

**ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE**

**HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural — Leader of the House)** [10.00 pm]: I move —

That the house do now adjourn.

*Dialysis Machines in the South West — Adjournment Debate*

**HON ROBYN McSWEENEY (South West)** [10.00 pm]: In question time today I asked a question about dialysis machines. There is a real problem in the south west in that there are not enough dialysis machines. The Lions Club in Bridgetown would very much like to take up this matter as a project. I have a letter from a lady called Wendy Rayner who lives in my home town of Bridgetown. I will read it out so that members can get a picture of the lack of services in the lower south west. The letter is to the head of the Lions Club and states —

It has recently come to my attention that the Lions Club are looking into the feasibility of the creation of a dialysis unit in the Bridgetown/Manjimup area. As I am one of the people who would benefit from this project, I thought I would write to you, to not only thank you for considering this worthy cause, but also to give you a little bit more information which could help you in reaching a decision as to whether to go ahead.

As you might know, I have been diagnosed with kidney failure after a long battle with diabetes, and am about to go back to Sir Charles Gardner Hospital to have the shunts inserted for me to be able to receive dialysis. Recently, when I was in Bunbury I visited the dialysis unit there, and was told by the supervisor that unfortunately there was no place for me there as they were full up and I would have to go on a waiting list.

People in the south west who need dialysis cannot go on a waiting list to get dialysis in Bunbury. Instead, they must go to Perth for two or three days a week, which is very hard if they live three hours away from Perth. The best choice for those people is to go to Bunbury, or to have a unit in their area. The letter continues —

There is a new unit opening in Busselton this month, but in all probability they are also full, so there will be no immediate place for me there either.

**Hon Barry House:** That hasn't opened yet, despite the promise that it was going to open in August last year.

**Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY:** No. From August last year to now is a long wait. I can readily believe that, in all probability, that unit will also be full. The people of the south west are being let down badly by this government. The letter continues—

This means that until I can get a place, I will have to live in Perth to receive my dialysis, as without it I will die within a few months. My other alternatives are to have home dialysis with peritoneal dialysis — not always a possibility — or to have my own haemodialysis machine at home.

Either of these last options are the ones I hope to achieve, but in order to do so, I need to spend two weeks in Perth to learn peritoneal dialysis or six weeks in Perth to learn how to perform home haemodialysis. I have now found that Charles Gardner has no accommodation for country people . . .

It actually does have accommodation. I knew about A.H. Crawford Lodge, but Wendy did not. I am trying to get her some accommodation for when she needs to go to Perth. She also said in her letter —

. . . I have nowhere to stay on a long term basis, I have found that the cheapest place in Perth is Jewell House YMCA at \$44 a night, which mounts up over a few weeks. It seems the odds are stacked very much against people like me, who would like to remain in their homes, but find obstacles at every turn. It might happen that we might have to move to Perth if things get too difficult with travelling and treatment, something which we don't want if it is possible to avoid it.

Although I do not know the exact statistics of how many dialysis patients there are in the area, I know there are three other people in Bridgetown besides me undergoing dialysis at great inconvenience to themselves. One . . . has been travelling to Bunbury for four and a half years three times a week, as has . . . of Greenbushes, just to keep themselves alive. . . . is on peritoneal dialysis, which he is able to maintain at home. As well as these people, I know there were at least two people from Manjimup at the dialysis unit the day I visited and some travel from Pemberton and Nannup to receive treatment. I think that kidney failure is becoming more prevalent in the community with the epidemic proportions of diabetes and other relevant diseases which cause it. It is only when illness strikes one personally, that the lack of facilities for country residents becomes evident to the sufferer.

Although there would be a great deal of organisation and funding necessary to achieve the goal of a dialysis unit in the area, I know it would be a lifeline for all those, who like me, need these services in order to continue some semblance of their old lifestyle. There could be a further problem with the

training of staff, but if I could be taught how to operate my own machine in six weeks, it would not take long to train a practising or retired nurse in how to do it, so these problems could be overcome.

I know that like me, all my fellow sufferers would have had feelings of great despair and depression as they contemplate not only the hopelessness of their illness, but also the constant travelling to Bunbury every other day, together with the isolation felt as we are so far away from the expert, professional help and aftercare we need to help us manage our day to day life. Maybe it is too late to help me and my fellow dialysis patients in the area, but the dialysis unit would help all those in the future who might need this treatment.

