We have seen "no ticket, no start" signs, which the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection refers to as merely poor advertising. The union right of entry has been totally and absolutely abused. The Building and Construction Industry Taskforce had been abolished and replaced with a toothless tiger; a body of people clearly incapable of dealing with union intimidation and militancy on construction sites. Labor's industrial relations reform is designed to placate unions and attract union donations, and is clearly not in the best interests of employers, employees and jobs in Western Australia.

Whenever a complaint is made to the inspectorate at 6.00 am, like the recent dispute at the East Perth site, the inspectorate does not arrive at the site until 8.30 am, because it does not start work until then. It is not worried about the union disputes on building sites. Members of the inspectorate get the message, and look at it over coffee and toast. A week and a half after the dispute at the East Perth site, not one person from the inspectorate had gone back to take any statements. The Premier said on radio that they can only respond if they have evidence to respond with. That is good, because they do not go back to get the evidence. It becomes a vicious circle, and they do not even bother to follow up. When they do get to the site, they get the right of entry wrong. They have no understanding. They are advising unions and employers that the building unions have a right of entry on safety matters, but that is clearly wrong. Occupational health and safety is not an industrial matter, and UnionsWA has consistently tried to keep the two issues separate.

The right of entry is an important issue, on which there has been a lack of leadership from the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection. Under the recent Supreme Court decision, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union is able to seek entry onto the site to speak with state union members under the state building trades and construction award. The CFMEU, however, takes a very liberal view of this decision, regarding itself as having an almost unfettered right to enter any construction project. That is clearly not the case under the Supreme Court decision. The real issue about the lack of leadership by the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection is that the Supreme Court decision has had an unintended consequence for the occupational health and safety laws in this State. The decision has given subcontractors possession of the site. The question should be asked: who is responsible for the occupational health and safety matters on the work site? This is something that we have not heard from the minister. There has been no appeal against the decision, because of the liberal view that the unions have taken of their unfettered right to enter union sites. It clearly does not understand the operation of building and construction sites. If the decision is not to be appealed, amendments are needed to the legislation to make it clear, particularly in the area of occupational health and safety.

Industrial relations in the building industry have continued to deteriorate. The "no ticket, no start" signs came up a day or two after the victory of the Labor Government, because the unions knew that the Labor Government would not interfere with its union mates. The unions constantly give donations to the Labor Party, and now they are threatening to withdraw their funds, and regretting they gave donations in the first place for the election campaign because the Labor Government has not met its side of the deal. No industrial relations legislation has come into this Parliament this year. The unions are complaining that no industrial relations legislation has been brought in. The industry has had insufficient notice of the legislation that the Government proposed to introduce into this place and it may not like what it sees. Everybody has been left hanging; they cannot make decisions about expansion and the future because they do not know what will be replacing workplace agreements. Everybody is in a hiatus until the industrial relations reforms are dealt with by this Parliament, and they are being held up by the Labor Government's social justice reforms.

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**MR BOARD** (Murdoch) [3.05 pm]: I support the motion, particularly in regard to the declining health services in Western Australia. No citizen in this State believes that the Government has performed well in the area of health, or that services are better today than they were before the State election. Not one person I know would agree that the situation has improved. None of the promises about policy direction made before the election have been fulfilled.

Tertiary hospitals make increasing demands, but the minister has trodden on the hose and said he will be tough and take on the doctors and stop the demands for more money. He has not resolved the demand for services. The crisis in our tertiary hospitals is unparalleled in this State. There will be ample evidence of that over the Christmas holiday period in tertiary hospitals, with the closure of wards and the cancellation of surgery. The minister has not come clean and told the Western Australian community that he has cut the elective surgery money in half, because of the explosion in budget overruns in tertiary hospitals, expected to be \$120 million by June of next year. To fix that, he is dragging resources from the country and cutting the programs that deal with particular issues in health.

Regional hospitals and country health services are further evidence of the decline. Every country hospital board has been sacked. These are not Liberal Party members; they are volunteers and include board chairmen who are saying that their budgets have been slashed, and that the minister has misled the Western Australian community. There have been no increases; in fact, services have had to be cut because of the lack of support for country areas by the minister. There is a crisis in mental health, with bed numbers being slashed. The State did not even tender for the badly needed positron emission tomography scanner. The AlintaGas money was in place, but the Government failed to tender, and the State is 12 months behind in the acquisition of that equipment.

