

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr Mike Board; Mr John Day; Mr Terry Waldron

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**APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2003**  
**APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 2) 2003**

*Cognate Debate*

On motion by Mr E.S. Ripper (Treasurer), resolved -

That leave be granted for the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 1) 2003 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 2) 2003 to be considered cognately, and for the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 1) 2003 to be the principal Bill.

*Declaration as Urgent*

On motion by Mr E.S. Ripper (Treasurer), resolved -

That the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 1) 2003 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 2) 2003 be considered urgent Bills.

*Second Reading - Cognate Debate*

**MR C.J. BARNETT** (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [3.22 pm]: In responding to this year's budget I wish to concentrate on some of the major economic or financial measures within the budget and budget process. Before doing so I want to make some general comments about the way in which this budget was presented, to not only this Parliament but also the people of this State. Never have I seen a Government take such blatant political actions in respect of a budget. It is fair enough that a Government of the day wants to promote its point of view and its budget, but that does not extend to an abuse of the parliamentary process and an abuse and wastage of taxpayers' money. The Gallop Government has been absolutely blatant in doing this. We have seen the traditional parliamentary conventions broken. We have seen an undermining of the integrity of the budget process and, indeed, of the budget papers.

The budget process started with a whole series of progressive announcements on health, education, capital works, public transport and WorkSafe. I remind members, particularly new members of this Parliament, that it is stated on the front page of the budget document, which is prepared by Treasury, that it was presented to the Legislative Assembly on 8 May. It is not a document that is prepared for any other group; it is prepared for this Parliament so that we may scrutinise the finances of the State of Western Australia, and every department and agency.

It has been the practice, and I would do the same, to announce the directions of the budget and talk about the budget in a general sense before it is announced. However, I have never known a Government to selectively announce details of a budget. It was a quite deliberate, smart-alec stunt. At the end of the day it backfired, because the people of Western Australia have more commonsense; they can see when there is an attempt to dupe them. They do not like it and they react accordingly.

It was a budget delivery totally driven by media spin. Labor members may have thought that it was clever politics, but they have undermined this Parliament, the Department of Treasury and Finance, its officers and the diligent work they do for respective Governments and, in a sense, they have undermined themselves. They have downplayed their roles as representatives in this Parliament. They have become part of a sideshow of press conferences and announcements designed simply to promote the Labor Party, not to promote the Government, the Department of Health or the Department of Education and Training, or indeed parliamentary scrutiny. It was a farcical exercise.

Why was it that throughout that process the Premier did not announce the tax increases? Does the Premier really think that the people of Western Australia are stupid? Does he really think that he can treat them in that vein; that is, day after day announce bits of good news and expect them to not realise he is trying to trick them? The people of this State are a little more sophisticated than that. They saw straight through his ploy and saw him for what he is - a showman and charlatan, not a true Premier representing fairly and accurately the affairs of Western Australia, as he is bound to do but which he failed to do.

When budget day finally came, this Government had the absolute gall to start a series of paid radio advertisements announcing details of the budget. Government members were obviously unsure about them by then, because the Opposition had raised the point about spending public money. We reminded the public that this Premier promised that he would not politicise such processes and use taxpayers' money for blatant political purposes. Having made that comment, which got some airing publicly, the Government went into a bit of panic mode. When the radio advertisements were aired last Thursday morning, they carried an authorisation. Why would government radio advertisements have a political authorisation? It was announced that the advertisements

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were authorised by the State Government of Western Australia. Why would they have that authorisation? The Government did not know what it was doing. Did the consciences of government members get to them and did they think that they were political advertisements and, therefore, needed political authorisation? It showed that members of the Government and their media officers who were running the show thought that they had better put an authorisation on the advertisements because they were not a government announcement but a political announcement. It was not accurate or good information, but a political, partisan promotion. They added an authorisation, but they were so silly that they added the wrong authorisation; that is, the advertisements were authorised by the State Government. Political authorisation requires the name of an individual and an address. It shows how unsure this Government was of what it was doing. The advertisements probably do not require an authorisation, because they are state government advertisements. My point is that it was a waste of taxpayers' money, it was inappropriate and of a poor standard, and government members knew that they were doing the wrong thing. That is why they added the authorisation.

After the budget was finally delivered, one would think that the taxpayers - the people of Western Australia - would get a fair go. They did not from this Government. What did they get? They got a cartoon. The copy I have is in the *Sunday Times*, but it appeared in other newspapers and local newspapers in particular. The advertisement is for building Western Australia. There is nothing wrong with a bit of creativity and presenting something visually. However, this is a full-page advertisement containing six paragraphs about the Western Australian state budget involving \$11 billion or \$12 billion of expenditure. The Labor Government has produced a cartoon. That is what it thinks of the people of Western Australia. The Labor Government thinks that it can dribble out bits and pieces, not tell people the full story and then dish up a cartoon. How absolutely patronising and insulting to the people of Western Australia. This Premier and Treasurer have insulted the people of Western Australia. That is what they think accountability is - a cartoon. The advertisement has a couple of sentences on health, a couple of sentences on education, a bit on environment, a bit on investment, a bit on community safety and a bit on people living within their means. In reading it, I thought that we would now see an honest announcement about the \$162 million of tax increases that will affect families and businesses. It was not there. The Government spent thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money telling them what was in the budget, but even after the event it did not have the basic decency to tell taxpayers that it had imposed another \$162 million of tax increases. The Premier and Treasurer might as well have lied to them. They have not only lied but also insulted and wasted the money of the people of this State.

I lay on the Table for the rest of the day's sitting this blatant, hypocritical waste of taxpayers' money. It was an appalling thing to do. The Premier's commitment to public accountability is worth less than this bit of newspaper.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Government should tell the people of this State what is in the budget. It should inform them about education, health and the like. However, Governments have a responsibility to inform them properly rather than in a crass, partisan way, which this Premier and this Treasurer did. I outline the standard that I will adhere to if I am Premier of this State. The budget information will be accessible. People will be able to find it. It will be easily understood. It will be simple for people to read and digest. The information will be factual, complete and accurate, not partial, doctored or spun. That is the standard which is required for, and which a future Liberal Government will apply to, the distribution of information relating to the budget and other matters of public policy. I do not know exactly what the Premier's standard is now, but it bears no resemblance to the comments he made as opposition leader.

We have spoken in this Parliament about broken promises. I said on those occasions what was the great lie of the election campaign. That lie was probably not intended but the result of the Premier being flustered when asked in front of the cameras a simple question about whether he would increase taxes and charges. The Premier said that his Government would not increase taxes and charges. It was silly to suggest there would be no changes in taxes and charges - such as the price of water or electricity - over a four-year period. However, that is what the Premier said. Maybe that was the first sign of the weakness of his character. He never meant it. If he had said that his Government would keep increases in taxes and charges to the rate of inflation or would minimise increases, he might have gotten away with it. However, he said there would be no increases in taxes. The Labor Party was in government for a few months before this Premier and this Treasurer imposed on the community huge increases in taxes. Then they did it for a second and third year. The Government must think that if it tells a lie and gets away with it, it might as well try to get away with the same lie a second and third time. Is that the standard of the Premier's character? Is that what he stands for in representing the people of this State? Through this budget, the people of Perth and country Western Australia understand the lie. They knew even before the budget came down that they would be lied to a third time. The Premier should not underestimate the people of this State and treat them like fools. He should treat them with some respect and propriety. He has failed dismally to do that in this budget.

