

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 5 April.

HON KEVIN LEAHY (Mining and Pastoral) [5.54pm]: First, I would like to thank His Excellency, Lieutenant General John Sanderson for delivering the Governor's speech when opening Parliament and for outlining the government's program for the next four years. I congratulate Geoff Gallop on the four years that have just passed, the first term of this Labor government, on his achievements with the finances of this state and for putting us in a good position to carry on with some social programs for the communities and community enhancement, especially in regional Western Australia. Members of this house and the other place will well know that we in the bush are languishing a little bit and lack facilities. That is not a direct criticism of this government, because it is has occurred over a number of years. I make the same criticism of past governments as well as the present one. I believe that we tend to see too much focus on the metropolitan area and not a lot on some of the major regional centres. It is great to see that the Premier has made a start, especially in the town of Geraldton. Geraldton has gone from being an outpost where everyone's attitude was gloom and doom. The people of Geraldton could not see a future for themselves. In the past two years there have been some major developments, such as the southern corridor for freight and the relocation of the railway line, giving greater access to beaches. There is now a boom in real estate and people are much more content with their lot.

I believe that the emphasis on the north instead of the concentration on the south-west corner of this state is a great thing. I hope that the emphasis moves further north to my home town of Carnarvon where we might see the same sort of infrastructure being put in place. Obviously Carnarvon is not as big a town as Geraldton. However, there is certainly greater recognition of regional centres and increased accessibility to health and education services. In the area of education, it seems that every year we lose a number of our youth to the metropolitan area. They seek a better, mainly university education but also skills and vocational education. Unfortunately for us in country Western Australia, we very rarely see the majority of them come back, because they find the bright lights of the city hard to resist. Most of them stay in the city or go to the eastern states or overseas. I have been lucky in that respect because my four eldest children were educated in Carnarvon. They then left town, one of them going on to university in Perth, but three of the four are back now working and living in Carnarvon. In that respect I am much luckier than the vast majority of residents in Carnarvon. It is good to see that facilities are improving. We are looking at an enhancement of education in Carnarvon and cooperation between Carnarvon's TAFE and high school, to make sure that educational standards are improved.

Over the past 12 months, I have chaired the Gascoyne Development Commission, which has played a great role in improving education. Some very good project officers are working hard to make sure that the sort of thing I am talking about comes to fruition. I would like to thank Sue Jones and her team, including Peter Taylor her second-in-charge, for the work that they have done on behalf of the community. The community does not often recognise the work of the development commissions. Having been the chairman of one for a period of time, I believe that development commissions do not do enough to let people know what they have achieved and where the future of towns is headed. It seems that the community does not recognise the value because it does not get any information about what is happening with regional development commissions. We need to do much more about letting the local community know.

I take the opportunity to reflect on my eight years in the other place representing the seat of Northern Rivers, which no longer exists. Being an optimist meant that I never had the opportunity of making a valedictory speech. I was tipped out in 1996 as a result of a major landslide in an election that saw many of my colleagues in the Labor Party leave their seats as well. Because of that, I obviously did not get the chance to thank the people who were involved in my eight years. Mine was a very marginal seat. I was replaced by Rod Sweetman. I had eight years as member for Northern Rivers and Rod had eight years as member for Ningaloo. Then the name changed again and the whole electorate changed. I had a magnificent electorate officer called Carleen Sieradzki during those eight years. Carleen was with me for the whole eight years, and in fact probably 12 months before I was elected when we were campaigning.

As everyone knows, the success of a local member of Parliament depends very much on the capabilities of his or her electorate officer. Carleen was one of best I have ever seen. I have thanked her personally, but I have never had the opportunity in this place of thanking her for her tireless work on behalf of the community. I also take this opportunity to thank all the other electorate officers, because they work just as hard for other members here and in the other place as Carleen did for me. It is testament to how good Carleen was that when I was defeated at the election, she was approached by Rod Sweetman and asked whether she would take on the job of being his electorate officer. For a member from a totally different party to approach that electorate officer shows just how much her ability was recognised in the community. Carleen declined, because she had a loyalty to the party. She was actually the local secretary of the Labor Party, and she did not think it would be seen as a good move to

be also the electorate officer of a Liberal member, so she resisted the temptation of staying in full-time employment. She has since shifted to Bunbury, and at the moment, because of the age of her children, she is packing shelves for Woolworths overnight so that she can spend more time on sporting activities with her kids. I thank Carleen very much for her wonderful years of service to me and on behalf of the electorate.