This Government has failed in health this year. It came into Government with promises and expectations. It told the community that health was under-funded and promised to change direction and fix it, but it has done nothing. The minister has put his foot on the hose and starved the health area, closing services around the State. The only answer is to starve the health services to death, and they may stop complaining.

**DR GALLOP** (Victoria Park - Premier) [3.09 pm]: The Government today has a comprehensive agenda. I know it is difficult for members of the Opposition to understand that social reform, economic development and environmental sustainability can all be pursued at the same time. This is called the triple bottom line, and it is an approach that is being adopted by all major corporations, as well as the non-government service sector. It is the way in which one must govern to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. I recall that famous quote about a former President of the United States that he was a person who could not walk and chew gum at the same time. It is obvious that we now have an Opposition that does not have the intellectual capacity to understand that we can have a social reform agenda at the same time as pursuing economic development, and environmental sustainability.

This Government has a comprehensive agenda under four different headings. First, we have an agenda to build up infrastructure in Western Australia to provide a basis upon which investment can be attracted to this State to create new jobs and opportunities. Secondly, we have an agenda to improve our natural environment. The centrepiece of that agenda is stopping logging of old-growth forest. Thirdly, we have a comprehensive public sector reform agenda, which is underpinned by reform of the administration systems of government and by serious fiscal reform. The previous Government did not manage the State's finances on a proper or sustainable basis. Finally, we have a social and legal reform agenda to establish equality for de facto couples and gay and lesbian people, and we also want to establish equal voting rights for all Western Australians through our electoral reform agenda.

It is a comprehensive agenda: infrastructure for growth, public sector reform, social and legal reform, environmental sustainability and the protection of old-growth forests. This is the sort of agenda that is needed for the twenty-first century. People now say to their Governments, "We do not want the Government just to focus on one side of the equation, because when that is done, the other side of the equation is forgotten about." For example, we might pursue economic development and forget about the environment. I recall in the 1980s, when Labor came to Government, it inherited a situation in the Bunbury-Australind region where significant economic development had taken place. However, no planning had been done to deal with the waste that resulted from that development. It took a Labor Government to set up management plans to deal with that issue. One cannot just have economic development; the environment must also be managed, and the same applies to social development. This Government is committed to a comprehensive agenda of reform.

The Opposition does not seem to understand that the role of Government has many different facets. One facet is to bring legislation into this Parliament. For many years I have had the view that this Parliament has not adequately dealt with the huge backlog of legislative issues that need to be addressed. The previous Government

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had so many internal divisions that it could not reach agreement on issues such as prostitution, de facto couples and the rights of gay and lesbian people. It did nothing about those issues, and we have come into power with a comprehensive agenda to get this Parliament working. That is why people elected us; to pass legislation that respects the rights of people. We also want the Parliament, working through its committee system, to explore issues and make sure that we are in touch with the problems in the community. That is why we are pleased that the Economic and Industry Standing Committee is reviewing the Bellevue problem. The second way in which a Government can do things is through its administration and policy, backed up by the budget priorities it sets.

In this Parliament in recent weeks, we have focused on our social and legal reform agenda. However, that does not mean that within the government system, all sorts of other things are not happening with regard to other items on our agenda, such as public sector reform and providing infrastructure for economic development.

Several members interjected.

Dr GALLOP: Let me just run through the issues -

Mr Barnett: What is the infrastructure?

Dr GALLOP: I am coming to that.

First, I remind the House of the economic inheritance of this Government. Economic growth for 2000-01 was minus 1.2 per cent; the worst in the country and well below the forecast of four per cent in the last Government's budget. I note that in the three financial years since 1997-98, business investment has declined by 16.1 per cent, 14 per cent and 10.7 per cent respectively, to the point where business investment in 2000-01 was almost exactly the same as it was in 1994-95. We inherited a range of budget deficits and forward estimates taking us into deficit again. What has the Government done to address these issues?

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr GALLOP: It is incumbent upon the Opposition when it comes into Parliament to have a serious debate about the Government's performance on the last sitting day, that it puts some intellectual effort into the debate, does some homework and argues the issue with a degree of sophistication. What we have just seen from the Opposition is a mishmash of prejudices against the union movement, unthought out strategies on health and unsubstantiated claims from the Leader of the Opposition about the economy.

The State can do a number of things to facilitate economic development. Firstly, it needs to provide infrastructure. Secondly, it needs to ensure that the education and training systems will provide the skilled work force needed for development. Thirdly, and importantly, the administrative processes of government must be able to deal with development applications.

