

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2003

Third Reading

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont - Treasurer) [5.20 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR A.D. MARSHALL (Dawesville) [5.21 pm]: I am pleased to reflect on the budget. Every year I look forward to the Estimates Committee hearings because they give every member a chance to challenge the budget and to consider how Western Australian taxpayers' money is being spent. This Labor Government has increased water, sewerage and drainage charges, motor vehicle registration fees, probate fees, payroll tax, court fees, land tax, public transport fares, drivers licence fees, motor vehicle third party insurance costs and stamp duty on homes and cars. I register my disappointment that little of the money raised by those extra taxes filtered through to Mandurah. Sure, some moneys were allocated to Mandurah projects such as the Peel Health Campus, the Perth-Mandurah rail link, the Mandurah Ocean Marina, the infill sewerage program in Falcon, the new bus terminal, mosquito runnelling and the second stage of the Mandurah Senior College. However, all those projects were started by the Liberal Government and were part of the forward estimates. Let us not kid ourselves: building the Mandurah Ocean Marina has proved to be a goldmine for both Governments. For three years I was on the task force that saw the first stage developed. It was anticipated that the first stage of the marina would be covered by government moneys through the sale of land resumed around that area. LandCorp has done extremely well. Only four years ago it was estimated that reclaiming the land and selling the blocks would fetch an average of \$100 000. Some blocks have been sold for \$180 000 and even \$300 000. To say that money is being put into the second stage of the marina is laughable because the Government is earning money from that project.

There was no good money news for Mandurah in the budget. No money was allocated for the Kwinana Freeway extension and the Peel deviation, both of which are priority projects for the region. The Falcon police station was again overlooked and no money was allocated to the much-needed Mandurah mental health service. Once again, Mandurah is seen as a low priority by the Gallop Government.

An allocation of \$2.5 million was made to the second stage of the Mandurah Senior College. On behalf of parents and some of the teaching staff at the college, during the Estimates Committee I asked whether any of the money would be spent on sporting facilities at the college. The reply was an abrupt no. Further questions revealed that year 11 and 12 colleges throughout the State also do not have sporting facilities. That is disturbing and discriminating. The new look education system of bringing year 11 and 12 students under one roof is full of merit; however, the lack of continuity with sport and recreation programs must be addressed. Year 11 and 12 colleges now exist at Mindarie, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Mandurah. Compared with many metropolitan schools, these regional schools are being discriminated against, which is wrong. Primary school students and students in years 8 to 10 have physical education teachers. They participate in organised sport and have on site the appropriate facilities, such as ovals, cricket pitches and tennis courts. Applecross Senior High School specialises in tennis; Lynwood Senior High School in soccer; Willetton Senior High School in basketball; Como Secondary College in golf and hockey; Kelmscott Senior High School in soccer; and Duncraig Senior High School in triathlons. In fact, all those five high schools in the metropolitan area have on-site sporting facilities. However, the new senior colleges in the outer metropolitan areas have nothing at all. That is not fair. Other senior colleges also specialise in a variety of sports but the programs are not accredited by the Department of Education. Sport is available at Mandurah Senior College through outdoor and physical education. However, if students take the units, buses are required to take them to other sporting facilities around the town. This is expensive in terms of costs and time. The school has tennis courts and a basketball court but no gymnasium or oval. The Eastern Goldfields Senior College has no sporting facilities at all and relies on middle school and community facilities. Mindarie Senior College has a fitness centre and a basketball court. Sport is not compulsory for year 11 and 12 students at these schools. That is unjustifiable. Physical activity is important for teenagers to build strong bodies, prevent obesity and diabetes, manage hormonal and mood swings, let out aggression and boredom, and develop discipline. It is well known that being fit and healthy helps young people study better. It is important that we keep students involved in sport so that keeping fit becomes a way of life. The Premier's physical activity task force was introduced to counter student inactivity. Why then has that policy not been adopted in the senior colleges? The University of Western Australia has an enormous range of sporting facilities. Tennis, squash, volleyball, basketball and netball are available on site. Only five minutes away, McGillvray Oval caters for cricket, football and athletics. Primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions in the metropolitan area have sporting facilities. Why then has no money been spent on sporting facilities for the new year 11 and 12 college campuses? I do not get it. I cannot understand why the question I

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asked during the estimates hearings about the sport and fitness of year 11 and 12 students in the outer metropolitan and regional areas was dealt with so flippantly and without compassion. By not supplying sporting facilities to the new senior colleges, the Gallop Government is failing every 16-year-old and 17-year-old who attends those schools. To lose the discipline of training as a 16-year-old or 17-year-old is not good or proper education. I expect to see an allocation in next year's budget to counter this laxity.

I hope that next year there will be a better budget allocation for Mandurah's water and rivers. The Peel region boasts the largest waterways in Western Australia. That makes it a tremendous recreational area and tourist attraction. We do not want a carbon copy of what has occurred with the Swan River. We need a better allocation for coast care and beach erosion. There is also that much-touted Peel regional park, something that both Governments have talked about over the past eight years. Now that the Peel regional plan is in place, it is time to act. In terms of recreation and the environment, nothing was put in place to get the regional park under way.

I would like to see money allocated to reopen the Mandurah Aboriginal affairs office. One of Western Australia's largest Nyoongah groups lives in Mandurah and Pinjarra. The Government talks about trying to give our indigenous people every chance to succeed but then it closes our Aboriginal affairs office. That is another black mark against the Government. I would like to see it reopened.

I would also like to see the full-scale deep sewerage program that the Liberals introduced brought back and financed into action, because prime land with some avenues of housing is surrounded by pristine waterways and estuaries on one side and the Indian Ocean on the other. We are cutting back on infill sewerage. In the old days when people went down for holidays on their quarter-acre blocks, septic tanks were installed without any planning. Over the past eight years there has been a population surge in not only Mandurah but also Dawesville, which is the largest regional country area in Western Australian. Mandurah has around 14 000 people while Dawesville has about 19 500 people. Septic tanks are everywhere, and that represents a health problem to the residents and the waterways.

I appeal to the ministers responsible to deeply consider spending some money in the Mandurah-Dawesville area. I was disgusted with this year's allocation. I remind the Government that the most important project in the entire Peel region is the Peel deviation, which must be started by 2005. I have been allocated 15 minutes for this speech; however, I could spend an hour and 15 minutes explaining why the Peel deviation should start immediately. This Government keeps dodging its responsibility. More than 15 000 vehicles travel along Old Coast Road on the way to Bunbury each day. Mandurah has become the gateway to the south west. However, Old Coast Road in one area comprises only a two-lane bridge. It must cater for all that traffic. It is also used by heavy haulage, which is not only a danger to but also a health and environmental hazard for all people in that area. People experience long waiting times on this road. It is logical that the Peel deviation be started straight away. However, the Government has not got any money. It has put the development of the Perth-Mandurah rail link ahead of all the roadworks in Mandurah. There should be a mix. The Government should be able to afford both. It has overspent on the rail project by \$500 million because it changed the rail route. It was to have been finished by 2005, but now the Government will be lucky if it is finished by 2010. I am faced with a lie every time I go past the new bus terminal. A sign proclaims that the bus terminal will be open by 2007 in time for the railway. I will bet every member here whatever they like - although some members do not pay up when they lose - that that will not be the case. There is not a chance in high heaven that the railway will be completed. Any logical person who knows about engineering and how slowly government bureaucratic bodies work and that there is no money is aware that the rail will not be finished by 2007.

