

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 5) 2003
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 6) 2003

Second Reading - Cognate Debate

Resumed from 24 August.

MRS C.L. EDWARDES (Kingsley) [12.50 pm]: I will raise two issues that continue on the topics raised during my address last night on the Disability Services Amendment Bill, and I will also raise two issues relating to young people. The first matter regards the serious issue of child prostitution and child exploitation, particularly that which occurs online. That is an area in which the Government and the Parliament have a very strong role to play. The second issue I will refer to is workplace mobbing.

A workplace mobbing conference will be held on 14 and 15 October 2004. Essentially, it is an occupational safety and health issue. I hope that the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection will ensure that one of his staff attends the conference. It is a phenomenon that has not been very well identified in Australia. Although we refer to bullying and stress in the workplace, another major issue is workplace mobbing. At its simplest it is referred to as a virus or cancer which springs from rumour and gossip and which is done in a deliberate attempt to force somebody out of employment. It means a group of employees ganging up on a colleague, a subordinate or superior and applying emotional abuse through rumour, innuendo, intimidation, humiliation, discreditation and isolation. All those forms of abuse have the same objective: to force the target to quit the workplace.

Workplace mobbing has been the subject of studies in other parts of the world for some 20 years. Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann identified the grave threat to health and safety in what appear to be the healthiest and safest workplaces in the world. Although his first language is German and his second is Swedish, Leymann labelled the menace with the English word “mobbing”. We are used to the terms “mob” and “mobbing” in Australia. However, this is the nuance of its use in workplaces.

Kenneth Westhues from the University of Waterloo traced Leymann’s discovery for some 20 years. In research published in December 2002 in the Canadian issue of *Occupational Health and Safety*, Westhues states -

All across Europe, not only specialists in occupational health but managers, union leaders, and the public at large came to recognize workplace mobbing as a real, measurable kind of harm, a destroyer of health and life.

Strangely, recognition of Leymann’s discovery has been slower in coming to the English-speaking world.

...

Workplace mobbing was almost never discussed in Canada until the coroner’s inquest following the murder of four workers at OC Transpo in Ottawa in 1999. In that case, a former employee, Pierre Lebrun, had ended the shooting spree by also taking his own life. It turned out that Lebrun had been ridiculed relentlessly by co-workers for his stutter, and then, after he had slapped one of them in retaliation, been forced to apologize to his tormentors. Had Lebrun been mobbed at work? Was this the phenomenon Leymann had in mind? Media reports and the inquest itself tentatively said it was.

Westhues describes mobbing as possibly the gravest threat most workers face. I bring this matter to the attention of the House because it was brought to my attention by a former teacher who was the subject of what would now be described as workplace mobbing. The interaction between her and her peers and the consequential stress that she faced has meant that she no longer works in the educational field. The experience has had an enormous impact on her life. Westhues describes it as possibly the gravest threat workers face today. That is a huge statement when considering the other dangers workers face, including slippery floors, dangerous machines, toxic chemicals and other hazards that can be found in a workplace.

Westhues further states -

In practical terms, however, the worst kind of harm that most Canadians have to fear at work is the kind that arises from faulty human relations, some kind of glitch in how people treat one another.

Leymann studied the circumstances surrounding suicides in Sweden and arrived at the startling conclusion that 12 per cent of people who took their own lives had recently been mobbed at work. That is a huge percentage. Although no similar studies have been done in Australia, it is hoped that such research will begin after the conference to be held next month. Westhues says that by Leymann’s estimates, which are backed by other studies, between two and five per cent of adults were mobbed sometime during their working lives. As for the remaining 95 per cent, Westhues’s explanation is that whether people are bystanders, observers, perpetrators or,

occasionally, rescuers, most people denied, glossed over or forgot about the mobbing cases in which they were involved. He concludes that that is one of the reasons it has taken so long for the phenomenon to be identified and researched.

An article compiled by Susan Dunn, MA, author of *How to Build Your Career with Emotional Intelligence*, says there are 10 top things to understand about mobbing. Her list draws on the experiences of others. The first point is that a mob is one of the most vicious subcultures in any society. She refers to the Ox Bow incident to prove that a mob behaves in a way that no individual human would. The second point on her list is about whether people immediately knew what the term “mobbing” meant when applied to the work force. When a woman named Elliot was asked that question, she said that people were aware of it but that they have never had a name for it. Susan Dunn’s list states -

“When we speak to people, they know immediately what we are talking about. One individual referred to it as “barnyard mentality,” similar to chickens pecking.

