

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Kucera; Acting Speaker; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Ms Sheila McHale; Mr David Templeman;
Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Carol Martin; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Arthur Marshall

PARENTING INFORMATION CENTRES

Motion

MR JOHNSON (Hillarys) [4.01 pm]: I move -

That this House condemns the Minister for Community Development for ignoring the needs of families by shutting the door of all parenting information centres in Western Australia.

It does not give me any joy to bring this matter to the House. After giving notice yesterday to move this motion, I felt I should add to it. I do not just blame or condemn the Minister for Community Development. I am sure the minister would have had some hard battles in the budget committee rounds when I hope she would have been fighting hard for as much as she could get for her portfolio areas. I would say she has been left fairly bruised by the Treasurer -

Ms McHale: Only from the flu injection.

Mr JOHNSON: Metaphorically speaking, the minister would have been left very bruised by the Treasurer. If she did not get the allocations she had been hoping for, she should feel bruised. If the minister got what she wanted in her budget estimates, I would commend her. Any minister worth her salt would always try to achieve the maximum she could for her portfolio areas. Community development is a very sensitive portfolio because it deals with family and children's services, children, youth and seniors. All of those areas are in great need. However, the minister's budget allocation has been reduced.

I should have condemned the Treasurer last Thursday when he brought down this budget with all his hoo-ha and stunts and his colleagues standing and applauding him. I thought, "What a stunt; he has just clobbered the overwhelming majority of Western Australians with increased taxes and charges". He introduced a new tax on third party insurance and he increased the stamp duty on all motor vehicles and houses. Every Australian's dream is to own his own house, and the Treasurer has made it a bit more difficult for people to achieve that dream.

Mr Hyde interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I have been on my feet for two minutes. The member can conduct his speech and I will conduct mine. I know the member gets the word: when the member for Hillarys is on his feet, come in and interject because we can have a bit of fun with him. I will have fun with the member later on. The member should allow me to at least get into my speech a bit and show a bit of courtesy, and I will then show him some courtesy.

As I was saying, the Treasurer has in general terms brought down a pretty horrific budget and the people out there - ordinary families, not just the wealthy - are saying that it is a Ripper rip-off, because they will have to pay hundreds and in some cases thousands of dollars more in increased taxes and charges. That description is fairly apt; as a budget, it is a Ripper rip-off!

Mr Hyde interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I am coming to that, if the member for Perth will be patient. It is now three minutes into my speech and the member cannot bear to hear the truth. The Treasurer is clobbering over the head those parents and families who need the most help. A great number of parents in this community desperately need help, because things have changed from the old days. Fifty years ago parents did not need the help that they need today, because families were different. The member for Innaloo reminded me of an opening remark made by the Chief Justice during one of his addresses recently: that is, all it takes is for a man and woman to have a child but it takes a community to raise that child. That is a very apt saying and I agree with it completely. We do not have that community support these days. People look to the Government for that extra support. Those families and parents desperately need help. It can sometimes be a very difficult task bringing up children. I know; I have brought up four of them, and I am sure many members in this Chamber have had the same problems. They are problems that we love, but they are problems nevertheless. Those people describe the Treasurer as the Grim Reaper, because that great big shadowy figure with the big scythe has come up behind everybody and he is cutting away -

Mr Whitely: At a bit of surplus.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Roleystone says it is surplus. The member thinks that those families who need help are surplus to requirements. We will remember that at election time. He thinks they are surplus to requirements. These parenting information centres have been in operation since 1995. They were introduced by my colleague the member for Kingsley when she was the minister and they have been very successful ever since.

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Mr Whitely interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I will give the member for Roleystone some figures shortly of the number of people who frequent them. I also remind members that this is not the first time that a Labor Government - not the Gallop Labor Government - has cut family support. That party is supposed to help families, battlers, the underprivileged and low income people. They are the very people that the Grim Reaper is letting down; that big shadowy figure is standing over those poor people who need help from this Government. Who was the minister in the 1991 Labor Government who cut out another service?

Mrs Edwardes: The grim Ripper!

Mr JOHNSON: Yes. He was the minister in 1991.

Mr Barnett: He was determined to get them.

Mr JOHNSON: If he did not get them when he was last in government, he will get them this time. I apologise to the Minister for Community Development for not including the Treasurer in my condemnation, because he should have gone side by side with the minister. The Independent member for Churchlands, who has a very keen interest in this matter, reminded me of some of the things that went on in 1991, when this Treasurer, who was the then minister, cut out the one-parent centre in East Fremantle. His excuse on the day was, "It was only a trial project." How long would a minister normally allow a trial project to succeed - one, two, three, four or five years? It went on for 15 years, but it was only a trial project, he said! Good God! It would be set in stone after 15 years! Obviously, the Treasurer of the day wanted his way and Hon Eric Ripper was a very compliant minister. He cut that service to the one-parent centres and, in doing so, said -

The One Parent Centre was a pilot project. It was never further developed. Children's services and supports for families have been developed in many different ways since the development of that pilot project, and we do not have one parent centres in Balga, Belmont, Wanneroo or Kununurra . . .

The next day - this debate went on for some time -

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The coalition Opposition of the day was -

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: We do care for people, low-income families, single parents and parents who are struggling to bring up their children. The Liberal Party genuinely cares. It is obvious from the budget cuts that members opposite have made -

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It has slashed with a huge scythe.

On 25 September 1991, Hon Eric Ripper said -

We must also consider the services which support not only single parent families but all families that experience disadvantages.

That is what the parenting information centres do. Hon Eric Ripper did not put anything in their place when he closed those centres. Western Australians in need had to wait for a coalition Government to be elected in 1995 for something to be done. There are now 13 centres, eight of which are in regional areas. Apparently there are also six mobile units, which is fantastic.

I will tell members what some of the experts say about the parenting information centres. A 1999 TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research report stated that the centres were visionary and at the cutting edge of prevention science. The institute is a highly respected organisation. Even the Chief Justice has said that it is important to initiate early intervention strategies to prevent children committing crimes later in life. What is this Government doing? Zilch!

Ms McHale: It is expanding the programs.

Mr JOHNSON: This Government is good with rhetoric but slow to act. If it intends to implement programs, it must provide the appropriate funding. Members opposite can say whatever they like and send out glossy pamphlets containing the minister's photograph, but they will do no good. These parents want somewhere to get help. The minister says that the people who need help do not go to shopping centres.

Mr Barnett: Perhaps the minister does not go to shopping centres. She probably sends her chauffeur to pick up her shopping. The Labor Party does not understand poor people.

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Mrs Edwardes: The important words in the press release are -

Families who often need the greatest help are not the ones frequenting shopping centres -

Mr JOHNSON: The member has reminded me that I should quote the minister's press release exactly. In attempting to justify closing these wonderful facilities, she said -

Families who often need the greatest help are not the ones frequenting shopping centres -

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: Where do they buy their nappies, milk formula and food for their families? At the local picture theatre? For goodness sake! Of course, they go to shopping centres.

Ms McHale: They often go to local shops.

Mr JOHNSON: No, they do not. If they are looking for bargains, they go to big shopping centres. Some of these services are provided in local shopping centres. They are placed in the most appropriate locations to afford the greatest coverage.

Mrs Edwardes: At the most useful sites.

Mr JOHNSON: That is correct. Does the minister think that these people telephone Harrods to order their food to be delivered? That would be a laughable comment if this topic were not so serious. I am glad no members opposite are laughing.

The member for Rockingham said yesterday that he had never seen anyone in his local parenting information centre. I reminded him that he is hardly ever there; he is either in Parliament, in his electorate office or out fulfilling his duties as Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. He represents the Premier at many multicultural events. The Premier does not attend those events these days and the member for Rockingham is doing more than his fair share. I have a great deal of time for the member; he should be on the front bench. He is certainly better than some of the current occupants -

Mr Barnett: I could give you half a dozen names of ministers who should be removed from the front bench.

Mr JOHNSON: That is very true.

I had to take the member for Rockingham to task yesterday, because he was wrong about studies being done. A study was undertaken by the Department of Family and Children's Services. Under the heading "Key outcomes of research findings", the evaluation report stated -

Data suggests a high demand for PICS services. Independent study of PICS in regard to consumer satisfaction. High level of overall visitor satisfaction. Two third of respondents repeat visitors, with one third having visited the centre five or more times in the last year. Metro centres were visited on average by 23 customers each day.