I speak on behalf of all the businesspeople in Mandurah who expect something to happen for tourism and to enable them to build their businesses. This Government is costing them thousands of dollars. I appeal to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the Premier of this State to provide something for Mandurah next year in the preliminary budget allocations. The Premier would like to win the seat of Mandurah at the next election. I know who the challengers will be, and the Premier will have to buckle up and put some money around Mandurah to square up the candidates and give his a chance.

If the Government has listened to this speech and the Premier and the Treasurer decide that there is some money for the major projects in Mandurah, which will benefit the majority of Western Australians, local residents will not continue to think that Mandurah is the forgotten city of this Gallop Government.

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [5.32 pm]: During the third reading debate I will revisit some of the points I raised during the second reading debate. The first issue is local government and road funding, which is very pertinent in rural Western Australia. I once again remind the House that although the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will try to tell us that the Government has not cut road funding to local government, she is not correct. It is in the budget papers. Instead of the \$92 million in funding that was agreed to, only \$77.7 million

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will be provided. In my book that is a reduction of approximately \$14 million. My phone has run hot since the release of the budget papers. I have received letters from local governments around the State. They say that it is already hard for rural local governments to address their road funding issues with the available money and that this is another kick in the teeth for local government roads. I am aware of various roads in my electorate that are unfinished. One particular road has a good blacktop apart from a 12-kilometre of section in the middle that is gravel. For the sake of \$500 000 in round figures, this road has not been finished. It has been in that state for the past two and a half years. This is a safety issue. Although it is perfectly safe to drive on the blacktop at 110 kilometres an hour, on a dark, rainy night a driver could hit that gravel without knowing it and become a statistic. Those are the sorts of things that local governments find very difficult to live with. The local governments in my area make up the mid west regional road group. It was expecting somewhere in the region of \$3.2 million, but this year it will receive \$1.9 million. It must somehow divide that among the local governments by determining which roads are the most important. However, all local councils have important roads. It is a real issue, and I think this Government will rue the day it decided to not address country roads. Country people feel that all the road funding is going into metropolitan roads. I have no problem with money going into metropolitan roads. However, there needs to be a balance, and I do not believe that exists.

I mentioned Indian Ocean Drive during my budget speech last year. The section of Indian Ocean Drive from Lancelin to Jurien Bay has again not been funded. The Jurien Bay to Dongara section was completed during the previous Government's term of office. This Government, for whatever reason, has been extremely stubborn about providing funding. The provision of \$39 million is not a lot of money in the scheme of things, but it would result in the development of projects along that coastal route worth \$700 million. If my economics are anything to go by, an investment of \$39 million that results in \$700 million of state development is a very good thing. Those local governments with an interest in the issue have met and are trying to persuade the minister to find some money for Indian Ocean Drive. It will help develop not only that mid-wheatbelt area but also all the coastal townships between Perth and Geraldton. Another spin-off of that development will be dollars to the State.

Another road issue is mining roads. A mining development is starting up in the Perenjori area, but there is a problem with funding for the road. I must be honest and say that I am not sure of the amount of funding needed. However, I believe the Shire of Perenjori is having some difficulty accessing not only the minister but also funds for the mining development, which, again, will provide a return to the State. This Government does not seem to recognise that the provision of such funding will be an investment in state development.

Another favourite topic of mine is power supplies. This budget provides nothing for the provision of power supplies. There will be some upgrading of power in the wheatbelt area but the northern wheatbelt still faces many problems. This year's budget contains nothing to try to reverse that. Interestingly, a wind farm is being planned for a property east of Geraldton. The property was purchased two and a half years ago on the sanction of the previous Government. It is a joint venture between the Government and a company called Enercon. The project is worth \$62 million, with a Western Australian component of about \$23 million. The Government's contribution was to be \$13 million. The proposal has been awaiting the final approval of the Minister for Energy for six months. There do not seem to be any good reasons for the delay. This project would probably help improve the power situation in the northern wheatbelt area, particularly the towns of Kalbarri and Dongara, yet the Government is sitting on its hands and not making any progress. I suspect that Enercon is probably starting to lose interest in the partnership. If we are not careful, it may walk away from it. The quality of power supplies is an issue. I do not believe that the Government is getting its mind around this issue to the extent that it should.

The development of industrial and residential land is a problem in my electorate. I believe that preliminary approval has been given for the development of some 70 acres in the Kalbarri township as residential blocks. The problem that Kalbarri people are running into is native title. Regardless of what one says about native title, it is probably the biggest bane to local government and local people when they try to develop land. This issue will not go away. They have tried to develop this land for three years. The Department of Land Administration seems to have thrown up its hands and said that it is all too hard. I suspect this is not the only area in which that is occurring. Native title is a problem. Somehow or other this Government must address that problem. It is not only residential land that is affected. In Kalbarri, the development of industrial land is also affected. It is a growing township. There is very limited, if any, land for development as industrial sites.

I also refer to the marine research facility centre to be developed at Point Moore in Geraldton. I give all credit to the Government for putting forward this project and moving with it. It is a good project. However, there seem to be some zoning problems. I gather that the zoning was correct in the first place. There was a need to excise the proposed southern transport corridor from that reserve. Again, it seems to come back to DOLA's back door. There is a belief that this caused confusion for the remainder of the reserve. There is now some doubt as to whether it is zoned correctly. I encourage the minister to represent to Cabinet where she is going and what she is

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doing with this issue. I understand that there could be a two-year time frame in which to get this through. This project is worth many dollars to not only the State but also the local community in the Geraldton-Greenough region. There could be a native title issue causing the delay. I urge the Government, and particularly the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, to address this issue to try to make this project happen. It is a particularly good project. I fear it will collapse if some urgent and proper action is not taken.

I also have some concerns about agriculture. I raised these issues during the second reading debate and wish to raise them again to remind the Government that it has a responsibility to the farming community, particularly on some basic issues concerning red tape and bureaucracy. I refer again to the issue of trailer widths and hay bales, and the stupidity of trying to tell the farming community that it could not transport hay bales on truck trailers because the bales are wider than the trailers. The hay bales are produced with baling machines built in America while the truck trailers are built in Australia. The hay bales hang over the sides of the trailers by some three inches. To my mind, it was plain stupid to say that to farmers. A little commonsense must prevail. The Government has tried to stop the farming community from hauling hay bales around the State at night-time because the bales overhang the trailers by three inches. The hay is probably loose; it is not very solid.

I also draw to the attention of the House the issue of emu and kangaroo control. Come the end of the growing season, with harvest around the corner, there will be a problem with emus, kangaroos and, in some areas, dogs. That issue must be addressed. Not enough funding is being put by to address that problem. The farming community is conscious of that problem. Farmers are wringing their hands because they are not sure to whom they should turn.

A real issue in country areas is attracting teachers to country schools. I am aware of a project that is being put forward by some Mingenew farmers' wives who want a holistic approach to be taken with teachers in country schools. For example, I believe some advice was given to city girls who wanted to teach in country areas that fresh fruit and vegetables were not available in country towns. People can buy fresh fruit and vegetables in most country towns, unless they are in very remote parts of the State. The group needs to be commended on that project. I believe it could help country teachers and country schools.