Members would recognise that when considering workplaces in which they have worked or when considering the mob culture that they have seen. The third point states -

Study after study in psychology proves that people draw a perverse strength from the group and will do in a group what they would never do alone.

Again all members can relate to and recognise that. The point continues -

Normal moral behaviour - even decent behaviour - is discarded . . . The manager whose reports decide to drive him out . . . the competent but beautiful new receptionist who’s pulled down by jealous co-workers . . . the manager who becomes threatened by the talents of a report . . .

The fourth point states -

Done by peers, subordinates and superiors, the goal is to force someone out using gossip, ostracism, intimidation, discreditation, humiliation, and just plain meanness.

The blame is projected on the victim, who, ‘gas lighted,’ becomes confused, has trouble perceiving correctly (that people could really do this), and accepts that he or she is incompetent, to blame, etc,

The fifth point Susan Dunn raises is -

Dr. Heinz Leymann . . . is credited for identifying the syndrome in Europe, Japan and Australia where he studied it for nearly 20 years.

I have referred to his research and the research he also undertook in Canada. The sixth point is -

Mobbing is a group bullying process that can go until the job is done - even years.

The mobber(s) interviewed often claimed they didn’t know they were harming anyone.

The seventh point is -

Mobbing is a particularly insidious form of emotional abuse, and the impact on the individual can be devastating.

The authors cite cases of individuals unable ever to return to work after mobbing. Mobbing is also sickening to watch.

The eighth issue she raised and which comes out of her research is that -

Mobbing is a serious behavioral risk-management issue for organizations, caution the authors.

Mobbing destroys morale, erodes trust, cripples initiative, and results in dysfunction, absenteeism, resignations, guilt, anxiety, paranoia, negativity, and marginal production. Key players leave, morale is devastated, and the effects are long-lasting.

The ninth issue from her research is that -

Mobbing is a “widespread, vicious, workplace tort [civil wrongs recognized by law as grounds for a lawsuit-and in this case an *intentional* tort],”

The tenth point is -

Mobbing is difficult to stop once it gets going, but managers can learn to recognize the patterns.

In the book they even cite cases where HR managers were ‘ordered’ by superior ‘mobbers’ to support a mobbing process.

In personal correspondence with Ms. Elliott, -

She was one of the people interviewed -

she told me that people often come up to her after her talks and say, "This will never happen again on my watch," which is heartening.

This is the reason for raising this issue; that is, to highlight this serious situation which is often not recognised. Although we have dealt with bullying in the schoolyard and workplaces as an occupational health and safety issue, a new phenomenon is being recognised. It is heartening when people recognise that it has been going on in their workplace and they identify that it will never happen again.

For those who are interested in following this issue through, the Internet is full of papers on workplace mobbing, with plenty of additional case examples to underline its existence, nature and impact. Having raised the issue, there are three specific observations that need to be made. One is that workplace mobbing is an occupational safety and health issue. As I said earlier, it has already been described as a more serious safety and health issue than any other in the workplace. Yet any acknowledgment of the problem, let alone a way to deal with it, is missing from state and federal legislation. Even if mobbing represented no more of a safety and health problem than all the other hazards that already have been identified and acted upon, it would still demand action. When workers are emotionally tormented by their coworkers to the point that they quit their jobs, action is overdue. I refer again to the example that has been brought to my attention. A teacher of some 30 years standing was emotionally tormented by her peers and is now on workers' compensation and stressed as a result. Action is overdue. It is a serious issue that we need to take into account. To some extent our antidiscrimination and equal opportunity legislation provides part cover in some cases. However, they have never been framed to cater for mobbing. I believe that both, as well as our occupational safety and health legislation, should be reviewed to take mobbing into account. If that is not enough, the State, federal and Territory Governments should consider specific legislation on workplace mobbing. We have an obligation to send a very clear message to everyone that this sort of psychological pressure will not be tolerated.