God willing, I hope it is not too late for Wendy and other people in the south west like her, because it is becoming a real problem. People cannot wait for dialysis treatment. There is no such thing as a waiting list. Wendy's letter continues —

I know you have many worthy causes to regard, but could you consider undertaking this one which is so close to me and those already using the Bunbury facility. I would be willing to come to a meeting and talk to your members of how this illness has affected me and my family and the difference it would make to us to know that one day in the future a facility might be here in the area to help us and future sufferers of kidney failure.

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Kind regards,

Wendy Rayner

Today I asked a question about how much such a machine would cost and I was told that it would cost between \$20 000 and \$25 000. A back-up machine would also be required, which would cost \$50 000, and then there would also be the cost of training staff. It could amount to a few hundred thousand dollars, which is not out of the realms of possibility. When people in a place such as Bridgetown make up their minds to help their community, things usually get underway fairly quickly. The reason I asked the question was to give them some idea of the cost they are looking at funding. However, why should the community have to fund \$200 000 for a dialysis unit when Busselton and Bunbury should be provided with enough machines to cope? The government has certainly made an error of judgement if people are being told that they need to be placed on a waiting list or must travel to Mandurah or Perth for treatment. The government is being negligent with people in the south west, and that is not good enough. My plea tonight is that somebody on the government benches—I note that Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm is here and he is a member for the south west—will perhaps talk to the Minister for Health. I have asked questions on notice about how many patients in the south west need dialysis, because I think that is the proper way to go. Once we find out how many people need dialysis in the south west, we can then perhaps do something collectively to make it a lot easier for those people. Even travelling to Bunbury three days a week is a lot of travel. It is an hour's travel from Bridgetown. Some people have to travel from Northcliffe to Bunbury, which probably takes another hour and a bit, so that is two and a half hours of travel there and back three times a week. Other people are told that they must go to Perth. Those people may not know anyone in Perth and may wonder where to get accommodation. Not all country people know about A.H. Crawford Lodge at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital until they need to use a facility like that. They get stressed and worried about how they are going to pay for accommodation and how they are going to travel from their accommodation to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, let alone the worry and stress of having shunts put in and being taught how to use dialysis, whether it is home dialysis or the other type. It is a huge stress. I think the government has been negligent in my area in the south west. I certainly hope that we can come to some sort of arrangement so that these people do not have to travel outside the area.

*Department of Education and Training, 457 Visa Students — Adjournment Debate*

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan)** [10.10 pm]: I would like to make a couple of comments about subclass 457 visas and the problem they are creating for the education system. I will give a bit of background of 457 visas. The genesis of these visas began with the Keating government in 1995 when it introduced a new temporary business visa scheme after the findings in the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Temporary Entry of Business People and Highly Skilled Specialists—that is, the Roach report—were released. The Keating government accepted the recommendations in the report and introduced temporary work visas that represented the beginning of the 457 visas. On 1 August 1996, the Howard government formalised this process by introducing the temporary business or long-stay visa subclass 457. This visa permits approved Australian or overseas employers to sponsor for a temporary period of three months to four years workers from overseas to come here to fill skilled positions. Overseas workers who have recognised qualifications and skills in particular occupations are eligible to be sponsored. In addition, health and character requirements must be met. Subsequently, thousands of skilled workers have come to Australia on 457 visas, but they have also brought with them their children. Thousands of these students cannot speak English or have very limited English-speaking

skills, and it has created a great problem in schools. These students are going into mainstream schooling and the schools are insufficiently resourced to cope with students who cannot speak English. It has been very commonplace for the state government to handball the problem to the federal government and say that it is the responsibility of the federal government because this is its scheme. Successive governments have blamed the Howard government, and the Howard government said that the delivery of education services was a state responsibility, and vice versa. Now that the two levels of government are in Labor hands, perhaps a bit of sanity can be returned to this situation and these students can be looked after.

I have previously asked a question about this issue. I asked how many students under the 457 visa category are currently enrolled in Department of Education and Training primary and secondary schools. At the moment there are 1 240 non-English speaking students in primary and secondary schools, which is a large number. More than 1 000 students who cannot speak English or who have limited English skills are sitting in classrooms. I also asked what additional resources DET provides to schools to assist students who have limited or no English-speaking capacity. The response was that these students have access to a range of resources and programs to support their identified needs, including those that support English literacy. Unfortunately, the resources that are available are insufficient. I have been approached by a number of teachers, administrators, principals and deputy principals over the past two years about this issue. A lot of these students are being put into mainstream schooling. The students do not have a clue what is happening in their environment and they are ostracised by their peers, and the teachers feel out of their depth. Basically, it is a lose-lose situation for all involved.

