

**LOCAL COMMUNITIES - DECISION MAKING**

*Urgency Motion*

**THE PRESIDENT (Hon Nick Griffiths):** I received the following letter this morning -

Dear Mr President

I wish to advise that pursuant to Standing Order 72 I will move at today's sitting the following motion:

*"That this House expresses its grave concern at the arrogance being shown by the State Government in making decisions affecting local communities without taking all proper steps to ensure that these communities are fully consulted."*

Yours sincerely

**Hon Ray Halligan MLC**  
Member for the North Metropolitan Region

The member will require the support of four members in order to move the motion.

[At least four members rose in their places.]

**HON RAY HALLIGAN (North Metropolitan) [3.44 pm]:** I move the motion.

The members on the government side will notice that I have mentioned only "grave concern" in my motion. I did not condemn the government, although it is my firm belief that it could well be condemned. I believe the evidence suggests that to be the case.

When Labor was campaigning for the 2001 election, the then leader of the Labor Party, Dr Geoff Gallop, produced a policy on accountability. He promised that a Gallop Labor government would aim for the highest standard of openness and accountability in government, the highest standard of integrity in public life and an enhanced democracy. If we went through those three, one by one, we could still be talking tomorrow. Unfortunately, a lot of what would be said would have to be derogatory of this government. There has not been the openness and neither has there been the accountability professed by Dr Geoff Gallop. In referring to the highest standard of integrity in public life, issues have arisen, and I will not bother to go down that path at this point.

The point is that these commitments have faded in the past six or more years that have ensued since that promise was made. In particular, community consultation is fast becoming an endangered species. One imagines one would have to ask what is meant by consultation. Consultation is certainly not passing a piece of paper across to somebody else telling them the result of one's deliberations and saying, "There, you are consulted." There is no purpose in meeting people and putting a proposition to them and then asking what they think of it, even if those people are not stakeholders in the issue, and saying, "There, you are consulted." It is a matter of doing things in an official manner; that is, in finding the stakeholders and putting the proposal to them, even if it is a number of proposals, and asking for their feedback. That is definitely not what this government has done.

In the northern suburbs alone there are three specific examples that amply demonstrate the government's lack of consultation or unwillingness to consult unless and until its back is against the wall. First is the \$60 million plan to build a raised extension to the Mitchell Freeway. By "raised", I mean nine metres above ground level. That was a fact that did not become apparent until plans were presented to a public meeting in October 2004. That was the level of public consultation. Despite the fact that the meeting was held during the school holidays, when many people would have been away, local residents were informed that the raised extension was a done deal. According to a report in *The West Australian*, all that was changed was the colour of the wall and the addition of a few plants. It was only after the locals lobbied against the plans and the Liberal Party promised to meet their concerns that the government backed down, withdrew the plans and gave residents the consultation that they should have been given in the first place. Even more importantly, the revised plans met residents' concerns with the government agreeing to meet the additional costs involved. It was very much a victory for people power over the government and bureaucracy.

Much more recently we have witnessed the same arrogance and lack of consultation by this government over the proposed car parks at the Whitfords train station. At a public meeting earlier this year the government trotted out plans that would have turned the road reserves east of the freeway and north and south of Whitfords Avenue into car parks. Nearby residents would have been confronted with massive walls across from their homes, until more than 200 people signed a petition, which I presented to Parliament. That was the government's notion of consultation. When asked what was going to happen, I was told that the residents would be consulted. Miraculously, the plans were suddenly changed, without consultation, by embracing the alternatives that the

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locals wanted. That was another example of people power at work. I will talk only briefly about the third example because my colleague, Hon Peter Collier, will go into it in far more detail. I refer to the proposed closure of the Blackmore Primary School, the school's parents and citizens association and the issues that were not brought to their attention. They were not asked for their opinion. They were eventually told of the problems they would be confronted with when moving their children to another school.

People power has worked in having the plans changed for the Mitchell Freeway and it worked again in having the plans changed for the Whitfords train station car park. It is now the turn of those at Blackmore Primary School to show the government that people power works that way as well. This government believes that it can take the people for granted. There are many more issues. A recent issue concerns fishing along the coast. When one considers that the commercial fishermen have a little more than a month to find new grounds in which to fish, it suggests to me that there has been a lack of consultation by this government. It is all very well and good and right for the fishery to be sustainable, but the businesses of the fishermen must be sustainable also. I wonder whether this government has taken that into consideration. I tend to doubt it.

Another issue that springs to mind is the local government authority and the talk about reducing the 142 mainland local governments to something in the order of 30 local governments. The local governments are suggesting - government members can tell me if I am wrong - that they have not been consulted.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Who has reduced them?

**Hon RAY HALLIGAN:** No-one has reduced them yet.

**Hon Ken Travers:** What proposal is there to reduce them?

**Hon RAY HALLIGAN:** The member will have an opportunity to stand and argue his case in just one moment.

**Hon Ken Travers:** You invited members to correct you if you were wrong. I'm correcting you.

**Hon RAY HALLIGAN:** The member is interjecting. Mr President, did I mention arrogance before? That is a demonstration of it. The whole point is that it is not a matter of government members wandering around the countryside, obviously at taxpayers' expense, talking to people about things that they later say was consultation.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** There are a lot of them walking round the countryside at the moment.