Having established that mobbing is an occupational safety and health issue, I draw attention to one group of employees that has already endured severe cases of workplace mobbing in Western Australia; that is, the whistleblowers to whom I have referred many times this year and last. Time and again I have raised the causes of the likes of Chris Read, Jean Thornton and Neil Winzer. Sadly, I need to report that their cases are still not being dealt with adequately or properly. At varying times and for various reasons they have taken on the establishment, and have focused especially on the wasteful expenditure of taxpayers' money. Chris Read has been proved correct. He went through the proper channels for a couple of years. I received a further response from the Premier today, who said that he could do nothing more in terms of Chris Read's occupation, job or level, and that he is pleased that the department is looking after Chris Read. The department is not looking after the Chris Reads of this world; the department is one of the workplace mobbers. The department has worked to protect the system. The same has happened with Jean Thornton and Neil Winzer. There are many other cases. Until we become serious about whistleblowers, we will allow workplace mobbing to operate against whistleblowers. It is a serious issue.

I remember Chris Read of 15 years ago. The torture he has suffered from the public service is a disgrace. We should all be ashamed of that. How dare we allow a man who has served this State and saved it millions of dollars to be treated in such an appalling way? It is not acceptable. I do not know whether Neil Winzer's matter has substance. It has been investigated by an enormous number of agencies. However, we all know that once a person is tagged as being a perpetual complainer, that is the drawer into which that person is placed and his complaint is never treated properly. I hope that the committee in the other place will undertake a proper review and assessment of Neil Winzer's claim. Neil Winzer, the public servant, is subjected to constant harassment on a daily basis. He is receiving that treatment from public servants in that department. I will repeat what one public servant said about another public servant: Mr X - I will not repeat his name - could remain at home and rot just like Mr Winzer. If this is not part of workplace mobbing, I do not know what is. This Government is allowing that to occur with whistleblowers. Jean Thornton raised a number of serious issues concerning the Department of Health. Those matters have been investigated. Some matters have been picked up by the police and others by the public service.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: They were referred to the Public Sector Standards Commission, which carried out a review. The report of that review, headed "Human Resource Management in the Royal Street Divisions of the Department of Health", was reported to this House last week. When it comes down to the word of one person against the word of someone else, and taking into consideration the degree to which someone will be believed, workplace mobbing has an enormous area in which to play. What happens is that one employee stands up against the system. Part of the system is the other employees. Does anyone think they are going to allow one

person to undermine their levels of responsibility, power or positions? I do not think so. That is what workplace mobbing is all about. That has worked against the Jean Thorntons, Neil Winzers and Chris Reads of this world. Until a Government starts to take this seriously and regard this as a serious occupational health and safety issue, it will never help employees who find themselves in this situation. I do not know how many employees from the public sector are on workers' compensation as a result of workplace mobbing. I would suspect it is quite a number. One case of workplace mobbing has already been brought to my attention by someone. It was how she felt she had been treated. When going through the research, it was very easy to pick up the examples of the Thorntons, Winzers and Reads of this world. What we have done to those people is an absolute disgrace. They are being treated as less than human. Neil Winzer as a public servant has been discarded and forgotten; nobody wants to talk to him. I have to qualify that. The chief executive officer, Mr Greg Martin, has been very approachable in this matter. However, the person who deals with the responses of the public servants and who had to deal with all the issues connected to Mr Winzer's complaints said that another employee could remain at home and rot just like Mr Winzer; is that workplace mobbing or not? I think it is and I think there is a serious malaise in the public service today. As a direct consequence of their actions, those people have been subjected to some form of workplace mobbing. The Premier totally dismissed the complaints of Chris Read and Jean Thornton. They have been chastised or ignored, shunted sideways or subjected to some unjustified psychological pressures to the extent that they have stood down from their positions. On the overseas evidence I have presented to the House today, those people have been subjected to the worst possible cases of occupational safety and health risks. Despite that, they all languish on the sidelines with the Government sitting back hoping that the problem - the whistleblowers - will quietly go away. I have news for them: they will not and it will not, and I will not stop advocating on their behalf. The report from the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards, which was presented last week, shows that no whistleblower will ever come forward again. If that is what the Government wants, it has succeeded in being part of the workplace mobbers because it has allowed this to continue and the whistleblowers to be intimidated. That affects any whistleblower who may have been likely to come forward. When workers realise that workplace mobbing is an occupational safety and health issue, they will demand its inclusion in all relevant legislation. I hope that the first conference to be held next month starts the ball rolling. All those people are entitled to be protected. There are already precedents in other parts of the world with antimobbing legislation in some European and Scandinavian countries. If the problem exists in other parts of the world and has done so for decades, we can make the reasonable assumption that it is alive and well in Australia. I think I have identified cases in which it is alive and well in Western Australia.