That is a large number of parents seeking help. Some of them were going back to get more help, support and advice. The report continues -

... however, majority of visitors were not aware that FCS was responsible for PICS. The findings point to the significant role that PICS play in strengthening parenting skills and providing knowledge in particular areas.

What a fantastic endorsement!

Mrs Edwardes: That research was done in the early days.

Mr JOHNSON: It was done in 1999.

Mrs Edwardes: There has been an increase in the numbers since then.

Mr JOHNSON: Of course there has. The minister seems to think that people who need help do not go shopping. Apparently they go to playgroups and daycare centres or other community venues. That is a bit vague; I am not sure what the minister means.

Ms McHale: It means that they go to family centres or community houses, or seek the help of child health nurses.

Mr JOHNSON: Many of these people will not seek help from those services. They like going to shopping centre facilities because they can do so anonymously. Parents do not like to admit that they are having difficulty bringing up their children.

Mr Templeman interjected.

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Mr JOHNSON: When the member for Mandurah becomes a father, he will understand. They do not like -
Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I am talking about the member for Mandurah.

Mr Templeman interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I am sure the people of Mandurah appreciate the centre.

Mr Templeman: I appreciate it very much. It is working very well, but it is different from the shopping centre facilities. I will tell the member about it in a minute.

Mr JOHNSON: I am looking forward to hearing the member.

Mr Templeman: Finish your speech now and I will tell you.

Mr JOHNSON: I advise the member to go steadily. I have been very gentle with him until now. He should not try to bully me into sitting down. I have a few more things to say. I am looking forward to hearing my colleague -

Mr Templeman interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: Make the most of it, sunshine! Members opposite will be on the Treasury bench for another two and a quarter years and then it will be bye, bye. He is a one-term member.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I normally love it when the member interjects, because he feeds me. However, I have a large amount of serious information to impart on this occasion -

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: If the member would listen instead of spouting rhetoric, he would understand what I am saying.

Mr Barnett: When they were in opposition, members of the Labor Party talked about issues such as parenting. Only the Minister for Community Development is here to participate in this debate. Not one other minister of the Labor Government is interested in parenting issues.

Mr Templeman: That is because this is drivel.

Mr JOHNSON: The Leader of the Opposition's interjection is exactly the point I made when I first started talking. I said that I should have added to the motion that the House condemns not only the Minister for Community Development but also the Treasurer and, indeed, the whole of the Gallop Labor Government. The Minister for Health should be in the Chamber because we are talking about kids. Parenting is the biggest thing. When people are bringing up children, they must know how to do it. I was distracted by the member for Roleystone. His favourite tactic is to try to distract me when I am on my feet. I have been in this place long enough to know that. The member might delay me a minute or two, but I do not mind that.

Mr Whitely: Where are you going? You are not going anywhere.

Mr JOHNSON: I will tell the member where I am going. I am attacking the Labor Government and its Minister for Community Development for not protecting the interests of parents in Western Australia - those parents who need help.

Ms McHale interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister will have her chance to speak as well. I am sure that she has the written stuff that her advisers have given her, and all the rhetoric will come out later. That is fine. I have been there and seen the sort of stuff that they turn out. I was pointing out why it is so important to have these facilities in shopping centres or somewhere to which people can go where they will have anonymity.

Ms Radisich: How can you say that they will have anonymity if they must go into a store in front of their neighbours.

Mr JOHNSON: The member is assuming that everybody in a shopping centre is one's neighbour. What a stupid comment. I have a lot of time for the member. I like her. She is a nice person. For her benefit, I will explain this to her.

Ms Radisich: All right. I will listen.

Mr JOHNSON: The member is a young woman. She does not have any children yet. I am sure that she will have children one day - I hope she does. When people have children, they appreciate these issues more and that it is not easy bringing up children. I have brought up four of them. All of them have had their difficulties. I was

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lucky because I had a supportive family. However, many people do not have supportive families. Some single parents desperately need help. At the childcare centres and the playgroups where all the other mums are with their kids, these people feel embarrassed. They do not want to admit that they are having a problem with bringing up their children. I can assure the member that it is a fact. She will understand that later in life.

Ms Radisich: Don't patronise me.

Mr JOHNSON: I am not patronising the member. She is a young person and probably does not have the knowledge of parenting that I have. I am only a man - okay? I am not a mother. However, I tried to play an important role in helping to bring up my children.

Mr Barnett: Often marital problems can impinge on this too.

Mr JOHNSON: Without a doubt. If there is a problem in bringing up children, as the Leader of the Opposition quite rightly said, it can cause a marriage break-up.

Mr Barnett: Or vice versa.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes. Therefore, parenting help and parenting information centres are desperately needed. Those centres have been successful. Therefore, why does the Government want to chop something that has been successful? Why did the Labor Party want to chop the single parenting units in 1991, when they were successful? This is a cost-cutting exercise, and the people the Government should be helping most are being put at a tremendous disadvantage. However, that is the way the Government operates, all for the sake of saving a few dollars. I do not think the minister has said that she has a new vision, because I do not think she has. She has said that this sort of facility will continue to operate, but in different areas. It is all very vague. She mentioned community venues, but did not say which ones they are.

Mrs Edwardes: "I'll be at the community centre next Tuesday and I won't be back again for six months."

Mr JOHNSON: That is right. Therefore, it will be a mobile facility. Some bureaucrat from the Department for Community Development will wander around childcare centres, and the facility will not be as successful as are the parenting information centres at the moment.

Ms Quirk interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: What is she going on about? The government Whip seems to think that when a member is on his feet in the Chamber she can have a conversation with members of the back bench. It is very rude to do that. If she wants to interject on me, that is fine. I will accept interjections; I am good at that. I play the game. However, she should not have a conversation with one of her backbench colleagues when I am on my feet, for goodness sake. It is very rude.

Mr Hyde: You invited an interjection.

Mr JOHNSON: Only if she wants to give me an interjection. I will happily take one.

Mr Hyde: She gave it to you.

Mr JOHNSON: No, she did not. She was having a discussion with the member for Perth or the member for Mandurah. It shows the seriousness of members of the Government on this sensitive issue, which will affect so many families in Western Australia. Members opposite do not give a damn about them. I think the minister does, but the member for Roleystone could not give a hoot. He has virtually declared that. He has said that these facilities are a low priority so they could be cut from the budget. He has as good as said that already. We will remember that at the next election.

Mr Hyde: Shouldn't you be interested in outcomes and not -

Mr JOHNSON: I told the House earlier what the outcomes are. If the member for Perth had been here, he would know that.

Mr Hyde: It is contradicting what you are saying.

Mr JOHNSON: No, it is not. These facilities should be located in areas so that parents can duck in when they are doing some shopping. In these facilities, they can get videos, booklets, advice, support and help from people who know what they are talking about - specialists in the field - not just some social worker from the Department for Community Development. These people are specialists in this area.

Ms Quirk interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, the member can, as long as she does not carry on a conversation afterwards.

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Ms Quirk: Are you implying that social workers are not professionals? I would be very concerned if that is what you are saying.

Mr Hyde: That is what he said.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I did not. The member is trying to twist words. I said that these people are specialists in this area. The minister wants to send out social workers from her department who are not necessarily specialists in this area.

Ms Radisich: They are professionals.

Mr JOHNSON: They might be professionals, but they do not specialise in parenting. Some people specialise in parenting skills. They are the ones who are in the parenting information centres at the moment, and we believe they should stay there and be able to help Western Australian families in carrying out their duties in bringing up their children.

Ms McHale: What do you think will happen to them under the new model?

Mr JOHNSON: I am sure the minister will tell us later.

Ms McHale: I am happy to tell you later.

Mr JOHNSON: Most of them are contracted people, are they not, through the Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation?

Ms McHale: They are members of the department, for a start, so they are departmental staff.

Mr JOHNSON: Are they not employed under contract to Meerilinga?

Ms McHale: No. They are departmental staff. They are the very staff that you have been criticising and calling bureaucrats and welfare workers.

Mr JOHNSON: These are the people who are running the parenting information centres now?

Ms McHale: Yes. They are members of the department's staff.

Mr JOHNSON: Are they on contract?

Ms McHale: No, they are departmental staff.

Mr JOHNSON: Are they permanent public servants?

Ms McHale: A couple of them could be on contract.

Mr JOHNSON: I was led to believe that most of them were on contract.