**Hon RAY HALLIGAN:** I agree. I will read from an article in *The West Australian* dated Wednesday, 13 October 2004 headed "Anger at raised road", which states -

Northern suburbs residents are outraged about a \$60 million plan to build a raised extension to the Mitchell Freeway, which they say is being forced through by the State Government with minimal public consultation.

Again, the government can refute that if it wishes. However, these people were prepared to go to the newspaper over the issue. The article further says -

Plans for Connolly, a leafy suburb next to Joondalup golf course, have for years shown a 2km proposed extension from the present end of the freeway at Hodges Drive through to Shenton Avenue. But residents say they bought their properties after being told by estate agents that the freeway extension would be sunk and an overpass built.

Plans presented in public meetings over the past two weeks show a 500m section of the extension near Connolly Primary School would be as much as 9m above ground level, including a concrete sound barrier. There will be an underpass instead of an overpass.

It goes on from there. I mentioned arrogance, did I not, Mr President, even though it may not be part of the motion, other than to say that I believe that the government is being arrogant in more than one area of policy and in its attitude towards the community and against any opposition that it believes it may encounter. Another article in *The West Australian* dated 22 February 2006 is headed "New freeway stuck in slow lane" and states -

Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan has called for tenders for the Mitchell Freeway extension past Joondalup on the same timetable she rubbished before last year's State election.

In announcing the move, Ms MacTiernan said that the \$170 million project would begin construction in 2007 and be finished by late 2008.

But on January 12 last year she blasted then Opposition leader Colin Barnett when he said a coalition government would build the road on exactly that timetable.

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“Today, Mr Barnett announced with much fanfare that a coalition government would build the extension by 2008. A day earlier the Gallop Government committed to bring the extension forward to 2007,” trumpeted Ms MacTiernan in a press release at the time.

“Colin Barnett and the coalition are once again out of touch with the local community. The choice is clear - a Labor Government will deliver this fully costed extension by 2007, a coalition government is promising the project a year later.”

That is not only arrogance, but also hypocrisy. Unfortunately, in the very short time I have available to me, I have been able to provide only a very small number of examples of this taking place. I can assure members that there are many, many more examples. The Housing Industry Association has been prepared to commit it to writing. These are not whispers behind closed doors; the HIA is prepared to commit to writing that this Labor government has not consulted on certain issues, yet the government will continually say that it has consulted. It will always say that it has consulted. However, as I said earlier, it comes down to the definition of “consultation”. If the community is right about the way it tells us this government has consulted, the government’s definition is totally and utterly wrong. The government is not providing the people of Western Australia with what they want; the government is telling the people of Western Australia what they will get. All I can suggest to members opposite is that at the next election this government will have extreme difficulties in explaining to the people of Western Australia why the Labor Party should be re-elected as the government of this state.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan)** [3.58 pm]: I support Hon Ray Halligan’s motion. I will deal in particular with the closure and amalgamation of schools. It appears that the closure and amalgamation of schools without community consultation is becoming the norm for this government. The two schools I will look at in particular are the Blackmore and Wubin Primary Schools. It is increasingly apparent that decisions regarding the closure of Wubin Primary School and the amalgamation of the Blackmore and Girrawheen Primary Schools - using them as type examples - are being made without community consultation. Last Thursday I attended a rally that was organised by Luke Simpkins, the Liberal candidate for Cowan, and the Blackmore Parents and Citizens Association to protest against the closure of the Blackmore Primary School. Dozens and dozens of parents, members of the community and students attended the rally. They are very distressed, disappointed and angry that the Blackmore Primary School is to be closed, most notably because they had not been consulted. They literally had not been consulted. To give her credit, Hon Margaret Quirk, the member for Girrawheen, was at that protest. It was a very difficult situation for her because she had to read a letter from the Minister for Education and Training that indicated that yes, essentially the decision could have been handled better, but that the decision would remain.

I draw members’ attention to the Swan education district’s report dated December 2005 and titled “Local Area Education Planning Consultation Report: Girrawheen and Koondoola Cluster of Schools”. There was a consultation process to determine what was going to happen to that cluster of schools, and I read from the report’s introduction -

The Consultation Report is the result of a consultation process that commenced with the formation of a Consultative Committee on 12 October 2005 following permission to consult on a revised version of the proposal presented in the Draft Local Area Education Plan. The committee developed a plan to ensure effective community consultation and have developed the Consultation Report, which includes findings in relation to the proposed option and other proposals from the community.

The report mentions the representatives from the various schools in the cluster. There are 16 members, and all schools have teacher or parent representatives, except Blackmore Primary School, which is represented by the school principal. I do not mind the fact that the principal is represented on the cluster, but there is no parental representation.

According to the proposals for consultation, the report states -

Stage 1 . . .