I now represent the Mining and Pastoral Region. I have lived in the Mining and Pastoral Region since early 1974 when I went with the Crown Law Department to Kalgoorlie as assistant clerk of courts. I went there for the same reason that many people go to the bush: it was the only way in which I could get a promotion in my employment. I stayed in Kalgoorlie for two years. I then shifted to Roebourne. I was supposed to live in Roebourne for only two years, but I stayed there for nearly six, much to the consternation of Crown Law, which actually sent auditors to Roebourne because it thought I was making a meal of the finances up there and that was the reason I had stayed there for so long. Crown Law had never before had anyone stay in Roebourne for such a long length of time. I found, as a lot of people do, that even though the facilities in some of these towns are not all that great, the people are magnificent. Roebourne was a great example of that. Roebourne was a great place in which to live, and until the last eight or 10 years I considered Roebourne to be my home. Carnarvon has obviously supplanted that now, because I have lived there for a long time and have raised my kids there. Roebourne also has a tremendous winter climate. The climate is not so good in summer, because it is very hard to live with the high temperatures. At my age now I could not possibly live with those temperatures. Carnarvon has a much more moderate climate and it suits my needs now.

In 1983 I moved to Carnarvon, again as clerk of courts. I stayed in Carnarvon when I was elected to Parliament in 1989. In 1986 I contested a by-election against the then Liberal member, Ian Laurance. In 1987, when Hon Ian Laurance - by that stage he had been a minister - resigned, I contested a by-election against Dudley Maslen, who was successful in that election and spent 14 months in the other place. I am touching on this because of the electoral reform legislation that we will be debating soon. In 1987 the seat of Gascoyne consisted of 3 400 electors. The neighbouring seat of Murchison-Eyre consisted of 1 800 electors. They were both statutory seats at that time, as were Pilbara and the Kimberley. It was difficult at the time to shift local members of Parliament. I am not decrying their ability as the local members of the upper house at that stage were Hon Phil Lockyer, Hon Norman Moore and Ian Laurance, and they were very good members. They knew the name of virtually every person in the electorate. The size of the electorate was not very large in those days. It went as far east as Gascoyne Junction and as far west as Exmouth. It also took in Carnarvon and Shark Bay. It was an easy seat to manage, and the local members ensconced themselves in that seat and did a very good job. Hon Ian Laurance was the local member for 17 years.

When I went north in 1976, the whole of the north was represented by the Liberal Party - the conservatives. At that time there was not a Labor member in either the upper house or the lower house. Therefore, the argument that we are seeking to protect our own lot in the Mining and Pastoral Region by quarantining those five seats is a furphy. Those five seats are not and never should be taken as being guaranteed to be conservative or Labor. The people in those seats are discerning when it comes to electing a person to represent them. They look closely at the quality of their representation. That is one of the benefits of being a country member of Parliament. However, it can also be a disadvantage. It is wrong to argue that we need more members of Parliament to represent people in this state. If we were to do that, we would need to give a greater weighting of votes to those people who had less money. That would be stupid. We would not even consider doing it. We do not need a greater weighting of votes for country people. What we need is better resources for the members of Parliament in country regions. If a seat is 1 000 kilometres in length, it certainly should have a second electorate office. I said earlier that my electorate officer, Carleen, did a great job. She was actually a *de facto* member of Parliament, because I was away so often. It would be the same for other members of Parliament who represent country electorates. They do a great job. However, that resource should be available at both ends of the electorate so that we can service it better. Country members of Parliament are also required to do more social work than are members of Parliament in the metropolitan area. We are approached not so much on legislative matters as we are on day-to-day matters of living, such as helping with Homeswest, sorting out a problem with a neighbour or checking with the shire about a dog that is running loose. All these sorts of things are more likely to be raised with a local member in a country town than they are with a member of Parliament in the city. Country members also need to be available. We cannot always be available. The time we spend in Perth in Parliament means that we are rarely available even in the town in which we live. It becomes particularly difficult when we do not have an air service that can get us from one town in the electorate to another. There is a 1 000-kilometre distance in a straight line between Carnarvon and Newman, for instance. It is absolutely essential to provide more resources for country members with large electorates. I hope the Premier will address that problem during this term of office. I am sure he will at least look at it.