I again refer to the issue of industrial sites. A review of industrial sites is being undertaken for the Geraldton region and Oakajee. The minister is wasting time. I believe the review will cost a lot of money. At the end of the day, the Government will probably come back to what was agreed in the first place; that Oakajee is the best site.

MR M.J. BIRNEY (Kalgoorlie) [5.46 pm]: I am pleased to add my contribution to this third reading debate on the recent budget. In doing so, I will touch on a couple of issues that arose from the Estimates Committee. After thoroughly analysing the budget papers, we found a massive shortfall of some \$6.275 million between what the Government said it would spend on policing in this financial year and what it will spend. Therefore, it follows that the Government has fallen short in the provision of police services to the people of Western Australia this financial year by \$6 million. When I publicly put that case to the Government by way of the media, two things happened. Firstly, the Minister for Police went into hiding; sadly, she was nowhere to be seen. She preferred that the Commissioner of Police cop it on the chin. The Commissioner of Police was interviewed for the seven o'clock and six o'clock news programs for most television stations and indicated that coming in under budget was a good thing. In most instances it is a good thing and it is a sign of good management if it can be done. The key is that all services promised for the year must also be supplied. If all the promised services can be supplied and a department can come in under budget, it deserves a big pat on the back. In this instance, that was not the case. I will tell members why.

The Government fell short in its provision of police personnel in this financial year by 109 personnel, or at least it will do when the current financial year concludes in a couple of weeks. There are only five outputs in policing. This Government fell short in the number of full-time employees provided under all five categories. Not one output escaped. The outputs in the budget papers are set out one after the other. When the number of police man-hours that the Government said it would provide this year under each output are compared with the actual number that will be provided this year, it shows a massive shortfall of 250 000 police man-hours. It is okay for the Government to pat itself on the back and say that it came in under budget. However, it is not okay if it comes in under budget and does not provide all the services for which it budgeted. That is the clear differentiation. The police portfolio is different from many other portfolios because if there were a budget shortfall, there would be a shortfall of services. It is not like some of the other economic portfolios. If the budgeted target falls short in the police portfolio, the Government falls short in the services it provides to the community. That happened in this instance.

That comes on the back of the Labor Party's promise to increase police numbers by 250 above and beyond the attrition rate across the State during its four-year term. A month or two ago, as a matter of curiosity, I checked to

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see how the Government's plan to increase police numbers by 250 was going. I was not surprised to learn that since the start of the Labor Party's first full financial year in charge of this State until the end of the month before last, it had increased police numbers by only 38. From memory, the attrition rate is about 190 police officers a year. In excess of 200 police officers are needed to meet that promise, and the attrition rate is about 190 a year. Therefore, the Government must recruit about 600 police officers in the remainder of its term. Sadly, last year the Government recruited only 120 police officers. I am at a loss to understand how it will get to that figure and match its promise by the end of its term of government.

When that is thrown into the mix and consideration is given to the latest round of crime statistics that show Western Australia's burglary rate is twice that of Victoria's and is 31 per cent higher than the burglary rate in New South Wales - bearing in mind that Victoria has more than double the population of Western Australia and New South Wales has more than triple the population of Western Australia - clearly there is a problem. Those crime statistics show that Western Australia has double the assault rate of that in Victoria, even though Victoria has double the population of Western Australia. This Government fell short in recruiting police personnel by 109. A picture is starting to emerge. These matters were all raised in the Estimates Committee. The Minister for Police flipped and flopped. She could not give us any firm answers. A picture is emerging.

Mr A.D. McRae: Did the member say that in spite of Victoria having double the population of Western Australia, the range of assaults recorded in Victoria is twice the rate of those in Western Australia?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: No, I did not say that. I do not have time for this; I have only nine minutes left in which to speak. I said that Western Australia has twice the assault rate of Victoria, and Victoria has twice the population of Western Australia. I have made that point as well as I possibly can.

I draw members' attention - particularly those members who were involved in the committee - to the budget Estimates Committee debate on the police division. I asked the Minister for Police a very clear question during the Estimates Committee; that is, have any of the new Glock pistols been accidentally discharged since being introduced into the Western Australia Police Service? The Minister for Police said, "No". The minister's response is clearly recorded in *Hansard* with nothing else attached to it. It was a plain and simple no. A paragraph or two later, the minister lambasted me by saying that I would be disappointed that no Glock pistols had been accidentally discharged in Western Australia and that they were the safest pistols around. I had information to the contrary; that is, a Glock pistol had gone off within two weeks of their being introduced into the Western Australia Police Service. Yet the highest person responsible for the Police Department said to me very clearly that the answer to my question was no. I walked away thinking that because the minister cannot lie in this place, the answer must be no. I thought that the information I had must be no good, so I dropped the issue. It has subsequently come to my attention that on 18 April - some two weeks after the introduction of Glock pistols into Western Australia - one of these pistols had indeed discharged. That was contrary to the very clear answer that the Minister for Police had given to me at the time; it was contrary to her assertions. Either the Minister for Police has deliberately misled this House to cover up a very bad decision to order these pistols without a full safety audit, or, as the minister says, she was given incorrect advice by the Commissioner of Police, in which case it follows that the Commissioner of Police was not aware that one of those pistols had gone off. To be kind to the Minister for Police, I will accept the latter as the correct account of what happened. However, it raises a further question: if the minister accepted incorrect advice from the Police Service and misled this Parliament - which was the case, and she does not deny it - why did she not correct the parliamentary record at the earliest opportunity? She was made aware of this at least a day prior to my raising the matter in Parliament again. She had the remainder of that day's sitting and the start of the following day's sitting to correct the parliamentary record, but she chose to cover it up. She chose not to take that course of action. I can conclude only that she tried to cover it up. She was made aware that her information was misleading and incorrect, yet she did not take the opportunity to correct the record in this place. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and all manner of ministers have made mistakes in this place - probably most of them - but the minute they found out they had given wrong information to the Parliament, they all corrected the record. Why did the Minister for Police not correct the record? I submit that she was covering up the truth. She did not want the truth publicised. She did not want people to know that a Glock pistol had accidentally discharged in this State two weeks after being introduced into Western Australia.

I have repeatedly given information to the Minister for Police with regard to these Glock pistols. I have repeatedly called for a full safety audit of the Glock pistol, taking into account the circumstances that surrounded these pistols when they were introduced into New South Wales and Queensland. Members should not just take my word for it. In April 1999, Police Inspector Paul Taylor, then head of the Queensland special emergency response team, said that the Glock was prone to accidental discharge and there were problems with loading and unloading it. Even if there was no magazine in the gun, it was still possible for a bullet to be in the chamber. I told the Minister for Police that six months ago. On 8 January 2000 it was reported in *The Sydney Morning*

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Herald that the Queensland coroner Mr Gary Casey had raised concerns about the Glock pistol, after 36-year-old Detective Sergeant Leonard James Hooper accidentally shot himself. In New South Wales special constables were ordered to hand back their Glock pistols in favour of the original Smith and Wesson revolvers, after the Public Service Association of New South Wales complained that it was unsafe for its members to use pooled Glocks. In Tasmania, the now Leader of the Opposition, Mr Rene Hidding, labelled the Glock pistols inherently dangerous. Sergeant Brian Cooke, a workplace health and safety expert in Queensland, was reported in *The Courier-Mail* on 30 April 1999 as saying that there were problems with loading and unloading the Glock.