Ms McHale: They are departmental staff. They are Department for Community Development staff.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister made an interesting point. She said that under her cost-cutting exercise, she will cut out the rents that the Government must pay in the shopping centres. That is the area in which the Government will save money. Therefore, the Government will save money by terminating all the leases in the shopping centres. Some of these people, plus others I assume, will be dotted around all the different playgroups. There is a shopping centre to which everybody can go. The minister is saying that the specialist in parenting support at that centre will be spread around different areas. The minister has no idea.

The Minister for Health has wandered into the Chamber again. It is good to see him. He should take an interest in this because it affects people's health. It affects not only the parents' health but also the children's health.

Mr Kucera: I have the utmost confidence in our minister.

Mr JOHNSON: Of course the minister does. I would not expect him to say anything different. It may not be correct, but -

Mr Kucera: She does not waste money.

Mr JOHNSON: Therefore, the Minister for Health is saying that these parenting information centres are a waste of money.

Mr Kucera: No, I did not say that at all.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister did. He said that the Minister for Community Development will not waste money. Therefore, the closing down of all these parenting information centres by the Minister for Community Development is a cost-cutting exercise and a way to save money.

Mr Kucera interjected.

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Mr JOHNSON: The Minister for Health obviously believes that that money is being wasted. That is very interesting. I am staggered that the Minister for Health would say that.

Mr Kucera: I am staggered that you would mislead the Parliament.

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister for Health is an expert in misleading the Parliament. We will bring him to book when it suits us. We will have him on toast. The Minister for Health, being a new member, tries to give the impression that he knows it all. We have heard so much bluff and blunder and we have seen so much misrepresentation and misleading of the Parliament by the Minister for Health that we are saving it all up and one day we will give it to the minister as a birthday present. The Minister for Health has been here for just over a year, yet he thinks he knows it all. It is interesting that we have so many people on the other side of the Chamber who have been here for just over a year, yet they think they are experts in all areas. God help Western Australia! This Government is a one-term Government. The reason it is a one-term Government is that it makes decisions such as this that will disadvantage not only parents but also children.

Mr Hyde interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Perth may be more than a one-term member. It depends on where the boundaries will be.

Mr Kucera: Talk about misleading! I remember a certain night when you did not even know the laws in my portfolio!

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister for Health was a stuntman. When he was a copper, he was an absolute stuntman. He was walking around, as the candidate for the seat of Yokine, in his police uniform, masquerading.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr KUCERA: Mr Acting Speaker, that is an absolute untruth, and I ask that it be withdrawn.. I never, ever campaigned in a uniform. That is an absolute untruth. It is the same kind of misleading information that the Opposition's spokesperson for health and the Leader of the Opposition gave out yesterday about the health budget.

Mr Johnson: It is not a point of order.

Mr KUCERA: It is a point of order, because the member for Hillarys is misleading the Parliament.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): Order! The minister has raised a point of order and has put his point on the record. The member for Hillarys.

Mr JOHNSON: Do you want me to speak to the point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, or carry on?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Carry on. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr JOHNSON: I agree. I appreciate that, Mr Acting Speaker. Once again, this is a case of a newcomer who thinks he knows it all.

Mr Watson: Why not withdraw it?

Mr JOHNSON: Because the Minister for Health came into my electorate in his police uniform. He went to a lot of electorates in his police uniform.

Mr Watson: You are an embarrassment to this Parliament.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Albany will not be here long enough -

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The point of order has been dealt with. I ask members to address the motion.

Mr JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I will certainly get back to the motion. This is the problem when people interject too much and make a fuss about these things.

Mr Kucera: This is the problem when people mislead the Parliament.

Mr JOHNSON: I know, and that is why we have a big problem with the Minister for Health.

Mr Whitely: You have been talking for 30 minutes. Can you summarise exactly what you have said?

Mr JOHNSON: I could go on for an hour. Some of the member's colleagues have said I can speak under wet concrete. I can do that if I have to, because this is a very important issue.

Mr Whitely: I am waiting for you to say something important.

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Mr JOHNSON: The member for Roleystone has verbal diarrhoea. He interjects all the time. For goodness sake! He really is becoming a pain in the posterior!

Mr Hyde: I am getting totally distracted.

Mr JOHNSON: I have a lot of time for the member for Perth. He interjects sometimes, but I quite like him. He is not a bad fellow. The member for Roleystone interjects all the time.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I do like him. That is not an untruth. Outside this Chamber we have very civil chats. Our job in this Chamber is to attack each other. I accept that. In this Chamber we attack the Government's policies and the things it does. However, outside this Chamber there are only one or two members on the opposite side that I do not have the time of day for.

Mr Hyde: I hope that includes the member for Roleystone!

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Roleystone is fast becoming one of them.

I will conclude because I want to hear from the member for Kingsley, who initiated and has played an important role in this wonderful scheme, and who knows a lot more of the history than I do. I accept that.

Mr Hyde interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I know a lot about my friend from Croydon. He is a good bloke. One day, if he is a naughty boy, I will say a few things about him. I know the street he comes from and everything. I know his friends and his enemies.

Mr Barnett: Where was that again?

Mr JOHNSON: Croydon.

Mr Kucera: Is that down from Brixton?

Mr JOHNSON: I was not in Brixton, my friend.

Mr Kucera: What is in Brixton?

Mr JOHNSON: Has the minister been there?

Mr Kucera: I do not know. I am asking you.

Mr JOHNSON: Perhaps the minister should go to Brixton. That would be very interesting.

I will now hand over to my colleague the member for Kingsley, who will give some more background information. I then look forward to hearing how the minister can justify this massive cost cutting exercise and this disservice to the families of Western Australia.

MRS EDWARDES (Kingsley) [4.38 pm]: I am pleased to support the motion. I will take this opportunity to go through some of the reasons that the parenting information centres were developed in the first place. Although I support the minister's proposal to extend parenting services into other areas, such as day care centres, family centres, neighbourhood centres and the like, that is not a reason to close the parenting information centres. The role of the parenting information centres is to provide direct access to parents when they need it - today, not tomorrow. The approach that the minister is proposing to take will restrict access by a large number of families who until today have had direct access to and assistance from those parenting support centres.

It is interesting that although the department has changed its name to the Department for Community Development, on its web site it is still called the Department for Family and Children's Services. That is significant, because family and children's services is something that we as a coalition Government wanted to support absolutely. We wanted the department to focus on parents and children. The web site outlines the parenting services that are available from what is now called the Department for Community Development. They include the parenting line; the parent help centre; the parenting information centres; the parent link home visiting service, which generally operates hand in hand with the parenting information centres; the best start program, which is a special program for Aboriginal communities; the under 10s preventive family support service, which is a special program for children who have behavioural and antisocial problems but who obviously do not go through the court system because they are under age, such as a couple of eight-year-olds who have thrashed a house; and education services for families with children who are having or are likely to have problems at school.

Those services were offered and operated by both the department and the non-government sector. I will go through a number of the services that are offered by the non-government sector. I will refer back to the time

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when I was the Minister for Family and Children's Services, because I am sure some of those programs are still in existence; I would be very surprised if they were not. The Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation provides a parent link home visiting service in the Fremantle area. Escare offers a family support and development service in Esperance. That is a new service that helps people with children up to 12 years of age who need advice on how to manage their children or about the community services that are available to families.

Parent link home visiting services and network organisations operate in the Cannington-Belmont area. Centrecare marriage and family service is also a parent link home visiting service. The parent help centre in Mt Lawley is a long-established and popular service. Its opening hours were extended to ensure that working couples, particularly fathers - there are more single fathers today than there were 30 or 40 years ago - could seek advice and talk face-to-face with a parenting expert. Those services were designed to meet the diverse needs of families. If the Government limits and restricts that access, not all of those families who might need that support and advice will get it.

Mr Hyde: The Mt Lawley parent help centre is not one of those services.

Mrs EDWARDES: No, it is not a parenting information centre.

Those of us who are parents know just how demanding that role can be. I have often said that being in Parliament is easy compared with bringing up children. In 1995, the then Department of Family and Children's Services undertook some market research into the attitudes to parenting and the available family support services. Parents told the department that the main problems between them and their children were household jobs, general behaviour, eating habits, watching television and sleeping times. In addition, parents felt they could improve the upbringing of their children by altering their current parenting techniques.

The TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research found that different types of parenting styles have an impact on the health and wellbeing of children. It found that children fared better when their parents used an encouraging parenting style. We should not necessarily target only at-risk families. We should target all families and make sure that those parenting services are easily accessible and identifiable to all families. The results of the 1995 survey by the Department of Family and Children's Services also found that although parents valued their own role, they did not think that the community generally placed a lot of emphasis or importance on the role of parents. New parents often felt unprepared for the responsibility of being a parent. Parents who took part in the survey said that they sometimes found parenting difficult. They thought that keeping their families stable and healthy was one of the most important and difficult jobs that they would ever undertake. Therefore, the research identified the parents' need for information. That was one of the reasons the former Government established the parenting information centres and the parenting home visiting services. That was in direct response to the needs and concerns that parents had expressed.

The parenting information centres focused on some positive strategies to help strengthen families and to help parents increase their skills in caring for their children. Parents know that some of the attitudes and behaviour of their kids can be bewildering. Often we do not know why they do what they do. The parenting centres created awareness of the important role parents played and the responsibility that they assumed. They also promoted the status of parents in the community. We did not want to identify only the parents who were in need; we must ensure that every parent receives appropriate advice when they need it. Therefore, we did not want to isolate those parents who are often in the greatest need of help from those who would never be targeted or access the department.

The centres also provided information on parenting and child development in ways that are easily understood and accessed. A touch-screen computer system provided parents with information. A parent would type in the details of their children, including their age and whether they had tantrums. For example, a parent might type in that the child is a teenager who has tantrums. Often that does not change as the child grows; only the child changes. That information would provide some feedback without the parent talking to a trained coordinator or one of the volunteers.

Over the decades, what is considered to be best practice in parenting has changed. I remember my mum's good old baby book. It was pink because I was a girl. That was in the 1950s. That book provided a list of don'ts, which is not the type of advice that would be provided to parents today.

Mr Omodei: I got a blue one.

Mrs EDWARDES: The member for Warren-Blackwood got a blue one.

The list of don'ts included don't praise the baby so that he can hear because he can understand before he can speak; don't overstimulate his brain by dangling objects in front of him and forcing smiles; don't allow visitors to watch him drink his milk because he must not be excited if he is to digest his food properly. That is not the

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type of advice a new mum would be given today. Therefore, the advice was changed and a series of very useful books and videos produced. I still have them in my electorate office and people still read them. They are entitled, "Living with Teenagers", "Living with Children", "Living with Babies" and there is one for kids called, "Living with Parents". Obviously, that is not an easy task either. That information has been updated since the 1950s and is easily understood.

Those resources provide vital information for parents so that they can build and strengthen their parenting skills when they need them most. Those books are widely available in libraries and elsewhere to anybody. By closing the parenting information centres, the Government will not broaden the distribution of this information or its availability; it will restrict one area of access.

Parents have different needs at different times. For instance, a parent with a three-year-old and a one-year-old baby must cope with sibling rivalry. As a grandmother, I am going through that with my two grandchildren. There is huge sibling rivalry between them. However, because they are so young, it is difficult to explain it to them. Parents need advice and help.

One of the best things about parenting information is that parents realise they are not going through these problems alone. Many other families are going through the same problems. Not all the advice will be relevant in each situation. A lot of what we know today has come about through trial and error. However, it is nice to get some hints and tips about what a parent can do. That is not the type of advice that a parent would seek from a neighbourhood centre or day care centre.

The local parenting information centre provided the opportunity for parents to visit the centre while they did the shopping; the visits would become part of the parent's day. If a parent had a problem with a child who did not do his homework, the parent could seek that basic information from one of those centres. Although that child and the family were not at risk, they could get help to cope with some of those struggles that can cause major problems in relationships between not only parents and children, but also between the mother and the father.

The parenting information centres offered a valuable service. Those centres were more easily accessed by a broader range of families and parents than the centres the minister highlighted in her media statement. The media statement refers to existing venues including playgroups, day care centres, community centres, neighbourhood houses and family centres. However, not every family attends one of those. My daughter-in-law and my son do not go to those places. How are they going to get the information they need? They could use the parenting help line and the parent help centre in Mt Lawley, but they are not going to travel all the way to Mt Lawley for a face-to-face meeting. That is why the parenting information centres were placed locally. In the metropolitan area they are situated in Cannington, Joondalup, Midland, Mirrabooka and Rockingham, and a mobile service also operates. The parenting information centres in regional areas are situated in Albany, Broome, Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Mandurah, Northam and South Hedland. They are extensively located around the State. How will the Government ensure that all those people who access that information through the local shopping centres will still get that information? The Mirrabooka centre is located in the shopping centre and gets 90 000 to 100 000 visitors a week. Only 25 000 to 27 000 families live in the Mirrabooka district. A wide range of families with diverse cultural backgrounds lives in that area, including Aboriginal and migrant families. An increasing number of families are from the Middle East. They will not go, as the minister suggests, to playgroups, day care centres, community centres, neighbourhood houses and family centres. She will not find those families in those centres.

Midland is now able to access the Aboriginal families. It took four years of hard work - since the centre was first opened - to achieve that. The staff are proud that all the work that they have done on the ground means that Aboriginal families now come into the parenting information centre. That door will soon be closed to those families. How will the Government then access and interact with those families? Will it wait until they have a problem, or until they go to a day care centre, neighbourhood house or family centre? I do not think so. That will not happen. All that hard slog on the ground will go to waste. The coordinators in those centres are very professional. The centres have many trained volunteers who have put in a lot of time and are hugely committed. Often they run the home visiting services. What will happen to them? They will become parenting officers who visit all the centres and tell the clients that although they will return next Tuesday, they may not be able to come back for another two or three months after that. What if I were a parent in need? My problem could not wait. In two to three months, my kids would have a new problem; I would have a new problem. It might be a matter of phoning someone. If the problem were serious enough, that might happen. However, the surveys show that those are not the types of issues the parents want help with. It is often the day-to-day problems that we have all faced. Previously, they would have leaned over the back fence and said to their neighbour, "Hey, I've got a problem with Johnny not doing his homework" or "What do you do about sibling rivalry between toddlers?" That is the advice that the extended community used to give. We no longer have that option. The fences are too

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high, and we live in cul-de-sacs and cannot see our neighbours. We need the ability to access other avenues for that information.

The core issue is dealing with the problems at the front end and not the back end. The Government should not wait until the children are in the juvenile justice system as a result of their parents being far too strict or far too lenient because they did not know what to do. Sometimes parents in trouble will, on a Friday night when it has become too hard, give the kids money and tell them to get out of their sight. It is those children who are exercising antisocial behaviour in the local shopping centres and on the neighbourhood streets. We should not wait until the problem gets to that point. We should give the advice, the help and assistance to parents when they most need it.

Often the families that need the greatest help do not identify themselves as such. They will not go out of their way to find help. For example, people in my electorate who suddenly find themselves unemployed for the first time in their lives will not go to the Red Cross or Salvation Army for food vouchers. They would not think of that because they have not been part of that system. They will not realise that they are in need of that sort of help and assistance until they are guided and supported through the process. It is the same with families. They will not necessarily think that they have the greatest need. If they have to wait until next Tuesday to see the officer, they will let other families with what they perceive is a greater need get help first, or give up because it is too difficult.

The parenting information centres were located where they would be the most useful and accessible. The local shopping centres and community centres are places that people drop in to as part of their daily routine. That is the reason they are there. They are also close to other services in case the families still have a great need for support or help. The parenting information centres help families link into other support services. The minister says that what she is doing will add to those services. The centres are not restricted from doing that now. The coordinators of those parenting information centres can already go to those family centres, neighbourhood centres, day care centres, child-care centres or the local parents and friends association. They do that all the time.

This is a cost-cutting measure to save money. That money will not be expended in the area of parenting services. That will be a real kick to families, because some will not be able to access the new locations for that information. They will simply miss out, and the Government will never know which families will not receive that information.

MS McHALE (Thornlie - Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth) [4.56 pm]: I thank the members for Hillarys and Kingsley for their contributions. I was concerned by the member for Hillarys' contribution. He did not seem to understand the nature of the parenting information centres or have some very basic information. The member for Kingsley's background on the PICs was helpful, and I was relieved by that. I do not think we are very far apart in our understanding of the importance of service delivery. If the statement in the motion were true, I would support it. However, I am not closing parenting information centres. The Opposition does not understand what I am doing.