Several members interjected.

Dr GALLOP: The interjections from the Opposition reflect its inability to deal with this issue seriously.

Several members interjected.

Dr GALLOP: We have a record capital works program; this year \$3.3 billion has gone into the transport, energy and water services sectors and other key economic and social infrastructure. That capital works program is creating the base upon which our State can develop in the future. We are also facilitating new private sector projects around the State. In recent days we have announced the Government's purchase of land and bulk-handling equipment in Kwinana to facilitate the proposed HIs melt project. We have executed the Iron Ore Processing (Mineralogy Pty Ltd) Agreement and we have provided \$7.5 million for the appointment of a facilities manager to the Jervoise Bay project.

Mr Barnett: They were previous projects.

Dr GALLOP: No, there was no funding for those projects in the forward estimates. Where was the money in the forward estimates to manage and promote the Jervoise Bay project? It was not there.

We have announced the approval in principle of a \$30 million loan for the purchase of one of the world's largest super computers. We have successfully negotiated with Emirates airlines for direct non-stop flights from Dubai to Perth starting next year and we have injected \$5 million into the tourism industry as a direct response to the terrorist attacks on 11 September. Further announcements will be made about major resource projects in Western Australia and what will be put into those projects to facilitate that investment. We have been a very active Government on economic issues and I am pleased to report to the House that, in the last quarter, economic

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growth in Western Australia was at a level of 5.1 per cent. There is no doubt that the capital works program and the improved business investment climate in Western Australia contributed to that growth.

I turn now to education and training. The Government believes that we must have the skilled work force to provide the basis for economic development. The shipbuilding industry has developed in areas such as Jervoise Bay and Henderson with the support of Governments from both political persuasions. The key to economic development is skilled labour, research and development capacities, and companies at the cutting edge of productivity and entrepreneurship.

Mrs Edwardes: Are the employees on workplace agreements?

Dr GALLOP: Some are, some are not; however, they are both successful. That tells us that the real issue is the relationship between employers and employees.

The Government is investing in a program of apprenticeships and traineeships to get young people skilled-up, so that they are capable of taking those jobs and opportunities into the future. We guarantee to reform our education system so that the disgraceful declining retention rates experienced by the previous Government are reversed.

Mr Board: That is absolutely not true!

Dr GALLOP: When Labor passed the reins of government to the coalition in 1993, retention rates in Western Australia had been rising as a result of the efforts of both the State and Commonwealth Labor Governments. During the time of the coalition Government the retention rates in secondary schools fell. What has the Government done? First, it has an infrastructure provision; secondly, it has training and education to ensure that the skills are in the economy; and, thirdly, it has administrative processes. We have taken huge strides in this area.

Mr Omodei: Will the Premier expand on “administrative processes”?

Dr GALLOP: When an interested party wants to invest in the State of Western Australia, the way in which the Government responds is crucial. Since gaining office, the Government has received many representations from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia. However, the government structure was totally out of date and inappropriate to deal with development applications. Therefore, this Government has reformed the public sector, and it is in the process of halving the number of government departments. That is a major commitment to economic development in Western Australia. A review of the approvals process is currently taking place - something the previous Government never tackled - and we are confident that under the stewardship of Mr Michael Keating the review will make some first-class recommendations to speed up the applications process and to provide better coordination across government.

The Government is also tackling native title by respecting the rights and interests of indigenous people - something that the previous Government did not do because it was prejudiced against indigenous people.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

Mr BARNETT: That comment was clearly an insult aimed at opposition members. I ask the Premier to apologise for that comment. It is most unparliamentary to accuse members of Parliament of being racist against indigenous people. The Premier should apologise immediately and withdraw his remark.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr MARSHALL: I know the Premier is saying that it does not matter, but it does matter because he has generalised too much. I do not want to be put into the category of being a racist and I am insulted by his generalisation.

Dr GALLOP: There was a very vigorous debate in this Parliament on native title legislation, and I stand by my claim that the previous Government was prejudiced against indigenous people with respect to their rights and interests in the native title issue.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Members!

Mr Barnett interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have a colleague on his feet.

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Mr Barnett interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, one of your colleagues was on his feet and I asked you to recognise that.