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Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Is that why he is sitting on the back bench?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is right. That is exactly why he is sitting on the back bench.

Dr G.I. Gallop: It is because I could not get through when a member was speaking.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: At least he is here. When we discussed the most significant social change in this State's history - cannabis law reform - he was not even here. He is a gutless Premier.

Mr J.B. D'Orazio: Where are all your members?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): Members! The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I concede that in the first budget there were some reductions in stamp duty and workers compensation premiums. The Government also reduced the Totalisator Agency Board tax, although that was a temporary arrangement. However, the major components of the first Labor Party budget included increases in payroll tax. That was in part effected by applying it to fringe benefits, and netted \$16 million. The Government collected \$20 million by extending payroll tax to subcontractors and a massive \$63 million by increasing the rate of payroll tax to six per cent. That is a huge increase. There were also increases in land tax. The Government removed the exemption from land tax for the principal place of private residence. A person cannot be the king of his castle in Western Australia. Consistently in every budget, the Labor Government has attacked the family home and home ownership. Over three years it has attacked home ownership. Does it not want people to succeed? Does it not want the people it purports to represent to have the sorts of incomes, homes and lifestyles that members of the Government, their representatives, enjoy? There is not a poor person in this Chamber. None of us is poor or on a low income. We all own homes. However, many of the people the Government purports to represent do not own homes. They struggle; yet this Government hits home ownership in every budget. I can assume only that, deep down, members of the Government resent people striving, succeeding and acquiring an asset, particularly a family home. I do not know why the Government picks on the home, but it has done it three times. Revenue increased by \$10.7 million as a result of land tax now being applied to the principal place of residence. The increase in the rate of land tax netted another \$28.6 million, and the Government tried to impose the premium property tax. Altogether, the Government imposed \$147 million of additional taxes in its first budget. It backed off on imposing the premium property tax, and partially backed off on extending payroll tax to subcontractors. Even so, the Government's first budget had a net increase in taxes over a full year of \$132 million. That is a massive tax increase.

In the second budget, the Government turned its attention to stamp duty. It increased compulsory motor vehicle third party insurance, which raised another \$24 million. It also increased the motor vehicle licence transfer fee, which applies to people who buy cars. That raised \$38 million. It also had another crack at payroll tax. The end result was \$110 million of announced increases. When the back-off on taxes applying to subcontractors is factored in, we see that the Government effectively imposed \$116 million of extra taxes in its second budget. In its third budget it went back to the property market. The property market for both residential and commercial properties has been strong. Stamp duty on property transactions was its target in the third budget. This is the budget of a Premier who said he would not increase taxes. The Government increased the tax on property conveyances by 15 per cent. That rate is applied to the price of the property, and the price of property is escalating as a result of inflation and generally strong demand for property. The Government thought it had a golden goose. It imposed a tax rate increase of 15 per cent. That is extraordinary. The Government did not have to do anything to collect more from the property sector simply because of the high turnover of properties and the rise in the price of land and established homes. Then, to make things worse for families, particularly young families struggling to pay ordinary living costs, the Government increased by 25 per cent the rate of stamp duty on home, contents and vehicle insurance. The Government hit families every way. If people can afford to buy a house, the Government slugs them with increases in insurance premiums. There has been a 25 per cent increase in the cost of insuring a home. If anyone is lucky enough to afford a decent house under Labor - that is, if they can get through that net - they will pay significant increases in their insurance premiums. People must insure their houses as a condition of finance. Insurance costs were rising in any case. Insurance premiums were going to be higher because of the collapse of HIH Insurance and the effects of September 11. The Government would have collected higher tax revenues from stamp duty on insurance premiums simply because the value of the premiums would have increased. That was not enough for the Labor Party. It had to get in and increase stamp duty by 25 per cent; one dollar in four. That is an extraordinary rate of increase.

Although it is strictly not a tax increase, the Government also whipped another \$20 million from the Water Corporation. It said that it did not represent a tax increase but, coincidentally, water charges have been increased by 3.3 per cent, which is significantly above the rate of inflation. That is where the \$20 million has come from. The Government has whipped it out of the Water Corporation, and the Water Corporation will whip it out of the

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householders who are paying for water. That is a tax by stealth. The Government is being a bit of a smart alec, but I do not think it is fooling the public at all.

That is a brief history of the first three budgets of the Gallop Labor Government. Without any doubt, this is a high tax Government. People, including people in the business community, are starting to twig to that. I remember when the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the second Gallop budget was a great budget. I said, "Hang on, fellows; have you looked at the tax increases on your small business members?" It had not done that; and, when it did that, it felt a bit silly. The Gallop Labor Government's first budget in 2001-02 raised an extra \$132 million in taxes. It raised an extra \$116 million in taxes in 2002-03 and it will raise an extra \$162 million in taxes in 2003-04. The Government has not increased taxes by any of the things that naturally result in tax revenue growth, such as an increase in asset values, turnover, population or business investment. It has increased taxes by \$410 million a year by deliberate policy decisions. This is from a Premier who said that he would not increase taxes. The great lie of the election campaign was shown in the first budget. It was repeated in the second budget, and in the third budget it is now absolutely confirmed so that everyone knows it is a lie.

What does that mean to the families that Labor members of Parliament used to represent? The Labor Party put out a glossy, cheap cartoon. However, have Labor members gone out to their constituents in their electorates? There are probably more struggling families in Labor electorates than there are in most Liberal electorates. There are struggling families, elderly people, young couples who are trying to get ahead, unemployed people and people with disabilities in every electorate, but Labor members would probably have a higher proportion, because income levels generally tend to be lower in Labor electorates than in Liberal electorates. Have Labor members told the people in their electorates that the effect of Labor's tax increases will be a further \$212 for every man, woman and child in Western Australia? For a family of four that will be over \$800 in extra taxes this financial year because of the Gallop-Ripper Government. That is the Government's commitment to the people of Western Australia. If the Government thinks that will hurt the constituents of Cottesloe, it is right; they will not like paying it. However, Labor members should wander around the electorates of Girrawheen, Belmont and Bassendean and ask their constituents if they can afford to pay an extra \$200 a year for every member of their family, because that is what the Treasurer has done to this community. That is the Treasurer's legacy. The Treasurer should not ever come into this Parliament and talk about budget surpluses, AAA credit ratings and all the rest of it. He should come in here and be honest enough to admit to the people of this State that every man, woman and child will have to pay an extra \$200. The Treasurer can announce a budget surplus of \$83 million for the coming year if he increases taxes in the same year by \$162 million. Big deal! The budget surplus is half the increase in the taxes that the Treasurer has announced, yet he pats himself on the back and says what a good fellow he is for having a budget surplus! Anyone can do that! Anyone can increase taxes in order to deliver a budget surplus, if that is the criterion of good economic management. However, that is not my criterion. The way to balance the budget is not simply by taxing the community.