There are 5 096 subclass 457 visa holders who have come from Europe to Western Australia. I would imagine that a number of those visa holders have also come from England. There are 3 292 visa holders who have come from Africa, which is the second highest number of visa holders. That is where a lot of the problems lie. A lot of children from African nations have limited or no English-speaking capacity. As I have said, they are placed in mainstream classrooms.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** They were not properly funded by the previous government.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** With all due respect, I know that the minister was on urgent parliamentary business, but I broached that subject earlier when I said that we must stop this nonsense of the blame game between the state government and the feds. The government must do something about it.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Yes, but you have to accept what is.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** There is now a federal Labor government and there are no excuses.

**Hon Kim Chance:** It is still the feds.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Get Julia Gillard to fund it.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I didn't see you jump up and down when your government was responsible for the problem.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Ken Travers):** Order! Hon Peter Collier has the call.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I will read from a letter to the Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association from a deputy principal of a senior high school. It highlights one of the problems and states –

I am writing to you to highlight some concerns and to request WASSEA to bring these issues to the attention of the policy makers. Specifically I am concerned about the number of 457 visa category students enrolling at mainstream schools in Western Australia and the inadequacy of English language support provided for them.

Under the 457 visa category, the Australian Government has been able to address the shortage of skilled labour in the country. According to recent media reports this trend looks set to continue and the numbers of people coming into Australia on 457 visas set to increase. Many of the skilled migrants on a 457 visa do not speak English, or have only a limited grasp. There are also many who do speak English however their spouses and children do not.

The children of parents who are on a 457 visa are entitled to enrol at their local primary or high school. Unfortunately, many of these schools are not able to cater for students who do not speak English and as a result staff struggle to provide meaningful learning experiences for them. The students themselves experience a lot of distress as their first experience in our education system is an overwhelmingly negative one.

As a Deputy Principal of an Intensive English Centre, it is particularly frustrating to know that the problems described above are completely avoidable. If, the students on 457 visas were deemed eligible to attend Intensive English Centres the students would complete an appropriate English preparation

course and then exit into their local schools where they could continue their schooling with the mainstream population.

I am aware that this issue has been addressed partially in the past where School Districts have been allocated some FTE to help alleviate the language difficulties described above. Unfortunately this allocation translates into a teacher who visits several schools in the metropolitan area to see students for about an hour per week. This kind of support falls well short of what is required and is virtually useless. The answer is to allow students on 457 visa categories time at Intensive English Centres. IECs have the expertise and tailored courses that are already in place and offer outstanding programmes that enable students to adjust to Australian culture and values and also impart critical English language competency.

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I'm sure there would be many WA Primary and Secondary Principals who would welcome being able to send Non English speaking students to an IEC, thereby relieving one of the pressure points in their schools. At present, IECs are not required to accept 457 visa holders, they only do so if they have spare capacity. In our case, we had approximately thirty 457 visa holders in the IEC, however as they are inelligible for IEC, we don't receive any FTE or funding for them. If I were to disallow future enrolments we would be putting added pressure on neighbouring schools who don't have the capacity to support them. The situation that could develop is that our number of eligible students decreases which reduces our FTE allocation yet the number of 457 students increases. This would severely limit our ability to accept 457 students in the future.

Either the State or Federal government should fund this area adequately. The consequences of not doing so are becoming more apparent as time goes by.

Although there are currently 1 240 non-English speaking students on 457 visas in our schools, that does not include the thousands of students who have gone through the system in the past few years. The pressure that this is placing on the teaching fraternity is enormous, particularly in light of the other pressures currently placed on teachers. This is an issue. We have 457 visas to help overcome the skills crisis, but at the same time we have to adequately and comprehensively provide schools with the resources to ensure that those students are properly catered for so that they do not walk into a classroom that is a daunting, almost horrifying, experience for them. They do not understand a word of what the teacher says. In a lot of instances, mainstream teachers do not feel qualified to adequately prepare these students for a meaningful education. As I have said, the students are ostracised in many instances by their peers. Their experience in the Australian education system is vehemently negative. I say to the state government: let us have a collaborative approach with the federal government and try to find a meaningful way forward so that more resources are pumped into IECs to ensure that these students are provided with a quality education system and their views of Australia are thereby enhanced.

