

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 18 May.

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [10.20 am]: I thank members for the opportunity to make a few comments on the Address-in-Reply. I begin by congratulating the Governor, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, and his wife, Lorraine, on their outstanding public duty in the interests of Western Australia. They jointly perform the role extremely well and have contact with many diverse groups and individuals throughout the Western Australian community. They have developed in their time in that position an excellent rapport with people throughout the State of all ages, backgrounds and aspirations. It is worth noting that Lieutenant General John Sanderson has a history of association with regional Western Australia. He was born in Northcliffe and went to Bunbury Senior High School, and his wife, Lorraine, is from Kangaroo Valley in regional New South Wales, which is in the hinterland near Wollongong, so they understand rural and regional Australia and know about the diverse range of interests and issues facing regional Western Australia. I wonder what the Governor will make of the debate on electoral change that has occurred in this Parliament in recent times. The Governor and his wife have gained the respect of everyone in this State, because they have credibility. That is a very important ingredient for that role. People in vice-regal positions in the main do a very good job. However, in recent times there have been examples of people who have lost the respect of the community. The former Governor General of Australia, and the former Governor of Tasmania, were both vice-regal appointments who lost the respect of the community and were forced to move on and leave those positions. We have been blessed with very good appointments to the vice-regal position. The former Governor, Major General Michael Jeffrey, did an outstanding job - so outstanding that he was promoted to the job of Governor General of Australia. Governor Sanderson has also been doing an outstanding job. I am not sure of the term of the Governor's appointment, but I hope Governor Sanderson and his wife will be in that role for a considerable time.

I now want to make some brief comments on the election. I guess we need to say something about the election in an Address-in-Reply debate. Needless to say, February 26 was a very dark day for me. I did not enjoy it very much at all. The election result was very disappointing, to say the least. However, I congratulate the Labor Party, through gritted teeth, on winning the election, and wish it well in government, because the interests of Western Australia are at stake if it is not a good government. If the Liberal Party's performance in the election throughout the rest of the state had been as good as its performance in the south west, we would be in government today with a significant majority. It therefore makes it doubly disappointing for me that the Liberal Party did not win the election. The area that I come from delivered a very good result for the Liberal Party and returned some outstanding new members to this Parliament. There has been an injection of outstanding talent in the new member for Bunbury, John Castrilli, who is a former mayor of Bunbury and has enormous community contact and credibility, in a similar way to the Governor, and that is why he was elected.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Mind you, it was not overwhelming.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: No, but it was against the trend in that for the past 50 years Bunbury has always gone with the government of the day. In that sense it was a significant victory for John Castrilli personally, perhaps even more so than a victory for the Liberal Party. In Troy Buswell, the new member for Vasse, we have an outstanding addition to this Parliament and to public life. Although a couple of people think otherwise, Troy won preselection in a fair and open process. The major person who disputes that process, of course, was the member who was beaten, but the fact remains that it was a fair and open process that was not interfered with by anyone. It was a democratic process within the Liberal Party, and it produced an overwhelming preselection result for Troy Buswell, and he went on to win that seat.

Hon Paddy Embry: It was very close.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: It was close, but we have to expect that, because an incumbent member has many advantages. We see in this place every day that incumbency is an enormous advantage. We need look only at the resources and advantages that go with being in government compared with being in opposition. The same applies to local members. It is a winner-take-all attitude. I think it has now reached such a stage that it is very unhealthy for the democratic process. The two-party result in the seat of Vasse was outstanding. We also have an excellent new candidate in the new seat of Capel, Steve Thomas, who is a veterinary doctor and a very enthusiastic and knowledgeable person.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That has got to be a first for your side of politics!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: We will say a bit more about the minister later. Has the minister read today's paper?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I have read it, yes.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Further up the line we have the new seat of Murray, which is represented by Murray Cowper, a former policeman who understands community issues extremely well and is already doing a superb job in the Parliament. Those new members have added to the experience of members like Paul Omodei and Dan Sullivan, and the recycled Kim Hames, the new member for Dawesville. He is a former minister who knows this Parliament very well and knows what is required of members.