In response to the member for Hillarys, if I had not secured increased funding for my portfolio areas during the budget round, I would be disappointed. The Department for Community Development's budget has been increased. An extra \$4.7 million will go to children in care. The member knows that there is a \$10 million program for early intervention, which is part of our election commitment. There is about \$3 million in new money for programs to deal with homelessness. Much of that will be directed towards children and families. There is also additional funding for dealing with child sexual abuse, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Mr Johnson: You have rearranged some of your finances. I accept that. However, there is a cut in real terms of 1.8 per cent.

Ms McHALE: There is not. I look forward to exploring that with the member for Hillarys during the estimates committee.

Mr Johnson: The Treasurer said yesterday it was \$3.2 million.

Ms McHALE: That is over four years. I am happy to go through that with the member during the estimates committee.

Mr Johnson: The uncorrected *Hansard* indicates it was \$32 million.

Ms McHALE: A dot had gone astray. I make it very clear that we are not closing parenting information centres. I am reconfiguring some of the current models.

Mr Birney: Reconfiguring?

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Ms McHALE: It is reconfiguring. Part of that involves closing the shops. That was recommended to me, and I think it is worth doing. However, parenting information and parenting centres will continue in different forms.

Mr Johnson: Who recommended it to you?

Ms McHALE: It was part of an evaluation of services that looked at different ways in which we could deliver those services.

Mrs Edwardes: Is that what you do with lists?

Ms McHALE: As a minister, in a tight fiscal environment I must constantly consider how best I can utilise the moneys we invest. We are not closing parenting information centres. Parenting information centres in shops are only part of the total package. I agree with the member for Kingsley's analysis of the importance of early childhood intervention. I will talk about that and the balance between universal services and maintenance programs, which is important in this debate.

Mr Johnson: Will you share that report that said the money would be better spent outside shopping centres?

Ms McHALE: I was referring to the many discussions I have had about how best to utilise funding.

Mr Johnson: You did not answer my question.

Ms McHALE: I did not say there was a report.

Mr Johnson: You said the closure of shop PICs was recommended. I want to know who recommended it and if there is anything in writing to back it up.

Ms McHALE: The recommendation followed discussions with my department, as part of the management of the community development portfolio, on how we can best use the money. It was not in a Telethon report.

Mr Johnson: You were told that your budget would be cut and how you should best manage what little finances you will have.

Ms McHALE: The recommendation is about looking at universal and targeted services.

Several members interjected.

Ms McHALE: I deliberately listened in silence to both members, although the member for Hillarys invited a few interjections during his comments. He quoted from the TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. That report referred to family and children's services being at the world's leading edge and said that programs such as PICs and the "Living with" series are critical. In a number of areas the Government has enhanced the programs that were identified as critical. We have decided to move away from providing services from a static shopping centre base to a model that makes the services more accessible, universal and anonymous where possible and that targets the needs of local parents. As the member for Kingsley said, parents have different needs at different times. Parents in one area will have different needs from parents in other areas. Their needs will depend on their socioeconomic make-up - whether they are cultural linguistic diverse families or Aboriginal families.

The parenting information centre in Albany is a mobile centre and it is the model we want to adopt. The member for Albany will comment on how his PIC operates. It is a great model, which will continue, and we will create more like it elsewhere. It will also be strengthened.

Mr Marshall: Will you take a question before you get off the PIC shops?

Ms McHALE: I am working through the centres so the member for Dawesville should keep his question.

Mr Templeman interjected.

Ms McHALE: I will move on now to Mandurah. The PIC in Mandurah occupied a shop, but it delivers much more than the static shop model. It delivers the community-based model that we want to deliver elsewhere. The strengths of the PIC in Mandurah are not the fact that it occupied a shop but its programs run for the men's volunteer group and so on. Those programs will be maintained, although they will not be located in the shop; they will be in another facility.

Mr Johnson: You just said it was very popular and successful, but you will close it.

Ms McHALE: I do not know whether the member for Hillarys is splitting hairs in all seriousness or trying to make this matter more problematic than it is. Some PICs will be relocated. The strengths of the Mandurah PIC will be sustained. I was saying that the men's volunteer group and some of the other elements will continue.

Mrs Edwardes: Are you saying that it will not be run out of the shop?

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Ms McHALE: It will not be run from the shop. It might be run from another community centre, as is the Albany PIC.

Mr Johnson: How can you guarantee the same number of people who need help will go to a different venue? It has proved to be successful in another shop. I accept that programs are run for men. If it is moved from the shop where it has been successful to somewhere else, the critical mass will not go there. You have something good in place and you will chop it off at the knees.

Ms McHALE: We will assess that. My advice is that the service will be more flexible.

Mr Johnson: How can you extend the service when you have less money?

Ms McHALE: We will monitor the service, but the strengths of the Mandurah program will continue.

Mr Marshall: I acknowledge the format is to be changed for programs that needed to be changed. However, I have heard that the success of the parenting information centre in Mandurah has set the standard for others. Why change something that does not need fixing?

Ms McHALE: We will apply many of the good aspects from Mandurah to some of the other PICs.

The mobile parenting information centre in Northam will continue. I think the member for Kingsley has articulated the PICs that work from shops. Gascoyne has a mobile PIC, which will continue. Kalgoorlie has a shop and a mobile unit. I understand the mobile unit will continue to operate. The parenting information officers are permanent members of the Department for Community Development.

Mr Johnson: Have you just been advised of that?

Ms McHALE: I said I knew that they were permanent staff, but I was not sure whether they were all permanent or some were on contract. I have checked. The member for Hillarys should not be unfair when I am trying to give him correct information. They are level 4 public servants.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Ms McHALE: The member for Hillarys thought they were employed by Meerilinga. They are not; they are departmental staff. He referred to them as bureaucrats.

Mr Johnson: No I didn't.

Ms Hodson-Thomas: Do the mobile units move from place to place?

Ms McHALE: Yes; they are very successful. I understand they have been more successful than the shops because they attend events such as the Dowerin field day and other community events. Although they are not anonymous in small country towns where everyone knows each other, they are very successful and they will continue. They have been more successful than some of the other models.

Bunbury has a shop and a mobile unit; the mobile unit will continue and the parenting information office will operate from somewhere else. I want to get across the point that I am being accused of closing the PICs. That is wrong.

Mr Johnson: In the *Budget Statements* it says that they are being closed.

Ms McHALE: We are moving out of the shopfronts; we are not withdrawing parenting information. Early intervention programs will not cease. Since the Government took office last year, many of the programs I have announced as new services have been about early intervention. It acknowledges the importance of providing services on the ground in local communities for pregnant women and parents with children up to the age of four. That is the age cohort in which brain development occurs that sets the pattern of behaviour for our children in early and adolescent life. It is critically important and we are strengthening that work.

Mr Johnson: How many of these centres have you visited?

Ms McHALE: I have visited about five or six. Does that help the member's understanding?

Mrs Edwardes: Have you tried it on the touch screens?

Ms McHALE: I have some sad news for the member for Kingsley, the computer touch screens were discontinued in 2000 under her Government. While I appreciated what the member had to say, the computer touch screens were discontinued by her Government in 2000.

Mrs Edwardes: Were they not utilised?

Ms McHALE: They were unreliable, there were technical difficulties and the member's Government terminated them. It is very unfortunate that that occurred.

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I will place on record the extent of universal services. The member for Kingsley referred to developing universal services as an overall prevention, which is a very admirable and justifiable position, and one that we support. The idea of universal services, as developed in the 1990s, was an excellent initiative and I give credit to the member for Kingsley for the work she did. We are continuing and strengthening a balance between universal services and targeted services.

The total expenditure on universal services that are provided by the department is approximately \$10 million. We have the parent health centres, the parenting web site and the parenting information centres or services. They will continue and I will leave them in the list.

Mrs Edwardes: What are you going to name them?

Ms McHALE: They will be parenting information services. There will be 20 services across the State providing parenting information. Then there is best start program and parenting information material, which includes the excellent work called "Living with". Earlier this year I updated and expanded the "Living with" program material, particularly for the role of fathers in parenting and to ensure that it was available to Aboriginal families and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I recognised the importance of the "Living with" series; it was a great series, is good universal material, and we hope it will continue to be around. The services provided by the non-government sector, which are universal services, include the Ngala early parenting community service, the Buster fun bus, Aboriginal family support, Aboriginal early years services, the family centres - there are 24 of those across the State - the family support and neighbourhood houses and occasional care is one form of information dissemination. There is no doubt that this Government is building upon the previous Government's approach to universal services. I do not want members to accuse me of removing parenting information centres, because it is not true, and even if it were true, that is only one small part of universal services.