- Amalgamate Montrose Primary School and Hainsworth Primary School into a new school, with facilities for full service provision, on the Montrose Primary School site opening in 2008. The Hainsworth Primary School site would then become surplus to requirements;
- Upgrade Girrawheen Primary School;

The amalgamation of Montrose Primary School and Hainsworth Primary School, a decision made with full community consultation, was recently announced. The report then talks about stage 2, which will obviously occur after stage 1, and states -

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If declining enrolments warrant further action, then the next phase will be considered for implementation. The next phase includes:

- Amalgamate Blackmore Primary School and Girrawheen Primary School in the refurbished Girrawheen Primary School;

There was no stage 2 community consultation; stage 1 has only just been announced. On 3 August 2007, parents of Blackmore Primary School students were notified that the school would close and be amalgamated with Girrawheen Primary School. Logically, they were very disappointed, angry and disillusioned. Primary schools are the heart and soul of any community and this is particularly so in rural and remote areas. The school parents, citizens of the community and current and former students of Blackmore Primary School feel completely let down and ignored by this government because of a complete lack of consultation.

In his response to a question from the Blackmore Parents and Citizens Association about why the Blackmore community had been excluded from the consultation process, the Minister for Education and Training indicated that the draft plan proposed two stages, which I have just read out. He then said -

... the first included the amalgamation of Hainsworth and Montrose Primary Schools and the building of a new school on the Montrose site, the upgrade of Girrawheen PS and a number of other items. The second stage proposed the amalgamation of Blackmore PS and Girrawheen PS on the Girrawheen site when the enrolments declined at Blackmore PS.

Whilst the Stage 1 proposals were put out for community consultation at the time, the Stage 2 proposal did not go out for community consultation as such. The Minister's announcement has brought forward the proposed Stage 2 to coincide with the implementation of Stage 1.

The minister thinks it is fine to go ahead with stage 1 and consult the community, and then go ahead with stage 2 without worrying at all about community consultation. That is what I am talking about: there was no community consultation about the decision to close Blackmore Primary School.

The second question put to the minister was -

**Why hasn't the Minister acted in accordance with the Education Act regarding school closures?**

In his response, the minister stated -

The Minister has, and will continue to, comply with the School Education Act 1999 . . .

The Minister proposes to amalgamate Blackmore Primary School with Girrawheen Primary School and in accordance with Sections 57 and 58 of the Act he will consult with the relevant parents, School Councils and P & Cs . . .

However, the decision has already been made. It is too late to consult once the decision has been made. Section 57, "Consultation", of the School Education Act 1999 states -

- (1) If the Minister proposes to amalgamate 2 or more government schools or to close any government school permanently, the Minister is to consult with -
  - (a) the parents of the students who are enrolled at the school or schools affected by the proposal, in relation to the matters referred to in subsection (2);
  - (b) the Council of each school affected by the proposal, in relation to the matters referred to in subsection (2); and
  - (c) each Parents and Citizens' Association formed under section 142 which would be wound up as an effect of the proposal, in relation to the disposal of property acquired by the association.

That did not occur. There was no consultation. Quite frankly, the minister did not consult with the parents, and they are furious. Parents are angry and disillusioned and that is why I tabled in this place two weeks ago a petition containing 2 000 signatures asking for the decision to be reversed or at the very least for some consultation to occur. There was a complete lack of consultation! Blackmore Primary School is being closed without community consultation.

Exactly the same thing has happened to the parents at Wubin Primary School. Wubin is a very small rural town located about 275 kilometres north east of Perth. On 6 August 2007, Mr Peter Reudavey, the president of the Wubin Primary School Parents and Citizens Association, received a letter from Sharyn O'Neill, the Director General of the Department for Education and Training. I will read part of the letter to members now -

Dear Mr Reudavey

I am writing to inform you of the decision to close Wubin Primary School at the end of Term 4, 2007.

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Wubin Primary School has served its community well and there will be fond memories and a rich history to look back on. However, declining enrolments and limited curriculum choices have led to my decision that the students' educational needs will be best met if they relocate to a school which will provide them with greater educational choice.

Again, absolutely no consultation whatsoever! I have a letter from Mr Reudavey to Karen Morrissey, the president of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, which provides a succinct and comprehensive precis of the very valid reasons that Wubin Primary School should remain open. I would like to table that letter, Mr President, and seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

[See paper 3134.]

The following material was incorporated -

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Wubin Parents and Citizens Association  
C/- Post Office  
Wubin 6612  
14<sup>th</sup> August 2007

Dear Karen

The Wubin School community has just received advice that its school is to be closed at the end of term 4 2007. Our community does not wish the school to close for a wide variety of reasons as outlined below and was not consulted about the decision apart from an indication being given that if the school numbers were below 12 and likely to stay there over time that it would be closed. The school has 12 children enrolled with this to rise to 14 in two weeks and committed numbers to maintain this for at least the next five years.

Wubin is situated 275 kilometres north east of Perth on the Great Northern Highway. It contains a shop and Post Office, two Roadhouses a Hotel, the school and 15 houses. There is also a Combined Sports Club, a golf course and tennis courts. All of the children, bar three who live in town, travel to school on our two bus runs. The first pick up on the longest of these bus runs is 7.15am and the last drop off in the afternoon is 4.30pm. This means that the students are away from home for over nine hours per day. Further travel to the next nearest school will add at least twenty minutes to this and take the time away from home towards ten hours per day. In winter these children already get up at first light and have little time at home before it is dark again in the afternoon and in summer, particularly with Daylight Saving, they must travel home during the hottest part of the day and still get up near first light. This becomes very tiring and stressful for all children but especially for those attending Kindergarten and in Pre Primary.