Sadly, I am running out of time. Two issues regarding the Glock pistol must be considered. First, the safety catch on the Glock pistol is on the trigger. If a police officer panics, it is very easy for him to pull the trigger twice and for the gun to go off. Secondly, when the magazine is removed from the pistol, it is possible for a bullet to remain in the chamber. Procedure requires police officers to rack the slide on the gun to get the last bullet out of the chamber. The problem with the Glock is that after the slide has been racked, the trigger must be pulled to release the springs. In New South Wales, there is a lot of evidence that police officers merely think they have racked the slide and that the last bullet has come out. They then pull the trigger to release the spring and the gun goes off. Tragically, a police officer died in New South Wales because of that very problem.

The alternative tenderer for the Police Service in Western Australia, Heckler and Koch, has the safety catch of its gun on the left-hand side, and it can be turned on and off with the thumb very deliberately. There is no requirement to pull the trigger after unloading the gun to release the springs. I submit that that is potentially a much safer gun. I am willing to accept that the Glock pistols are the right weapon for the Western Australia Police Service, provided the minister undertakes a full safety audit of those pistols, taking into account the problems that have existed with those pistols in the eastern States. Sadly, this minister wants no part of that. She wants to run her department by remote control. She writes out the cheque, hands it over and then goes into her bunker. She puts the poor old Commissioner of Police on television to explain everything. She is in charge of that department. It is not good enough for her to simply say that she has given the Police Department the money and it has done the wrong thing with it. Imagine if the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure said she had given money to the Department of Transport to build roads but the roads were not built.

Sitting suspended from 6.01 to 7.00 pm

MRS C.L. EDWARDES (Kingsley) [7.00 pm]: I will raise a couple of matters that arose out of the Estimates Committee hearings. The first is the impact of the Labour Relations Reform Bill 2002 in the area of employer-employee agreements and the second is about accredited union representatives with right of entry. The Government budgeted for 3 600 EEAs in the current financial year. It had received only 440 applications to the end of April, and as a result estimates for the following month were revised down to 690. Of the 440 applications received, only 195 were accepted for lodgment, and 95 of those were refused and 28 withdrawn. In the eight months since the legislation came into existence, only 12 EEAs have been registered. By comparison, there has been a huge increase in the number of employers heading off to the federal system. When the House was debating the industrial relations legislation, the Opposition indicated quite clearly that the process being put in place for individual agreements was very bureaucratic and would not work in the way intended by the Government.

I suspect, however, that there was an alternative agenda. Individual agreements were not supported by the unions, and the Government was really not serious about making sure that the individual agreements worked, even to the point at which the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection still had not provided summaries of some 60 awards. I gave the case of a medical practice that had applied for seven EEAs. One employee left after the application was lodged. After three months, the practice received a rejection notice for the EEAs on the ground that the summary of the award being provided to the employees was not adequate. The employer asked for an appropriate summary of the award, and was told that it was still awaited from the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection. The Government is not really committed to individual agreements, which becomes clear when considering the number of employers who have made applications and the lack of support they are getting. EEAs in Western Australia are an absolute failure.

By comparison, from 1 July 2002 to 30 April 2003, 37 085 Australian workplace agreements were lodged by Western Australian employers. AWAs approved for Western Australian employers from 1 July 2002 to 31 March 2003 numbered 26 140. In the March quarter of 2003, 10 610 AWAs were approved for Western Australian employers. Lodgments for the March quarter 2003 were up 420 per cent from the March quarter of 2002. In the March quarter of 2003, Western Australian employers comprised 35 per cent of all employers lodging AWAs for the first time. In April 2003, 44 per cent of all AWA applications lodged were from Western Australia. That is a significant indictment of individual agreements under the Western Australian legislation. The industry breakdown is very interesting as well. Figures for the rate of industry penetration of AWAs in

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Western Australia show only amounts of seven per cent or more; anything less than that does not show up. In the mining industry, 28 per cent of the work force are covered by AWAs; communications services, 16 per cent; construction, 10 per cent; cultural and recreational services, eight per cent; electricity and gas, eight per cent; manufacturing, seven per cent; and transport and storage, seven per cent. The total of all Western Australian workers covered by AWAs is five per cent, second only to the Australian Capital Territory at six per cent, and well above the national figure of 2.5 per cent. That is an indictment of the industrial relations policy that this Government went to the election on, and then put into practice, saying that it would provide workable individual agreements. That is simply not the case. The EEAs are totally unworkable, and employers from Western Australia are going across to the federal system in droves. Some might say that that is a good thing, but I think it is very sad. Western Australian employers, although they have the choice of going to the federal system or staying with the state system, find that this State is not looking after their needs or interests. Many employers, particularly small ones, are not eligible to go to the federal system and they are very confused about the current industrial relations situation. They have just gone straight onto the awards, but the awards do not meet their needs.

In relation to the union representatives accredited with the right of entry on the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission register, I asked the Attorney General whether the convictions against any of those representatives were public information, and if he would list the convictions. The answer stated -

The Register kept by the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission of accredited union representatives with right of entry contains 303 names; this information is available via the Internet. Given the resource requirements, and possible inaccuracies (and consequences of any such inaccuracies) to determine whether there are any convictions against those persons, I am unable to provide the information requested by the Hon Member.

As was identified in the debate on the legislation, accreditation by the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission is simply a rubber stamp of a nomination by a union. Those union representatives are not assessed in any way. In particular, there is no criminal record screening. I suggest that, given the powers permitted to those representatives through right of entry and access to employment records and details, there should at least be some criminal record screening, if not by the union, which would be required to submit the information with the nomination, then at least by the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission. I have serious concerns about the information to which they have access through private employment records. They can access health and personal details, addresses, telephone numbers and garnishee or child support payments. That information can end up in the wrong hands. There need only be a situation in which a husband and wife or partners have separated acrimoniously. The husband or partner may know a union official. He may be a mate whom he drinks with at the pub. That union official can go onto a site, access the personal records and obtain the unlisted telephone number and address of the female. That is not unknown. The private addresses of Department of Justice prison officers have gotten into the hands of bikie gangs. How did they get there? It was through somebody who did not use the information before him appropriately or correctly. If everybody could be relied on to do the right thing, laws would not be needed. I am saying that there is the real potential for somebody to access private information and to give it to a person who will misuse it.

Members of Parliament in this House are concerned about the safety of women and children. Last week we had a long debate on the Swan Valley Nyungah Community and the safety of women and children. Quite clearly, this goes against that. It is not good enough to say that there is a penalty for the misuse of such information, because, in any event, the good will and good purpose of the individual accessing the information is being relied upon. The Minister for Community Development wants to introduce compulsory screening checks to meet tougher new standards for people who work with children. The minister is aware of the serious issue of domestic violence. Only in this morning's paper it was reported that those women and children will be put into hotels for their safety. Why would that be done? It would be done to protect those women and children. Yet the changes in the Labour Relations Reform Act 2002 permit union representatives to inspect and copy employment records, irrespective of whether the employee is a union member. There is full and total access to all employment records. In the past, the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection has said that that is only if they have the permission of the employee. That deals with one section of the Act; it does not deal with the other section of the Act that the minister has quite conveniently ignored when the Opposition has raised this issue for debate on numerous occasions. I believe that private employment record details should remain exactly that; they should remain private. They are nobody else's business.