I now turn to the issue of child prostitution, which I have mentioned on previous occasions. It is an issue that is crying out for urgent action. On 11 February this year *The West Australian* carried a report from London that stated that children were being sold for sex on the Internet and then rated out of 10 by paedophiles. According to the report, relatives and friends had been involved in advertising the children online with indecent photographs taken at home. The report was published by the children's charity Barnardo's in London. Barnardo's is a reputable organisation. It warned that new GPRS and 3G mobile phone technology may lead to many more children being abused through the Internet. The article went on to state -

... Barnardo's identified 83 who had been sexually abused through the internet and mobile phones.

That issue has been raised when this Parliament has dealt with criminal legislation. The article continued -

Of those, seven were sold online to paedophiles and one was abused live on the net.

There are other equally tragic stories about youngsters of varying ages being tricked, coerced or rendered vulnerable through alcohol.

I then read a report on the commercial exploitation of children in New Zealand. The report substantiates the broad findings from London. Child prostitution was evident throughout New Zealand and involved children as young as 11. Far more girls than boys were involved, with 79 per cent compared with 21 per cent. The survey found common threads in their background circumstances such as difficulties with parents who had separated; alcoholic, criminal or dysfunctional families; and, in some families, the death of the father or mother or the mental illness of the mother, which required a period in hospital. Nearly two-thirds of those identified as child prostitutes had been sexually abused and more than two-thirds had been physically abused. The report suggested a range of strategies to deal with the problem, such as making men responsible for tackling clients, providing more resources to crack down on child pornography, laying more complaints with police, taking down vehicle numberplates, providing facilities to help children make the transition from victim to survivor and expanding education throughout the area. This is an area that none of us likes to talk about as happening in our community. If it is happening in England and New Zealand, I think we can draw only one conclusion; that is, child prostitution exists in Australia. The report also listed specific areas for prevention, based on the old adage that prevention is better than cure. They are to stop the things that lead to the sexual exploitation of children, such as pornography, child abuse and violence; train males to not be abusers, offenders or exploiters and reduce youth poverty and provide free tertiary education; and make abusers, offenders and exploiters accountable as well as

help dysfunctional families and provide respite care for runaways. We have started that approach in some of those areas. The challenge for us as a society and as members of Parliament is to stand and be willing to do something about it. As I have said over so many years, the protection of our children is our greatest priority. That is the issue we must continually run concerning censorship. Although adults may be able to see and hear what they want, we need to ensure that our children are protected. The Children's Court magistrates tell some very sad stories about young males in their teenage years who have seen their parents' X-rated videos. The young males then went into the community to experiment with sexual violence because of what they saw. There is an increasing trend along that line that is disturbing to the Children's Court magistrates. We now know that every second home in Australia has a computer. The electronic age in which we live has also become a danger for our children. We have an obligation to ensure that parents and families are made aware that our children need to be protected in their formative years and that they are not unduly influenced by a preponderance of sex and violence. If we allow our children to become desensitised, I believe we as a community will have failed ourselves and, more importantly, our children. We need to help parents understand what they need to do to protect their kids from much of the material that is available on the Internet. People know about the sort of material that is constantly sent in e-mails and that appears in advertising material. Children would see that material if they started up their computers. I will not highlight in the Parliament some of those ads, but all members know what I am talking about. We need to protect our children. The two issues that I have raised today go one step further to protect children, as well as workers, and we need to take action along those lines.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [1.20 pm]: I will make my contribution to the debate on the appropriation Bills now before the House. I will relate my comments to the community that I represent and in which I live and I will make a few observations. The members for Dawesville and Murray-Wellington and I have reminded members in the past that we represent an area of Western Australia that is experiencing rapid and quite extensive growth. Decades ago this community was made up of relatively small towns in the shire of Murray and in the city of Mandurah. Only 30 years ago the communities of Pinjarra, Dwellingup, Yarloop, Harvey and Mandurah were small towns. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Mandurah was a town of only a couple of thousand people. Just a few decades later, the city of Mandurah boasts a population of 55 000 people. The towns of Pinjarra, Dwellingup and others along the South Western Highway also are experiencing rapid growth. The Peel region, which encompasses the city of Mandurah as a municipality and the shires of Murray, Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Waroona and Boddington, has experienced rapid growth in a short period. Mandurah is now a rapidly expanding community. Indeed, local, state and federal government authorities need to respond to that growth to ensure that they plan very carefully for the future expansion in the number of people who choose to live in the region in which I live, as well as those who visit the exciting and dynamic Peel region. When there is incredible growth, of course there is a range of challenges. Members of this House need to recognise that many people who live in the Peel region and in the city of Mandurah have seen that growth. Not all of them support what has happened. The fact is that people keep coming to the region because of a desire for close proximity to the metropolitan area, the wonderful waterways and the natural environment in the area and the opportunities that present themselves for people. We must ensure that we plan very carefully for that growing population.