This is a high tax Government by policy decision. It is also a Government that, because the property industry has been fairly buoyant, has generated for itself strong tax revenue. The Government should not complain about how tough things are. That is a nonsense. The Government has been bleating about how oil prices are down, the Commonwealth is not giving the State enough money, and times are tough. What a load of rubbish! As I pointed out prior to the budget, the Government has received an additional \$3.3 billion in revenue from that estimated in the pre-election financial statement. The Government should not cry poor. It does not make sense. In the current financial year, 2002-03, tax revenues for the State Government are expected by its own figures to increase by 10.5 per cent, yet the Government is saying it has no money! Give me a break! The Government's tax increases for 2003-04 will result in an 8.8 per cent increase in tax revenues. Not only is the Government increasing the rate of taxes dramatically but also it is deriving an enormous increase in tax revenues - almost three times the rate of inflation. That is what the Government is doing to the people of this State. The Government thinks it is pretty smart and it will get away with it while the economy is strong. However, if the economy turns down in the property and housing sectors, the Government will have no-one to blame but itself. The Government may think that it has the timing right in the property sector, but I can tell it that it does not.

The third aspect is that the Government's tax increases alone amount to about 11 per cent of total tax revenue. In other words, because of Dr Gallop and Mr Ripper, every person who pays a government tax or charge will have to pay an extra dollar for every \$10 that he spends. That is from a Labor Government that promised that it would not increase taxes. People who pay their insurance bill will have to pay an extra dollar for every \$10 that they spend. The increases in property tax, land tax and payroll tax will hurt the small to medium-size businesses in this State. That will impact on employment opportunities. Members opposite come in here in their pious way and complain about the lack of full-time jobs and the casualisation of the labour force. That will increase even more if the Government continues to put up payroll tax! Get real!

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The increase in taxes on stamp duty and insurance will impact on families. What distinguishes the third Gallop budget from the first two budgets is that this time the tax increases are not only larger but also are targeted more at families than at businesses. Last year the budget hit businesses. This year the budget will hit families. The increase in property tax alone will raise a further \$205 million a year. I will give some examples of what that will mean. A person may want to buy a fairly modest house worth \$150 000.

Mr A.D. McRae interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Where does the member live? Is it anywhere near Riverton?

Mr A.D. McRae: Close.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There are not many houses in Perth worth \$150 000, but there are certainly some in country and regional areas. Prior to the coming into office of the Labor Government, a person would have paid stamp duty of \$3 980 on that purchase. After the 2002-03 budget, a person would have paid \$4 275 on that purchase. A person will now have to pay \$4 905 - essentially an extra \$1 000 - on that purchase. Are Labor members proud of that? A struggling person or a couple who are trying to buy a bottom of the basement, cheap house worth \$150 000 will now be hit with an extra \$1 000. That will impact on those people. People who are trying to buy a house for \$150 000 probably struggle to get bank finance. They may not have many assets, they may not have a secure job, they may not have a high income and they may have three small kids and be a one-income family. The Labor Party likes to call them the working poor, because Labor members think that they can cleanse their conscience by using terms like "working poor". If they have any working poor in their electorates, they have just hit them with an extra \$1 000! These are people with a disability and elderly couples who are trying to buy a house!

Mr A.D. McRae: For an increase in the health budget.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Riverton should tell them that.

Mr A.D. McRae: That is exactly what I am telling them.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Riverton should have the courage that his Premier and his Treasurer did not have and tell them about the extra \$1 000 that they will pay in stamp duty. He should have the courage to tell them what the tax increases will be as well as what the expenditure will be. I bet he does not do that, because he also does not have the character to do that. This budget comes down to a matter of character. We see a bit about character in this budget.

If people bought a house in Perth at a more average price of \$200 000 or a bit more, two years ago they would have paid stamp duty of \$7 680 on a \$250 000 house. Last year they would have paid \$8 425. Now they will pay \$9 655. That is nearly \$2 000 more. Many young people buy houses in Perth for an average price of about \$200 000, \$250 000 or \$300 000. That is pretty typical. That is the price range in which most transactions take place. That is the typical price for a house in Perth or in a regional centre. Those people will pay an extra \$2 000. That will make a big difference. It will take away a big chunk of the first home owner grant. In fact, with the first home owner grant from the Commonwealth of \$7 000, a young couple buying a typically priced Perth house for, say, \$250 000 will now be worse off. They will get the \$7 000 from the Commonwealth and pay \$9 655 to the State Government. The government contribution to them is a net loss of \$2 500. Even if they qualify for the \$500 rebate, they will be \$2 000 worse off. They would be better off without stamp duty and without the first home owner grant.

One can understand why Peter Costello will be angry tonight. This State in particular and other States have simply apportioned to themselves, through stamp duty increases, a genuine attempt by the Commonwealth to provide assistance to first home owners. This Government has simply taken that. The Commonwealth gave first home owners \$7 000, and the Labor Party in Western Australia took it off them.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, if people buy a \$1 million house in Cottesloe, they will pay more. Let us say people have a \$500 000 house. Five hundred thousand dollars is not an uncommon price to pay for a house. All members will have houses worth \$500 000 or more in their electorates. The Premier is probably shaking his head at something else. What would a typical house price in Victoria Park be? Would it be \$400 000 or \$500 000? As I understand the area in which the Premier lives, which is closer to the river, house prices would be of that order. I do not think many houses worth under \$400 000 would be found in Victoria Park these days. Four hundred thousand dollars or \$500 000 would be a typical price. For a \$500 000 house, people will pay an extra \$5 000. Do members know what the stamp duty figure will go up to? If people buy a \$500 000 house, the stamp duty will increase by \$5 000 -

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Dr G.I. Gallop interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Premier is not in his seat. If he wants to join in the debate, he should sit in his place.

Dr G.I. Gallop: I am talking to my friend.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the Premier wants to talk and engage in the debate, he should sit in his proper place. I invite the Premier to have the courage to at least sit in the Chamber and participate, unlike in the cannabis debate.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: That's why he's not sitting in his chair.

Mr A.D. McRae: It's a pity you don't have more of your crew here to listen.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am quite happy about that.

Mr A.D. McRae: I'm surprised you don't call for a quorum to be formed.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If people buy a \$500 000 house, not only will the stamp duty increase by \$5 000, but also they will have to pay \$24 405. People do not have that money in their pocket. Therefore, when they make an offer on a house, they must borrow for the house and the stamp duty. That is a fantastic policy! Stamp duty has been increased to the extent that young people must now go into long-term debt to pay it. That is what this Government has delivered to the people of this State.

I go back to a macro point of view: tax competitiveness. The Treasurer has just introduced a Bill relating to stamp duty. Do members know what he said? I am relying on memory. He said words to the effect that even with the Government's increases, people in Perth will pay less stamp duty on a median-priced house than do people in Sydney. Because the Treasurer is too used to smart tricks, he did not make the obvious point that the median price in Sydney is vastly different from that in Perth; it is probably double the price. Therefore, the Treasurer effectively misled the people again. People in Perth and Sydney do not pay the same price; it is what people must pay.

