

GOVERNMENT FUNDING - KEY SERVICE AREAS

684. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Treasurer:

Mr Speaker -

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition's time is over in relation to his question. I call him to order for the first time.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: In view of the ever-diminishing commonwealth funding for Western Australia -

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

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

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I will bring the member some happy pills; he needs them.

In view of the ever-diminishing commonwealth funding for Western Australia, can the Treasurer explain how the state government has managed to continue increasing support for key service areas?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

I thank the member for Joondalup for his question. We all know that John Howard and Peter Costello have been treating Western Australia with contempt.

Mr T. Buswell: That is what they think of you in Rivervale.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I have heard that the member for Vasse has been going around this house telling people that he will be the Leader of the Opposition by Christmas. Is that true?

Mr T. Buswell: Who told you that? I went to Rivervale; they love you in Rivervale.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Is it the case that the member for Vasse is preparing to betray his second leader? Is it not time that the member told him? This bloke has form, and if he has told the Leader of the Opposition that he will vote for him in the coming leadership ballot, if I were the Leader of the Opposition, I would be very worried.

The SPEAKER: I am sure that members can see me standing. That bit of madness is now over.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I was enjoying reminding the house of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's record of betraying his leaders.

Let me talk about what I said yesterday about Howard and Costello ripping off the people of Western Australia while trying to avoid responsibility and, in fact, passing the buck for their broken promise on rising interest rates. We have this strange situation in which the Prime Minister of Australia says that Western Australia is in deficit. Everyone in Western Australia knows that that is not true, and that the government is running healthy surpluses while investing record amounts in infrastructure and maintaining net state debt levels at record lows. However, I do not want to talk about that; I want to talk about the service delivery dividend that the government has been delivering from the state's economic prosperity.

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition groan. I know that he does not believe in the service delivery role of government, but on this side of the house we believe in the service delivery role of the state government. That is why, in real terms, since the period of the Court government, the government has increased funding for health by 34.2 per cent. That is a 34.2 per cent real increase in health funding since 2000-01. In the area of community support services, which includes child protection and disability services, the real increase has been 33.8 per cent. Let us go on to the next key area - law and order. In law and order, the increase in funding in real terms since 2000, under this government, after accounting for inflation, is 33.2 per cent; and in education and training, the increase has been 17.7 per cent. The government is investing the proceeds of Western Australia's economic prosperity in the services that people need. We are building record amounts of infrastructure. We are retiring government debt and freeing up money for services that would otherwise be spent on interest payments. We are also ensuring that the key services get a dividend in funding from our economic prosperity. We are providing those dividends for health, child protection, disability services, education and training, and law and order. We are doing these things because we think all Western Australians are entitled to share in the prosperity the state is experiencing. Part of their share in that prosperity is improved resourcing for these key services. It is part of the government's philosophy to maximise and sustain Western Australia's economic growth and to share the dividends with the people of Western Australia through improved services. We need to do that because the federal government is shirking its responsibilities.

I would love to talk more about the record of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but he has ceased interjecting. I wonder if you could give him the indulgence of one or two more interjections, Mr Speaker, so I can once again refer to how he treated the member for Kalgoorlie, and how he is lining up the Leader of the Opposition for another round.