One of the challenges is to provide infrastructure, and I will not go into my pet projects that I support strongly; that is, the rapid transit railway and the Peel deviation. However, growing communities, particularly those in the Peel region, have traditionally been up against it. I am talking particularly about the city of Mandurah. In the past the city of Mandurah has traditionally been caught between a rock and a hard place. The rock is Perth and the hard place is Bunbury. It is not a denigration of either of those communities, but the fact is that, in the past, government departments have included the city of Mandurah as part of either the metropolitan area or the Bunbury or south west catchment. That has left the people of Mandurah in a position in which they have had to argue and fight with either the metropolitan area or Bunbury for resources, officers and infrastructure for the Peel region. As an example, the Main Roads Western Australia office to which the people in Mandurah predominantly refer is the Bunbury office, whereas Mandurah falls within the health system's south metropolitan catchment. Although there is a reassurance that our needs are serviced, the fact is that because the infrastructure connections are not yet in place, we have to fight very hard to ensure that the people of Mandurah, Pinjarra and other localities within the Peel region get their fair share of resources. I have highlighted that to the House because I have often had a debate with a number of my colleagues about people seeing Mandurah specifically as part of the metropolitan area. I indicate to the House that people who live in Mandurah feel they have a strong regional identity.

One of the great things about Mandurah is that it is made up of people who have come from a variety of places. Many of them have come from the country. Many of the people who now live in Mandurah holidayed there decades ago and came from places such as Northam, as I did. Many of the people who now call Mandurah home have come from the wheatbelt and the goldfields. A very large contingent of ex-goldfields people lives in Mandurah. I have noticed in recent times that many people who call Mandurah home are from the south west

and Albany and from more isolated parts of the State. They tell me that one of the reasons they moved to Mandurah is that it allows them to be closer to their families. A couple of people from Albany recently highlighted to me that they wanted and needed to be closer to their families in the Perth metropolitan area, and Mandurah was a perfect spot because of its close proximity to Perth. The extension of the southern suburbs railway will be a very important component to allow them to be closer to their families.

As I have said, I have had this debate with my colleagues. Mandurah is often tacked on by some people as the most southern suburb of Perth. I reassure the House that there is a very strong feeling by the people of Mandurah that it maintain its strong regional identity. That is why it is important that the Peel region be considered and continue to be considered a distinct region in its own right. As I mentioned earlier, the Peel region is made up of five municipalities. It is a nice neat region. Although it is not huge in area, it has a diverse economic base, a diverse population base and a diverse and exciting geographic base. People who live in the area and those who visit the area can experience a range of tourism and lifestyle opportunities. Within 40 minutes of Mandurah, people can be in a forest in Dwellingup; on the magnificent coast of Western Australia, which takes in some 80-plus kilometres of coastline; or in the rural and historical areas along the South Western Highway in the Shire of Murray. Mandurah, therefore, has great opportunities and diversity.

I put on record my appreciation of the Peel Development Commission and all the local government authorities in the area for the very important role they play in helping to build Peel and for achieving opportunities for the region in which I live and for which I have great affection. As we build a strong, diverse economy there, we build a community that provides a range of opportunities for both young and old people. In speaking to this Bill, I will highlight to the House a couple of very important initiatives that help to build on this development of a community. I will refer specifically to the issues of community policing and community safety.