I will stick with some interstate comparisons for a moment. The Treasurer talked about tax competitiveness. That is a pretty clumsy term. However, Treasury presents it as the amount of revenue raised divided by the population. In the last two budgets, a graph appeared on page 15 of the budget papers. Fair enough; it compares the States in that way. In every other year, this graph has had a weighted average. In other words, it has shown the tax burden by State, and it always had a line across it showing the weighted average of the six States. That was so that people could see whether this State was above or below the average. For the first time in my memory, the weighted average is missing. Why is that? Why did Treasury suddenly break from normal practice and take out the average? Could it be that Western Australia is no longer below the average? It could well be. I am interested in that. We will find out in the Estimates Committee hearings.

There has been a significant increase in the relative tax burden on Western Australians. The burden in this State is now equal to that in Victoria. Only New South Wales, with its gambling taxes, is higher. I will compare Western Australia with Queensland, because if any comparisons are to be made, they should be between Western Australia and Queensland. Queensland has a larger population than that of Western Australia, but it shares with this State a large geographic area, high growth, and a similar economy that is based on primary production and mining production. If any comparisons are to be made, they should be between Perth and Brisbane, and Western Australia and Queensland. The comparison should not be between Perth and Sydney.

A comparison of Queensland and Western Australia shows that Western Australians are paying about \$400 a head more than their equivalents in Queensland. I am not talking about the taxpayer; I am talking about every man, woman and child. If the Government thinks that will not have an impact on people's interstate migration, it is wrong. If people are thinking about where they will go, the relative cost of the tax burden will start to impact. The Government may think that people do not think about that, but I can assure it that businesses do. Where businesses go, the jobs go and the people follow. The Government has given this State a decided economic disadvantage compared with the other States, but particularly Queensland. On these tax measures alone, it has created an environment in which people who are seeking to establish a small business or to relocate their business from either Sydney or Melbourne would see Queensland as a far more attractive bet than Western Australia. That is the longer-term implication of these policies.

Queensland has always had relatively low taxation, because former Premier Bjelke-Petersen set about repaying debt, as did Western Australia a few years ago. Queensland has had that legacy, and some good Labor Premiers have preserved that position, unlike the situation in this State. That lack of tax competitiveness will hurt this State. Every man, woman and child in Queensland is \$400 better off than any Western Australian. That is not a record of which to be proud.

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The Government has talked about its operating balances. Again, the Treasurer could not resist the temptation in his budget speech to be political. He breaks every tradition. He just does not know how to do it properly.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Not born to rule; that is the problem.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the Treasurer re-reads the budget speeches of the former Premier, sure, he will see that he referred to WA Inc. Why would he not? The previous Government referred to the legacy that it had, and the Treasurer can refer to the legacy, good or bad - however he sees it - that he has. I have read the budget speeches of Brian Burke, for whom I do not have great admiration. I have never seen a Premier or a Treasurer use a budget speech in such a crass, low political way as did the Treasurer this year. It was appalling. Brian Burke never stooped that low. The Treasurer thinks it is smart-alec stuff. However, he has let down his officers in Treasury. The Treasurer should have seen the faces of those officers as he read out that material. The member for Greenough is correct; they were embarrassed about the way the executive arm of government played politics with the presentation of the budget. I am not saying that the Treasurer should not talk about debt or that he should not compare his Government with previous Governments, but what we got in his presentation of the budget was pathetic, childish ranter. I know that Treasury was embarrassed, not by the content of the budget speech but by the politicisation, the cheap point scoring and the playground antics. That is the standard set by the Treasurer; he politicised the budget, which was a disgrace.

The Treasurer goes on about operating balances, surpluses and deficits but he forgot that the accounting procedure had changed to accrual accounting prior to the 2001 election, which change redefined surpluses and deficits. We copped that sweet. However, the Treasurer also forgot to tell the people of this State that in 2000-01 the Government inherited a budget in surplus to the tune of \$167 million. In fact, two budgets leading into that election had been strongly in surplus of \$167 million and about \$150 million. They were not one-off wonders. The Treasurer inherited a state economy that had not only repaid debt of some \$4 billion, but also had come through the Asian economic crisis.

The Treasurer has not yet experienced an economic crisis. Good luck to him. He has been extraordinarily lucky. He has not had to contend with a drought or a national collapse in agriculture such as occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He has not had to contend at a state level with the Asian economic crisis, wild swings in the Australian dollar or Paul Keating's 17 per cent interest rates. He has had to contend with a very stable national macro-economic environment.

Mr A.D. McRae: At the time all concerned said that Paul Keating was one of the best reform Treasurers in Australian history.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Riverton can make his speech later.

Mr A.D. McRae: You still just want to nitpick, groan and pull people down. You have form on this.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is not nitpicking. Go away little flea. The member for Riverton can speak when he wants to and when the Acting Speaker does his job.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): Members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We will hear from the member for Riverton later when he can tell the people of Riverton that his Government has increased taxes by \$200 for every man, woman and child in his electorate. If he acknowledges that \$200 increase in his speech, I will go into his electorate and give him credit for it.

The environment that the Treasurer has had in government has been one of strong national growth, with the state economy growing well. He has not had to contend with negative growth or with a recession. National growth has been about three to four per cent throughout the period. Inflation has been generally around 2.5 to 3.5 per cent. Interest rates were falling before his Government came into power, they fell sharply after it came into power and they have remained at five, six or seven per cent, depending on which measure one uses. The Australian dollar has been generally stable through that period, although it has appreciated recently. The Treasurer has had a very benign and friendly set of macro-economic conditions. The Asian economy, which may not be growing at the rate it was growing prior to the 1997 financial crisis in Asia, is certainly rebounding with a particularly strong Chinese economy. That is the environment in which this Treasurer has had to work. I would acknowledge a good Treasurer who operated in a state economy during tough times; this Treasurer has not had that test. He may be up to it - I do not know. My advice to him is not to crow too loudly until he has been through a test and shown that he can do it. To run up \$2 billion of debt in this environment is not good economic management.

The Treasurer has surpluses, therefore, in his budget. I note that the surplus for 2003-04 is down to \$83 million; that is tight. Standard and Poor's is correct: it would take a very small change in the economic environment and a small downturn in the housing industry, the property market or trade conditions for that to happen. We will see

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what will happen; good luck to the Treasurer. I do not want to see the State go into deficit, but I suspect the Treasurer is starting to skate on rather thinner ice than he has been on in the past couple of years.

Mr A.D. McRae: Do you still believe in your pledge on payroll tax?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Pledge on payroll tax?

Mr A.D. McRae: Yes, when you said that payroll tax had to go. Do you still believe that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have never said that.

Mr A.D. McRae: I think you did. It was part of the policy statement that you signed off on in 1993.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, sorry.