While I have this opportunity, I congratulate the members of Parliament from my area who have been re-elected; namely, Hon John Ford, John Bowler, Fred Riebeling and Hon Tom Stephens. I particularly acknowledge and congratulate those who have attained ministerial positions. It is great to have in Hon Jon Ford a local member of

Parliament who also has responsibility for the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne, and I congratulate him for that. It was great to travel today with Hon Jon Ford to Carnarvon to open a seminar by the Pilbara Development Commission and to fly over that wonderful region. The weather up there today was probably better than it is in Perth. Now that I have come back I have begun to sweat. It was much cooler up there. It is great to be able to showcase the region that we represent. Like every member in this place, I am very proud of the region I represent. I am particularly proud of the Gascoyne, because I live there. Whenever I get the opportunity I like to showcase it and show people around.

My local member is Fred Riebeling. Fred has been a friend of mine for years. He and I worked together in the Crown Law Department many years ago. He has been a personal friend for all that time. I worked on Fred's campaign, as I did with John Bowler and Hon Tom Stephens. I am glad they have all been re-elected and that Fred Riebeling is again the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. I congratulate Fred.

I have talked about government facilities in the Gascoyne region. There is also a big shortage of facilities in the private sector. It is funny that I would say this, because I am a publican in Carnarvon, but a resort-style hotel is desperately needed in Carnarvon as a point of destination. Carnarvon has any number of motel rooms and beds for people who are travelling through the town, but it cannot provide the services of a resort-style hotel that can run charter operations for whale and dugong watching, and diving courses. Carnarvon is the biggest town in the Gascoyne. All of the other towns in the north have resort-style hotels. I read in this morning's paper that Coral Bay is about to get a Hilton hotel, yet we still do not have a resort hotel in the largest town in the Gascoyne. I am pleased that \$250 000 has been set aside to identify a site on Whitlock Island and then to call for expressions of interest from hoteliers with the means to invest the sort of money that we are talking about on a facility that will serve us and provide the beds that we will need for the next 15 years or so.

Probably the only matter on which I have been of the same opinion as Hon Norman Moore during the past 20 years is the Coral Bay-Mauds Landing development. I did not agree with the government's decision on that development, and I told it that at the time, because I think that would have been great facility. It passed the highest environmental checks of any development in Western Australia. When we knock back developments like that, which are sorely needed for international travellers, it makes it very difficult for places like the Gascoyne. The Gascoyne has all the natural attractions that we could want, but it lacks people. There are only 10 000 people in the whole region. We desperately need more people in that area. The area that we are talking about is equivalent in size to the area comprising northern New South Wales, the Gold Coast and as far north as Bundaberg. That area has the best weather on the east coast. People discovered it 20 and 30 years ago and moved there from southern Victoria. Western Australia has the most deserted stretch of coast in Australia. It extends in size from Geraldton through to Exmouth. It is ridiculous that we have knocked back an investment at Mauds Landing that would have provided world-class facilities for both locals and tourists, and employment opportunities for people such as the local Aboriginal community at Cardabia Station.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

HON KEVIN LEAHY: Before the dinner break I was referring to my disappointment that the Coral Bay-Mauds Landing development did not go ahead. I am pleased that the government has set up a planning office in Carnarvon to examine planning matters on the coastline between Carnarvon and Exmouth and also to ensure that developments fit in with the pristine nature of that part of the coastline. As I mentioned earlier, I was particularly pleased to see the decision by the Hilton chain to establish a hotel at Coral Bay. It is much needed and it will assist in attracting and keeping international tourists in that region of this state.

The decision by the government to establish sewage services in that area, with water and electricity services to come, is overdue as well. These decisions go back probably 10 or 12 years to previous governments that have neglected services in Coral Bay. The only thing that is desperately needed now is adequate accommodation for the workers. At the moment the feudal system in Coral Bay makes it very difficult for people to live in the region when their employment is withdrawn.

To complete my Address-in-Reply speech I would like to make special comment about an adversary of Hon Norman Moore, and that is Tom Stephens. As all members know, I filled in the balance of the previous term for Tom Stephens. He resigned from this house and from the ministry to contest the federal seat of Kalgoorlie. It was always going to be a very difficult task. We had the death of a much loved member of the Labor Party in Kevin Richards, who was doing a great job in the campaign. It was always going to be difficult for a person to fill in at a late stage, but Tom did that. He resigned his ministerial position in this house to contest that seat. He copped a lot of flak both during the campaign and afterwards. Many comments were made that he copped a flogging at the election. I would like to put on record the fact that the swing against the Labor Party for the seat of Kalgoorlie during the election was the lowest in the state. It was less than two per cent. For such great campaigners as Graham Edwards, for instance, it was up around 3.5 and 4 per cent. The task that was set Tom Stephens was a very difficult one and I think he did an admirable job. He then went on to win the Central