One department that fits within the regional development commission's boundary is the Police Service. The Police Service's Peel boundary is, of course, the same as the boundary of the development commission in the Peel region. We have had a succession of very competent inspectors and superintendents in the district and I welcome the latest district superintendent, Cath Bullen. I understand she is the only female superintendent in the Police Force in charge of a region. I met with Cath again the other day. Superintendent Bullen has a very clear goal in terms of how we can build on the police resources that have been added to the police district in the past three years of the Gallop Government. Statistics show that more than 30 officers have been added to the Peel police district since we came to government; but I want more. I have said that before in this House. I know the member for Dawesville has said it, and I am sure the member for Murray-Wellington also is very keen to see more police troops added to the force there. We need to continue building on that force not only because of the population growth, but also because in peak times we experience a massive increase in the transient population - that is, visitors - to the region. That population is constantly increasing as Mandurah and the region become more popular as places to visit.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: You can't get parking there on a long weekend.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is exactly right, minister, which is one reason we must have the railway so that we can get those people down there by rail, rather than by driving there. I will continue to highlight to the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police the need for ongoing resources in the police portfolio for the Peel police district. Superintendent Bullen is very much now putting in place the front-line policing strategy that the new Commissioner of Police is keen to establish. I am very excited about the things that Cath mentioned to me at our recent meeting.

I want to highlight a couple of projects that demonstrate how the community is critical to ensuring community safety and to addressing ongoing community safety issues. In my electorate a program operates in Peel called the Street Net program, which was established some five years ago as a one-off project. However, like many one-off projects, it demonstrated a need and now demonstrates its ongoing need. One issue we faced with Street Net was how, through various departments - be it the Police Service, the Department for Community Development or the Department of Justice - we could get ongoing funding to ensure the continuation of the program. This on-the-ground program involves youth workers who work with young people alongside police officers. I want to highlight to the ministers responsible for those three portfolios that it is critical that the Street Net program continue.

Another program of which I am a proud patron that operates in the region is a seniors organisation called Supporting Our Seniors and Disabled Inc. That organisation supports members of the community who have a variety of maintenance issues in their homes and ensures that they can stay in their homes as long as possible. The program recently received some crime prevention money to expand its services into the wider Peel region, which was very much welcomed.

Another program is the youth maritime project, which operates from the Mandurah Offshore Fishing and Sailing Club. For members who are unaware of it, I believe it is the most successful offshore fishing and sailing club in

Western Australia. Members of the club are talking about how they can manage the incredible number of members - about 4 500 - that they already have. As Mandurah and the Peel region continue to develop, pressure will be placed on the club to manage such growth. The club, of which I am also a proud patron, supports a program that was established by one of its members, Des McLean. Des is passionate about doing positive things for young people. Des tenaciously developed the youth maritime project, which was firstly known as the "Hooked on Fishing" program. The project was set up to steer away young people at risk of falling foul of the law or young people who might find themselves, or indeed found themselves, in the juvenile justice system. The program encourages young people to do something positive and learn skills that they can use as they develop into adults and, hopefully, that can lead them to make a positive contribution to the community. Already we are seeing huge results from the program. That is because it is supported strongly by the club and by an individual in Mandurah, Keith Turner. Keith and his wife, Beryl, are passionate about helping people to reach their goals and their true potential. He very generously has supported the youth maritime project with a substantial donation through the Mandurah Lions Club. Keith and the Lions Club of Mandurah have been tremendous supporters of that project.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The youth maritime project was established as a one-off project, but it is now such an important part of community policing and our youth projects that we must find some ongoing funding to ensure it continues its good work. About 12 or 13 young people move through each cycle of the program. They have support from TAFE, and Keith and Beryl Turner support a number of them to enter the Leeuwin project as a follow-up to their work with the youth maritime project. It is, therefore, critical that the project continue.

Another program is the Duyfken youth traineeship program. The *Duyfken*, I believe, is due in Mandurah in September and will be there through to the very successful boat show that is held in October at the Mandurah Offshore Fishing and Sailing Club premises and in the Mandurah Ocean Marina. The Government was very generous in supporting the Duyfken youth traineeship program. I say to the member for Greenough that the *Duyfken* has been in Geraldton recently. We are looking forward to its coming to Mandurah, as it will provide young people and the people of Mandurah and the region with an opportunity to see that iconic ship berthed at the Mandurah Ocean Marina. It will be a very important and exciting time for the people in Mandurah who can enjoy that iconic ship that was constructed some years ago and is now delivering the government funded youth project.

The other important initiative that the Government has recently supported with funding is the Peel Community Legal Service. I cannot stress enough the importance of that funding from the Attorney General. It has allowed a group that was voluntarily providing very much needed legal assistance and workshops to people in dire need to now provide critical support for many people in the Mandurah and Peel region who need legal advice and assistance, but cannot afford private support through local lawyers. Local lawyers have supported the service because they see the need for it. In fact, many lawyers in Mandurah provided pro bono support to that service in its infancy and during the period when it was being established and it was providing a service through voluntary means.