Mr Johnson: You said in your press statement that you were shutting them down.

Ms McHALE: If I said that, I meant the shops.

Mr Johnson: It basically comes down to the rentals in the shopping centres.

Ms McHALE: I will say a little more about the PICs. There is no doubt that the parenting information centres have received a very positive response from the community and have had some positive results. The PICs staff, who are departmental staff, have worked hard and I give credit to the work they are doing. The beauty of my model is that the PICs will continue to work in localised areas. We will continue some of the PICs, and where we move from the shops, we will develop a model that people will be very happy with, once they get used to it.

It is part of every Government's responsibility - and I am pleased the Treasurer is present to hear this - to continually review outcomes against costs. We have sometimes raised the question of whether the PICs in shops are the best value for money. We want to pick the best out of the PICs, such as the provision of information at the local level, the parenting library service and the country mobiles, and combine it with strategies to avoid the biggest problem with the PICs, which is the notion that one size fits all, because it does not. The shopping centre model is problematic in a State as big as Western Australia. The approach we are taking, which will be modelled on some of the other PICs, will be far better for parents. The new services will allow community participation and community engagement.

I correct the member for Kingsley, because she portrayed a picture that belies the truth and the actual model. She suggested that the parenting information officer might be at the library one day, the child-care centre the next and in six weeks time would return to the community centre. That is not the intention. With our model of service delivery we will talk to the community and find better ways to provide that information. For instance, in Broome the service is currently in a shop.

Mrs Martin: It is a small community; the office is too public. People do not like to be seen going in there. Sometimes there is a stigma attached to going into an office, and if it is located in the middle of a big shopping centre it is not the most appropriate place. Also, in such a big electorate, we need a mobile unit so that we can service people where they are; 1 600 kilometres of road is a big area to service.

Ms McHALE: I thank the member for Kimberley. We will be working with the community to determine the best places to locate the PICs. The member for Kingsley has asked me the best question of all: will we be looking at one site? My understanding and my approach is yes, we will be.

Mrs Edwardes: Do you have a coordinator who can be accessed on a daily basis?

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Ms McHALE: Yes. These people will not be stuck away in a departmental office, which is the picture the member has portrayed. The whole idea is for them to be more accessible and to be in centres where people come and go. The Albany model is terrific. I will not steal the member for Albany's thunder -

Mrs Edwardes: And that is not just talking about the member of Parliament.

Ms McHALE: I cannot look beyond the member for Albany - what a heart throb. Look at his body!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): Order, members!

Ms McHALE: The new service will also allow the trained staff to do more than just provide information. In the shopping centres, because the model of service was retail, it meant the centres were there just to provide information. The member for Hillarys is quite right; they are trained staff.

Mr Johnson: They do more than provide information.

Mrs Edwardes: Your coordinator will not do anything different.

Ms McHALE: They will be able to do that in a much better fashion.

Mr Johnson: How? That is a very broad statement.

Ms McHALE: The member says that because he does not understand parenting centres. The staff will be able to do one-on-one work, if required. It is great to read that the parenting information service has been seen as a leading edge initiative. This Government will not do anything to undermine that. The shopfront model must be reassessed and moved into areas in which it will be more accessible. I am excited by it. The member painted it as a cost-cutting exercise and said it would be the demise of parenting information centres. He was wrong.

Mr Johnson: It is a cost-cutting exercise. The Treasurer has removed funds.

Ms McHALE: We received a \$4.7 million funding increase for children in care.

Mrs Edwardes: There is a \$3.2 million cut.

Ms McHALE: No. The figure the Treasurer quoted was the total savings to be diverted to a different model over four years. It was not one year.

Mr Johnson: That is different from what you said yesterday.

Mrs Edwardes: The member for Hillarys will be able to question the minister about it next week. She will have the figure down pat by then.

Ms McHALE: I have it now; it is \$2.1 million a year.

Mr Johnson: Taking inflation into account, it is a cut of 1.8 per cent in real terms.

Ms McHALE: The member is wrong.

Mr Johnson: I will show you next week.

Ms McHALE: The budget allocates \$4.7 million to children in care, \$400 000 to deal with child abuse, more than \$3 million to deal with homelessness and \$10 million over four years for new parenting programs. I cannot make it any clearer that it is new money; it is not a budget cut. It relates to specific service delivery. I wish the member for Hillarys would listen.

Mr Johnson: What areas have you cut to make the new money available?

Ms McHALE: We are redirecting some of the money from PICs into other services. It is as simple as that. The member might call it a cut -

Mr Johnson: You have cut the funding for the Office of Youth Affairs. My colleague the member for Murdoch raised that issue today.

Ms McHALE: I gave him the answer this afternoon.

Mr Johnson: You said something about amalgamating services. It is a real budget cut.

Ms McHALE: The Government has delivered new services since the Telethon report. They include the expansion of the best beginnings home visiting service, the Aboriginal early years support service, the early years development service, the men's resource unit and the practical in-home support service for children. The "Living with" documents service has been updated, two new not-for-profit services have been established at the parent link home visiting service in Midland and Rockingham, and the best start program is now available at 23 sites, including at Outreach. The member for Hillarys' statement that the Government has not delivered services is erroneous, to say the least.

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Mr Johnson: How many FTEs have you had to employ to provide all those new services? There is no increase for staffing in the budget papers.

Ms McHALE: The TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research report indicates what must be done in this area. I have the information with me, but I cannot find it.

Mr Johnson: I have the same problem, but I am sure you can waffle on without any problems.

Ms McHALE: I definitely do not waffle on.

Several members interjected.

Ms McHALE: With all due respect, the member for Hillarys has made -

Mr Johnson: Now you are going to be nasty. That always comes after the words "with all due respect".

Ms McHALE: No, I am not. However, the member has taken a decision made in the interests of improving services provided to families and turned it into a monumental issue. He does not understand what I have done, he has not bothered to think about what the Government is doing and he did not know that parenting information coordinators are public servants.

Mr Johnson: Be honest, you didn't know that either.

Ms McHALE: I will be honest. I told the member that they are public servants, but he did not -

Mr Johnson: I will be honest and admit that I thought a large number were on contract.

Ms McHALE: The member said that they were employed by contractors.

Mr Johnson: I said I thought some were.

Several members interjected.

Ms McHALE: A number of parenting information centres are already community based, and that is a great model.

I take exception to this motion. It is patently wrong to suggest that the Government has not increased the budget to assist vulnerable families. It has made significant allocations to that area of need. It recognises the importance of the research on early intervention, prevention and the provision of universal services that are tailored more appropriately to the needs of local communities. This Government does not accept that one size fits all. It believes that it should engage the community to assist in providing the most appropriately located services. It also believes in the importance of providing parenting information, and it will boost services and provide resources to ensure that parents are supported in this community.

MR TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [5.28 pm]: I support the minister's comments about the inadequacy of this motion. It is clearly badly thought out and based upon a misunderstanding of the information provided.

The Mandurah family fun day was held last weekend as part of Family Week. For the second year in a row, the Minister for Community Development was able to open the event. She visits the area more frequently than any other minister.

Several members interjected.

Mr TEMPLEMAN: The member for Dawesville also attended. It was a very enlightening and warming day. A huge number of families took part in the festivities to celebrate the family.

Ms Hodson-Thomas: Was the mobile unit there?

Mr TEMPLEMAN: Many services that provide assistance to families in the region were represented. It was magnificent to see so many young children, parents, grandparents and so on celebrating the family. The minister was particularly impressed with the crowd and the positive attitude displayed.

It is pleasing to note that a wide range of family needs are being catered for by a variety of services. That is the crux of this issue. In Mandurah, the parenting information service has operated out of a shopfront. However, the actual service in Mandurah has operated outside that. The reason behind that is that the people involved in delivering the services have acknowledged that they must get out into the community to service the needs of the people. Those needs have driven the model in Mandurah to be changed. The minister's announcement of a simple change in the delivery of the services from the shopfront to a variety of other places reflects those needs.