Kimberley-Pilbara seat with an absolute majority, which again was a great result. On behalf of his electorate, I congratulate Tom Stephens and I thank him for the sacrifice he made in handing in a seat that he held and also a ministerial position. He has been a great member of Parliament. He was my campaign manager for three elections. We managed to win the seat twice and at that stage it was the most marginal seat in Western Australia. On the third occasion we lost it despite having a majority of 700 first preferences. A lot of the credit for winning that seat when I held it was because I had Tom Stephens as campaign manager. He is a great campaigner and a much loved member of Parliament, who has a great affinity with Aboriginal people. He wishes to try to further their lot, as do I and most people in this house.

I thank the people in my electorate whom I had the honour to represent previously for eight years in the other house and for a very short period in this house. I thank members in this house for their friendship during the short time I have been here.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [7.36 pm]: I am delighted to support the Address-in-Reply motion. The Governor of Western Australia, His Excellency Lieutenant General John Sanderson, is a very fine man and I think that is the view of everyone in this house. I have never heard a view expressed to the contrary, and neither should there be. He fills the role of Governor with distinction, ably supported by his wife. Mrs Sanderson is a lady of great character, personality and grace. I join with other members in supporting the Address-in-Reply motion and place on the record my appreciation for the services performed by His Excellency and Mrs Sanderson and the outstanding public service they provide to the people and the community of Western Australia.

His Excellency's speech was very well delivered on the occasion of the opening of the first session of the thirty-seventh Parliament. We have had the opportunity to reflect on how fortunate we are to have such a person occupying the position of Governor. As ever, the opening of Parliament, as far as the government is concerned, was an occasion of suitable dignity and it was carried off well by the Governor. Of course, the speech provided by the Governor is not of his own making, unlike many speeches that the Governor is required to deliver. The Governor's speech to the opening of Parliament is a monster created by the government of the day. I will reflect on some aspects of that speech in a moment.

As one would expect, the opening of the thirty-seventh Parliament followed the general election. I congratulate the Australian Labor Party on its victory and join others in welcoming new members to the Parliament. There are quite a few members in the Assembly, in particular, and my party has seen an injection of new blood. That is a very positive thing both for the Parliament and also for the Liberal Party. The new members in the Legislative Assembly are great personalities and are people of great ability, and I look forward to serving with them.

Hon Louise Pratt: I am sure you have some women with talent in the Liberal Party. Haven't you met them yet?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Hon Louise Pratt interjected with a comment that I did not fully hear. However, the gist of it was about what I thought of the quality of women members in the Liberal Party.

Hon Louise Pratt: You have a high quality of women members. Why not let more women into Parliament?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Members of the Liberal Party - both men and women - are of a very high standard, none more so than in the Legislative Council.

Hon Louise Pratt: So let more women in.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I was about to briefly mention the fact that on 22 May the eight current Liberal members of the Legislative Council will be joined by seven newly elected Liberal members. Such an injection of new blood all at once is an interesting phenomenon. They are people of great quality. Hon Louise Pratt will be delighted to know that a number of them are women. Indeed, women are fairly taking over the place. I am outnumbered four to one in the South Metropolitan Region and, in the East Metropolitan Region, the ratio is also four to one. Some outstanding women members come from the South West and the Mining and Pastoral Regions.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: Agricultural.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I beg your pardon, I mean the Agricultural Region.

Hon Kim Chance: The only woman from the Agricultural Region is a Liberal member.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Indeed. I look forward to welcoming them in due course. For now, the Council will retain its pre-election composition, with the exception of the new Greens member Hon Lynn MacLaren, who has taken her seat for a few months to fulfil the balance of a former member's term. We welcome her and I hope she finds some meaningful satisfaction in her stint as a member of this house.

Regardless of the outcome, as members will know, the world is not the same place for parliamentary members following a general election. Whether members be new or old members, changes are evident after polling day.

I am affected by several changes. The cards have fallen for me with an invitation to join the shadow ministry -

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: Great choice!

Hon Kim Chance: Hear, hear!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I have been given the portfolios of commerce and trade, works and services and disability services. I held the latter portfolio before the election. I will make a few comments on that in a moment.