I am really pleased that the Peel Community Legal Service is to be government funded over the next four years. Substantial funding has come to the Peel region for that service. I congratulate the board and all the volunteers who have worked so hard. They have been tremendous. The board has been battling very hard for the establishment of a community legal service in the Mandurah and Peel region. They now have it, because they demonstrated very clearly the need and that they had the resources and expertise to set up and establish that very badly needed service.

One of the things we have been attempting to do in Mandurah and the Peel region is to lift the way in which education is valued. I congratulate the Commonwealth Government, the State Government and the local governments because all of them have been working with the local community to lift the value of education. At the federal level, Murdoch University has been established at the Peel Education and TAFE Campus, which is a collocated campus on which are situated Murdoch University, the senior college and the TAFE college. Murdoch University's footprint has been very firmly placed on that site and a building program has commenced. I thank Murdoch University for its work, and particularly Professor Kateryna Longley, who, along with the vice chancellor, has been absolutely passionate about establishing Murdoch University. They have ensured that the Peel region has the presence of Murdoch University.

I congratulate the State Government. It has completed stage 2 of Mandurah Senior College, which was an initiative of the previous Government. As I have mentioned in the House before, it was a very important decision by the previous Government. My Government has added to its value by completing stage 2 at a cost of \$2 million, and it is now being used by students. That site is providing very valuable infrastructure and resources for students.

I place on the record my support for the efforts of local government in this whole community learning concept. The City of Mandurah in particular has done some amazing things to ensure that our education facilities are world class. I put on the record my congratulations to the mayor, Keith Holmes, the councillors, the directors and the staff of the City of Mandurah for their vision, because they have made a very strong commitment to education. They have done so because they understand that if we are to build a strong, safe and secure community, and if we are to provide the opportunities for our young people and also those who are not so young but want to continue to embrace learning, we must invest heavily in education. It has been a great partnership by all three levels of government to lift the value of education in our region. This community learning concept is about ongoing, lifelong learning. I sit on a little think tank committee that continues to work out ways in which we can continue to promote it.

The state schools in Mandurah are fantastic. They are staffed by tremendously enthusiastic principals, teachers and non-teaching staff, and they are backed by very supportive parents. The non-government schools are tremendous; they provide fantastic opportunities for our young people. I remind the House that 25 years ago Mandurah had no high school. All Mandurah's students went to Pinjarra. The area now has 17, edging towards 20, government and non-government schools. That demonstrates the extent of the growth of the area. I mention Greenfields Primary School, Riverside Primary School, Mandurah Primary School, Dudley Park Primary School and North Mandurah Primary School. I visit them regularly. I thank their principals, their staff and the school community that supports them. I mention the Assumption Catholic Primary School, Frederick Irwin Anglican School, Mandurah Catholic College and other schools that are in the Dawesville electorate and the wider Peel region. All of them are doing tremendous work to support and encourage lifelong learning to achieve the potential of our young people. It is really important that education continue to have a high priority in my region.

Although we have wonderful seniors, and the demographics show that my area has more than the state average - I think the area has double the state average of people over the age of 55 years - at the other end of the spectrum the biggest growth in population is in the zero to 19 age group. In the Peel region there is a bulge at both ends of the population growth, as it were. That bulge in population needs to be massaged and nurtured so that we can create great opportunities for everybody who lives in Mandurah and the Peel region. We are seeing some major change and advancement over a whole range of areas. It is an exciting time to be a member for that region. I am really privileged to represent the City of Mandurah in this place. I love living there. I believe that the two greatest resources we have are our natural environment and the people who have chosen that city and that region to live in.

MR M.F. BOARD (Murdoch) [1.49 pm]: Like a number of members today, I want to speak about young people and, in particular, the ongoing dangers and incidence of bad health and problems with health facing our young people. I say that at a time when we are watching the Olympics on our television screens and we are very proud of our elite athletes. Australians are doing exceptionally well on the world stage in sport. Australia is seen by the world as a country of fantastic sports-active and athletic people, yet I believe that the images on our television screens and the reality for the average Australian, particularly the average young Australian, are growing further apart, and certainly further and further apart than when I was 16 or 17 years of age.