If the unions want access to time and wages records, that is a totally different issue. However, they should not have detailed information on hiring, firing, terms and conditions of employment, membership of any professional association or trade union, leave, taxation, banking or superannuation affairs. The important issue is

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the protection of women and children and the ability to put those addresses and unlisted telephone numbers into the wrong hands. There is a real likelihood of that occurring.

There is no requirement for any screening or checking of union nominations to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission for the accreditation of union representatives so that they can have access to work sites. There should at least be some form of screening, particularly of criminal records. If that task is not given to the unions so that they can provide the information, it should at least be given to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission. The minister has said that the employers can lodge an objection. Once the addresses or the personal employment records or details are in the wrong hands, it is far too late for the employer to object. The employer might object about other matters. However, this goes far beyond the bullying, intimidation and calling out of the workers to discuss discount cards, as I understand happened today. The union said, "Join the union and see what it gives you. It gives you a discount card and - guess what - free legal service." For how long is the legal service free? It is for the first consultation. A person can go to just about any lawyer about dividing fences, overhanging trees, a pool pump being too noisy or separation and get the first consultation free.

The element of this about which I am concerned is the ability for that information to get into the wrong hands. We all know what it is like. We have all heard the stories in the past. When break-ups are acrimonious, some of these people are quite ingenious in being able to track down their partners, and particularly their children. There has been some unsavoury behaviour in the past and some terrible tragedies with partners, ex-wives and their children. This is one element for which there should be appropriate criminal record screening in Western Australia, or the laws should be changed to protect and keep private those personal employment records. The unions should be given access to only the time and wages records, rather than all the information being open and available to a union representative, whether or not the person concerned is a union member.

MS S.E. WALKER (Nedlands) [7.16 pm]: At the outset I fully endorse the comments of the member for Kingsley about a criminal screening check of the people to whom she has alluded and who are able to access the personal and private records of people in employment. It is very dangerous to not have that check.

I will refer to three matters which arose during the budget estimates committee hearings and which involve child abuse and protection. They are the child card, the provision of child protection workers and a commissioner for children. If I have time, I may comment on mandatory reporting of child abuse. If I do not comment on it now, I will do so at another time. I refer to the position statement released by Hon Barbara Scott, MLC, who is responsible for the shadow portfolio dedicated to children. Some months ago Hon Barbara Scott organised a children's summit to canvass the views of many people involved in the welfare of children, including health professionals, education experts, those in the juvenile systems, plus non-government organisations. All those people called for the setting up of the office of a commissioner for children, as did the Gordon inquiry.

The Liberal Party is committed to the development of such an office to promote and protect children and to ensure that long-term policies - not policies made on the run or in a highly politicised climate, which I will come to - are put in place, with sustained resource allocation. It is a tragedy that the Minister for Community Development has recently adopted quick-fix policies to try to gain mileage in this area, in a highly charged political environment. Evidence from the Perth TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research is that child abuse is increasing above and beyond the increase in reporting. Nineteen countries around the world have established an office of a commissioner for children. In Australia, the Labor-dominated States of Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania all have such offices. Prior to the establishment of such an office in this State - by the Liberal Party, of course - there would be an analysis of the benefits to the community of the introduction of a child card.

On 13 May this year, at the height of the Hollingworth crisis, the Minister for Community Development, Minister McHale, issued a press release. I will come to the way in which this relates to the budget speech. As a result of the minister's decision, which was announced in this press release, I raised questions in the budget estimates. The minister said that she would introduce a compulsory screening check for people who were employed around children. That includes people in voluntary organisations. As I said, it was done at the height of the Hollingworth crisis. Archbishop Hollingworth was a Liberal prime ministerial appointment. I am not sure whether it was the next day but the minister appeared on the Liam Bartlett ABC radio program. I have been unable to obtain a transcript but, if I recall correctly, the minister found it difficult to concede that despite a child card and the screening of people who work with children, there were no guarantees about such a card or that someone given the card would not be a paedophile. The whole point of such a card - I will later refer to what the federal Labor Opposition leader had to say - is that it is supposed to protect children from, most importantly, sexual abuse. I raised these concerns during the Estimates Committee hearings. I will mention the minister's comments shortly.

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The day after Governor-General Hollingworth resigned, 26 May, the federal Leader of the Opposition, Simon Crean, was interviewed on *Lateline* on ABC television. The interview was titled "Crean slams Hollingworth for 'moral turpitude'". The presenter, Tony Jones, introduced the program by stating -

Today was clearly a personal and political low point for the Prime Minister. But, on a day that should have been his to command, the Opposition leader still managed to hit one particular off-key note. It happened when he departed from his script and denounced the Governor-General's "moral turpitude". Perhaps it seemed like a good idea at the time and perhaps some would agree that it is an apt description. But Simon Crean may come to regret stripping away the last remnants of the Governor-General's dignity.

I raise this because Simon Crean informed the Australian public during the program -

... what the Labor Party put into the Parliament was a private members bill to address that very question, to ensure that this child sex abuse issue is wiped out, is eradicated, and we've proposed a number of initiatives to achieve that objective.

One is the Children's Commissioner, so that you coordinate the activities in every State where there are enforcement authorities.

The Liberal Party in this State has called for a child commissioner time and again, as have other parties. Despite that, the Gallop Government refuses to establish such an office. Simon Crean continued -

Secondly, that you establish a code of conduct so that any organisation in receipt of Commonwealth funding is required to refer allegations to the appropriate authorities.

... and, thirdly, that there be a check on people who work with children to satisfy parents that their backgrounds ... have been appropriately scrutinised so that the kids are safe.

I will return to that point because it does not mean that children will be safe. Simon Crean further stated -

And I've suggested to the Prime Minister that together we actually support legislation to strengthen the arm, to ensure that the child sexual abuse opportunities are wiped out.

They will not be wiped out. Simon Crean's statements and the Minister for Community Development's on the run policy are trying to lull parents into a false sense of security by saying that a child card will eradicate child sexual abuse. It is a position of ignorance taken without properly thinking through the ramifications of endorsing people in this manner. It is a use of the sexual abuse of children to score political points. The minister has had two and a half years to introduce a child card. Simon Crean introduced legislation the day after Governor-General Hollingworth resigned. It is despicable behaviour to play politics with the lives of children. Why introduce a federal Bill the day after Governor-General Hollingworth resigned? It was another political card the Labor Party had up its sleeve. Why lull parents into a false sense of security? I will show how ill thought out the policy is. Even after appearing on the Liam Bartlett program, the Minister for Community Development had not applied her mind to the fact that, notwithstanding the screening of people for criminal records before issuing a child card and that it is designed to protect children from paedophiles, she does not understand it will not be any guarantee to protect children. I refer to part of the transcript of the budget estimates of Thursday, 21 May. I stated -

I refer to the minister's recent announcement on the child card. The reference in the budget papers is the last dot point on page 1002 in relation to the three Acts. Is the minister thinking of bringing in legislation based on the Queensland legislation? If so, has she given thought to the fact that the child card could endorse paedophiles?

Ms S.M. McHALE: Will the member for Nedlands repeat the last sentence?

Ms S.E. WALKER: Has she given thought to the fact that the child card could endorse paedophiles? Obviously she has not.

Ms S.M. McHALE: I wanted to make sure I was hearing the member correctly.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Absolutely. Would the minister like me to explain it to her?

The screening of an individual will show whether a person has been convicted of sexual offences. If a person has committed sexual offences over some years and has not been convicted, a child card will never show that. It elevates a person to a sense of trustworthiness. A person will approach an organisation with a card. Parents will think that the person is extra trustworthy. The person may be; I am not saying he is not. However, there is no guarantee that a person without criminal convictions is not a paedophile. We have seen it happen. People in

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high office and celebrities, all sorts of people, have been revealed as paedophiles only much later in their life. The minister continued -

No, I would not. I thought it was an absolutely bizarre question from someone who should know better. The point is that I do know better. I do not say that in an arrogant way. I say it because I have worked with victims of child sexual abuse. I know how offenders operate. The minister further stated -

For the member to say what she said is gob-smackingly stupid. This policy is an example of a Government that is prepared to make difficult decisions and introduce legislation that will protect children and not respond to a political crisis.

The minister was referring to what she called a Liberal political crisis. I asked the minister a further question -

Has the minister considered that by endorsing people who show a clean record, she could be endorsing paedophiles? The fact that someone has not been convicted does not mean they are not paedophiles. Whether the Government likes it or not, that is the danger with the proposed cards. Has the minister considered that the cards will give a person a higher status and a sense of trustworthiness?

Frankly, I thought that the minister became almost hysterical. She replied -

It is bizarre in the extreme and irresponsible for the Opposition to criticise a system designed to improve child protection.

She further stated -

The member for Nedlands is putting on record that she does not agree with the criminal screening or the legislation to protect children.

That is not what I said. I agree with the criminal screening of people who apply to work in such organisations. I do not agree with what Simon Crean said - that it would eradicate child sexual abuse. There needs to be a long-term education policy. A commissioner for children could look at implementing such a program in which parents come to understand that such a card will not necessarily mean a person is not a paedophile. They will realise that such a card means only that the person has a clean criminal record. That is all. That is not to decry anyone who has a clean criminal record. I spoke to the minister outside the Chamber and she said she would like to speak to me about this. However, the next day she issued a statement that a child card will protect children from known offenders who have been convicted. I agree with that.

Leaving aside the issue of the child card for a moment, organisations that involve children could avail themselves of many sources of information from screening processes to identify offender strategies and how offenders seduce children. I would like to see policies along those lines implemented. During the debate, the issue of child protection workers has been raised. I have raised it regarding the situation in Onslow. Notwithstanding that this Government has been in office for two and half years, the Gordon inquiry, and that this Government has said there should be a commissioner for children, nothing has been done. That can be seen in Onslow at a microscopic level. On Tuesday last week 19 children aged between seven and 14 years were wandering through the town when they should have been at school. There is only one worker from the Department for Community Development. The police there were beside themselves. Notwithstanding the fact that they are paid - they probably have mortgages and families and could lose their job - they felt so sincerely and genuinely about the situation that they had to telephone someone to tell them that things were critical. They said that children from Onslow were suffering sexual abuse but they felt they did not have the skills to deal with the matter and that they needed someone up there to talk to the children. In the budget estimates it was mentioned that 15 protection workers would be going into the regions. However, they will not be going near Onslow. In question time last week, the minister said that the two people going up there would not be child protection workers. They are not trained and have not the skills necessary to determine, either through anecdotal evidence or through a child's behaviour, whether a child may have been sexually abused. I know the damage that child sexual abuse can do and I know how these depraved and evil people operate. Federal and state Labor policies deal with child sexual abuse, yet it is tragic that at a federal and state level people are playing politics with the lives of children.

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin) [7.32 pm]: This state budget has reached a critical stage for regional Western Australia. People from regional WA continue to be horrified by the state budget and have witnessed election promise after election promise being broken by this Government. I am afraid that this budget merely continues with that disappointment. This afternoon we argued for a while about another promise that has been broken. The centrepiece of the state budget was a record injection to the health system. However, that budget allocation is fundamentally flawed as it is premised on money that the State may not yet receive from the state-commonwealth funding arrangement. We hope that for the good of Western Australians the State does receive

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the money. However, a substantial proportion of the remainder of the budget has been underwritten by increases in taxes and charges. That is plain for everybody to see. We must remember that this Government was elected on a promise that it would not increase taxes and charges. If there is one thing that this Government is consistent about, it is breaking those promises. Each of the three budgets delivered by Labor has contained increases in taxes and charges that have collectively boosted the State's coffers by some \$687 million. Again, Labor has attacked the hip pocket of the average Western Australian with \$182 million worth of extra taxes and charges. That is the reality of this budget. It has also been pointed out that since Labor was elected, it has increased water, sewerage and drainage charges, motor vehicle registration fees, probate fees, payroll tax, court fees, land tax, public transport fees, drivers licence fees, motor vehicle third party insurance costs and stamp duty on homes and cars. Labor was unsuccessful in implementing the premium property tax, so there is no doubt that it had to target other areas.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I think that is a fact. People are waking up to these matters. In the past two years this Government has hit homebuyers with huge stamp duty increases. Having been involved in the real estate industry for many years and talking with many people in that industry, I know that the increases are having a real impact. This year stamp duty has increased by another 15 per cent - a huge rise. When the new rates take effect on 1 July, stamp duty on a median-priced home will have risen from \$4 787 to \$7 015 in just over 12 or 13 months.

Mr M.P. Whitely: How much of that is due to the increase in the cost of a median-priced house?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The tax has increased by 15 per cent this year, and that is the cost of the tax for the average home. The member can feel free to knock some money off the cost of a house. If \$1 000 is knocked off to cover his question, there is still a jump in the tax. That is the reality of the matter.

Mr M.P. Whitely: How much has the cost of a median-priced house increased?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The tax will vary with the price of the house and the area from which it comes. It will be a lot different for a house in Kojonup from one in Dalkeith or Albany, for instance.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It has not increased greatly at Jingalup. However, the duty has increased because of the land and dealing with farms involves big amounts of money.

The Premier likes to tell us that the Government's priorities are health, education and law and order. During the budget estimates the parliamentary secretary for the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure confirmed what we all knew; that is, that the Perth-Mandurah railway ranks with health as one of the Government's budget priorities. However, the budget confirms that the Government has a huge obsession with a project that will serve - it has been said many times before - just 28 000 people. The railway will cost more than \$1.6 million to build and \$100 million a year to run. The National Party does not support the way the railway is being built because of the route and the way the cost is blowing out.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I said because of the route and the huge cost blow-out. The other route was a far more sensible option, but I do not want to get into an argument about that. The interest bill is expected to cost taxpayers at least \$60 million a year and passenger subsidies will cost \$40 million. People are aware of this and it is time the Government realised what the people from the country are saying. Although the member for Albany will not admit it, I am sure he has heard a few of these things from constituents in his electorate.

Mr P.B. Watson: No. They love the Government in Albany.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That is good. However, we will see as time goes on.

The Government will never convince the people of regional Western Australia of the economic and social justification for this project. There are 450 school bus operators who are struggling to get some reasonable funds just to maintain their vehicles. They see the same minister committing the money to this project.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is a big furphy.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, it is not a big furphy at all.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The member can have that attitude but it will be his undoing in the end. He needs to open his eyes. The independent public sector policeman, the Auditor General, needed to be awarded more

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funding in this budget to allow him to do his job. Once again, that is another broken election promise. I fail to see how this Government can deliver on transparency and accountability with the allocations it has given to the Auditor General in this budget. The Government is restricting funding to the Auditor General, who is the one person who can scrutinise the Government's public sector management. Western Australians require that to be done. The role of the Auditor General is to ensure that the Government is spending its money in a transparent and accountable way. The \$2.6 billion portfolio of health is under scrutiny from the Auditor General because it has received qualified audits. The cost of private audits has skyrocketed because of the Enron and HIH Insurance disasters etc. The Auditor General should have received a budget increase so he can do his job and so that we know exactly where the huge amount of money from the health budget is going.

Mr P.B. Watson: Do you want us to take money out of health?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, I want the health budget to be properly audited so we know where the money is going. The Auditor General has qualified the audits of the health budget and I am saying that we need to know what is happening there. Although appropriate amounts of money need to be in health - I am not saying otherwise - we will have a real problem with the health budget as time goes on because it will get to the stage where we may not be able to sustain it, no matter who is in government. We really need to know where the money is going and to have it audited because I fear that its distribution may not be balanced. I acknowledge that the population in Perth has greater needs. I do not think that country people dispute that at all. However, we need to tighten the budget for major public hospitals. I do not have the experience of many other members in this House, but as time goes on I am sure that I will be shown to be correct.

Mr P.B. Watson: A lot of country people use those public hospitals.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes they do. Perhaps we should be using the country hospitals more effectively.

The power supply to country WA has reached crisis levels. I remind the member for Albany of the many calls from people in Bremer Bay to ABC radio the other day about issues with power supply. My office continually receives a great many complaints. The electricity network is in trouble. The minister knows about the problem but he keeps denying it. The Government needs to inject a meaningful amount of funding into the program to rehabilitate the network. However, Western Power's capital works program has been cut by \$40 million. The independent regulator has issued a damning report. More than 72 000 people across 44 wheatbelt shires produce \$2.7 billion worth of produce for the State's comedy - I mean economy. A comedy of errors was on my mind. Country people feel neglected. Members opposite will not understand the strength of their feelings unless they talk to people in those communities. The regulator has given Western Power a month to produce a plan and an indication of what it will cost to provide a reasonable solution to the electricity supply problem. The National Party will be watching and waiting to see whether the minister will bite the bullet.

This budget also indicates that a further \$200 million will be slashed from road funding over the next four years. It also reveals that Main Roads underspent its budget by \$107 million last year. Furthermore, it failed to give a plausible explanation in the Estimates Committee. The list goes on.

I am doing government members a favour by reminding them that they need to take more notice of country people. The amount of \$6.7 million has been slashed from the Department of Agriculture's budget and a further 27 jobs have been lost from its regional locations. That is in addition to the \$40 million reduction and the loss of 150 jobs in the past two years. The police budget was underspent by \$6 million when country Western Australia is crying out for more police officers and resources. There is a growing law and order problem in country communities.

As I travel around I see the contraction of government services and of local input into decision making. Local input is being denied, particularly on decisions concerning health services over the past 18 months. That has resulted in a lack of understanding, which is already having an effect on country services. Transparency of expenditure in local hospitals used to be there for all to see. That is no longer the case.

We have already discussed the direct hit in cuts to regional road groups. The infill sewerage program in small towns is on hold. That regional sewerage infill program provided a huge boost to country WA. It is a great shame that it has been delayed. To give some credit, I brought a deputation from Kukerin to see the minister and was given an indication that the programs in Kukerin, Kondinin and, I think, Hyden will be progressed over the next three years, although it is only hoped to commence the Kukerin program in three years. We do not know. They are not big programs; nonetheless they are important to those areas.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: During the second reading debate I complimented the Government on much of what is in the budget. I was positive. Members opposite need to understand that my comments reflect the views of country people. The reality in inland country Western Australia is reflected in my comments tonight. Members opposite

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should understand the strength of their feelings. If they do not, it will come back and bite them at the end of the day.

The budget reflects increased taxes, broken election promises and the black hole in the health budget; the money is being absorbed mostly by health services in the metropolitan area. The Government does not seem to have any real control over the expenditure of the Perth to Mandurah railway project. Our leader was laughed at in the Parliament the other day when he referred to it blowing out to \$2 billion, and reference was made to a "Maximetre". However, today we heard about the possibility of more delays.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: We will wait and see. It is currently estimated to cost \$1.6 billion and I think people are correct in saying that the estimate is rising. Funds are being ripped out of country WA to fund health and the southern metropolitan railway. Families across the State are suffering due to tax increases. Businesses are paying the price of increased taxes, some introduced by stealth and others more blatantly. I was more positive about the budget in my second reading speech.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Members opposite can read my second reading speech.

Mr D.A. Templeman: They told you to be more negative.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Unlike the Australian Labor Party, National Party members can make their own speeches and say what they want to say. That is the truth. I have been accused at times of being too complimentary.

Mr P.B. Watson: It is not in your nature to be nasty.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I am trying to tell members opposite that it is not in my nature. However, they are missing the point that every-day people over the past three weeks have rammed down my throat their views on this budget. If members opposite do not listen to me tonight it will be at their peril. In a couple of years I might remind them of my remarks this evening.

Several members interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: We will see what happens. This afternoon during debate on a matter of public interest, the member for Merredin commented about some of the statements coming from the backbench members of the Labor Party, who do not want to listen. However, as country representatives, we know what is being said about how the electorate's views are starting to affect some of the members opposite. I am trying to do them a favour tonight. Come the time, come the hour, country Western Australia will have its say. That say will count in the end and we will be here.

MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [7.46 pm]: I will take up where the member for Wagin left off on transport routes and express my disappointment about the budget and the budget process. First, the budget has been a disaster for Western Australia, with increases in stamp duty on insurance, and increases in water, sewerage and drainage rates. No mention has been made of the goods and services tax on top of those services, which amounts to probably an extra 2.5 per cent. The Government has failed to admit to the people of Western Australia that this year GST is cash positive. The amount of \$2.9 billion has been allocated to the State. The Government continues to tell the people of Western Australia that the State will not get a positive GST return until 2006-07, when the federal Treasurer's own briefing note indicates that Western Australia is \$2.9 billion GST funding in the black this year. As I will say time and again, the only thing that will save Western Australia from losing its AAA credit rating is GST revenue from the commonwealth - the very thing the Labor Party in Western Australia has been decrying ever since the GST was introduced by the federal Government.

During this debate the member for Dawesville referred to the Peel deviation. The member for Mandurah is only one of two Labor members in the House present for this very important third reading stage of the budget debate. I do not know where the member for Mandurah lives, but I regularly go back and forth through his electorate as I travel to and from my electorate. Can the member for Mandurah tell me whether there are eight or nine sets of lights on the main route through Mandurah?