We would all be keen to follow-up some opportunities in commerce and trade in particular that go right back to one of the reasons we are all members of this place - we want to do some things for the benefit of our state - which is occasionally obscured somewhat by the smoke and fury of political battle, and it echoes for a little while after a general election is fought and won or lost. As the dust settles, we all need to refocus on what we are here for; that is, to improve services in our state for our people and the future and to enjoy all the benefits that go with that. I pledge to do my best to develop, in concert with others, ways that we can do that. I will say more about those portfolio matters in future.

The past four years in which I have been the shadow spokesperson for disability services have afforded me great personal growth. My exposure to that sector, as I suspect would be the case with most members, was fairly limited prior to that. Four years ago, as a complete newcomer, I had to say to the disability sector that I wanted to learn all about what happens in this portfolio area, and I asked the people involved in that sector to take some time to educate me. In due course, I could be in a position to repay that investment if they are prepared to make it. The people involved responded magnificently; they are always willing to engage. I say to all members that they should make sure they engage with those people. They will always receive a welcome and will find it an enriching experience. That is a way that members can involve themselves from the start with a view to improving the quality of life in our state.

I like to think that I have already helped put some focus on disabilities with the work I have done over the past four years. Members can achieve things in opposition, and I hope that I have helped to achieve some things in that area. As I said a few minutes ago, I am pleased that I have retained the disabilities portfolio because I want to try to build on what we have done. I pledge to the house now that I wish to build upon what has been done previously, rather than seek to reside in a comfort zone.

Some clear challenges are facing the disability sector. I will share those matters with any member who has a mind to do something about the problems that emerge. Generally speaking, the problems that I have identified are as follows. Firstly, there is an unmet need for accommodation for individuals of serious and multiple disabilities who require very high levels of on-going care. I have raised with the house previously the reasons for that, and I will return to them on other occasions. Suffice to say, there is a growing demand for high levels of care, and that is yet to be bridged. It will not be bridged in a way that recognises the essential dignity of every client of the Disability Services Commission - the dignity that is inherent in every human being that is part and parcel of being a citizen of Western Australia, regardless of how intellectually or physically able they might be - unless we equip the sector, particularly the non-government sector, with the resources to be able to meet that demand. The government must do that in partnership. I fear that there is an increasing trend on the part of some of the decision makers, not necessarily elected decision makers, to allow the capacity of the non-government organisations to slip and weaken. That will be exacerbated by a few other policy decisions that will take effect over the next few years, and it will also have a ripple effect that leads right back to a requirement for more people to have accommodation support. I am alluding to alternative options to employment for people with high levels of disability, and to people with disabilities no longer being able to find full-time employment, and that leads to difficulties with families being able to provide the extra care that will have to be found for those people. That in turn creates a ripple effect whereby there is more demand for respite. If people cannot get the bit of respite they need, the demand, in turn, for out-of-home accommodation options blows out as well. I mention those couple of matters because there are a couple of ways in which the government and the non-government sectors are increasingly getting out of sync. I will comment more about that on another occasion. However, I look forward to continuing to search for some solutions with the disability sector and with members.

If members want to give some encouragement in this area, there is an opportunity for them to do so. The Developmental Disability Council of WA runs a program called the politician adoption scheme. I think a number of members in this house, as well as in another place and federally, are members of the politician adoption scheme. Seven or eight politician adoption ceremonies have been conducted under that scheme in this state in recent years whereby a number of members have been adopted by people with disabilities and their families. It is a very worthwhile exercise to enter into. The object of the exercise is to help elected members

gain a greater understanding of the day-to-day issues that affect people with serious disabilities and their families. This is a great way to do it. I hasten to add, for the benefit of members who are not aware of this scheme, that it is not about members adopting someone with a disability; it is the other way around. The person with the disability adopts the member of Parliament. Therefore, there is no requirement for the member to do anything except engage with that person and his or her family, and use that as a growth experience. It is a valuable experience. If members are invited to join, I urge them to consider it closely. They will be surprised how many people are already members of the scheme. There will be another politician adoption ceremony in the near future - probably next month - which I am helping to organise. This time the venue will be Parliament House. Therefore, there will be an opportunity, I hope on a sitting evening, for members to come and have a look, if they wish to do so, and to join with those who are involved, at a suitable location around the Parliament. Members will be notified of that in due course.