There also were some disappointing results, particularly in the three other Legislative Assembly seats in the area. I was very disappointed not to see Andrew Partington elected to the seat of Albany. He would have made - I hope he still will have an opportunity to become - an outstanding member of the Legislative Council at some stage. In Mandurah the Liberal Party was represented by Ashley King, an excellent candidate. He is an education principal who is very dedicated to his career and the community. He too is an outstanding prospective member. In Collie-Wellington, well-known local identity Craig Carbone also missed out on a seat, which he might have won in other circumstances.

In the upper house South West Region, the Liberal Party returned the highest primary vote and obtained a quota of 3.12. That easily resulted in the election of three Liberal Party members. Nigel Hallett will join Hon Robyn McSweeney and me in this house. He, of course, will replace Hon Bill Stretch, who has given this place and the community outstanding service. Those new candidates all have a lot to offer. In time, we will see their outstanding representation of the south west.

At the recent state election, seven members of the Liberal Party were listed on the ticket for the South West Region. The other four members on that ticket have much to offer. I hope they will stay involved and, at some stage, be given other opportunities to take on public representation. Dr Ken Robinson was listed fourth on the Liberal Party ticket. He is the "first reserve" in case one of the members is run over by a bus. Dr Robinson is a professional in education and regional studies at Edith Cowan University in Bunbury. He understands the region very well. Given the opportunity, he would bring to this chamber the same sort of rigour on educational matters as someone like Hon Peter Foss brings to legal matters. Kerrol Gildersleeve was our fifth candidate. He is a very experienced classroom teacher, and as a practitioner at the coalface in education he knows the business very well. He is also a Vietnam War veteran and, in the past, was a candidate for the seat of Mitchell. Philippa Reid is a very bright, capable young lady from Busselton, who is already making a major contribution as a Busselton shire councillor. She has experience in the real estate industry and has spent many years working in Japan, so she is very familiar with international issues. Narelle King is also a very bright, capable young lady with qualifications in education and health, and is based around Mandurah. She has family responsibilities with young children and she performed extremely well during the election. I am sure that one day she will have the opportunity to play another role.

Labor Party member Hon Adele Farina will be joined by two new members, whom I have not met yet. I am looking forward to meeting them next week. I hope they have the interests of the South West Region at heart, rather than simply the headquarters of the Australian Labor Party.

Hon Ken Travers: Don't judge others by yourself.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I have said already that I reserve my judgment; the jury is still out. As I said, I hope those members, along with others from the South West Region, represent the interests of the region in this place. The seventh member elected is the Greens member Paul Llewellyn. I guess the outcome of the election in the south west highlights the type of electoral system under which we operate. To a large extent, the election of the last member of these regions can be a bit of a raffle; it can produce very unpredictable, even undesired, results if certain people are careless with their preference distribution. I put to the house that that is what happened in the south west at the last election.

Hon Ken Travers: What is wrong with him? Why is his election undesirable?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I do not know; I reserve my judgment on Mr Llewellyn also because I do not know him very well. I hope he makes a positive contribution to this place. I am just saying that, given the options we were presented with, I would have preferred another outcome. The last electoral process was the distribution of preferences, at which point three members were left in the count. The first member was Paul Llewellyn from the Greens (WA), the second was Linda Rose from the Family First party and the third was Steve Dilley from the National Party. At that stage, Steve Dilley's count was 10 134. The count for the Family First candidate, Linda Rose, was 13 505 and the count for the Greens member was 12 058; therefore, the lowest number was distributed first on a ratio that meant that 7 698 votes were distributed. Virtually all of them, 7 471, were distributed to Paul Llewellyn, the Greens candidate. That distribution bumped his votes up to 19 529, which was more than the quota of 17 906. That duly got him elected, and that was a bizarre result. The National Party ticket listed the Greens as its third preference after the Liberal Party. I think about 95 per cent of votes cast in the Legislative Council are ticket votes; they are not individual votes. That determined the outcome of that election. I think the

Family First candidate's policies and the policies of the National and Liberal Parties would have been much more like-minded.

Hon Graham Giffard: Clearly the National Party doesn't agree with you. Clearly it thinks you are wrong, otherwise it would have given Family First its preferences, but it didn't.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: If that is the case, so be it.

Hon Ken Travers: More importantly, no wonder the National Party has looked for a better option when its coalition party attacks it. You were trying to knock off National Party members in seats in which they were sitting members. Give us a break.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order! Hon Barry House is on his feet.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am merely saying that the election of that seventh member to the Legislative Council for the South West Region is an abnormal result in two-party preferred politics. However, that is basically the system that makes our democratic system tick. That has paralleled the result from the previous election in which One Nation preferences were responsible for the election of members of the Greens to represent the Agricultural and Mining and Pastoral Regions. Let it be on the heads of those people who promoted those distributions.

Hon Graham Giffard: You are obviously a source of healing for the coalition with the Liberal Party.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: We will see.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: In this Parliament I have the education and training portfolio.

Hon Ken Travers: I am amazed at that.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: One at a time.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: There are some very smart alecs around the place, are there not, Mr Deputy President? Before I say a few words about that, I want to say a few words about the racing and gaming portfolio that I had prior to the changeover. I enjoyed the portfolio. I approached the task to do the best I could for the racing, gaming and liquor industries outcomes. I did not approach it in a purely political point-scoring way. I like to think that I, together with the minister at the time, Hon Nick Griffiths, played a role in getting a better and fairer deal for the racing industry into the future. Let us go back a bit. The first major piece of legislative change to be introduced in the last Parliament was to establish the new racing industry body called Racing and Wagering WA. That legislation was of course born out of a review commissioned by the previous coalition government. WAWA has been in existence for about 18 months. In the assessment of virtually everybody in the industry, it has done a good job. It has conducted a comprehensive review of the industry and developed key strategies for the future, identifying taxation and infrastructure as the major needs of the racing industry. Even before the WAWA review was published in September of last year, I had been saying publicly that the racing taxing regime should be restructured so that there would be equity with taxation on gaming activities at Burswood Casino. In the coalition position statements I firmed that up into a position statement and then moved it further into a firm policy commitment in the lead-up to the election. The Labor government tried to put a bandaid on the situation by committing \$20 million over four years initially for capital works. This was to be drip fed at \$5 million a year into the racing industry for selected racing clubs and their infrastructure. The government thought that would be enough, but two weeks before the election it committed to something like our package and, I guess, took the heat out of it as an election issue.

[Quorum formed.]

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The racing and gaming portfolio provided a bit of a case study and insight into how election campaigns are run. We know that, I think unfortunately, the media concentrates heavily on the presidential style of election campaigns. They focus on the two leaders principally and almost exclusively throughout an election campaign. I do not know whether that is done from the point of view of trying to change the system or whether purely from laziness because the media can feed off one source of information throughout an election campaign without properly researching all the issues that go into making up a policy platform for a party. However, I suggest that it ties in with the discrepancy that I outlined earlier. When it comes to government versus opposition, the discrepancy in the availability of resources is too wide. It does not matter whether the Liberal Party or the Labor Party is in government; the same seems to apply. There is no even-handedness.