One of the reasons given for the closure of the school is limited curriculum choices and declining enrolments. The school provides individual learning programs for each of the students in the skill areas and a whole school program in the afternoons. This allows the students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills at their own level and rate and then to use these to work together in the other learning areas in the afternoons. This has resulted in a regular collection of Credits and Distinctions in the New South Wales University Testing competition in Computing, Science, Mathematics, English, Writing and Spelling. This year the students from the school achieved one credit in Computing, a credit and a distinction in Science, a distinction in Maths and a credit and a distinction in English. Two of our students have also been selected to take part in the Primary Extension and Challenge Program (PEAC) in 2007 and in past years we have generally had one or two students participating in this program. The WALNA results for the school support these results and last year we had 100% of our students above the Benchmark for Reading Writing and Mathematics.

Our school combines with other small schools in the area to field sporting teams in Minkey, Kanga Cricket, Netball, Basketball and Tee Ball. This has resulted in many trophies being won for the schools with 2006 bringing wins in Minkey, and Kanga Cricket and runner up in Netball. Our school also competes on its own in the NEDSSA Athletics carnival held each year and in 2006 won the Overall Champion School, P&C Presidents Marching Shield and the Principals Meritorious Shield. Every year the Year 4-7 students go on camp to one of the following towns - Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Perth or Margaret River. The students also attend a wide range of cultural, skills based and entertainment excursions and incursions. In 2007 these include Easter, Anzac Day, Foundation Day, Aboriginal Visiting Artist day and Circus Activity Days combined with Latham and Buntine Primary Schools. The children will be visiting the Egyptian Antiquities exhibition at the W.A. Art Gallery and be visited by the Education Officer from the Geraldton section of the W.A. Museum. Mr Rob Adams visits the school each year to entertain and teach the children about values, the Japanese Language students have been to a LOTE Day and the school has used the Musica Viva program for its music program and attended the Marmalade Jam show they provided. Football, Netball and Cricket clinics are held at the school run by the various state junior bodies for these sports.

The school provides a wide range of resources for the children. These include all books and stationery as well as a well equipped library, sporting equipment, playground equipment, a garden/park atmosphere to the entire playground, access to satellite television programs including Westlink. All of the children have access to their own individual computer and the school owns 14 laptop computers that the Year 4-7 children are able to take home to use. The school also pays for the students to take part in the testing competitions mentioned above with parents sent the results.

Most of the resources at the school have some input from the P&C Association in the form of funding when required and/or maintenance and erection of equipment. This funding and provision of labour and expertise is ongoing and is part of the pride that the parents have in their children's school and education.

2007 has been a very dry year and coming on top of 2006 has made for very difficult times in many wheatbelt communities including ours. Prices for almost everything are increasing while incomes in these areas are not. Having this decision made now has not improved the morale of our community. Everyone is left wondering what facilities will be left in small country towns where travel to the local town takes time and money but to have to travel even further for basic services like education increases the burden. The school community wants to keep its school at Wubin and to send their children to the local school.

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Any assistance or advice that could help us in our endeavours to keep our school open would be most appreciated.  
Thank you for taking the time to read our response to this very sudden event and we look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,  
Peter Reudavey  
P & C President

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**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Mr President, for emphasis, I will just read from part of that letter now. It says in part -

Dear Karen

The Wubin School community has just received advice that its school is to be closed at the end of term 4 2007. Our community does not wish the school to close for a wide variety of reasons as outlined below and was not consulted about the decision apart from an indication being given that if the school numbers were below 12 and likely to stay there over time that it would be closed. The school has 12 children enrolled with this to rise to 14 in two weeks and committed numbers to maintain this for at least the next five years.

A letter addressed to Sharyn O'Neill from the Isolated Children's Parents' Associated states in part -

Dear Sharyn,

ICPA (WA) has grave concerns over the proposed imminent closure of the Wubin Primary School. Also, that your decision to close this school has been based on misinformation of student numbers and an understanding that certain procedures of consultation have taken place, when they haven't.

...

We strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to close the Wubin School and to defer Monday's meeting at the school, which we believe is being called to implement closure, including distribution of the school's resources.

If any meeting is to take place, ICPA (WA) believes it should be a Community Consultation meeting to enable such a serious proposal to be appropriately discussed.

Another letter from all the parents at Wubin Primary School states in part that they want the school to stay open, and the reasons for their request include -

- All parents of the twelve students enrolled in Wubin Primary unanimously agree that this school remain open.
- We are all frustrated at the apparent lack of consultation and reasoning behind our school closure.

...

We are all wondering who makes these decisions, how much research time and upon what procedure was undertaken to close us down. We believe Wubin Primary School should remain open. We feel we are owed a meeting to explain the above concerns prior to any Implementation Committee meeting for school closure taking place.