I have been honoured to have another development come my way. The Legislative Council members of the Parliamentary Liberal Party decided last Wednesday for the first time ever that they wanted to have a position of deputy leader. The Australian Labor Party has had a deputy leader in the upper house for a long time. We made that decision last Wednesday. I was honoured to be elected by my colleagues to that position. That gives me another opportunity to involve myself in coordination between the houses from the point of view of Parliamentary Liberal Party members, and I look forward to the challenges that being part of the leadership group will bring. I thank my colleagues very much for that.

Following the election, it is also time, as we all take stock of what the future will hold, where we are at, and where we are intending to go, for us to reflect on those who have given us assistance in getting this far. I would particularly like to thank my wife and family, and the staff at my electorate office. I have two staff, Mrs Danielle Reid and Mrs Kelly Terry, and I thank them for their ongoing assistance. I also thank a former part-time staff member who assisted in my office late last year, Ms Jane Blake, and wish her well for the future now that she has left my office after her temporary placement. I also extend my thanks to all the people, professionals and others, involved in the Liberal Party's disabilities policy group. We put together a very good policy, which I think has been recognised as such. I certainly thank them for their help. We had forums throughout the state over a very long period and met with many people. As I said, our policy was very well received, and it will certainly not be lost. It provides a starting point upon which to build in the future. I also thank the numerous campaign volunteers in the South Metropolitan Region who assisted me. I will not try to name any of them, because possibly some of them would not like to be named, and there is probably the more serious risk of my failing to name people who deserve to be named. However, I thank all of my supporters very much indeed.

I want to turn briefly to issues of the future. I will draw on only a couple of items now, because there will be other occasions on which to share my thoughts with the house. I want to give a bit of feedback on two matters. The first is a very positive one. I know that Hon Jon Ford will be interested in this, because when I mentioned this matter some time ago, he followed it up with me outside the house and expressed an interest in it. I think I have told the house in the past that I am patron of a disabled veterans group, which largely comprises Vietnam veterans at the moment, in the Rockingham district, or, more specifically, in the Baldivis district. Honourable members may recall that I described efforts to obtain a semirural property as an accommodation and respite base for that group, which is quite a big group. Substantial progress has been made. We are now on about our third bus. Clubrooms and what have you have been built on the property that we obtained. I know that Hon Jon Ford will be interested to know that we have gone a bit further than that. One of the tasks, of course, was to develop a model to provide some permanent accommodation for families involved with the association, and also to provide a range of respite accommodation for people who may perhaps come to Perth from the non-metropolitan area for treatment. We wanted to provide emergency accommodation for a family member, possibly a spouse, who accompanied a person who had come to Perth to have perhaps a long course of treatment for a very serious, and possibly even a terminal, condition. The accommodation is also to be used occasionally as respite accommodation for people trying to expunge a few personal demons and needing a bit of time out in a supportive but tranquil environment away from their immediate domestic situation.

To cut a long story short, we are now in the situation in which ground has been broken. We have driveways and land graded ready for construction of access ways. The arrangements to enter into a joint venture with Homeswest were made some time ago. However, an essential final element was needed. We had arranged everything, and we had the splendid assistance of the City of Rockingham in providing some management for the land, for example. Everything was in place. However, we needed more cash, from whomever could provide it, to enable the essential site works to be provided for what will be a reasonable-size development. I am talking about access ways, and I mentioned that they have already been graded. I am also talking about the extension of water and sewerage services, as well as electricity services, which is no small thing, because we are right at the end of the line. We need more than one power cord to run a dozen or more family dwellings. The saviours on this occasion, particularly the TPI group, came forward in partnership with the sum of \$50 000 to make that

happen. That amount was handed over just the other day at the Baldivis clubrooms in the presence of the many people who have been involved in getting this project this far. They were joined on that occasion by some further supporters, in this case from the Royal Australian Air Force Association headquartered at Bull Creek, who have also lent their weight and expertise in this sort of development project to the project that is occurring at Baldivis. It looks as though it will all come together. It has taken a few years, but these things do. I knew that some members would be interested to note that these things do get there when people persevere, and that is very satisfying.