Mr JOHNSON: The Premier's comment was unparliamentary and he should withdraw it gracefully. A few years ago this House passed what was known as the "sorry" motion, and that motion received a positive response from both Houses and from both sides of politics. The Premier knows that as well as I do. Therefore, to refer to members on this side of the House in the way that he did is definitely unparliamentary.

Ms SUE WALKER: I personally object to what the Premier said because although he meant to say the Government he said members.

Dr Gallop interjected.

Ms SUE WALKER: The Premier said members. I have lived and worked with Aboriginal people, and an Aboriginal child was named after me because of the work that I have done with these people. I find it offensive that the Premier said that I am prejudiced against Aboriginal people.

Dr Gallop: I did not say that.

Ms SUE WALKER: That is what the Premier said. I ask him to apologise and withdraw his remarks.

Mr HYDE: There is no point of order. The remark referred to the actions of a Government - a Government is not an individual parliamentarian. Over the past week members opposite have referred to members on this side of the House as being morally bankrupt on numerous occasions, and we have not taken offence at those comments and claimed they were unparliamentary. This is not a point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Standing Order No 92 clearly states -

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on the Sovereign, the Governor, a judicial officer or members of the Assembly or the Council are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Dr GALLOP: I withdraw.

*Debate Resumed*

Dr GALLOP: The previous Government did not deal with the native title question by showing the respect that the issue deserved. It introduced legislation into this Parliament that sought to remove Aboriginal people's rights under native title law. The High Court of the Australia saw through this. The High Court voted down its legislation 6-0. The High Court stated that that legislation discriminated against indigenous people.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr GALLOP: The previous Government was incapable of dealing with the native title question because of the attitude and values it took to that issue. This Government has a different approach and it is dealing with that question by respecting the rights of indigenous people. When I move around the State of Western Australia and meet indigenous people, I do so with absolute passion and pride because they come up to me and talk about their needs and interests knowing that they are with us on the kitchen table of Western Australian society. They are equal partners in the Western Australian family that is looking for solutions for the future; they are not outside the dining room taking what the previous Government delivered them by way of legislative scraps. That is what they were doing.

Mr Barnett: They will not forgive you for what you said in this Parliament.

Dr GALLOP: What did I say?

Mr Barnett: You accused members on this side of being prejudiced against indigenous people, and you will never get out of that.

Dr GALLOP: My friend the Leader of the Opposition can feel free to continue to work on the basis of his fabrication.

Mr Barnett: You as Premier had to withdraw.

Dr GALLOP: I was asked to withdraw, and I did withdraw because I was asked to. However, the Leader of the Opposition should not continue to misrepresent what was said.

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Mr Barnett: You were meant to withdraw unreservedly.

Dr GALLOP: I did.

Mr Barnett: You just made an excuse. You said that you withdrew only because you were asked to. There was no sense of apology, statesmanship or respect for indigenous people.

Dr GALLOP: It is pretty hard to have a debate in this Parliament with the current state of the Opposition. Opposition members have an inability to deal with these issues on an intellectual basis. It is obvious that when pushed into a corner, all they can do is come up with abuse. I will go through those three issues again.

Mr Barnett interjected.

Dr GALLOP: The High Court of Australia's decision was 7-0. Does the member for Dawesville know what the High Court said? It said that the legislation of this Parliament offended the Racial Discrimination Act. I am proud of what we are doing on that issue; that is, sorting out the mess with which we had to deal. Members cannot even cope with a debate in this Parliament. They do not even have the ability to come in and argue about an issue. Let me repeat the major points.

Mr Barnett: You are struggling. You will be crying in the corner in a minute, the way you are going. I would let the Attorney General get up and try to handle this issue; he could do it a bit better.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: When is the Attorney General going to force you to do a reshuffle?

Dr GALLOP: Members opposite are really raising the standard of debate.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: The community would like to know.

Dr GALLOP: We are capable of running a number of issues at the same time - social, economic and environmental. We have a massive program of infrastructure provision to encourage investment. We have a massive investment program in education and training to ensure our young workers have the skills to get the jobs that will come their way. We also will deal with all those administrative issues with which the previous Government could not deal because of its failure to respect the rights of indigenous people. We can deal with those issues but members opposite cannot. I am pleased to report that after nine months in government, we are well on track in all those issues. We are on track with our social and legal reform agenda; we are on track with our public sector reform agenda; we are on track with our environmental sustainability agenda, based upon banning the logging of old-growth forests; and, most importantly, we are on track with providing jobs and opportunities for Western Australian citizens.

The real question is: where is the Opposition? The Opposition is driving along, looking in the rear-vision mirror, harking back to a mythical past that never existed and believing that somehow it can use that mythical past as the basis upon which to criticise a reforming Government. We now have a reforming Government in this State.

Mr Barnett: Gays and lesbians, decriminalising marijuana - great reforms!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will members on my left show some courtesy, for the Hansard reporter, if for no other reason?

Dr GALLOP: We now have a reforming Government in this State. We are on the path to bringing Western Australia into the twenty-first century, so that it is capable of responding properly to the economic challenges of new jobs and opportunities in the new economy, protecting old-growth forests and having a sustainable environment that builds better communities around decency and respect for people, whether they be indigenous or members of unions. Underpinning all of that is a modern public sector capable of dealing efficiently and effectively with all those issues.

**MR JOHNSON** (Hillarys) [3.33 pm]: I will make a contribution to this debate because we just heard the Premier go on at length about what a wonderful Government he leads. Self-praise is no recommendation. That is what the people out there are saying. We have a Government that is bereft of talent, integrity and true recognition of moral standards in society. We have a Government that says it is on track. The only way it is on track is in its social agenda. That was its number one priority to get through this House. Never mind the 4 000 jobs that will be lost in the south west, the black hole that is going to appear in its budget and which has already started to appear, the drug-related problems and the crisis in the hospitals; the Government must get its social agenda through. Why is the Government doing this? I will tell members why the Premier and the Attorney General are doing it. They are pandering to the minority of people in our society just for their votes. They are buying their votes. They are prostituting themselves for those people's votes at the next election, because they



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know for whom those people will vote. In doing that, the Premier and the Attorney General are prepared to pass through this Chamber the dreadful parts of that legislation, to which most members of the public are opposed.

The Premier's cunning plan was to get the legislation through this House and the other House before Christmas. Why was he going to do that? He was cunningly clever, not decently clever. What would have happened if the legislation had passed through this and the other House before Christmas? It would have been proclaimed and the Government would have gagged the freedom of speech of the people who were opposed to those terrible parts of the legislation that he has put through this House.

Mr Hyde: Are you against your party's stand on the bikies laws now? Is that what you are talking about?

Mr JOHNSON: If the member for Perth spent more time out of the Chamber, we would get a lot more business done. There are many important issues that this Government should be tackling, but it has tackled none. It is totally and utterly inept. It is not dealing with the real problems that affect the majority of Western Australians. The Government is just trying to pander to the small minority, because it wants those votes at the next election, and it will get them. Those people would not vote for my colleagues or me in a fit. The Government has covered that part. It will get those votes, but at what cost to Western Australia? At what cost to the children of this State - the children who will be put at risk and who will be vulnerable? The Premier, the Attorney General and the Government will stand utterly condemned for their actions and their desperate attempts to get this legislation through before Christmas. We know why the Government did not want it to be passed next year. It wants to distance it as much as possible from the next election.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: About 195 leaflets will be delivered not by this party, but by concerned people in Western Australia to a lot of Labor seats to try to urge the people who live in those areas to contact their Labor members of Parliament and ask them the very serious and dire questions that need to be asked. The people in Western Australia are concerned about their 16 and 17-year-old children, because they are the ones the Government has given a green light -

Mr Carpenter: Do you still think it is a big issue in Albany?

Mr JOHNSON: We know where those guys stand.

*Point of Order*

Mr McRAE: The member for Hillarys is impugning the Government by saying that it is in some way giving the green light and encouragement to paedophilia and predatory behaviour. That is a criminal offence. This Government would never be a party to it, and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr JOHNSON: The member is an absolute sucker for getting in the firing line. I never said those words at all. Madam Deputy Speaker, you heard it, as did everybody else. The member for Riverton often looks at me and asks what I said. He does not quite understand what people are saying. The member for Riverton does not have a clue about how this place is run. He keeps thinking he hears things, but they were not said. There is no point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Unfortunately, I did not hear that part of the conversation. I have a feeling that the member on his feet was canvassing some ideas of his own. I do not know whether he accused anyone opposite directly or collectively. There is no point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr McRae: You should have the dignity to withdraw.

Mr JOHNSON: I accept your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you are right. If I had accused anyone opposite of paedophilia, I would have withdrawn and apologised. I am not too big to apologise when I do something wrong. It is a pity some members opposite do not do the same thing.