*Government Interim Financial Statements — Adjournment Debate*

**HON NIGEL HALLETT (South West)** [10.20 pm]: I would like to make a few comments on the recent interim financial statements that were released in late January, early February. It amazes me how the government continually puts a spin on how well it handles the economy and how it would have us believe that the surplus is all of the government's making and that it has nothing to do with the economic situation that has come about through our links with Asia, particularly China. The government has made another proud announcement that the surplus is bigger than the budget. The surplus is up by some 18 per cent based on last year, to \$1.37 billion, and, of course, it will break more records by the end of this financial year. To some extent that is right, but for all the wrong reasons. To put it bluntly, the government does not trust the people of Western Australia. It continually taxes people through stamp duty, payroll tax and land tax. Recently we have heard comments from small trucking firms about changes in the trucking industry's licensing regime. One small trucking firm in my electorate is paying an additional \$150 000 for the new licensing fees. The Treasurer has said that he has made substantial tax cuts. If they are so substantial, why is the government making more money than the previous year? How is the government achieving this surplus increase? The government has subjected us to its tax-and-spend regime with little being given back to the people. If I were to ask the people and businesses of this state how we could better use the surplus, I am sure the majority of them would react in a positive way. The four major taxes creating real problems in this state are property tax, land tax, stamp duty for businesses and payroll tax. With the increase in the median house price and the price of land, land tax and stamp duty have been a blatant tax on inflation, which has fuelled the government's own policy. Although the government can claim that it helped first home buyers in the last budget, that help came a little too late. It also put at a disadvantage the elderly people in our society who want to downscale their home, because they are now competing directly with first home buyers. The Treasurer made much of the stamp duty cut for first home buyers, but the actual tax take will increase from \$1.009 billion to \$1.218 billion for the same period. As I said before, the substantial increase

in the median value of a Perth home and in the price of land are blatant taxes on inflation. Any long-overdue reduction in stamp duty to the levels of three years ago will in itself be inflationary. The government has been unable to understand the sense in linking stamp duty exemptions to median house prices. I do not know whether that is a product of pride or conceit, or both. Land taxes need an urgent reassessment. One of major causes of increasing land prices is the appallingly slow way in which the government has released land for development. It has created a shortage of supply and inflated prices and values. It has also provided more revenue for the government. In the first six months of this financial year, \$419 million was collected against an estimated \$420 million. Western Australians continually hear about this once-in-a-generation economic boom, which has principally come about because of the resource sector. However, it is also being driven by China. If the Chinese economy slows down, it will be interesting to see what effect that has on our economy now that we are expecting a recession in the US global economy. The government has said that it will be active in seeking diversification of business in this state. Why not stimulate that with a reduction in payroll tax? In the first six months of this financial year, the take from payroll tax increased by \$178 million, or 22 per cent. Once again, the government has plenty of room to manoeuvre. The level of payroll tax that business has to shoulder is ludicrous, and I wish I had a dollar for every business that agrees with me, and yet once again there is more money for the government.

Inflation in Western Australia is much higher than in the eastern states, and one of the principal reasons is the government itself. By choosing to spend this surplus it has fuelled inflation, particularly in the construction sector. It is a government with policies that are inflationary. Inflation has not been an issue until recently, but it is now very much back on the agenda for Western Australians and Australians. Businesses are likely to have to pay a lot more for their borrowing because of this government's policies.

With all this surplus cash, has the government spent wisely? Are our health, education and police services better than those in other states? The answer is an obvious no. All this extra cash has been spent on bureaucrats and consultants, not on frontline public servants, often with disastrous results. We do not have enough teachers, police, doctors and nurses, and we do not have enough hospital beds. Day after day incidences are being reported of shortages in vital government agencies. We have a shortage of magistrates throughout the regions. The Department for Child Protection is unable to attend court, resulting in a 13-year-old girl having to be returned to custody. All this is happening while the state is swimming in surplus revenue. Recently, the Minister for Health unveiled a plan to reduce surgery waiting lists, which is good news, but the money for that is not coming from the state budget; the federal government will fund it.

Over the next few months we will witness a lot more pork-barrelling, to a level that we have not seen before. We will see tax cuts, but they should have happened some time ago. We have seen some spending on the new sports stadium, the Museum, and the redevelopment of the inner city. These are all good things, but we are still not seeing spending on core projects such as Ord stage 2—something that will secure a food bowl for this state, Australia and the world. I am sure the residents of Esperance and Kununurra would like to see this expansion happen. Esperance needs a decent water service to provide fresh, clean water to the town and the region. Voters of this state are now starting to realise that this government does not have any ability, and will recognise the government for what it is. It has lost touch with the people; it has not delivered on core policies in health, education, and law and order; and it has created inflation, and is using our money to fuel it. The time is coming when this government will be judged on its record.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.27 pm*

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