I will go through a couple of examples. As the member for Dawesville would know very well, the City of Mandurah is expanding rapidly, and a number of localities are experiencing some interesting changes. Their demographics are changing. In some of the outer suburbs in particular, and certainly in the member for

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Dawesville's electorate in the south, the number of families in the region is the major contributor to the change in demographics. Mandurah has been known for its high level of retirees and seniors. That is still the case. Compared with the rest of the State, Mandurah still has the largest number of people aged over 65 years, for example. However, the number of families in the community is increasing, and the balance is shifting to the other end. Many more young families are now establishing themselves in Mandurah. Not all of them will have their needs serviced through a shopfront. The needs of that growing community have necessitated a change in the delivery of the service. Therefore, to meet the needs of families, there is now a requirement for the parenting information service to be offered in various places in the community. Some families will need a one-to-one service. The changes that the minister has mentioned will allow that service to be delivered.

As the population of the Mandurah community increases and the pressures of family life change, we must make sure that the services change with them. The services must provide for the needs. Quite simply, a shopfront in Mandurah is no longer delivering the best service to meet the need. Early in the member for Hillarys' discourse, he mentioned that this is simply a closure issue. It is not. He misunderstood the points made by the minister. This is a reflection of the changing needs in a community. The Mandurah model is one on which the minister is basing these changes.

Mr Marshall interjected.

Mr TEMPLEMAN: No, I have a few more things to say, and I know that my very good friend the member for Albany will also point out a number of things.

As the needs in Mandurah change, the service is changing to satisfy those needs. The new service delivery model that the minister has mentioned will allow the staff involved in the service - the excellent staff who do a wonderful job - to continue to develop the service further, so that it continues to address the needs of the families in our community. That is the key. Specific needs must be serviced. In this case, they will not necessarily be serviced from a shopfront. The service is being changed to service the need.

I will now finish my comments because my wonderful former Olympian friend the member for Albany, who is doing a fantastic job in his area, wants to speak. I have had a chat with him about the service delivered in his area. It is similar to the Mandurah service in targeting the needs of families. That is what these changes are all about. I am sure that my very good friend the member for Albany would like to enlighten us on those changes.

I am sure that the member for Dawesville will be very interested in what I am about to say. The lease on the Mandurah service expires next year. In making these changes, we have an opportunity, as the minister mentioned, to consult and work with the community to make sure that the service will meet the needs of the people who will access it. I have confidence in the minister's changes. They will be wonderful for Mandurah, because they will build on the strengths that already exist. If the member for Dawesville wants to go around scaremongering, as seems to be his habit now, he can do so, but his words will be hollow, just as the words of the member for Hillarys are hollow.

MR WATSON (Albany) [5.34 pm]: It is interesting that the members who are making most of the noise on the other side are those who probably had children a long time ago and no longer need these services. These facilities have been located in shopping centres. If I wanted to take my child to one of these services, I certainly would not want to do that when I was going shopping.

Mr Johnson: You don't take your children there. You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr WATSON: No, but people go along to these facilities when they are at shopping centres. When people go to shopping centres, they have kids on their hands and shopping bags. Albany is a perfect example. It has a tremendous service in North Road, which is out of town. In the community centre there is also the parent link home visiting service, the best beginnings service and the rainbow coast family services. Everything is there. People can go to all those different services.

Mr Johnson: The member is telling us what a good service Albany has.

Mr WATSON: I am. Part of the new system is modelled on the Albany service. Perhaps the member for Hillarys, instead of trying to be a buffoon, should listen, and he might be able to get some information. I have listened to the member for Hillarys and everybody else.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): Members, I have lost count of the number of conversations across the Chamber. Could all members not act in the manner described by the member and give their attention to the member for Albany.

Withdrawal of Remark

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Mr JOHNSON: I have a point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Hillarys, I have just spoken. I assume that you are taking a point of order on my decision.

Mr JOHNSON: No, not at all.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I was talking; no-one else was. Therefore, I do not see what the point of order is.

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Acting Speaker, you jumped up before I could get up. That is what happened. You never gave me a chance to take a point of order. You got up to stop the people interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member can give me his point of order.

Mr JOHNSON: I am not a thin-skinned person, but it is a bit unparliamentary for the member for Albany to refer to a member on this side of the House as a buffoon. I do not think that is parliamentary and I ask that he withdraw it.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I do not know what a buffoon is, but I am sure that if the member for Albany impugned the reputation of the member for Hillarys by calling him that, he will withdraw it in good grace.

Mr WATSON: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr WATSON: I am sure that I could find other words to use. If an opposition member who criticises government members is so thin skinned, he should not be sitting on the front bench and putting his nose into other people's business. The member for Kingsley made a tremendous contribution to this debate, but the member for Hillarys was grandstanding. This is an important issue in our communities. The contribution of the member for Hillarys was a disgrace. If I, as the member for Albany, did that on an issue as delicate as this, my constituents would be very disappointed.

Our young families of today are our future. The Government is looking after families. Albany has a hinterland in which 50 000 people live. It is no good having these facilities in a shopping centre. The Albany facility goes out to the people. The education service is taken to the people. Previously, it was just an information service in town. Now it goes to the communities in the region. There are many problems these days with families who have young children.

Mr Johnson: Your facility used to be in town but now it is a mobile facility. How long has it been a mobile facility?

Mr WATSON: I am not taking interjections.

Mr Johnson: Because you don't know the answer.

Mr WATSON: I will not take an interjection from the member for Hillarys. If it were anyone else on that side, I would take an interjection.

An Aboriginal parenting officer will be employed by the Albany parenting information service, and it will have two staff in tandem who will be able to offer a parenting information and skilling service to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families in the region. That is another big step for Albany, because Albany has a large Aboriginal community, and there are a lot of health and other problems for young Aboriginals in Albany and throughout its hinterland. The model that we have in Albany is one of the best in the State, and if it could be passed on to everybody else -

Several members interjected.

Mr WATSON: If we have a good model, why not use it in other places? I agree with the member for Mandurah. We have to move with the times. If we had stayed with the old system, we would still be going around with horses and with wagons with wooden wheels. We need to go forward. The thing about the Gallop Labor Government is that we are going forward. I fully support the minister's initiatives for this service.

MRS MARTIN (Kimberley) [5.40 pm]: I feel compelled to speak on this motion. I cannot support what members opposite are saying about this wonderful Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth.

Mr Johnson: Tell the truth!

Mrs MARTIN: It is the truth. Parenting information centres were established because a need was identified by the department that had the mandate to provide services for families. Okay. We have had parenting information centres for a number of years. We know they are successful. It is now time to move on. Communities change.

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Services change. We cannot have a uniform service. I am envious of the member for Albany. He has a few things that I do not have in the Kimberley yet, but hopefully I will get them in the next budget. However, let us face it. There are 1 700 kilometres of road between the six towns in the Kimberley. We do not need a shopfront in every town. We need a mobile service that will service the people in their own location. We need to find out from the community, through consultation, what the people need. I am sorry, member for Albany, but the Kimberley electorate is further from the capital city than any other electorate. The Kimberley has some unique needs. I am really offended that the Opposition is condemning this minister, because she is doing a wonderful job. The reality is that the parenting information centres will still provide a service. They will listen to the community and provide the diversity of services that the community needs to assist people to parent.

People in the Kimberley use the parenting information service. Antenatal classes are run regularly. I would prefer that they were run at Circle House, which is one of the places to which the majority of our community members go. We can have the headquarters there, but we still need a mobile unit, and perhaps two. It is not up to me. It is up to the community. Real consultation will allow that to happen. The reality is that parenting information centres are needed. A shopfront is not right for the culture of our community, because it is out the front of the shopping centre and everyone can see the people coming and going. If it were near a day care centre, like my office is, it would be okay. Have members seen my office? It is brilliant. The fact that it is near a day care centre makes it easy for people to visit me. Why not have a parenting information centre next to a day care centre?

Mr Marshall: Why not have a mobile office?

Mrs MARTIN: I have a mobile office. It is a beauty! It is a bit big, but I can handle it! When we think about the services that are needed by the community, mobile is good. I like to service my community, so I drive my Toyota from one end of the community to the other. It has everything I need. That is what the parenting information centres need too. They need to be mobile. They need to be out in the community and providing a service.

Mr Johnson: In your area, I would agree, but not in every area.

Mrs MARTIN: That is what I mean. We cannot have everything uniform. We cannot have shopfronts everywhere. Shopfronts will not work everywhere. In some of the smaller communities where there are 1 200 people, the only shopfront is the local store, and we do not want it there. Why not have the parenting centre close to a school, or close to where the women and children go, or to where the young fathers go? There is a diversity of places. We cannot say a shopfront will fit all, because it does not. One model does not fit all. We need to look at that. I cannot see how members opposite can condemn this wonderful minister for bringing about a process that will allow the community to not only have a voice but also make decisions about where the parenting information centres should be located.