We trust you will consider our urgent request regarding this matter.

Mr President, there has been a total lack of consultation with regard to the closure of these schools.

**HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan)** [4.08 pm]: I have listened to this debate with a degree of interest this afternoon, and it amazes me. Some of the issues are worthy of debate in this chamber this afternoon. As a government, we can always look at the processes we have put in place to ensure that not only are they better than those of the previous government, but also we are continuously improving them as we go down the track.

However, I find it difficult to understand why members have mentioned some of these issues in this chamber this afternoon. I will address some of the issues that have been raised by the mover of this motion. Hon Ray Halligan said that the government had failed in its consultation in three key priority areas. We must look at the end result in each of those areas that the member has outlined. The first example he could find goes back to 2004 and the extension of the Mitchell Freeway, which, as he mentioned, cost \$60 million. I dispute the argument that he made when he kept talking about it being a raised freeway, because that gave the impression that somehow we were going to build it above ground level when in fact it was going to be built at ground level. I accept that would mean that the freeway would have been nine metres higher than the nearest road in the

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Connelly Estate. However, I think that language that he used was quite mischievous. As a result of the community consultation process that this government put in place, we are now spending \$171 million on that freeway extension and we are sinking the freeway. Anyone can see the truckloads of earth that are being taken out of that site. I saw many members of the Liberal Party hanging around and being involved in this issue prior to the election, but after the election, I did not see any of them turning up and being involved in the community consultation process.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Were they invited?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I am sure they would have been.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** I will tell you what: the ones south of the river have not been invited.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** All members of the community could turn up. I must tell Hon Simon O'Brien that when things were going on in my electorate, I used to make sure that I would turn up if I saw meetings advertised. I can assure members that the freeway extension consultation was advertised so that community members could attend.

**Hon George Cash:** You know what reception you used to get.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** It was a very positive reception.

**Hon George Cash:** Only when I saved you from marauding -

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** When and where?

**Hon George Cash:** You know.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** You did what!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I have never heard of anyone being saved by a smiling crocodile before. I am not sure from which beach I went swimming with Hon George Cash. Were there sharks out there?

Another noticeable aspect of Hon Ray Halligan's comments was his constant references to the fact that after a public meeting, this issue became of concern and was taken up. I do not know what members on the other side want, but when a public meeting is held to discuss such issues, the community raises its concerns about those issues and they are dealt with and addressed, I would have thought that is what public consultation is. It does not always mean that at the end of that consultation process there is 100 per cent agreement between the government and the local community. If I get time, I am more than happy to go through it and give examples of how the previous government, of which many members opposite were part, used to conduct its community consultation. If I were managing the consultation process of the freeway extension, I would have done it slightly differently from the way in which it was done. However, I think the end result was a good one for the Connelly community. It is clear from the freeway that has been built there that this government did listen.

The member also raised the issue of new car parks at the northern railway stations. Labor members in the northern suburbs had been arguing for the government to get on and do that. We were successful in getting funding of some \$18 million in the last budget round to build those additional car parks. The Public Transport Authority has its proposed locations for those car parks. The member for Kingsley, Judy Hughes, organised a community forum at which she got people from the PTA to talk about the proposals. The local community raised concerns through that process. The cabinet then went to Joondalup. People were not asked to come into the city; the cabinet went to Joondalup. What happened? Judy organised for some of those representatives of the local community to come along and meet with appropriate ministers to discuss the community's concerns about the car parking. As a result of that process -

**Hon Vincent Catania:** How many regional cabinets have we had?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Far more than the other side even thought about.

As a result of that process, the PTA started to work through alternative solutions for parking around the railway stations on the northern corridor. As a result of that process, the community was heard and listened to. May I say to Hon Ray Halligan that by the time his petition was tabled, those concerns were already just about signed off by the minister and were being sorted out as a result of the community consultation process that involved the local member for Kingsley listening to her community and raising her concerns.

**Hon Ray Halligan:** She had no option but to listen. I was there.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I am not sure what the member's problem is when we ask the community whether it has concerns. We listen to the community's concerns and we address the community's concerns.

**Hon Ray Halligan:** Always after the event. You ram something down their throat and they regurgitate it.

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**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I would love to go through the issue of the Blackmore Primary School. I can say, and the minister has acknowledged, that we could have done the Blackmore Primary School consultation better. The government is putting in better education facilities for the people of Girrawheen. I am proud of that. I am proud of the fact that when the candidate for Cowan, Liz Prime, took representatives of the parents and citizens association from Blackmore Primary School along to see the Minister for Education and Training, in a very hastily organised meeting, the minister was happy to listen to their concerns. As a result of that process -

Several members interjected.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I only slipped that in because members on the other side want to make this a political debate. I wanted to make sure that people understood the order in which things happened out there. It did get the minister to acknowledge the process could have been done better. I hope that out of the current processes we will see the concerns of the parents being addressed.