The final matter I want to touch on this evening is public policy and, indeed, politics. On 21 December 2004 a surprise announcement was given in the name of the Minister for Health advising that the state government had bought two private hospitals - namely, the 95-bed Fremantle Kaleeya Hospital in East Fremantle and the 61-bed Galliers Private Hospital and Specialist Centre in Armadale - for a total price of around \$31 million. The stated intention was to increase bed numbers in the public health system and reduce waiting lists for elective surgery. The idea was that the state's capacity would be increased by the purchase of these two private hospitals and their inclusion in the public health system. I was most concerned to discover earlier this month that, months after that announcement, Kaleeya hospital, which I am very familiar with because it is in my region and my family and friends have been patients there over the years, was running at an almost negligible capacity in the first week in March. If I allow for the fact that the first Monday in March was a public holiday, so it was a long weekend - Labour Day, ironically - I will have to look at it a little more widely to work out what is happening at Kaleeya hospital. I will continue to look at what has happened at Kaleeya hospital so far, and it is cause for concern. I raise that matter now so that members are aware of it. If the net result of my raising the matter means that the government manages to redouble its efforts to do what it said it would do and ensures that the public gets some benefit, so much the better. I was told that early in March, Kaleeya hospital was running at a capacity of six beds, and it has 95 beds. Kaleeya hospital has always been a very popular private hospital. Whenever I have been there over the years, it has appeared to be running at a very high occupancy; so it staggered me that only six out of 95 beds were occupied.

I have asked some questions in this place on this matter, of which I will remind members. The information obtained from my recent questions in this place about Kaleeya hospital includes the following data: the government finalised its purchase of Kaleeya hospital in East Fremantle on 31 January 2005 and it cost \$14.375 million, excluding legal costs, to purchase the place, plus a potential further liability of \$1.5 million to finalise issues of leave liability and run-off insurance. I have also heard that there is a further possibility of up to \$4 million in staff costs that have not been announced. I do not know whether that is true. I can only ask the question, which I did, and I received the answer that I have just repeated about how much it has cost the taxpayer to purchase Kaleeya hospital. If that is the answer, so be it. However, there has been a suggestion in the hospital fraternity in this state that that is not the final cost of this transaction.

I also discovered that on 7 March, Labour Day, the patient occupancy in this hospital was six. As I indicated earlier, a public holiday is probably not a good example for a hospital in which a lot of elective surgery occurs. On 8 February there were 40 patients and on 8 March there were 24 patients. That is a long way short of the 95-bed capacity, and there are possibly some reasons for that. I also asked what was the average daily occupancy rate for February and I was told that it was 30.4 per cent. That is about 29 or 30 patients or occupied beds in a 95-bed hospital. That seems very light on. Again, on Tuesday, 5 April via question without notice 46, I asked about the total capacity in bed terms at Kaleeya hospital and was advised that it was 96. The average overnight occupancy rate at Kaleeya hospital for March, bearing in mind that the rate for February was 30.4 per cent, was 13.3 and the average occupancy for same-day cases was 16. Again, that is bang on what it was in February. There has been no real change. On average, it is 29 to 30 patients every day out of 96 beds.

I understand that the occupancy rates in the government's hospitals are calculated at four o'clock in the morning. At 4.00 am a census is conducted of how many beds are occupied by patients who are there overnight, and that is the answer. The average for March was 13.3. It strikes me as curious that the time for the census is four o'clock in the morning. I am told that it is done at four o'clock; it may be some other time in the wee hours. I thought it would be better to have two census times - one during the day and another at midnight. The midnight figure, like the 4.00 am figure, would capture longer-term patients who are there at least overnight. If a daytime calculation is also done, regard can be had for those patients who occupy a bed during the day for same-day surgery. The bed is being utilised, but obviously the bed would be physically vacant overnight and would not be counted in the 4.00 am census. That is a curious thing. The official figure taken at the 4.00 am census was 13.3 beds occupied out of 96. If the average number of day-care cases is included, the number goes up to a bit over 29. As I said earlier, that does not seem to be a good occupancy rate for a 96-bed hospital.

The history of Fremantle Kaleeya hospital is that it had a very high occupancy rate as a private hospital. The government does not know how much, and that information is not available, but certainly anecdotally it would seem to be considerably higher than 30 per cent on average. Anyone who visited the place when it was in full

swing would see that it was running at a very high occupancy rate. Some years ago when St John of God, Murdoch opened, a slight drop-off occurred in the number of patients going to Kaleeya hospital. Obviously some private patients in the South Metropolitan Region would have found it much more convenient to go to St John of God, Murdoch because it was closer to home. Nonetheless, Kaleeya hospital still maintained a good occupancy rate. It then started to pick up. It was of course of value if it had any spare capacity above and beyond that which St John of God, Murdoch had with its attractive emergency room facility.