Mr D.A. Templeman: I think there are about seven.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I cannot wait for the member for Mandurah to figure out how many there are. He does not even know how many sets of traffic lights are in his electorate. I pay very close attention to the amount of traffic that travels through the centre of his electorate. At the cost of \$300 million, the Peel deviation would be a fantastic project for this Government to complete. It should delay its fantastic railway line that will have no passengers; it should be deferred for a couple of years so that the Peel deviation can be completed. That deviation would clean up the member for Mandurah's electorate. All the traffic from the south west would be

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able to circumvent Mandurah and alleviate the traffic congestion in that beautiful area. I cannot understand why the member for Mandurah is not out there shoulder to shoulder with the member for Dawesville supporting the Peel deviation, because it is eminently sensible. It is one of the things that this Government should be doing, rather than building a grandiose railway line that is 10 years ahead of its time. Why not spend some money on the Peel deviation and the South Western Highway? Guess what the Government is doing? It will construct a little passing lane at Balingup. Halfway down the hill the dual carriageway becomes a single carriageway. What will happen when all the city slickers travel along that road on their way to a holiday this winter? They will run out of road. I could not believe it when I drove home the other night; I was driving down a steep hill and halfway down the dual carriageway became a single lane. When it is foggy and raining, motorists will end up in the bush. The Government spent \$500 000 to try to placate the people of the south west and show them that it was doing something about the South Western Highway, which is possibly the most important transit route in the State.

Mr A.J. Dean: Why didn't your Government do anything three years ago?

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I hear the member for Bunbury. It is his first contribution to a debate in this Parliament for about six months. The truth of the matter is that the coalition Government allocated \$62 million to the South Western Highway. Members might recall that during the eight years of the coalition Government work was done on the coast road and the dual carriageway for the last 50 kilometres before the electorate of the member for Bunbury. It was absolutely excellent and probably saved dozens of lives. What lies between Donnybrook and Bridgetown? There is a death trap.

Mr T.K. Waldron: It is a shocker.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: It is a shocker. What is the Government doing on that piece of road? It is putting at risk all those young mothers who can no longer have their babies delivered in the state-of-the-art birthing suites in Manjimup-Warren District Hospital and Pemberton District Hospital. They must all travel to Bunbury. Do members know why? It is because no anaesthetists or surgeons live close enough to those hospitals to be able to reach them within an hour. Dozens of very healthy babies have been born in those hospitals over the years. However, in this age of litigation and liability, anaesthetists and surgeons must be within an hour's journey of the hospital. Young pregnant women must make at least a dozen trips to Bunbury from places such as Northcliffe, Pemberton, Manjimup and Nannup and have their lives placed at risk. Why? It is because this Government wants to build a fancy railway line to Mandurah. For whom? It is to service the constituents of the member for Mandurah - one special group. It might well mean that the member for Rockingham and the member for Mandurah will automatically be returned to this Parliament, but that does not make it right.

I drive to Perth on a regular basis. When I travel along the brilliant freeway that was built by the previous Government, nine times out of 10 I have to travel at the piddling speed limit - excuse my language - of 100 kilometres an hour for the length of the freeway. Freeways are built to allow traffic to travel at a faster, not slower, speed. Nine times out of 10 people are travelling on the freeway at 100 kilometres an hour. I feel like getting out and walking because it seems that the car is almost standing still. There is also hardly any traffic on the freeway. What does this brilliant Government want to do? It wants to build a grandiose \$1.6 billion railway line to service one community. It will leave a horrible, mongrel-looking road through Donnybrook and Balingup and down to Bridgetown. Why a whole host of people have not been killed on that stretch of road beggars belief. I pay tribute to those wonderful truck drivers who are so polite, cautious and caring towards the other drivers on that road.

I want to refer to the estimates debate on the housing portfolio, which is not my shadow portfolio. A couple of simple questions exposed the fact that the capital works budget for the housing portfolio will be \$30 million less this year. When the minister was questioned, we found that the \$30 million has been carried over from last year because it had not been spent. When the media questioned the chief executive officer of the Department of Housing and Works, he admitted that a further \$65 million was unspent in the housing budget. That totals \$95 million. Some 14 000 people are looking for a Homeswest house in Western Australia, while \$95 million is unspent. That begs the question; why is it so, as Professor Julius Sumner Miller used to say. Could it be that the funds are being carried over to ensure that there is a surplus budget?

I can recall the current Treasurer sallying forth during the debate and saying that the previous Government had brought forward five deficit budgets out of eight. I put it to members that in the run up to the end of the financial year how easy it is to defer projects and to debt finance some of the capital works to ensure that there is a surplus budget. It is very simple. Even an ordinary common spud farmer like me can work that out. Let me tell members what has happened. Under the previous Government the Treasurer, as the Premier of Western Australia, held the significant responsibility of Treasurer and Minister for Federal Affairs, in contrast to this Premier who holds portfolios that currently do not work. For example, the Office of Crime Prevention simply does not exist in Western Australia. Safer WA, the graffiti program and all those kinds of things have simply

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Matt Birney; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Omodei

gone out the window. All the volunteers are ignored. The Premier has a simple workload as a prima donna in front of all the garden gnomes who nod every time a fancy project is announced. He goes home early and does all the easy work. The previous Premier of Western Australia had the responsibility of managing the finances of this State. He played it as it was; he showed the budget as it was. He showed a deficit budget if there was a deficit budget. He did not succumb to the temptation of playing with the figures to ensure that there was a surplus budget. The bottom line is that the debt of this State is growing at an alarming rate and this Government does not understand how the finances of this State work.

During the estimates debate we talked about the projects that are being financed under this state budget, and we found that significant funds have been set aside to rehabilitate the Fremantle Prison, for example. The forward estimates have something like \$1 million for 2006-07 and, in addition, there is an initial allocation of \$1.3 million over two years to commence in the 2004-05 budget. That money is to be spent on opening up the tunnels underneath the Fremantle Prison for the benefit of tourism. That begs the question: why are we not funding tourism projects in the southern forest where the Government has decimated the timber industry? More importantly, under the time to care, time to act campaign of the Disability Services Commission, 720 people are looking for accommodation. Guess what is happening? Some \$95 million for simple housing is being withheld under the housing budget. All the Government has to find is the recurrent funding. The money is available to build houses for those disabled people. All that is needed is ongoing recurrent funding to build those houses. However, tunnels are being opened underneath Fremantle Prison for tourism in Western Australia.

Mr A.J. Dean: Fantastic!

Mr P.D. OMODEI: The member for Bunbury says it is fantastic.

Mr A.J. Dean: Put me on the record.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I will - the comment is going in *Hansard*. The member for Bunbury prefers to open tunnels under Fremantle Prison rather than provide facilities for families with disabled persons. I refer to 720 desperate families. Families are falling apart because they cannot find funding for their children or siblings. At any given time, a host of people are looking for funding for disability services.

I remind members that the previous Labor Government spent only \$12 million on disabilities services over three years. This will not be the last time members will hear me make this comment. The Government provided this year an extra \$12.5 million for one year. In the first tranche of funding under the previous Liberal Government, \$125 million was provided over five years, followed by \$112 million over the following four years. It is disgraceful that this Government does not care a damn about people with disabilities in Western Australia.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House).