Parenting information is very important. In another life I worked in a department that said parents need more information about how to be good parents. I thought, "Who are good parents?" I had to admit that I was not the best parent, but I was the best I knew. I was a bit biased, of course. Parents need a hand with certain things. I live with a teenager. Teenagers are from another planet, I am convinced!

Ms McHale: The same as my son!

Mrs MARTIN: As parents, we have these lovely cute little things -

Mr Marshall: Wait until they are 40!

Mrs MARTIN: My kid is not leaving home until he is 35! It is true. I picked up one of these books about how to live with a teenager, and I thought, "No way. My kids are okay." I got that book from the parenting information centre. I was walking past and I saw the sign. I knew someone who was working there, so I thought I would go in and say good day, and I gave them my card. I was campaigning, by the way. I picked up this book about how to live with teenagers. It had some really good ideas, and it did help me a bit. It helped me to see that my teenage daughter was just being a normal kid. She was just being herself. I think my male child is brilliant - not that I am biased - but there was a section on him that told me he would not be staying as perfect as he was. Believe me; virtually everything in that book came true. I thought, "I have read it, and it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy", and it did. However, it gave me some good ideas on how to be a parent and how to cope with teenagers. If people in the Kimberley do not live in Broome, how can they access these resources? If I had not had that bit of information, it would have been a bit harder for me. I am different from many other people, because I have a huge family support network, and that has helped me. However, what happens to young people who come to the Kimberley to look for work and start their families but do not have that family

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support network? For many people the family information centres are a lifeline. They also assist people to meet with each other. I am sorry that I cannot support this motion, but I hope I have contributed to the debate.

MS HODSON-THOMAS (Carine) [5.48 pm]: The member for Kimberley has contributed well to the debate. She has highlighted the fact that the parenting information centres have assisted her as a parent, as I am sure they have assisted many other parents.

I listened intently to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth. I think the minister explained the rationale for why she is choosing to close down the shopfront parenting support centres. I can understand the minister's rationale in the case of regional centres. However, the point that is being missed in this debate is that the parenting support centres in the city should be expanded. The situation is obviously very different in the Kimberley, Albany and Mandurah. In the regions, there needs to be a different shift, with a mobile unit that meets the different demands and the diversity and demographics of the community; and I think the minister has identified that. Clearly a shopping centre is a great meeting point for mums and dads. They may be passing by a parenting information centre when they are having a problem. The member for Kingsley has already raised that issue.

As a parent, I have experienced a number of problems along the way. When I was a young mother, parenting information centres were not available. If I had to research anything, I had to buy a book, go to a library or seek the support of family members and friends. The parenting information centres met an important need for young families. The Minister for Community Development has made some changes to the service delivery of parenting information centres to the regions, and there is a need for that. I congratulate the minister for taking that step. However, it is important not to change something that works. The needs of the broader community must be met. Obviously the minister is trying to meet the needs of people who are in dire need of assistance, especially in the early years when parents need early intervention. Parents are not given a manual when they have a baby. They find themselves with a tiny bundle and off they go. I did not even know how to change a nappy. My husband had to show me how to do it. He knew how to change a nappy because he had siblings who were 15 years younger than he was. It was handy for him to do that side of the parenting.

Mrs Edwardes: It worked.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: It did. Occasionally it pays to show a little ignorance.

Young parents need assistance with so many things; for example, if there is something physically wrong with the child. My second son was born with an infantile larynx. I have talked about it in this place before. He failed to thrive for 16 weeks and I needed to get some support for him.

Mrs Edwardes: One size does not fit all, which is the point the member has made. By closing down the shopfront, a large number of families will be alienated. They could be like the member for Kimberley, who walked past a shop and saw a book. She knew that she had a problem with teenagers but she probably would not have gone to a community or mobile centre to seek out the same information when the book was readily available to her when she walked through the door.

Mrs Martin: I went to get a vote; I was campaigning. I am not joking, that is what I was doing there.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: It is very good that the member for Kimberley got the vote as well as information about how to live with teenagers. That is a very difficult task. They are all very different, whether they be boys or girls. They can be difficult for grandparents too.

Not everybody has an extended family on which they can rely. Some people need services like these. If anything, these services must be expanded. I do not know whether closing the shopfronts in the metropolitan area is the right thing to do, although I accept what the minister said about the regions. The members who have spoken about their regions have highlighted the need to take a different approach to provide that service.

Ms McHale: There is an advantage in looking at the linkages that can be made between providing information with other services, such as family centres. It is a matter of judgment. I have heard what the member has said, but I think there are also advantages in accepting that different models may be just as effective. I reaffirm the availability of universal services for parents to access the type of information about which the member refers. They might not be able to just walk past it, but there are other ways of getting that information.

Ms HODSON-THOMAS: I accept that; however, often that information must be in front of new parents. Parents are not given a manual. It is a retrograde step to change the service delivery in the metropolitan area.

The member for Dawesville wants to say a few words and I know that he is an experienced father and grandfather, so I will not occupy any more time.

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MR MARSHALL (Dawesville) [5.54 pm]: I am a great advocate for parenting information centres. I agree with the member for Kimberley's address because there is no set formula for parenting centres. Just because the shopfront procedures were not working in the member for Albany's area, that does not mean that the system should be changed. Sportspeople change losing games, but they do not change winning games.

I recall the early days of the infant health centres. They still exist but they have now gone a step further thanks to the member for Kingsley who, when she was the minister, took the next step. Parenting information centres are needed.

I will relate this issue to my electorate of Dawesville. Dawesville is a complex area with a lot of battlers living in very low socioeconomic areas. Generally, those areas are made up of single parents who cannot go to their families when they are in trouble or are worried about money, the economy and rearing their children. In Mandurah, the shopfront of the parenting centre is at the Forum shopping centre. That is the hub of the whole business community in the Peel region. More than 50 000 people live in Mandurah and more than 150 000 live in the region. I venture to suggest that more than 90 per cent of those people shop at the Forum. All the buses go to the Forum. The retail outlet is so huge that on a national scale it is ranked fourth in size for the turnover it generates. That is why it is so important to have the shopfront of the parenting information centre there.

The Department for Community Development in Mandurah does a tremendous job. It has been so thorough and professional that its parenting information centre has been the leading light for all the others to follow. However, now, on a whim, the Government feels that a change is necessary to show it is doing things differently. Although sometimes change is needed, a winning game should not be changed. Perhaps a combination of measures should be implemented. If some shopfront centres are not working, they could be located to other regions. However, if they work, they should not be changed. The Government wants to take away something that is working 100 per cent effectively and move it to somewhere else in the community. For example, the former Government provided funds two years ago for the Department of Family and Children's Services to build a house at Coodanup, which is one of the low socioeconomic areas in my electorate. Single parents go there to learn how to raise their children and how to cook etc. Those services are provided for people who do not have family or friends to fall back on. That service has been a great success.

Why does the Government want to use that house to relocate the parenting centre from the Forum? The only reason is the cost, because rents and leases are very expensive at the Forum. However, having a business name on a shopfront at the Forum is the greatest advertisement in the area. Everybody knows where it is and it is accessible to the community. The parents support the use of day care centres, preprimary schools and kindergartens to provide those parenting services because they take their children to school, they pick them up after school and they join the parents and citizens associations. The people in those places are interested in families. They interact and talk about all the problems they have experienced. Young mothers can learn from each other by talking together.

The member for Carine said that no-one really teaches parents about motherhood. I marvel at how things were done in the old days compared with how they are done these days. My daughter has just had her second child. I have gone through all the breathing exercises with her. I marvel at how her partner was at the birth. When I go into the baby shops, I marvel at the range of things that are available for children - it is absolutely stunning. Some of the children are smarter than their grandad and can work out how to use the toys. Such is the progress of parenting in this world.

Only last night, when I got home after midnight, my wife said it was a pity that I had to go to Parliament because Dixie, Luke and the family were coming on Thursday and they wanted to go to The Shack to pick up a warmer for the winter. They think it is theirs, but I said that it was mine, not theirs. As a grandfather, I will let Dixie and Luke pick it up and give it to the children. Parents are trying to scheme a little to get the best for their children. How will they get the best when there are no parenting information centres?

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm