

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 1 May.

MR KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Health) [1.14 pm]: It is with a profound sense of the honour, respect and responsibility that has been afforded me by the electors of Yokine that I rise to give my first speech as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia. I thank each and every one of them for the confidence, trust and faith that they have placed in me, and I assure them that I will do my utmost to represent their interests in Parliament over the next four years. I also wish to pay special tribute to my campaign director, Sharryn Jackson, the Labor candidate for Hasluck, and my campaign manager, Bruce Campbell-Fraser. They, together with a tireless group of unsung heroes - that is, the special volunteers from the community, the unions and a host of community organisations - helped me week in, week out for 10 long months to ensure my election.

True believers such as Ed Hutchinson, Judy Webber, Katrina Monteau, Steed and Karen Farrell, Patrick Behan, Fred Birnie and many more pounded the pavement and walked the Yokine beat alongside me doing what parliamentarians must always do, but what some were not doing, that is, listening to the people. All parliamentarians must do that; however, some did not. The electorate gave the Labor Party a clear message and a mandate to repair the damage caused by eight years of an uncaring, conservative Government. Above all, I thank my family, Tim, Joanne, Richard, Rebecca and especially my wife, Susan, who, for over 37 years, has been the wind beneath my wings. When entering into public life, politicians must enter into a partnership. My wife tells me that behind every successful man is a very surprised woman. I am not sure whether that is politically correct but, in my case, it is probably true.

I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election and appointment as the Speaker of this House. As a new member I may seek your guidance from time to time and I sincerely hope that you do not take the advice proffered by Theodore Roosevelt to his Speaker that, in his case, he speak softly and carry a big stick. Being mindful of my previous occupation, if I am unsure about something, I may say to you, Mr Speaker, "Hello, hello, hello, what's going on here?" I come to this place with an appreciation of the importance and impact of good law and a real experience of the difficulty of applying poorly framed legislation. After 35 years as a law enforcer, I consider it a privilege to become a law-maker. Never has the need for good government been greater, and never was that more evident to me than when, as a police officer, I experienced every possible human situation and some situations that I might say were inhuman. No other occupation, save that of perhaps a nurse or a doctor, touches the extremes of the human condition like that of a police officer; therefore, my qualifications for this new role have been earned in the university of life.

I also congratulate my parliamentary colleague, Carol Martin, the first indigenous woman to become a member of this or any other Australian Parliament. Shortly, I will talk about my passion for equity, fairness and inclusion. Throughout my career in the Police Force I worked with Aboriginal communities. My first posting was to Mt Barker in 1967 where, as part of my duties, I was the Inspector of Natives. The state of the native reserve was nothing short of a scandal. Sadly, even today, little has changed in some of the places I have visited. I enforced many of those rules to which Ms Martin referred. Unlike some members, I have no problem in saying sorry. In the twenty-first century, I like to think we live in an enlightened world, one of understanding, tolerance and compassion. It has been said that the past is another country; yet, unless we journey from that country along the pathway of reconciliation, how can we travel into the brave new country we call the future? I thank my colleague, the member for Kimberley, and the other traditional owners of this land for showing me the way. Today is a date with destiny for me. It is the culmination of a journey of almost 56 years that has brought me from the coalfields of south Wales to what I believe is one of the great cities of the world. My father, Charlie Kucera, met and married Norah Williams while they were both fighting against the Nazis who had driven my father from his native Czechoslovakia and who were attempting to overrun Wales, the land of Norah's father. I was the first of their three children. By coincidence, they were both stationed with the Australian 10 Squadron, flying Sunderlands from Pembroke Dock in south Wales. The mates they made and the friendships they forged led them to Perth in 1964, almost 20 years later, where they made a new life for me, my younger brother Richard and my sister Janet. However, it was my childhood spent in the Welsh valleys, the birthplace of the industrial revolution and unionism, that instilled in me a set of principles that I have followed fiercely: Fairness, equity, democratic freedom and the fundamental right of everyone to a decent job and a quality of life, which they choose for themselves, through their own efforts. These have been my priorities.

In the words of another Welshman, Aneurin Bevan, "the language of priorities is the religion of socialism" - in the language of Australia, a fair go! My father went back to Czechoslovakia in 1945 to what was left of his home, only to escape again when the Soviets closed the borders. He returned to Wales as a refugee, and we grew up in a postwar era when everyone from Europe was viewed with suspicion. As a smallgoods

manufacturer, Charlie's shop became the focal point for many hundreds of Jewish, Balkan and east European refugees and displaced persons.

In the early days I was the son of a "reffe". My mates were Jewish, Polish, Latvian or whatever group we mixed in with. That period of my life made me realise that I would never just practise tolerance but rather would always seek to understand and accept difference, and celebrate it! History is littered with the tragic results of communities that think, selfishly, that they can afford to exclude others from the quality of life that they themselves demand. Norah and Charlie, my parents, instilled in me that thirst for social justice. Growing up in a house that was always filled with Europe's discarded peoples and listening to their stories made me determined that, no matter what, I would always seek out roles in life where I could make a difference. I hope that Norah and Charlie are somehow listening today because they were right, and those principles are as valid to me today as they were then.

Last year I again discovered the joys of listening to people with similar stories when I began knocking on the doors of those in the Yokine electorate. I met again with Tom Milevski and Vic Radis and their fellow countrymen at the Macedonian community club. I met my Greek constituents, such as the Limnios family, and I enjoyed the great Turkish coffee that Vasi made me at the Aegean Cafe while we argued about politics. I relived some childhood memories when I visited the synagogue and listened to the wonderful men and women at the Maurice Zeffert Memorial Centre for the Aged tell their tales. I then revisited some of the horror of the children of Terezin in the exhibition that Rabbis Freilich and Coleman so thoughtfully showed me through. How fortunate I am to be in a position to represent such a culturally rich and diverse electorate: The hardworking Italian community, with people like the Minnitti family, my Chinese and Vietnamese friends, and the newest constituents from the Horn of Africa who comprise my many Islamic friends whom I have come to understand and respect. Yokine is Australia in microcosm, the multicultural success story that makes our country renowned among the lands.

When I came to Australia nearly 38 years ago, it was a very different community. Yokine has been intertwined with my life almost from the beginning of my Australian journey. I met my wife, Susan, just six months after arriving. Her family had lived in North Perth and Mt Hawthorn since the early part of the century. My wife, as a member of the Ptolomey family, grew up in North Perth and went to Kyilla Primary School, while the whole family, including her brother Robert and her father, Mick, were one of the mainstay families of the West Perth Football Club. Robert played first ruck alongside Blue Foley, and Uncle Fred was the president. My wife's mum, Vi, was one of three sisters who all married Mt Hawthorn boys. In the early part of our married life, we lived in that electorate in the same area until we transferred to the bush. We came home to North Perth nearly 10 years ago when we returned to the family home, and we have seen the rebirth of the electorate as young families have moved back in. We have also seen the electorate change as the City of Stirling and the Town of Vincent have moved into the twenty-first century. It is not only my electorate but also my home.

My home and the homes of those who live in my electorate are, like many others in recent years, now constantly coming under increasing pressure from the three key issues on which the Labor Party essentially campaigned: Health, the education of our children and our safety and security. This is the very foundation of the quality of our life. Driving this pressure has been the headlong attack on the basic fabric of our community underscored by the mantra of economic rationalism - a philosophy that has hurt many Western Australians over the past eight years of conservative government. The most common question that I have been asked so far has been why did I leave a perfectly good career to become a politician. I often give the same answer as General Charles De Gaulle, "Politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians". However, now I am one, seriously!

The reality, however, is that people are now viewing politics with a degree of cynicism. I found when doorknocking that people have a sense of alienation and a very real view that collectively government is not listening. Increasingly over the past few years I have come to realise that the key determinants of crime were far beyond the capacity of the police or the prison system to fix. I believe that every one of us who seeks political office has an absolute obligation to make a difference. That is why I stand here today. Former United States President Lyndon Johnson, whom one would hardly describe as a social reformer, recognised that the key causes of crime in the United States were want, ignorance prejudice, disease, unemployment and poverty, and he was right. Coppers and courts cannot fix those problems. Only an effective and a committed Government can. Rest assured that the Gallop Labor Party is committed to be effective and compassionate.

Let us analyse these key causes for a moment. Ignorance and prejudice result from a lack of awareness and education. Disease is a product of poverty and poor health services. Want is caused by unemployment and inequity in wealth distribution. Unemployment is a direct product of either poor government policy or, more latterly, the absolute insistence on economic rationalism and the pursuit of the almighty dollar. It is now accepted that if these social determinants exist - poor education, poor health, unemployment and inequitable wealth distribution - then according to Lyndon Johnson we will have high crime rates. One does not need to be a rocket scientist to work out why we in this State have high crime rates and why these key issues - health,

education, community safety and unemployment - are those that troubled the Western Australian electors the most.

Trying to deal with these key issues was a fundamental part of my life before I came to this place. The Police Force was a great career, but it was the realisation that for 35 years I had been dealing with the results and not the causes of crime that made me undertake what I suppose one could call my seachange. The real watershed for me came in 1991 when I returned to work in Wales as part of a Churchill Fellowship and saw at first-hand after 27 years what Thatcher and her brand of economic rationalism had done to the green valleys of my birth. I spoke with the miners, and the police. I saw how the policies were splitting whole communities. I went to Corby in Lancashire and the northern towns where coppers were fighting with their own. This cannot happen in Australia, I said, but it did, and it has.

Throughout my previous career I took great pride in being apolitical. I kept my principles, I worked with many members on both sides of the House and with ministers and I went to great lengths to support the Government of the day regardless of its persuasion. However, the final crunch came a few years back during the waterfront dispute when my young police officers had to stand between balaclava-clad minders, with their dogs, and the ordinary men and women of this State. At the end of the day, we live in a community of real people who are just trying to get on with their daily lives, not in an economy.

The people of Yokine, my constituents, have the same expectations and aspirations, for they are no different from any other community within this great State. They expect us as the representatives of their democracy to deliver on the fundamental social contract that is demanded of government. My priority, which I pledged to the electors of Yokine, is to represent their local interests and most importantly to listen to their views. Supported by my party, I made four clear commitments: To rebuild the Mt Lawley Senior High School; to reduce the health bureaucracy and put the money saved into patient care; to boost state police numbers by 250 officers; and to stop all logging in old-growth forests.

On the first commitment, Christine Richardson and the long-suffering members of the parents and citizens association of Mt Lawley Senior High School, together with the principal, Ian Murray, have struggled for many years to produce some of the most talented students in Western Australia. The previous Government and the local member made hollow promises for eight long, frustrating years to do something about what was the most neglected high school in the State. My thanks go to the sheer persistence of Christine, Ian and their colleagues in placing this at the top of the list of issues in Yokine. Through the efforts of Diana Warnock, the former member for Perth, John Hyde, the current member for Perth, and my colleague Hon Alan Carpenter, Minister for Education, we announced recently the \$17 million rebuild of that great school. Education is a fundamental right of all Western Australians. Mt Lawley Senior High School is the only public high school in the electorate, and its level of neglect is an indictment of the previous Government. It can now return to its former glory and continue to be a centre of excellence, producing well-educated students.

Similarly, many local primary schools have suffered years of neglect. David Rose, Craig Heath and the wonderful staff and parents of Yokine Primary School do not have sewerage toilets at their school, yet the sewerage line runs past their front door. The basic care and maintenance that once was the province of the cleaners and the caretakers in our schools has almost disappeared. The fabric of the school community has been undermined so that contract firms can profit while our schools fall down or burn down at the hands of vandals. What has been the cost of privatisation? Care and compassion has gone for some meagre savings, but at what cost? It is estimated that vandalism and arson in our state schools last year cost \$6.4 million. How many cleaners, caretakers and crossing guards would we get for that, Mr Speaker, and how much safer would our children be?

I had no idea when I pledged my second commitment that I would be Minister for Health in the Gallop Government. However, during my election campaign I saw the impact on my constituents of the challenges that providing public health services presents. The poor quality of life of someone like Rae Hedley of Tuart Hill, a proud grandmother, demanded that she have a hip replacement. On five occasions she arrived at hospital, only to be turned away. On the sixth occasion, after my intervention, she was successfully treated in the private system, paid for by public funding.

My first action as Health minister was to abolish the Metropolitan Health Service Board, and I will ensure that the estimated \$4 million savings are put back into patient care. Last week I announced the first phase of a review of the health bureaucracy that will tackle the challenges ahead. In the past seven weeks I managed to visit almost all public hospitals in the metropolitan area and many country facilities. I found no-one who does not want to excel in our system. I was extremely proud a few weeks ago to present Peter Campos and the staff of Osborne Park Hospital, next to my electorate, with a well-deserved full accreditation. From my almost daily personal interaction on the floors of the wards in the hospitals I believe that we have the basic underpinning of what could be a great health system. However, imagination, vision, leadership and, above all, compassion are

the four ingredients essential to accomplish a return to that greatness. That will be our Government's mantra as we embark on a journey of repair and reform.

On my third pledge, my colleague Hon Michelle Roberts, Minister for Police, has taken the first step towards recruiting those police officers, to ensure that the safety of our entire community is a priority. However, even more important is the vision of our Premier in establishing in his own department a social policy unit and a cabinet subcommittee whose principal role is to cooperatively address the social determinants of crime, that I spoke of earlier.

Ensuring that government policy allows young Western Australians to reach out for their dreams and aspirations will be a key element of this Government. It is essential that our community volunteers - the Jim Easterbrooks of this world and the committee of the Yokine Little Athletics Club - be supported; that Norma Brooks, who has coached literally thousands of young people in the little swimming pool behind Tuart College, including greats like Louise Sauvage, are recognised, together with Lionel Warhurst and Jim Bradley from the Tuart Hill Swimming Club. Their tireless efforts for almost 30 years ensure that the fabric of our society is continuously renewed. They and many other countless volunteers, especially in this the International Year of Volunteers, make my electorate of Yokine a great place in which to live and work. Respect for others and the understanding of the true meaning of our community are the greatest weapons we have against crime.

Mr Speaker, my final pledge is to ensure the future of a wonderful part of our great State - native forests. It is a matter of record that our Government has commenced that process, and I again thank the people of Yokine for giving us that mandate.

I began my Address-in-Reply speech by emphasising my journey through the rich tapestry of Australian life. Last Wednesday morning on Anzac Day, our national day of remembrance, I stood at the Osborne Park RSL alongside Fred Birnie and Bill Sullivan, President of the Osborne Park subbranch of the Returned and Services League of Australia. Later I attended a dedication at the Mt Hawthorn memorial with former state RSL president, Ken Murphy, and the family of the late Jack Axford, VC, MM. It reminded me of the awesome responsibility that each of us accepts in this first session of the thirty-sixth Parliament of Western Australia. We have inherited the legacy the Anzacs left us to ensure the continuation of the wonderful institution that is our parliamentary democracy.

A few years ago I asked a young woman, a political refugee from South America, what she thought of police officers and government. Her reply was "shiny black boots". I was a bit puzzled about that and asked her why. She said that that was all she remembered of the night they took away her brother, and he never came back. Mr Speaker, it is this institution that now protects that young woman. The laws we make honour the legacy left by the Anzacs and shield her from the totalitarian regime that my father fought against and the regime that took her brother. It is said that many are called, but few are chosen. I am proud that the people of Yokine chose me. My hope is to live up to their expectations; my desire is to make a difference for the betterment of their lives; and my goal is to serve the people of Western Australia to the best of my ability. I look forward to becoming a part of the great tradition that this Parliament represents.

[Applause.]

MR EDWARDS (Greenough) [1.39 pm]: Mr Speaker, as a new member, I regard it a privilege to join this Chamber as the member for Greenough. It is a particular honour to follow in the footsteps of three distinguished former parliamentarians - Kevin Minson, Reg Tubby and Sir David Brand. I mention these three specifically as they have been part of the political landscape since I have been a resident of Western Australia for the past 34 years. I believe that all three former members brought dignity, a genuine desire to serve and a good commonsense attitude into this Parliament. I hope I can aspire to those same ideals.

I became a member of the Liberal Party because I believe it is the party that best represents the broad church of politics. It does not pander to sectional interests, nor is it a party of single issues. I wish to place on record my thanks to all the people who helped in my campaign to ensure that Liberal representation continued in the electorate of Greenough, in particular Joe North, who has been a good friend and mentor.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to the very important and influential office of Speaker of the House. I also congratulate all new and returned members on their election, particularly Carol Martin, our first indigenous woman member of Parliament. I recognise that achievement.

I admit to being slightly bemused at being a member of this place. The road from an upbringing as a farmer's son in the depths of the county of Hampshire in England to the position of an elected member of the Western Australian Parliament has been full of the unexpected - sometimes difficult, always interesting, often surprising, but infinitely rewarding. I came to this State as a young man with no great ambitions or directions. However, I had a desire to work and I was prepared to grasp opportunities when they arose. I believe those opportunities are still available. However, it is incumbent upon those who sit in this place to ensure that the deliberations and

decisions made give life and a future for those opportunities for the benefit and encouragement of young people. I seek from this Parliament those benefits and encouragement for the young people in the communities of my electorate of Greenough.

The electorate of Greenough is one of the oldest in the State. Its boundaries have remained comparatively unchanged, although some adjustments have occurred over the past 10 years. Greenough has an area of approximately 31 979 square kilometres, stretching from the Murchison River in Kalbarri in the north to the pastoral areas beyond Mullewa and Morawa in the east. The southern boundary lies halfway between Morawa and Perenjori across to the coast between Dongara and Green Head. The make-up of both the population and commercial activity of Greenough is diverse. The contrasts are reflected within the industries and lifestyles that exist between the city of Geraldton on the coast and the country towns in the agricultural and pastoral regions. The immediate hinterland of Geraldton, which is situated in the Greenough electorate, is mainly new residential development made up of city style blocks and rural style country living. There is a mix of commercial activity from mining operations to service provision for machinery used in the agricultural and fishing industries and other smaller business. These industries provide reasonable employment; however, the Geraldton-Greenough region lacks a big name industry that will sustain future employment and benefits for young people.

The traditional industries have been agriculture and fishing; however, more recently, other industries have developed, to which I will refer later. The agricultural statistics for 1996-97 show agricultural products from the seven local government areas within the electorate were worth some \$366 million. This is not an insignificant figure. Today's rising beef and sheep prices suggest that the farming community in the Greenough electorate will enjoy better times and prosperity. However, in general that will not be the case. Some of the long-time and well-established farming enterprises in the electorate are re-appraising their operations and budgets. The low value of the dollar, high on-farm costs, rising fuel prices and competition against generous subsidies in overseas markets are having a grievous impact on these enterprises. This is also reflected in the retail sector and service industries of rural towns that service the farming communities.

It is imperative that people who choose to live and work in rural areas not be disadvantaged for making that choice. They should have reason to expect the same quality of education, health, social and other benefits that their city cousins enjoy. The farming and rural communities in my electorate contain some of the most efficient and knowledgeable people in those professions. However, the effects of problems such as salinity, soil erosion and uncertain climatic conditions are beyond the immediate control and influence of those people. The sum of these factors adds up to the responsibility of the State and the nation to recognise the ever-increasing value and importance of agriculture within rural communities.

I referred earlier to other activities in the Greenough electorate. The fishing industry operating from Dongara, Geraldton, the Abrolhos Islands and Kalbarri is a major income earner for the region. The industry has successfully developed markets for live and dead crayfish, scallops and scale fish from growing wetline fishing. It is currently in a healthy and sustainable position and is one of the best examples of a well-managed fishery. However, some professional fishermen have raised concerns about the increasing influence of recreational fishing. This issue must be addressed in the future. The fishing industry has enjoyed an almost unchallenged tenure over the Houtman Abrolhos Islands. However, the growing tourism industry, which has much more potential for Western Australia, is seeking to develop some limited projects on and around the islands. I have been told that given the right weather conditions, the reefs in the vicinity can match the visual impact of the Great Barrier Reef.

There are enormous opportunities for the growth of tourism in Greenough and the whole of Western Australia through the expansion of natural and heritage attractions. Eco-tourism and adventure activities are probably the fastest growing facets of the industry. Abseiling, whitewater rafting, horse riding, wind surfing, station and farm stays, mustering and participating in on-farm operations are all part of tourist activities that visitors can enjoy within the boundaries of the Greenough electorate. Heritage buildings and sites in the electorate, of which there are many, add another dimension to tourism and should be given more recognition for their historic value and importance as part of this State's heritage. Cultural tourism is not a term that Western Australia has yet fully understood or come to accept. There are significant community and financial benefits to be realised through the promotion of cultural tourism.

Tourism, fishing and agriculture could be seen as natural bedfellows. The growth and interest in aquaculture, marron, trout, table grapes, viticulture, cut flowers and the olive industry as boutique businesses complement tourism, fishing and farming activities. I am encouraged by the confidence of those people between Dongara and Northampton who have seen the investment potential to diverge from traditional uses of water and land. However, for those new projects to succeed, expand and bring a return, government agencies must be flexible about the costs and charges for the provision of power, water and other services. The potential for production and downstream processing from these alternative enterprises should not be underestimated.

As a country member of Parliament, I express my concern about the proposed rationalisation of rural seats across the State and the effect this would have on the further erosion of the country people's voice in this place. This important issue is relevant to my electors.

As with many of my parliamentary colleagues, I spent a number of years in local government. I acknowledge the influential role that local government played in my journey to become the member for Greenough. For those members who have had the rewarding experience of serving communities in local government, the step onto the state government stage seems a natural progression. I had the privilege to be president of the Western Australian Municipal Association. However, during my tenure it was noticeable that apart from a few former local government members from across the broad spectrum of Parliament, not too many recognised the grassroots local government that probably helped them be elected to this place. I do not mean to be critical; however, I believe there is a lot more common ground between state and local government. There needs to be better understanding of the benefits and roles that both parties can play in advancing Western Australia. Local government in rural Western Australia is often the glue that holds country communities together. In the metropolitan area, councils have great influence on the quality of the financial, recreational and public lifestyles that their communities enjoy. I seek to have some influence on this issue.

I look forward to the challenge of giving good representation to my electorate of Greenough, of remembering who elected me and why, and of helping to make a difference to this great State as a member of Parliament. I thank the members for the courtesy and attention extended to me during my address.

[Applause.]

Amendment to Motion

Mr EDWARDS: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but regrets to inform Your Excellency that the Premier has failed to act appropriately, openly or in the interests of good government following the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure's loss of her drivers licence for the third time for speeding, following two previous convictions for drink driving.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [1.49 pm]: This is a significant amendment, which concerns not only the minister in question but also the Premier and this Parliament. In the lead up to the recent election, the Labor Party campaigned very strongly on the issues of ministerial conduct and accountability. As we are all aware, they undoubtedly proved to be significant issues in the election. Those issues involved the conduct of ministers, their accountability and, in the case of misconduct or improper conduct, the form of disciplinary action that should be taken. Indeed, during the election campaign the Premier boasted about his setting new standards for ministers. He referred to benchmarks for Governments across Australia. Remarks attributed to the Premier in *The Australian* immediately after the election result was known were that it is appropriate that the Government start on the right foundation and that foundation must be proper standards of accountability.

It did not take long for the integrity and credibility of both the ministers and the Premier to be tested - it occurred within the first month of the new Government. As members are aware, that test involved the driving record of a senior minister, the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, who is the member for Armadale.

There are two broad issues. The first is the driving record and the conduct of the minister and the second is the response to the public by both the minister and the Premier. I stress that I am referring to the second of those issues. I am not about to dwell on the driving record of the minister. This amendment is about her response and the response of the Premier, which is of concern to this Parliament. However, for the record - the facts deserve to be placed on the public record - I will briefly summarise an atrocious driving record.

In 1976, the minister was fined for careless driving, which apparently involved hitting a parked car. In 1986 the minister lost her licence for drink driving. In 1994 the minister lost her licence a second time for drink driving. In 2001 - this is the event that sparked this issue - she lost her licence for a third time for speeding. That caused her demerit points to reach 12, which exceeds the limit. Those facts are not for debate here; nonetheless a member of Parliament, now a senior minister, has a record of drinking and driving and of speeding. That is a matter of fact.

On Monday, 5 March, a public holiday, the minister was detected driving at 98 kilometres an hour in a 60-kilometre an hour zone on the outskirts of Pinjarra. She was obviously enjoying the freedom of her new ministerial V8 car.

Several members interjected.

Mr BARNETT: Members opposite may laugh. Speeding is a serious issue. Sadly, many people in this State have lost their lives or suffered serious injury from the fatal combination of drinking or substance abuse and speeding on our roads. I do not make light of that; nor should members opposite make light of it.

Mr Carpenter: Tell us how many times you have been caught speeding.

Mr BARNETT: I would be happy to at any time.

On Tuesday, 6 March the minister admitted publicly to losing her licence. She said that the four demerit points for a speeding offence, added to her existing demerit points, would cause her to lose her licence.

My point is the conduct of the minister. I will not harp about her driving record. She admitted the loss of her licence. The public, as was I and no doubt most other members in this Chamber, was left with the impression that a minister who had lost her licence for speeding - which can happen to many people - was admitting it publicly and being honest. That impression was largely accepted by the community.

What was my response as Leader of the Opposition? The Press was excited about the issue - here was the first Gallop government minister to be in serious trouble - and looking for me to make all sorts of extreme claims or statements. I made it clear that I did not call for her resignation. However, I made the observation that a minister responsible for transport, including road safety, who had lost her licence, should at the very least have taken away from her the responsibility for road safety, if not also transport. That was not an extreme response. We did not call for the minister's scalp or her sacking. What a sharp contrast that was to the behaviour of members opposite when they were in Opposition.

What was the response of the Premier? *The Australian* further reported that the Premier's response was to praise the minister for being open and to say that it was not a sackable offence. That was very modest. He went out of his way to point out how good and how open the minister had been and what a standard she had shown. The minister certainly contrived to be open and remorseful. She even tried to trivialise the issue. On television on 6 March 2001 the Premier said that should she lose her licence again, she would be sacked from Cabinet. The clear implication of that was that her loss of licence was an isolated incident. That could well have been the end of the issue had the minister been honest and had the Premier done what he claimed during and preceding the election campaign he would do. On Wednesday, 7 March on ABC radio when questioned in an interview with Liam Bartlett the minister asked -

Should I stand down because I've had a parking . . . a speeding infringement?

My assessment is that that is not the standard the public requires; it requires openness and people to admit when they have made an error and to make an example of themselves. However, the minister called it a speeding infringement. While pretending to be remorseful, the minister was implying that it was minor, that she had been open and that it would be broadly accepted.

Dr Gallop: What an insult. What sort of standards do you set with your commentary? It is pathetic.

Mr BARNETT: A much better standard than you, my friend. Had the minister been open? No she had not. At the end of that interview, which I and many other people heard, Mr Bartlett asked, almost as an afterthought, whether that was the first time the minister had lost her licence. The response was -

No, I lost my licence in '94, I think it was, yeah, '94.

Even then when the truth was starting to unravel and the minister could have admitted that was the third time she had lost her licence, she chose not to. When she admitted to losing her licence in 1994 she did not take the opportunity to admit she had lost it for drink driving.

Ms MacTiernan: How did you find out? As soon as I was asked, I told the public.

Mr BARNETT: The minister failed to admit it; she failed to be open and accountable and the Premier failed to act.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr BARNETT: The minister will get her turn. Calling the minister to order could be your first job in office, Mr Speaker. What was the Opposition's response at that time? By that stage, people were baying for blood and for the minister to be sacked. Again I took a responsible position. I did not call for her to be sacked from Cabinet.

Mr Ripper: What a statesman!

Mr BARNETT: Yes. I said that she should be removed from the transport portfolio because she was a bad role model by not being open and by not setting a proper example as a senior minister of the Crown responsible for transport and road safety.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

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