Mr Hyde: Are you funding the lies being put out by the Australian Family Association?

Mr JOHNSON: I have done nothing to financially support the AFA.

Mr Hyde: How do you know about the leaflets?

Mr JOHNSON: I have seen one.

Mr Hyde: Did they send you a copy?

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Mr JOHNSON: Yes, because the Australian Family Association together with all the church groups is concerned. I love this interjection; it is manna from heaven because it is giving me a chance to explain more. The AFA and many of the church groups are so concerned about this Government's policies creating vulnerability among children of 16 or 17 years that they are funding the fliers themselves. They sent me a copy of one of them and complimented me on the remarks I made in this Chamber. I only mention that because the member for Perth thinks I provided the AFA with some funding. That is errant nonsense, like most of the things he says. This Government is doomed to failure socially, economically and in every other respect.

**MR RIPPER** (Belmont - Treasurer) [3.41 pm]: After all the emotion, let us look at some of the facts. The motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition accuses the Labor Government of not managing the economy of Western Australia and not allowing it to grow. Let us look at the record. In the September quarter, state financial demand grew by 5.1 per cent. That was the fastest growth rate of any State in the country. In New South Wales the rate was 1.9 per cent; Victoria, 1.5 per cent; Queensland, 0.9 per cent; South Australia, 1.6 per cent; and Tasmania, 3.1 per cent. The national average was 1.6 per cent growth. We should take note of the gross state product growth in the last financial year, when the Leader of the Opposition was a senior economic minister. The State's economy declined by 1.2 per cent. That was the worst figure for any State in the country. We could not even beat Tasmania. The September quarter under Labor is the best figure in the nation. For the financial year 2000-01, with the coalition in charge for most of the year, it was the worst figure in the nation.

A number of aspects of that September quarter result are worth mentioning. The September quarter growth for business investment was 15.6 per cent, the first positive business investment growth in Western Australia annually since December 1999. After three years of declining business investment it turned around under Labor. Dwelling investment increased by 25.3 per cent in the September quarter. We all know what happened to dwelling investment. It was mugged by the goods and services tax, supported by the leading economic commentators opposite. It is now recovering. Construction activity increased 56.4 per cent in the September quarter. The whole factual basis of the motion by the Leader of the Opposition is being blown away.

He accused the Government of concentrating on its social agenda and letting the economy go. How come the economic growth figures are much better than they were in the financial position that we inherited from the previous Government? The Leader of the Opposition continues to prophesy doom in the economy. He hopes that eventually he will be proved right. So far, he has said unemployment will rise and it has fallen. He has no credibility on these matters. In any case, it is not true that Labor has been ignoring the economic agenda. Business told us that we should attend to our own house and that we had a ramshackle public sector with far too many government departments and agencies. Richard Court should have tackled that at the beginning of his second term. He had a proposal to reform the public sector in 1996. However, he did not have the courage to do so. That proposal came into my hands during the Labor Party's period in opposition. We acted on public sector reform. We have reduced the number of government departments through the Machinery of Government Taskforce.

The previous Government under Richard Court could not handle the finances. It managed to create four deficits in a row. Time after time, in between the budget process, ministers went before Cabinet with special requests. They blew the budget between the budget process. The Under Treasurer was so distressed about it that he sent an extraordinary memo to the former Treasurer lambasting the performance of previous government ministers.

This Government has restored fiscal discipline, which is important to the economy. It is important to be able to say to overseas investors that the State's finances are under control and that it is a jurisdiction in which people can invest with confidence because they are being managed properly. Standard and Poor's have recognised that and said that the new Government is well placed to meet its sound financial management objectives.

This Government is tackling other issues. How many times did Richard Court complain about commonwealth-state financial relations and say that Western Australia was being unfairly treated? This Government has taken a positive, practical step. It has joined with New South Wales and Victoria to promote an independent review of commonwealth-state financial relations. It is always difficult to achieve reform in this area because the beneficiary States resist reform. However, we have created the best opportunity for decades to achieve some reform to this system, which treats Western Australia so unfairly.

This Government has embarked on an electricity reform process. The previous Government ignored it to the extent that it put at risk the Commonwealth Government's national competition policy payments to Western Australia. The Opposition is now opposing the structural reform of Western Power. However, I have been advised that the coalition told the National Competition Council that it needed to embark on structural reform of Western Power otherwise it would have put at risk the national competition policy payments to Western Australia.

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Mr Barnett: That is not true.