During this election campaign, we made all the running in the debate and policy development on racing and gaming. The Premier is commonly known to dislike and oppose gambling of any sort. During the election campaign, his minders obviously prompted him to get out there and demonstrate an interest in the area. He was photographed in a very stage-managed way buying Lotto tickets in a supermarket in a shopping complex in Bunbury. The Premier was then the television grab for the day when, accompanying the announcement on racing, he was shown placing a bet at a Totalisator Agency Board shop in Kalgoorlie where he announced the belated and overdue tax package, which more or less matched ours. That gives an insight into the shallowness of the election campaign and the fact that the whole exercise was stage-managed. I wonder how many times in real life the Premier walks into a TAB shop and places a bet or how many times he buys a Lotto ticket. Given his predisposition against gambling, I do not think it would be very often. There was a great artificiality about the whole thing, but I guess that is what we have come to expect from a government that relies on a stage management unit in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to project everything to the community. When we analyse and take a real look at the substance of the issue and ask the genuine question, did the government's commitment to the racing industry match ours, the answer is no. The government's commitment relies on a series of capital grants which, as I mentioned before, had been introduced as a bit of a bandaid measure to try to appease the racing industry and get it off its back. They re-jigged them from four \$5 million grants over four years to two 10-year grants. They were to go to select race clubs. Of course, they would have welcomed the injection of money. However, there were no positives in a general sense for the racing industry overall in providing better stake money or opportunities to spread and direct the money to where it is most needed. I have not received a satisfactory answer on whether the money - \$10 million this year and \$10 million next year - is new money in the system or a directive to Racing and Wagering WA to allocate money to capital funding. I am entitled to raise that confusing issue. It has been stated that it is new money, but I have not seen in black and white that that is the case. The opposition's tax package would have operated from this budget; that is, from 1 July. It would have contained significant benefits across the board and improved the amount of stake money. Stake money is the driver of the major interests of the racing industry. It filters down to all participants of the racing industry: the trainers, jockeys, owners, associations, feed merchants and everyone else involved.

A table was compiled by people in the racing industry that compared the amounts of money to be contributed by the government and the opposition. It covers a period of 10 years. There were some assumptions in the compilation. It assumed a \$1.1 billion TAB turnover in 2005-06 and an increase in turnover of five per cent per annum compounded. I suggest that that assumption is conservative. Figures I saw the other day bear that out. The turnover of the TAB is rising at a rate in excess of five per cent. The real figures widen the discrepancy between the government's commitments and our commitments. The comparison also assumes an average of 17 per cent gross profit on turnover and that reductions and payments start on 1 August 2005, which is the start of the new RAWWA financial year. In the first year, 2005-06, the injection of money into the racing industry through the government's commitment is \$10 million. The opposition's commitment would have been \$11 million. In the second year, 2006-07, the commitment by the government is \$10 million and our commitment would have been \$11.5 million. Let us not forget that there is a question mark about whether the government's \$10 million is new money or whether it is recycled money that is already available to the racing industry in one form or another. If it is recycled money, that is a gross fraud on the racing industry. If it is new money, which I have heard that it is although I have not seen it in black and white, it will be used on selected race clubs. Those clubs will welcome the money. However, it will not be available for the racing industry overall until 2007. I continue to question whether the \$20 million is new money because, during the election campaign, a figure was shown in the *Sunday Times* of 13 February 2005 on its election "spendometer". The newspaper tallied the commitments of the government with those of the opposition to make a comparison. The government's commitment was \$22.5 million. That is for 2007-08 and 2008-09, and does not include the \$20 million. However, the newspaper had costed the opposition's commitment at \$44 million. It was prepared to cost the opposition's commitment over four years but it was not prepared to cost the government's over four years. That is why the question mark arises.

According to the table, taxation changes come into force in the third year. This Parliament will have to approve legislation prior to that. As such, the government proposes to inject \$11.6 million. The opposition's proposal was to inject \$12 million. In the fourth year the government will inject \$11.72 million, and the opposition proposed to inject \$12.6 million. If we extrapolate the figures to a four-year total, the government's commitment will be \$42.88 million and the opposition's would have been \$47.1 million. The opposition would have contributed \$4 million more than the government. A 10-year projection shows that the government will inject \$125.33 million into the racing industry, but the opposition would have injected \$135.9 million. The opposition advocated a better proposal for the racing industry. That proposal would have allowed the racing industry to keep more of the money it generates. It was a very fair and comprehensive policy commitment. It equated the taxes on the racing industry and its activities to taxes on gaming activities at Burswood Casino. In anyone's language, if the two are compared side by side, it can be shown that the racing industry has been taxed at a far

higher rate than the Burswood Casino has over the past 20 years, which is when the casino came into existence. The opposition's policy is based on equity and it is very fair.