Australia is a changing place. I do not direct this as a criticism of the federal Government or the current State Government. This issue needs to be dealt with in the community and throughout Australia. If we follow the current trends for western nations - particularly Britain and the United States - then in the long term the health of young people in Australia is in danger more than ever before. It is an interesting exercise to look at old family photographs of groups of people and families around the dinner table, say, 35 to 40 years ago. It is a bit before your time I think, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms J.A. Radisich)! When I was in my early teens, people were a lot thinner. We are growing, as a population, in every respect. In my speech today I will reflect on what is happening to young people, why it is happening, the dangers for the quality of their lives and the cost of maintaining people's health as they get older. I will talk about the rising incidence of obesity in young people; the incredible rise in diabetes in Australia, particularly amongst young people; the increase in mental health issues for young people; the incidence of attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and the prescription of psycho-stimulant drugs; and other lifestyle issues that show that we are getting our priorities wrong in this country compared to the vision of our health 30 to 40 years ago. Raising this issue does not imply criticism of any particular government or regime. It is rather a wake-up call to all of us to change our priorities, under the leadership of the Government.

Australia is a changing community. We all talk about multiculturalism, and we wear it as a badge of what can be achieved when communities come together in peace and harmony to work for a single cause. That is a very good thing, but our community is different from what it was 40 to 50 years ago. The nature of what we eat has changed, and the way in which we judge one another's looks is very different. The way in which we educate our young people is very different. Priorities for sport and recreation are different from what they were 40 to 50 years ago. Transportation, both public and private, is much more readily available today than it was 30 years

ago, when kids walked fairly long distances to school carrying fairly heavy bags. This was all part of the regime of staying fit. Stranger danger, problems in the community and the concern of parents about kids on the street, has changed the nature of activity in the home and transport to school. Computers and technology have made a huge difference to what is done with recreational time. Planning decisions have changed the nature of how our community looks. Even if kids wanted to play with a football around the streets, the nature of our planning decisions, the way in which we build our roads, the recreational space, the size of blocks and access to parks have changed dramatically over the past 30 years. There are not as many social opportunities for young people. I notice the Minister for Tourism is in the Chamber, and I recognise that the Government has done a great deal to raise the awareness of young people of sport and recreation programs, and I appreciate the amount of resources and energy that has gone into that. However, all indications are that, as a total society, we are not doing as well as we did 30 or 40 years ago. The incidence of obesity and diabetes is much greater now, particularly diabetes II, which is a lifestyle issue. This must be sending a warning signal to us that our priorities are wrong.

I draw the attention of members to the fact that currently some 800 000 Australians have been diagnosed with diabetes. Ninety per cent of those people suffer from diabetes II. A warning signal there is that that figure has doubled in the past six years, and it is projected that by 2010, 1.5 million Australians will have diabetes. At that growth rate, by the year 2020, over three million Australians will have diabetes. However, that figure is only for diagnosed cases of diabetes. It is well recognised that, for every person diagnosed, at least one other person in the community has undiagnosed diabetes. On the basis of those statistics, six million Australians - possibly one in four - will have diabetes II by 2020. Unless we do something dramatic about changing our priorities about the amount of time we allocate to sport and recreation, increasing the resources available and educating the community, the health of our society will decline, particularly amongst young people. We will not be able to afford to maintain the quality of life that we enjoy today, because the cost of maintaining people with diabetes - particularly when renal dialysis is required - will be many billions of dollars a year. It already constitutes a very high proportion of the health budget, and Australia may find itself spending not one dollar in four, but up to 50 per cent of its total resources in attempting to maintain the health of people who have chosen bad lifestyles or bad habits as a result of the changing priorities in our community. It is an issue of significance. Warning signs can be seen in other jurisdictions. It is anathema for Australians to see themselves going down this path - to think that our health will be declining, given the amount of effort that goes into education through the Department of Health and in the school curriculum. It goes to the heart of what we see as our lifestyle and our image as Australians. All indications are going the other way.

I am not sure that there is any issue of greater concern than that of mental health. It is now projected that one in five young people under the age of 24 has a mental health issue. That is an extraordinary figure in this day and age, and it concerns me greatly that the community does not seem to recognise this. Governments do not properly recognise these areas in their allocation of resourcing and priority. No direct criticism of this Government is intended, as this has been the case with all Governments. All members have been shocked and stunned by the suicide and self-harm rates of young people in Western Australia, but that is only the tip of the iceberg in relation to the number of young people suffering mental health problems. We must dramatically take stock of this issue.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.