Mr RIPPER: I have been told that. If the Leader of the Opposition says it is not true, I will conduct some investigation and see whether I can find evidence to back up that advice given to me.

Another area in which the previous Government has led the State -

Mr Barnett interjected.

Mr RIPPER: The Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about electricity. I remind him of the connection between low electricity prices and economic growth. Our comparatively high electricity prices inhibit investment in this State. If we want to promote this State's economic growth, we should move to lower input costs. One of the important input costs we can lower is electricity. That can be done by reforming competition in the electricity industry. The previous Government recognised that and knew that its failure to advance on electricity reform was putting at risk those national competition policy funds.

This Government is getting on with the essential task of promoting the economy in this State. One area that has a close relationship with economic development is the effective handling of native title. The previous Government led this State into an imbroglio over native title. There was no goodwill or willingness to settle issues because that Government promoted division in the community and propaganda against the rights of indigenous people. Its legislation went to the High Court and was found to be racist - based on a judgment of 7-0 against it. The Government not only unfairly treated indigenous people through that native title legislation, but also threatened the economic development of this State by failing to resolve the native title issue. This Government is tackling those issues.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! It is disorderly to carry on a conversation while another member has the call.

Mr RIPPER: I will conclude with an example of the success of the leading economic commentator who now purports to lead the Opposition. He put his faith in a deal with Energy Equity Corporation Ltd and Woodside Pty Ltd for the West Kimberley power supply. That deal has collapsed.

**MR BARRON-SULLIVAN** (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.50 pm]: In an era in which people often say that the political environment has changed and that it is hard to tell the difference between the two major political parties, this year will go down in history as the year in which a fundamental divide between the Liberal and Labor Parties was demonstrated. I say that because a new form of values has been upheld by this Government; namely, the social agenda and priorities it has attached to its social legislation. That set of values is at variance with the values held by the community and by members of the Liberal Party. The new values that the Government is imposing on the community as a whole have resulted not only in the alienation of mainstream, traditional families in Western Australia, to which the member for Hillarys alluded earlier, but also in the alienation of two other key groups - small business and regional communities.

The Minister for Small Business purports to represent small business, but he acts more like the Minister for Labour Relations. He acts like a union representative both inside and outside this Chamber. The Government has introduced a number of policy initiatives and legislative changes that are blatantly anti small business. The minister remains silent. He defends those changes. The Government's budget imposed a huge increase in payroll and other taxes that directly impact on business. That contradicts the Labor Party's election policy commitments. The Minister for Small Business remains silent. He remains silent over the fact that the Government said that it would review business tax. However the fine print says that the results of that review must be revenue neutral. That means a tax will be eliminated from one area, but added to another area. If ever there were a sign that this Government had no truck for small business, it is the fact that from 1 July next year it will tax the family homes of small business people throughout this State. That is how much of a damn this Government gives about small business.

Mr Barnett: That is tax neutral!

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: It is tax neutral! It is putting an extra tax on small business.

The Government has disfranchised regional Western Australia with its so-called one vote, one value legislation. The eight members of the Labor Party who represent country seats have gone blindly and lamely to the slaughter. They are tied to the Labor Party policy platform, regardless of what country Western Australia thinks about the matter. The Government's alienation of the country was shown in what happened in Merredin, where the Labor Party did not even get its deposit back.

**Extract from *Hansard***  
[ASSEMBLY - Thursday, 13 December 2001]  
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Arrogance has crept into this Government after barely 10 months. We saw that today when the Premier made an accusation that he was ultimately forced to withdraw. That is the sign of an arrogant Government. The Government is imposing values on the community which the community does not support. That will be the major distinction from now on between the Liberal and Labor Parties. The Liberal Party learnt many lessons back in February, one of which was that people do not want an arrogant Government; they want a Government that listens to them. This Government has become arrogant after 10 months. It does not give a damn about the people.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (21)

Mr Ainsworth	Mrs Edwardes	Mr Marshall	Ms Sue Walker
Mr Barnett	Mr Edwards	Mr Masters	Dr Woollard
Mr Barron-Sullivan	Mr Grylls	Mr Omodei	Mr Bradshaw ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr Board	Ms Hodson-Thomas	Mr Pandal	
Dr Constable	Mr Johnson	Mr Sweetman	
Mr Day	Mr McNee	Mr Waldron	

Noes (29)

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

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Pair

Mr House

Mr Logan

Question thus negatived.