I commend the former minister, Hon Nick Griffiths, for getting the commitment he did during the election campaign. It was a belated result but it is in the interests of the racing industry and commonsense. It is a lesson well learnt, although there is not much I can do about it as the opposition spokesperson.

I have approached the industry to find out where its problems lie and what the government could and should be doing for it. The opposition made policy decisions that have led this debate. However, at the end of the day, the government has all the resources and the ability to trump the opposition. That is what happened.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: I have had some very enjoyable times through the racing industry, particularly parliamentary race days in Geraldton.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Yes. It is an enjoyable portfolio, which I am missing already. It is a very sociable portfolio that has many social and economic connections to the Western Australian community. I have had some very enjoyable times at the races, trotting meetings and greyhound meetings, both in the city and throughout the country. I thoroughly enjoyed visiting not only Ascot, Gloucester Park, and Cannington greyhounds but also meeting and working with country race clubs in Geraldton, Broome, Kalgoorlie, Albany, and the south west in places such as in Geraldton, Bunbury, Harvey and others. The industry is very important and its impact on the Australian psyche and the economy is often underestimated.

I learnt a lesson about the opposition trying to get its message across. I was continually frustrated by the chief racing writer for *The West Australian*, Peter Austin, who, in my mind, would never report the policy debate in an open and fair way. Despite my many attempts, he always referred to the government without putting all the stakes - a pun - on the table and lining up the policy commitments in a fair and just way. At times it was difficult to swallow that lesson about not being able to get a message across. I spent a lot of time, effort and money directly communicating to the racing industry as best I could. Of course, that comes back to the issue of resources, and how well such communication can be effected from a member's electoral office, which was the only resource I had. We could do it only to the best of our ability, but I think we got our message out to the racing industry at large and played a role in changing the future of the racing industry. I think that has already paid dividends through thoroughbred sale prices; stake money at the races, trots and greyhounds; and increased general interest, which is reflected in TAB turnover.

In the end, the previous minister, Hon Nick Griffiths, played a positive role in establishing Racing and Wagering Western Australia through legislation and then pushing the taxation reform. He was probably pushing it behind the scenes, but he did not get much cooperation from his colleagues until they realised that it might bite as an election issue. Then they came to the party. The breakthrough the racing industry wanted was achieved in the last two weeks of the campaign. I wish the racing industry well. I think it is headed for interesting and exciting times. I keep referring to it as an industry; it is more than just a sport. It has very important economic and social implications for a wide range of people in the Western Australian community.

I commend Hon Nick Griffiths for his role in that industry. I could examine his performance in his other ministerial portfolios, and refer to, for instance, the collapse of Devaugh Construction. As the Minister for Housing and Works, Hon Nick Griffiths oversaw a system that, frankly, did not work. It happened on his watch and the responsibility comes back to him. The Devaugh collapse gained a lot of publicity during the election campaign, particularly in Albany, where Devaugh was involved in the construction of the Albany justice complex. The government offered a rescue package for the subcontractors involved in that government contract. That was terrific for the Albany justice complex project and the many people in Albany involved in the building works. However, I believe some questions remain. I feel deeply sorry for the principals of Devaugh Construction, Margaret and Merv Waugh, whom I know well, because of their position in the situation that has unfolded. I know that they have been very distressed by it. I believe the situation arose because of the government's slack and careless administration - there is no other way of putting it. Devaugh was awarded the contract despite a Dun and Bradstreet report indicating there was a 76 per cent chance that people involved in the contract would not be paid. The company was obviously in some degree of strife before the contract was awarded. That is one aspect of it. The other aspect, of course, is that the government saw fit to rescue that one project in Albany. That was good for Albany and the subcontractors involved, but it was contrary to the government's action in a comparable situation involving Consolidated Constructions Pty Ltd and a roadworks contract in the north of the state, for which money is still owed. Of course, the government's rescue package also does not take account of other effects of the Devaugh collapse. I have spoken to many private contractors - bricklayers and others - working on projects such as the Broadwater building project in Dunsborough who are still owed money as a result of the Devaugh collapse. Other government contracts are involved. Devaugh built the Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School in Bunbury, for which money is still owing. Djidi Djidi opened two years ago and has been functioning for a long time. That is another side of the issue.

As minister, Hon Nick Griffiths also faced the allegations about and subsequent charging of Graham Burkett. I will not say any more about that except that the minister was shown to be asleep on his watch. That situation does not reflect very well on a person who aspires to be the President of this chamber.

I will summarise the broad comments I wanted to make on education - otherwise, I would run out of time as I also want to speak on some other things. I look forward to the challenges that the education and training portfolio present. I am pleased with the priority that the government has apparently attached to education. This priority has been reflected through the rhetoric in the Governor's speech and the Minister for Education and Training's ministerial statements and blustering answers in this chamber and presentations to the community. I merely say - I will not prejudge too much - that the minister has to get a bit more serious about things. That was adequately summarised in the article on page 16 of today's *The West Australian*, "Time for Ms Ravlich to axe jargon, clichés". I realise that the new minister is excited about the new portfolio. She is very happy to have the white car and all the people in the department running around after her; she is very flattered by the ministerial job. The community has already identified that the time has come for her to be a bit more serious about the situation. She simply cannot joke about things and try to make a cheap political point about every issue without providing some substance. I will give a couple of examples of incidents in this chamber. I have asked several questions, one of which is very simple: will the minister give an assurance that teachers and other public servants involved in education will, without victimisation, be able to give evidence and appear before the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education and Health, which has set up an inquiry into the proposed curriculum changes for years 11 and 12 that will be implemented over the next couple of years? She has ducked that question two or three times. I have put the question on notice, as that is the only way I believe I will get her to put something on the record on the matter. I know that I will not receive that answer for a month or so. In the meantime, I am told that the Curriculum Council is sending legal letters or threats to teachers involved in the education system who have been vocal about the changes. The council is legally imposing that those servants of the state pull their heads in and not make any comment.

The inquiry set up by this Legislative Assembly committee is, for want of a better and fuller inquiry, an adequate vehicle. This situation is gathering a head of steam. Enormous confusion and concern is evident in the community about the curriculum changes to years 11 and 12 that are due to be implemented next year. This committee announced, without the minister's prior knowledge or approval - she has admitted that - that it will mount a 12-month inquiry.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Two members are interjecting.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I'm back!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am pleased to see it.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We do not need a third.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I will summarise the concerns. The minister has a very stubborn streak. She has said bluntly that no change will be made to the timetable. Even though the changes are due to be implemented in seven months, and the inquiry will not report for 12 months, she has indicated that she will plough on regardless. That is not a very educated and sensible response.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Educated? He who sleeps during question time - don't speak to me about educated.

Several members interjected.

Hon Norman Moore: Take a valium!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The inquiry poses a few interesting questions.

Hon Graham Giffard: Is that your answer to everything - drugs?

Hon Norman Moore: In her case, yes; you're right.

The PRESIDENT: Order; otherwise, more people will have to take a Bex and have a good lie down.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Mogadon comes to mind, Mr President. The inquiry poses three interesting scenarios. The first scenario - I hope it is the right one - is that the inquiry is an open and honest response to obvious community concerns about the merits and implications of the changes. The second scenario is that, as it is a government-dominated committee, it will carry out a very superficial and sanitised examination of the concerns surrounding the Curriculum Council's changes.

Hon Graham Giffard: Your slurs know no bounds. You're now slurring the Assembly committee.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The parliamentary secretary will be an expert at slurs, coming from his background.

The second scenario - I hope it is not the case, and I have no reason to believe it is - is that the inquiry will be an attempt to sanitise the whole situation. If I wanted to slur, I could say that it will be an ultimate whitewash.

The third scenario is perhaps the most interesting. Hon Tom Stephens, whom we in this chamber all know, as he was here for a long time, is now a member of the Legislative Assembly, and he will be a very miffed man at the moment because he missed out on the ministry.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Like you missed out on the deputy leadership of the opposition.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The deputy leadership is irrelevant, quite frankly.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You've been crying for the last six weeks; you're like a broken man. You should just get on with the job.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The minister would not know what she is talking about.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I think Hon Barry House is bringing his speech to a conclusion and members should listen in silence.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am painting the third scenario. I do not know whether it is true, but I am sure somebody in the Labor Party knows. This is Hon Tom Stephens' revenge. We all know that Hon Tom Stephens is a very entertaining, exuberant and sometimes erratic character. He is inclined to be quite independent when he chooses to be. This could be his opportunity, given the consolation prize he was dished up as chairman of this standing committee, to open up a situation in the education and training portfolio, which he covered at one time. I know that Hon Tom Stephens also has some connections in the education industry. His motives could well be genuine. I hope they are because the issue needs examining. It will be an interesting inquiry as it unfolds because both the merits and implementation of the proposed changes need some assessment, review, inquiry and analysis. The minister will acknowledge that I have not bagged the proposed changes. I am merely making some comments on the questions raised about their implementation.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: What's your position, then?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: There are some questions -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: As opposition spokesperson, what's your position?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The Curriculum Council has not made -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Spineless! A shiver looking for a spine is the expression.

Hon Norman Moore: Is there any prospect that we can respectfully put you in the Assembly?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I invite the minister to read the article in today's *The West Australian*. Has she read it?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Yes.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: It is not my comment; it is the views of a public commentator writing in this newspaper about the minister's propensity to mouth off at everything without any content or substance.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will direct his comments to the Chair and not engage the minister in side conversation.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The Curriculum Council, whether it is right or wrong - I am not passing judgment on that matter - has not at this stage made the case for these changes to the community, to the teaching fraternity or to schools. It has not made a case to justify the merits of the changes, not provided resource material or necessary professional development - the professional development made available has been pitiful. Let us not forget that the changes deal with not only the state school system, but also the private school system. The professional development provided to private schools has been non-existent. The Curriculum Council has become a closed and defensive organisation about its agenda. Either the council does not want to, or is not prepared to, listen to any other points of view about either the merits or the implementation of the changes. Concern is being expressed by an enormous array of people involved in education throughout Western Australia. If the minister gets off her bike and talks to a few people involved in delivering education in this state, rather than only to public servants, she might start to realise that there is concern about a real issue here. The proposed changes will not succeed if they do not have the support and acceptance of the people who will deliver them. Those people are the teachers, and the schools at which they teach. It will fail, whether it is good or bad or right or wrong.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: But what is your position?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: My position is that the minister should instantly call for a moratorium on the implementation of these changes until the case is made.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: What is your position?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: That is my position; I have just said it. The minister cannot even understand English.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It is my second language, don't forget.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! We do not want to descend into a shouting match.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The position is pretty obvious. Given the current concerns and difficulties with -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: When you become minister, you can do what you like.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Is that the minister's attitude - when I become minister, I can do what I like?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Absolutely. You can determine whether to have a moratorium. You've got something to strive for, but you've got a long way to go.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I have been asked for my position. I am saying that if I were the minister, I would call for a moratorium on these changes to years 11 and 12 right now. A great deal of concern, dissent and confusion surrounds these changes. We are not saying that we will bag the lot and throw them all in the bin; we are saying that we need to make a responsible move and have a good look at these changes.

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