Mr A.D. McRae: So, you were not part of the Liberal Party?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member should produce it. The member for Riverton does not know what he is talking about. It is not there, mate, and I never said that. Again the member for Riverton just throws in a comment. He is the dirt; he is just a sleaze.

I will move on to state debt. It is a matter of fact that the Labor Government in the 1980s ran up an enormous increase in state debt. About \$1.5 billion was due to WA Inc through failed, botched and inappropriate business dealings under the Burke Government, followed by the Dowding and Lawrence Governments. Dowding and Lawrence inherited the legacy of WA Inc. Dowding in particular made a mess of trying to fix it and just repeated the mistakes in doing so. Premier Lawrence had no idea at all what to do; state debt increased by \$1 billion a year in her time as Premier. WA Inc was meant to be finished by that stage but state debt was still increasing by \$1 billion a year. The coalition Government reduced state debt by \$4.2 billion. It privatised assets, not solely for reasons of retiring state debt. Each asset privatisation decision was made individually on its merits. The record of privatisation of the State Government Insurance Office, BankWest, AlintaGas and the pipeline was a good one. I am not suggesting that no issues came out of those privatisations; they were large, complex, commercial transactions and they were conducted effectively. AlintaGas is thriving in Western Australia and is now becoming a national business. Hopefully, one way or another, the pipeline issue will be sorted out; it would be if the Treasurer acted. SGIO also is a thriving Western Australian business. Those businesses in Western Australia have not gone away but have been built up and, hopefully, they will develop further. The repayment of state debt by those privatisations reduced debt by \$2 200 per person in this State. What has happened under Labor?

It was hard to repay debt. Often it was hard to convince the public of the necessity of privatisation. Members should bear in mind that when the Liberal Government came to power in 1993-94, it inherited a net operating balance of minus \$300 million. The Treasurer carries on about debts, surpluses and small increases and reductions around the time of the Asian crisis; however, that is different from inheriting a state debt that doubled under Labor and a net operating balance of minus \$300 million. That was the legacy we inherited. I give due credit to Richard Court who, as Premier and Treasurer, had to deal with that. If this Premier and this Treasurer had to deal with a situation like that, as opposed to dealing with this benign environment, he would get some brownie points. Even in this benign environment a rise in state debt has started. In this Government's first budget in 2001-02, state debt increased by \$110 million, which was less than expected. In 2002-03 state debt increased by \$518 million. That was achieved only because the Government deferred about \$400 million-worth of capital works. The Government has not carried out the capital works it promised the public - schools, hospitals and police stations. The Treasurer has said, "We have a surplus. Debt did not go up by so much. Aren't I a good Treasurer?" Yes, congratulations to him, but the Government has not delivered what it promised to the people.

In this coming financial year 2003-04, when the Government will be unable to defer these capital works - I may be wrong and the Government may try the same trick again - state debt will increase by a massive \$951 million on the Treasurer's figures, in spite of the \$162 million increase in taxes. In this coming financial year alone each Western Australian will be indebted by the State to the tune of \$500. The Government has not even started the south metropolitan rail project, which has now been delayed at least two and probably three years. State debt, in spite of the delay, will continue to increase by nearly \$1 billion - or \$500 per head of population.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you think that anything other than capital works contributes to that debt?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Lots of things contribute to it.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What else, other than capital works, contributes to it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Treasurer can reply.

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Mr E.S. Ripper: It is only capital works.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, it is a lot more than capital works. When the Treasurer was a member of the Lawrence Government, no capital works were carried out and debt still ran up at about \$1 billion a year. Will the Treasurer tell me how that occurred? The Treasurer has had the benefit of low interest rates. How vulnerable is this State to a rise in interest rates? The Treasurer is exposing us to a rise in interest rates. On the latest budget figures, by the end of this four-year term this Government will have increased state debt by over \$2 077 million, or \$1 000 for every man, woman and child. That will be this Government's legacy. That exposes future generations to risk and it exposes health, education, police, law and order and all the other sectors of government spending.

Mr A.D. McRae: How much did you spend on high schools?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: From memory, a couple of million.

Mr A.D. McRae: Tell me how much, in eight years?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: From memory, \$2 million out of AlintaGas.

Mr A.D. McRae: Which was on the never never. How much did you spend in eight years? Not one cent was spent on major maintenance.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I hope the member speaks on capital works and education, because his Government has cut capital works in education. We know the member is just a slugger. The only job the member for Riverton has is to try to intimidate members, particularly female members. He is a one-termer. He is here to throw his weight around. I reckon he is a flea.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member will continue to intimidate members as he wishes. He will never have my respect.

Mr A.D. McRae interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Most members in this Chamber have my respect.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Riverton will never have my respect, because it is a matter of character, and in this case his lack of it.

Another measure of debt is the debt to revenue ratio. It is a bit phoney to say that it is not the amount of debt that matters, it is the ability to service it that counts. The amount of debt owed does matter. That is what interest is paid on; that is what presumably might one day be repaid; that is what is carried; and that is what is vulnerable and susceptible to interest rate rises. The amount of debt is the key thing, not the debt to revenue ratio. It is what is owed that matters. Nevertheless, let us look at the debt to revenue ratio, because that relative concept allows comparisons to be made from one fiscal jurisdiction to another. That is the reason for having relative measures.

When the coalition came to Government, it had an extraordinary debt to revenue ratio of 73 per cent. This Treasurer talks about his self-imposed requirement of debt to revenue not exceeding 45 or 47 per cent. I accept that change to 47 per cent, but we were left with a debt to revenue ratio of 73 per cent! Western Australia was essentially bankrupt, and the Treasurer and the Premier were members of the Cabinet. They left this State bankrupt. Imagine a Government going to Standard and Poor's and saying it is a bit concerned about its credit rating and that its debt to revenue ratio is 73 per cent. What a joke! No wonder the State lost its credit rating. This State was left in a parlous economic condition. After eight years of the coalition Government, that debt to revenue ratio was down to 34 per cent, a proper and impressive figure, the sort of figure of about one-third debt to revenue that a good financial manager would seek to maintain. We did not have to bring it to zero; debt plays a role, I do not deny that. That is the sort of ratio to feel confident about and that is not to be exposed to interest rate rises, changes in commodity markets or exchange rates. One would feel a sense of comfort and financial security.

However, what happened under Labor? It is a bit of a joke. Labor said its target was not to exceed the bar on the high jump, set at 45 per cent - that was the target - and we were down to 34 per cent. If the target is set high, the Government can stay under it; big deal. Government members pat themselves on the back and say they are under the debt to revenue target. They can put the target as high as they want, but what happens to the debt to revenue ratio when debt goes up? In this Government's first budget, it inherited a debt to revenue ratio of 34 per

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cent; in 2001-02 it went up to 38.9 per cent; in 2002-03 it dropped down to 37.1 per cent; and in 2003-04 it went straight up to 42.6 per cent. After just two and a half years of Labor we have gone from a debt to revenue ratio of 34 per cent to 43 per cent. Where is Western Australia going? Does the Treasurer reckon this is good financial management? In the little bit of rubbish he puts out to the public of this State, he says we are living within our means. He is running this State into financial risk. Sooner or later some of the commentators will get a bit switched on and realise what is happening. The property industry has twigged and hopefully the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia might also twig.