We could look at the record of the other side. The member wanted to talk about Wubin. What about the 29 schools in regional areas that the Court government closed? Let us talk about those. Let us talk about the school closures in the northern suburbs. Let us talk about the other schools we are amalgamating to get better educational outcomes right throughout the northern corridor. The member may pick out Blackmore Primary School, and the minister and I have accepted the process should have been done better, but, by the member's own words, local area educational planning referred to stage 1 and stage 2. When we are able to get the government to bring forward stage 2 and to put the funds in, and I would hope that one of the things we may be successful in is getting a little bit more funding for that area, because I think that providing quality education is an absolutely crucial part -

**Hon Ray Halligan:** Can we quote you that you are happy to get some more money? We will go out there and tell people that Hon Ken Travers is going to get them some more money.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The member may quote me all he likes. I am more than happy to try to ensure that if there are needs in that community and at that school, we will get them addressed. There is a process for doing that. The Blackmore Primary School process could have been done better, but we have gone through that process with a whole range of other schools and we are doing it better. We do not see the situations created by the mob on the other side, such as the closure of Scarborough Senior High School. Hon Ed Dermer will remember the closure of Scarborough Senior High School. The then government put nothing in its place and made no response to the local community's concerns. We are seeing the long-term problems in that area as a result of that decision. I agree that although we are doing a good job with consultation, we could always do it better and we will try to do it better.

**HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan)** [4.19 pm]: When Geoff Gallop became Premier, he put in place a section of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet called the Citizens and Civics Unit. It was established as a world-class service. It was developing all the protocols and processes for good community consultation and, based on that, produced various documents. He was a man who understood that such consultation is absolutely paramount for a democracy. A democracy cannot exist without good community consultation. I used to use the documents produced by that unit frequently, looking at the various models suggested for the different types of community consultation that should or should not take place. I also used to recommend those documents to a lot of people. I gave them out to community groups etc. They were exceptionally good documents and won a lot of awards for the work that they promoted on community consultation. Then there was a change.

**Hon Barbara Scott:** They got rid of Gallop.

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** I do not think the government got rid of Dr Gallop; unfortunately, he had to leave. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet abolished the Citizens and Civics Unit when the current Premier took office. We used to use those documents frequently and show people what the government said it would do and what it was not doing. We used to hold these documents up to the government over and again. In the end, it became too embarrassing and too difficult for the Carpenter government to continue to try to defend its position about why it was not working to the ideals set out in the Citizens and Civics Unit booklets.

I want to give one really good example of how that has occurred by looking at the obstetrics review. Since this government came to power, 27 000 people, by way of signature, said that the government was not consulting with them about the direction it was taking obstetric services in this state and they did not like what it was doing. Despite that, the Minister for Health continued to go down that track. Women and families all over the state were saying that it was not acceptable and they did not like it. Questions were continuously asked in this place. I was involved in meetings with the minister's office in which he continually said that he was consulting but we knew that he was not. The only option that seemed to be left was to put a motion on the notice paper to establish a select committee of inquiry into whether this consultation was taking place. As members know, that select



committee met and tabled a report. The report that was tabled commented on the type of consultation that was taking place. For example, it stated -

In relation to the decision making process following the Cohen report . . . evidence to this inquiry indicates that many stakeholders are of the opinion that there was inadequate consultation with the community. Evidence also indicates that stakeholders are not satisfied that the Department gave sufficient regard to evidence provided by the community and from the academic literature in its decision making process.

That was a bipartisan committee of this house saying that despite all the assurances that the minister had given and the fact that he tried many times to suggest that community consultation was taking place, community consultation was not happening, it was not adequate and people were very unhappy about it.

It was not until we established that select committee that the minister put in place what people asked for in the beginning. He put forward a new maternity services plan that would involve community consultation etc. That community consultation is taking place as a result of the work of the select committee. Great fears are being expressed around the state that now that that select committee has tabled its report and finished its work, the minister will revert to his old ways and that level of community consultation that has been achieved over the past 12 months will go backwards. I am really concerned about how this level of community consultation is not being taken seriously by this government. Another example relates to the community-supported residential units that enable people with a mental illness to live in the community. An extremely poor consultation process occurred. It was set up to create division between the people who live in those communities and the people who will live in the facilities. Twelve months before any discussions took place, the plans for these facilities were established. The minister deliberately suggested that people complained that they did not want those facilities in their backyards. I have met nearly every one of the community groups that has participated in these community-supported residential units. One or two people always have a totally irrational point of view about people with a mental illness living in the community and the support they need, but the vast majority of people want to be involved in working out the best and most appropriate way of accommodating these people in the community. I get really annoyed when I hear the health department staff and the minister saying that these people have nothing to contribute and because they are not professionals, they could not possibly know what they are talking about. These people do know what they are talking about. They live in the community and they have some terrific ideas. They have said over and over again that 25 people should not be put in one group of units in one location because of the number of things that could occur as a result. They do not want that number of people living there in that way because it would stigmatise those people. The health department staff have been out to these communities - I have been out there with them - and they refer to these facilities as mental health villages. The language they use already stigmatises the people who will live there. They believe that if 25 people were in groups of five or eight in different locations in the community, not only would that be better for the residents living in those facilities but it would also give the community the best possible opportunity to accept and embrace those smaller groups of people.