I tried to inquire about the rate of occupancy prior to the state government's takeover. When I asked the state government what the figures were for before 31 January, I was told that it was not applicable because the government had bought Kaleeya hospital on 31 January, so it would not tell us, although one would think that the government would have checked out what the occupancy rate was before it spent \$31 million buying two hospitals. If the government has done that, why does it not simply tell us? In response to these remarks, someone from the government might possibly convey that information to me, because I think there is a need to know. I have asked people with whom I have been in contact to confer with their professional colleagues - these are people who have a professional ongoing association at Kaleeya hospital - to ask what their take was on the occupancy rates prior to the government's takeover. The figures I have received vary between 50 and 65 per cent. One can compare that with the 29 or 30 per cent that there is now.

The state government said with great fanfare back on 21 December last year that it is all about increasing bed numbers in the public health system and reducing waiting lists for elective surgery. It was described at the time by Minister McGinty as an excellent deal financially for the state and an even better deal for the health of Western Australians. I believe that the Gallop government is starting to be exposed again over its mismanagement of the health system. We had all the promises that anyone could ever give, and then some, yet when one examines them after an election, one finds that they are pretty hollow. I have given members the figures. I do not see from them how we have got an excellent financial deal if the hospital resource is not being used as well as it used to be used or as well as it could be used, and if over two consecutive months the occupancy rate has remained at about 29 or 30 per cent, including all the day cases. It used to be 50 per cent plus according to the best information that I have been able to source, and up to 65 per cent occupancy on average. I do not know how the heck it is a better deal for the health of Western Australians.

When 96 bed days are available at Kaleeya hospital every single day, every time people fail to make efficient use of those bed days is a time when the overall combined public and private system is denied another bed day. If we start to add it up, we can see that at Kaleeya hospital already hundreds and hundreds of bed days have been lost that were being utilised before the government bought these hospitals. Kaleeya hospital is about as empty as Labor's promises to fix the health system. The excellent deal for the health of Western Australians - the deal to increase bed numbers and reduce waiting lists - in fact has gone the other way. The system had 96 beds that have been taken over by the government, at a cost in the case of Kaleeya hospital of \$15.8 million at least, yet two-thirds of the beds have been sitting there idle every day for the past two months that the government has had management of the hospital. Patients who have been denied surgery as a result of those beds having been taken out of the overall system, and patients who are waiting for elective surgery, are entitled to feel angry about that, and rightly so. I will continue to ask questions about Kaleeya hospital, and perhaps just this once the government will come clean and answer some of the questions that I have raised, without the need for me to drag it out of it, and without the need for me to put up with the impertinent cheek that we seem to get from parliamentary secretaries representing ministers in another place when we raise matters of legitimate concern and are fobbed off. I am fed up with the ongoing bidding announcement war in health matters that has raged south of the river in recent months. The government announces a 600-bed hospital one day and then the next day announces a 1 000-bed hospital at the same location.

Let me bring this back down to a more domestic and manageable level of the scale of Kaleeya hospital in East Fremantle. It is a friendly, welcoming, family-oriented hospital, well-respected in that community and known by people all over the region for the high level of care and the confidence that doctors and patients alike have placed in it for so long. That is reflected in the occupancy rates that it has enjoyed on some occasions but is not enjoying now. Every day the government is claiming that it is spending \$7 million, \$40 million or whatever. If there are so many people on waiting lists and the government is spending all this money on putting people into Kaleeya hospital, where are they? The figures that the government has provided for February and March, which are the first two full months in which it has had Kaleeya hospital, certainly show that the government is not putting any patients into Kaleeya hospital. What has happened is that Kaleeya hospital, with its underutilised occupancy levels under state government management, is now not available to the health system as a whole, so in fact there are fewer people deriving benefit. The taxpayers had to pay \$15.8 million up-front for that in the first place.

There are a few more questions to be asked about Kaleeya hospital. No doubt the committees of this house will ask those questions in due course, because if there is one thing that I am sure of it is that all members of this

house are determined to make sure that the community does get value for its health dollar. I see the Minister for Education and Training agreeing with me. Therefore, they will be appalled to know that the government has bought a private hospital, taking 96 beds out of that sector and putting an average of 30 beds back in. That represents a net loss to the people of Western Australia. One wonders how the government will manage to reach its targets for further elective surgery.

Those are a number of the issues that are exercising my mind at the moment. I return to what I hope will be seen as the overwhelming sentiment of my contribution to the Address-in-Reply. That is that although we have some serious work to do and some issues to address, I am sure members on both sides of this house will continue to address these matters in a professional way and will work together for the benefit of Western Australia and its people.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Bruce Donaldson**.