Mr A.D. McRae interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There are risks. We have heard a lot about commonwealth payments. The Treasurer has an excuse for everything. It is now three years since we were in government. People understand that. They remember the good and they remember the bad. They are starting to realise that the next election is a fair bit closer than the last one, so they have got tired of blaming the previous Government.

Mr P.B. Watson: Will you take an interjection?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If it is sensible, unlike that from the member for Riverton.

Mr P.B. Watson: When the Labor Party was in opposition, did it support Richard Court when he was trying to get extra funds from the federal Government?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What do you mean by support?

Mr P.B. Watson: Every time we asked for support you just said no and blamed the federal Government. I was not here and I am asking the question.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Albany is a new member of Parliament and he is a decent bloke. If this Premier or Treasurer want me to go and meet with Peter Costello - which I will be doing in a couple of weeks - and present something, I will do it if it is in the interests of the State.

We get the Commonwealth's figures, we get the pre-budget estimate, the forward estimate, the budget estimate, the estimated actual and the actual. We get about six different measures to choose from. A person does not have to be an Einstein to present any picture he wants. This Government always presents this sort of beggar-thy-neighbour type picture of Western Australia.

Let us look at the exercise. I will refer to the commonwealth Treasury figures for a start. The Treasurer said that commonwealth grants to Western Australia for 2003-04 will go up by 0.9 per cent; in other words, there will be virtually no increase. That is the story this Treasurer is putting around. We get our commonwealth grants in various forms. The commonwealth Treasury stated -

- In 2003-04 Western Australia is estimated to receive \$2,940.9 million in GST revenue, an increase of \$130.4 million or 4.6 per cent from the previous year.

So GST revenue is up 4.6 per cent. It continues -

- In 2003-04 Western Australia is estimated to receive \$2,569.0 million in Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs), an increase of \$107.9 million or 4.4 per cent from the previous year.
- It is estimated that a National Competition Policy Payment of \$74.6 million will be made to Western Australia in 2003-04, an increase of \$2.6 million or 3.6 per cent from the previous year.

This does not hang together. The state Treasurer is saying -

Mr E.S. Ripper: I think you have forgotten one or two - budget balancing assistance.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This state Treasurer is saying we have a 0.9 per cent increase and the Commonwealth is saying something entirely different. The average increase in funding from the Commonwealth is 4.5 per cent. The commonwealth Treasury and the commonwealth Treasurer, who provided the information, estimated that for 2003-04, commonwealth grants to Western Australia would increase across the board by 4.5 per cent. If some other aspect should be considered, I am happy to look at it, and if the Treasurer would like me to, I will confront Peter Costello about it in a few weeks. I suggest that, although the Commonwealth might play games, this Government is playing bigger games. This State will receive increased commonwealth funding slightly above the inflation rate, as it has been doing for some time.

Mr E.S. Ripper: If you sit quiet in question time tomorrow I will give you a response.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the Treasurer does not want to take my word for it, and he probably will not, I will take the time to refer to some figures on commonwealth grants. The Treasurer should get a pen and paper and do a

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bit of work. I no longer have the staff who can do it. In 2001-02 commonwealth grants to Western Australia were estimated at \$5 183 million. The total amount for the year was \$5 520 million. That is \$330 million more than estimated. I have not adjusted figures to take account of the latest figures for 2002-03. However, the Government will find that by the end of 2003 the total commonwealth grant will be significantly above the estimated grant. It has been above the estimate by \$78 million, \$330 million, \$570 million and \$330 million.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you want me to give an explanation?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Treasurer can do it later.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I will give it during question time; it is a much better quorum.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: He will find that, by the end of the financial year, the commonwealth grants identified at the time the state budget was released are consistently above that amount. Why? There are probably a number of reasons, but the most important is that the commonwealth budget includes its base funding. During the year it makes announcements on disability and health funding, education programs and a host of other areas. When they are added up at the end of the year they will show a real increase in commonwealth grants. Despite the Treasurer's rhetoric there have been real increases in commonwealth grants over these years. I expect that, at the end of the day, there will be a real increase in commonwealth grants for the period 2003-04.

I refer to what some of the increases in taxes and charges will mean. Although I have referred to percentage increases, I wonder what they mean for an ordinary family. Stamp duty on property conveyance will increase by 15 per cent. As I said, the cost of stamp duty on a \$200 000 house will increase by \$930. Stamp duty on general insurance will increase from eight cents in the dollar to 10 cents. On a \$200 000 home, and an average \$60 000 home contents policy, stamp duty will cost an extra \$12 a year, which will increase the annual amount from \$638 to \$650. The insurance bill next year for a home and contents policy for a typical Perth household will be \$650. Does the Government reckon householders will not remember the Labor Party? The extra amount of \$12 might not sound much, but to people who are struggling to pay those and other bills, it will matter.

Stamp duty on motor vehicle third party insurance is something that people must have; nor can they avoid insurance on their homes and contents. Motor vehicle third party insurance will increase by 2.8 per cent, combined with a stamp duty rate of eight per cent to 10 per cent. That will amount to an additional \$12 that people must pay. Water charges will be increased by 3.6 per cent. That is another \$6.29 a year for a typical household. Sewerage rates will add \$17; drainage, \$2; and public transport, about \$1 a week, or about \$50 a year per commuter. The Government purports to care about people on low incomes, but it has hit them across the board with increases in the cost of water, conveyancing, stamp duties, insurance and compulsory third party insurance. It has hit them everywhere, including in transport. It has hit people on lower incomes who do not have a car and who must ride on public transport to get to and from work, to go shopping and to visit family and friends. It has hit parents struggling to support their children through school. Transport costs for those families will increase. Although the concessional holder will not pay more, increases in the total transport costs will hurt low-income families.

Many other members will speak in more detail on the expenditure side of the budget. The health budget will get some scrutiny, particularly in the Estimates Committee. The Treasurer has claimed a 9.7 per cent increase in funding on health services.

Mr E.S. Ripper: It is appropriation.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Appropriation. Here we go. The Treasurer has started to catch on; it is not a 9.7 per cent increase in funding, is it?

Mr E.S. Ripper: Yes - in the State Government's appropriation funding.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is about 5.7 per cent. An analysis of the figures will reveal that the increases in expenditure that the Treasurer is trying to present are not real.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Last year when we talked about expenses, you complained, so I am talking about appropriation.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am talking about the accuracy of the information the Treasurer has presented. We can argue the policy position and the accuracy of the Treasurer's figures.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Have you included the commonwealth increases?

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is an appropriation figure. The expenses figure includes the other sources of funding.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Are the additional sources of funding included in those figures?

Mr E.S. Ripper: I do not think that agreement has been signed.

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Mr C.J. BARNETT: Have they been included without the agreement being signed?

Mr E.S. Ripper: We will respond in due course.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Treasurer is not so cocky now, is he? He was brave a minute ago - he was the top-gun Treasurer!