At no time have the people that I am working with or those who come to see me said that they do not support or agree that people with mental illnesses should be living in supported accommodation. However, the thing that they say over and over again is that despite every attempt they make to try to make these views known to the minister, the minister will not listen and says that they are concerned about these people being in their backyard. I know it is cheaper for the government to run a 25-bed facility in one place. I know it is cheaper for the government to use hospital-based land rather than place people into more appropriate community-based locations. That is not in the best interests of the people who will live there, and it is not in the best interests of the communities who will accept and support these people.

If there is one message that I have got out of the debate that has taken place so far today, it is that the government has lost its way with community consultation. It started off with some fantastic ideals and some great booklets and directions about what community consultation should consist of and how people need to move down that track. Since the Citizens and Civics Unit was disbanded and there was a change of leadership, the government has moved away from the ideals of community consultation to something more akin to a bulldozer.

**HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House)** [4.28 pm]: I thank Hon Ray Halligan for moving this motion. The government always tries to be consultative and tries to do it right every time but there are clearly times when we do not get it right. Hon Ken Travers and the Minister for Education and Training also conceded that in one particular instance raised by Hon Ray Halligan we clearly did not get it right. It is good of him to tell us those things.

The government has been accused of lack of consultation generally. It is certainly true that the best consultative mechanisms have their failings. I took Hon Ray Halligan's motion very broadly, although we did think it would

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be concentrated around issues in the honourable member's North Metropolitan Region, and that is why Hon Ken Travers led the debate for the government. The wording of the motion is very broad and my response will be very broad. I will not touch on those issues in the North Metropolitan electorate. I will give one example and, Hon Helen Morton, it is a current example, not an example from the Gallop government. Indeed, it happened only a couple of weeks ago in Carnarvon. The government intended to build a new justice complex in Carnarvon. The government had a very clear idea about where the complex would be located. The problem was that the community did not want it there; the community wanted it in another place. As much as the government tried to convince the community that the location that it had in mind was the right one, the community, represented by the shire and much more broadly than that, had a very strong view about its preferred site. One of the local members, Hon Vince Catania, went to the trouble of surveying the opinion of people in Carnarvon and, more broadly, in the Gascoyne. That process indicated to Hon Vince Catania that the community was right and the government was wrong in its choice of location. The response of the government was to say, "Okay; we'll cop that. Our first choice of site was wrong and we'll now build the justice complex on your preferred site." That site is what we call now the traders site. I think that is a much better example of the kind of consultation process that our government engages in than some of the failings that members have quite rightly brought to our attention. Yes, we do have failings, but we might differ about the degree to which we have failed. I certainly recall the issue about the Kwinana Freeway, but I said that I would not go into that.

**Hon Ray Halligan:** You had a similar situation in Northbridge, did you not, with the police complex?

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** Quite possibly, although that was not really a matter about the community; it was more a matter about my old school mate Graham Hardie, I think.

**Hon Ray Halligan:** I think positioning did come into it.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** The Leader of the Opposition invited me to discuss the issues about community cabinets. Can I just say generally -

**Hon Norman Moore:** No, I did not invite you to; you actually inadvertently left your notes where I got a copy of them, so I just asked whether you were going to talk about what was in your notes.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** I see; I thought it was an invitation. No matter whose idea it was, it was a very good idea, and I am prepared to share with members what a good idea it was.

**Hon Norman Moore:** I've already read your speech, so you can just have it incorporated in *Hansard* and sit down.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** I might divert from that speech a little.

By the end of this year, the Gallop and Carpenter governments will have held 42 regional cabinet meetings.

**Hon Norman Moore:** We think that's a great idea because it means more people get to see how bad you are.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** That is good, and judging by the polls, obviously we are doing a terrible job!

These community cabinet meetings are organised by the community cabinet liaison group. Strangely, we have just heard an attack by the opposition on the government for what it calls a waste of taxpayers' money. Do honourable members really believe that the following was a waste of taxpayers' money? Three cabinet meetings were held in Albany; three were held in Bunbury; three were held in Collie-Wellington, which included visits to Donnybrook, Boyanup, Waroona, Yarloop, Dwellingup and Brunswick Junction; three were held in Geraldton; two were held in Kalgoorlie; one was held in Coolgardie-Kambalda; two were held in Broome, which included visits to Fitzroy Crossing, Derby and a number of other regional remote communities; and one was held in Kununurra, which included visits to Wyndham, Halls Creek, Oombulgurri and Kalumburu. That is really taking cabinet to the outer limits of the state. Two cabinet meetings were held in Mandurah; one was held in Newman, which included visits to Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Jigalong; two were held in Karratha, which included visits to Port Hedland, Wickham, Dampier, Roebourne, Port Sampson, Cossack and Barrow Island; three were held in Carnarvon; one was held in Port Hedland, which included visits to Yandeyarra, Karratha, Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Nullagine and Marble Bar; and one was held in Esperance, which included visits to Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun.

Several members interjected.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** Can I just say how carefully the Carpenter government looks after Esperance. In January this year Esperance had a horrific flood. The Acting Minister for Police and Emergency Services at the time, Hon Margaret Quirk, got there before the flood even started! She anticipated a natural disaster.

One meeting was held in Busselton, which included visits to Margaret River, Dunsborough and Yallingup; one was held in Narrogin; one meeting was held in York and Northam; and two meetings were held in Wanneroo.

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Wanneroo actually included an event in Mindarie. When I had a look at Hon Ray Halligan's letter, I noted that he represents the state electorates of all these places, but Mindarie is not listed in his letter.

**Hon Ray Halligan:** It's an old one!

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** I just thought I would bring that to his attention to return the favour!

One meeting was held in Roleystone-Armadale; one was held in Rockingham; and one was held in Mundaring, which included a visit to Ellenbrook.

**Hon Ken Travers** interjected.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** Order! On each of these occasions, cabinet members make themselves available to meet individual members of the community and we have quarter-hour sessions. Members of the opposition who are local members are always welcome to attend and, indeed, are invited to attend. I am happy to say that I have seen just about -

**Hon Barry House:** We usually find out the day after.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** No; I have seen Hon Barry House at the functions. That is consultation. The example that I gave about the Carnarvon justice centre is consultation -

**Hon Ray Halligan:** What is consultation - just going there?

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** No; it is a process of going there and listening to what people have to say.

**Hon Ray Halligan:** But also telling them what it is you are proposing to do so that they can respond.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** Exactly, and the example I gave of the justice centre in Carnarvon is an example of that. We went there with a view that there was a site that was suitable.

**Hon Ken Travers:** On the car park that Hon Ray Halligan mentioned, the minister met with the local community during a regional cabinet.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** It was started by the local member; exactly. The function of the regional cabinet meetings is to have those issues raised that are perhaps not in the cabinet's consciousness. It is very easy to sit down there on Adelaide Terrace or St Georges Terrace - I came from the Western Australian Farmers Federation, which is in Adelaide Terrace - and not get the importance of issues, such as those car parks, in the cabinet's collective mind. However, when we go out to the area and meet people, it raises the level of consciousness. I do not want to use all my time, but I and the government accept that we do not always get it right and we thank members for telling us when we get it wrong because we rely on them to do that.

**Hon Ray Halligan:** The people are telling us.

**Hon KIM CHANCE:** I thank the member for faithfully relaying their message. Both the Gallop and Carpenter governments have generally, I think, been consultative governments. I think the processes that we go through to try to ensure that the quality of that consultation is continually improved are in the right direction.

**HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [4.38 pm]:** I want to cite one more example to support Hon Ray Halligan's motion about the lack of consultation or flawed consultation. The example relates to the Busselton foreshore public land. A bewildering array of questions, queries, views and conspiracy theories have been swirling around in Busselton for three or four years. I put it to members that that is due to a flawed consultation process in the first place. The background to this issue is that some very valuable and valued public foreshore land in Busselton has been an item for much public discussion and comment over recent years. People may know the areas, including Barnard Park; the reserves encompassing the restaurants on the foreshore; the Nautical Lady Entertainment World; Signal Park; the tennis club; the Kookaburra Caravan Park, where there are three reserves; Churchill Park; and so on. About four years ago, the Busselton jetty, which, as people know, is an icon, had been very caringly looked after and maintained by the local community through dedicated hard work and commitment over a long period. It has been upgraded and now has an interpretive centre and underwater observatory. A full-scale assessment was done on the state of the jetty that showed it to be in a rather negative state and in need of a pretty serious injection of something like \$18 million to \$20 million. This is where it seems to have gone off the rails a little. Rather than treating the issues separately, and looking at the commitments needed for the Busselton jetty and then separately looking at the issue of public land and the upgrade of the Busselton foreshore, which nobody says is not required, the state and federal governments - the federal government has an obligation in this regard as well - linked the two issues. These issues were put in the hands of government agencies such as LandCorp and the South West Development Commission -

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**Hon Adele Farina:** There was a joint working group between the shire and the state government representatives.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** Yes, it was in a secret committee with the Shire of Busselton that locked out the community from negotiations for a couple of years.

**Hon Adele Farina:** It did not lock out the community. There were a series of public workshops, there were public information sessions, there was a community survey -

Several members interjected.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** I can assure the honourable member that the community felt locked out, which is the issue surrounding this whole example that I wanted to bring to the attention of the house. The outcome of that working party was tabled recently - that outcome is the grand plan. Some of the plan has some merit, but other parts of it are raising major concerns in the community because, largely, the community has had no input and no direct voice into the plan. The community has until 1 November for submissions on the government's proposal for the foreshore land. People, rightly or wrongly, feel that they are now in a position in which this grand plan has been devised and put together, put to the community, and they now have only about two months to assess it and work out what it means for them and to put their views to the authorities. The shire has taken a bit of a sideways step away from responsibility for that process, because it passed a motion indicating that that plan is only one of the options available for the development of the Busselton foreshore land. That is a wise move to take.

All I am saying is that the issue could have been handled better through better public consultation involving open input from the public right from day one, rather than -

**Hon Adele Farina:** We did. The honourable member is wrong. We included the community right from day one. We have had extensive consultation with stakeholders, and the stakeholders are now supporting the project.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** The government included selected parts of the community, and that is the issue.

Several members interjected.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.