Mr J.H.D. Day interjected.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I think you will find that the state increases in health funding are way above what the Commonwealth is offering. The Commonwealth's offer for the next four or five years is way below what we would have expected under the current agreement. There is no commonwealth rescue for this just as there is no commonwealth rescue for anything to do with state finances. GST revenue will not apply until 2007-08.

Mr J.H.D. Day: You very deliberately did not answer my question.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I shall continue because we will have opportunities later to pursue the detail of the health budget. I am sure the Minister for Health will be right across his portfolio!

The Australian Medical Association was unimpressed with the budget. Most of the capital works projects for the Department of Health were re-announcements. How many more times will the Government announce the emergency department redevelopment at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital? It is in the member for Nedlands' electorate. People are queuing up waiting to see it start. It has been announced three or four times. People are not that silly. The same applies to the renal dialysis unit at the Peel Health Campus. I hope the Geraldton Regional Hospital redevelopment finally gets under way, because it is desperately needed. Although the original planning and design work started during the previous Government's term, it has been delayed during this Government's term. It should have been completed by now. I will not go into detail now; we will have an opportunity to do that later.

Education will receive a real increase of around one per cent. That is a pathetic allocation of funds for education. I am sure that, as someone who championed public schools in a previous incarnation, the Deputy Speaker is distraught. She is now a member of a Government that will deliver an increase in education spending of one per cent.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What do you think the increase in education spending should be?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Treasurer should go back and look at the budget framed when I was minister.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Give me a budget year and we will look at the example.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Treasurer will find that in the five years during which I was Minister for Education increases in education spending averaged seven to eight per cent a year.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Are you arguing for a seven per cent increase in education spending?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Treasurer asked me a question and I answered it. I am answering a question about figures of five years ago. The Treasurer could not answer a question about this year's budget when the member for Darling Range asked a question. I do not know who has Alzheimer's disease, but I know that it is not me.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Are you suggesting an increase of seven per cent?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I did not say that; I said that when I was education minister the budget increased -

Mr E.S. Ripper: What do you think the increase should be?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It should be above a one per cent real increase.

Mr E.S. Ripper: It should be somewhere between one and seven per cent, should it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It should be above a one per cent real increase for the simple reason that the student population is growing at about one to one-and-a-half per cent a year. We should be not only maintaining education but also improving it. If the education budget is being maintained at the inflation rate, the Government is not allowing for student growth, improvements in the delivery and quality of education and, in this instance, funding for the next round of teachers' salary negotiations. They have a fairly ambit claim, as is always the case. The Treasurer will have to deal with teachers' salaries in the course of the coming financial year, but no allowance has been made for that at all.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is not true.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is not in the budget.

Mr E.S. Ripper: There is an allowance for teachers' salaries.

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Mr C.J. BARNETT: Maybe the Minister for Education and Training can explain to us how he will fund the salaries and wages of teachers.

Mr E.S. Ripper: The Government's wages policy covers their funding.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Government's wages policy - what a joke! We will see how much the Minister for Education and Training knows about wages and salaries in the education sector. I suspect he knows very little.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you have an amount by which you think teachers' salaries should increase? Do you have an opposition wages policy?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: When I was Minister for Education, teachers got significant real increases in wages, I think in the order of 20 per cent.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We can go back to your time and draw out your policy and the records.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I supported teachers getting a significant pay rise. The coalition Government funded education very generously. It is a huge sector with 250 000 students in government schools alone and approximately 30 000 teachers and staff. I would never say that inefficiencies cannot be rectified and improvements cannot be made in education, but a little boy and girl attending pre-primary and kindergarten cannot necessarily wait for efficiency gains. The Government has a responsibility to provide quality education now and every day those kids go to school. That is what the Treasurer must make sure happens.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That sounds like something you must have been saying to Richard Court when he was trying to enforce a productivity dividend on your portfolio and you did not agree with him.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not think any member on this side of the House regrets setting up the following: a kindergarten program, a pre-primary program, a new curriculum, teachers' salary increases, a tenfold increase in vocational education, big capital works spending and catching up on Labor's huge backlog of neglect of maintenance in schools. Sure, we made a huge commitment. That level of funding or increase in funding would not or could not have been sustained, but we had to have four or five years of very heavy spending in education to bring it up to speed.

Mr M.P. Whitely: Do you regret blowing your budget? That is on the record.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: When the member used to teach at Christ Church Grammar School, I thought that he might make a decent member of Parliament.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is a simple question. Do you regret blowing your budget?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Roleystone can make his speech. Maybe he can come into the Chamber and give the Minister for Education and Training a hand. Every year every Minister for Education and Training gets to open a few new schools, because they are in the forward plans and that always happens. However, a good Minister for Education and Training makes some changes and improvements in education. I have seen programs that the coalition put in place and started, continue. Some programs were just beginning, such as the behaviour management program and the more sophisticated computer networks in schools program, and they have continued. Where has the innovation been in education in the past three years? It has not been there. The Minister for Education has raised the issue of the school leaving age, and I will give him credit for that. I agree with collocation in Karratha, for example, but collocation is not new; it has happened in Manjimup, Esperance and Kalgoorlie. I agree that the minister has continued that trend, but where is the innovation? Where is something new and different being done to improve the quality of schooling? It is not there. I am not saying that schooling has gone backwards, but it has certainly lost the momentum that it had previously.

As for the police portfolio, it will be interesting to see whether the Minister for Police can produce the extra 250 police officers that were promised. The public is looking round every street corner with a searchlight, asking where they are. Where are they? I do not see them on the roads or in Northbridge or Fremantle, arresting gangs or preventing the almost weekly murders that take place in Perth. I do not see them solving the 86 per cent of unsolved burglaries to which the member for South Perth drew attention. We all have our torches on and we are all looking, but where are the 250 extra police officers? I cannot see them.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I have not seen them in Hillarys.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, and how many officers went out of the Joondalup police district?

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Twenty-three.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Twenty-three? Where is the member for Joondalup? I cannot see him. Will he come into the Chamber and argue that police officers be reinstated in the Joondalup police district? I hope he does.

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Mr R.F. Johnson: He will do it in the newspaper but he will not do it in here.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I hope that he comes in here and argues for policing in his community.

As for transport, the member for Carine has talked about cuts to road funding. The minister from Madrid tries to pretend that it is not true! I believe it is true. Some \$200 million has been taken off the forward estimates. I have said in this place a dozen times that I do not set a great deal of store by the forward estimates, but this Treasurer thinks they are the bee's knees. Perhaps he could explain why he has taken \$200 million off the forward estimates for road funding. Perhaps he can convince local government and motorists that roads are being funded, built, restored and repaired under him. However, they are not, because \$195 million has been cut out of the Main Roads budget in the first two years of this Government. The Treasurer should not try to say that this Government is increasing road funding when everyone knows that it is not.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We are spending more in the forthcoming year; that is an increase.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: You must spend it, though.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Exactly.

As for the southern rail link, which is the big one, how can the Government have a \$1 billion increase in debt in the coming financial year when construction of the rail link has not yet started? The Government has not even sorted out the problem of bringing the rail track under the central business district. Only a couple of weeks ago the responsible - or, should I say, irresponsible - minister said that the station would be moved a few hundred metres down the track. Hang on, that must have a bit of an impact. An underground station cannot simply be moved a couple of hundred metres along a track. The minister has not got close to resolving the issue.

As I said prior to this budget being delivered, this Parliament and the people of this State are right in expecting to see a detailed account in this budget outlining the timing and costing of each component of the southern rail link. The first great lie by the Premier was that there would be no increases in taxes. Will the second great lie prove to be the Premier's statement that the southern rail link, with a \$1.2 billion budget, despite a change in route, will be on time and on budget? We know that the project is two, probably three, years late. Six months after making that statement, the Premier said to forget the \$1.2 billion because the cost had escalated. He sounded like Arthur Daley when he used terms like escalation, inflation, cost plus, forward estimates and projected income.

He had said the southern rail link would cost \$1.2 billion and be on time and on budget. Even if we were generous - and why would we be generous - and accepted another press release indicating that it would cost \$1.4 billion and be on time and on budget, we would expect to see detailed information in this budget. It is not there. It is probably not the largest capital works program this State has ever had, but it is certainly the biggest the State is facing right now. I would suggest that the Dampier to Bunbury gas pipeline project was more significant, but nevertheless this project involves major capital expenditure by the State. One would expect, and indeed this Parliament has a right to demand, detailed costings. If the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure - or, as she is more commonly known in the public service, the minister for planning and destructure - cannot present detailed figures for the southern rail link in the estimates committee, this whole budget is a waste of time and a failure. The Treasurer has not yet produced, and has about a week in which to produce, detailed figures and costings on the railway. Frankly, if he cannot do that, this budget will be of limited value.

Mr E.S. Ripper: It is \$33 million for the Thornlie spur, \$70 million for rolling stock, \$63.5 million for the southern railway to Mandurah and \$15 million for the Clarkson extension.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I want figures for the whole project.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is four figures off the top of my head for what will be spent in this budget year. I might be \$100 000 or \$200 000 out.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We do not want to inherit a railway between Mandurah and Rockingham that does not go into Rockingham but stops at the top of the Kwinana Freeway; nor do we want a hole under part of Perth that goes down but does not come up. It increasingly looks like we will inherit an uncosted, unbudgeted, unplanned and unengineered project. We searched the budget papers for some information on this. Rail infrastructure appears under the Western Australia Government Railways Commission, which is fair enough. Why is it that land acquisition comes under the Western Australian Planning Commission? I would have thought that land acquisition was part of the rail project. The Government will need to buy a lot of expensive land, particularly in the central business district, to complete the project. Why does the Main Roads budget show a big increase in construction on bridges? Will Main Roads cop part of the work on the Narrows Bridge or Mount Henry Bridge?

The Government boasts about the northern railway, which was a good and successful project.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We are extending that.

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Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, but the Government is already two years late. We know that many of the costs on the northern railway were concealed and shifted into other areas of expenditure. The Government has not even started this project and already it has begun to shift costs into other areas of expenditure. I assure the Government that it will not get away with it. It will be required by this Parliament to provide detailed costings of the project, component by component and time frame by time frame.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We will be not only required but also willing to give that information.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Okay. I take the Treasurer's word that he will provide full, detailed costings. We know that the \$1.2 billion figure is not true.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Of course, in many cases tenders have not been let, so we must be a little careful about how much we telegraph tender costs to people. However, we will give you costings.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I understand that. However, the Premier said that the project would be completed on time and on budget. He nailed himself to the mast on that. It was his commitment.

Mr A.D. McRae interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member is dying to say something. He should get it off his chest.

Mr A.D. McRae interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will have a break. The member is dying to say his piece. He should get it off his chest. He rushed away earlier. What is his contribution?

Mr A.D. McRae: A little while ago you asked me for evidence that you supported the abolition of payroll tax. You challenged my assertion that that was the view of either you or the Liberal Party.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, the member referred to only me.

Mr A.D. McRae: In *Hansard* of Thursday, 28 May 1992 you are reported as debating the budget Bills and saying, "I emphasise that the Opposition supports these Bills but they do not go far enough. Although they provide some relief at the margin, it is poor in comparison to the Opposition's intention, when in Government, to abolish payroll tax."

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, that was under John Hewson's goods and services tax package.

Mr A.D. McRae: You said that you would support it. You said that that was your plan. You should not come in here and play the pretty man. In eight years you did absolutely nothing.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Hewson's Fightback planned for the abolition of payroll tax, and I supported that. I wrote a statement to that effect.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Can I declare a TKO for the member for Riverton?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. What I thought the member was referring to -

Mr A.D. McRae: The Liberal Party policy of 1993 states, "Payroll tax and fuel excise go. We have a moral obligation to remove a tax on jobs."

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, that was under the GST Fightback.

Mr A.D. McRae: What did you do about it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Had Hewson won the federal election, there would have been an end to payroll tax. We supported the Hewson package, and the Hewson package would have allowed the States to abolish payroll tax. It is no secret that I supported the Hewson package. Is that the member's revelation? I gave about 100 public talks supporting the Hewson package. I think he would have been a great Prime Minister. I regret that he did not become Prime Minister. As great as John Howard has been, Hewson is an outstanding person and would have been a great Prime Minister. He would have given Australia great direction. However, he did not get there.

Mr A.D. McRae: You said you would get rid of payroll tax. What did you do in eight years?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Riverton could have found a better quote, but he could not manage that. I know the Premier has little ferrets in his office. He has many people in his office now. They read every speech that I and probably most members on this side have ever made. They read every piece of correspondence.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We are the only ones who read them!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I agree. The ministers and staff of this Government go through the files and read the correspondence. Ministers table memos from the former Premier to former ministers. It is appalling.

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Mr E.S. Ripper: I have one here if you would like me to do it now. I bring it in every day.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I cannot speak for every former minister, but I never, ever read -

Mr C.M. Brown: You are unique, because Premier Court did. He had an army of people.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: He may have.

Mr C.M. Brown: You know he did.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I tell the House right now that I never, ever -

Mr C.M. Brown: No.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am talking about me. The minister can talk about whomever he wants. I never, ever bothered to read the correspondence of previous ministers. I never saw the files, and I never wanted to. This Government spends its time ferreting through files. It is pathetic.

Mr C.M. Brown interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have unlimited time in this debate, but I am not about to take on the record of Hon Tom Stephens.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I cannot do it.

I conclude with a few general comments. What is lacking in this budget, apart from detail about taxes, revenues and allocations, is any true sense, vision or direction for Western Australia, either economically or in community or social services. There is no direction. There is so much for this and so much for that; a bit here and a bit there. However, there is no sense of where this State is going. In the area of economic development there is no vision for developing our agricultural industry. I suggest that for the first time in the history of this State, agriculture was not mentioned in the budget speech. Agriculture is the founding industry of this State. It is still worth around \$5 billion in a normal year. It was not mentioned. Fisheries was not mentioned in the budget speech. I do not think the Treasurer even mentioned youth.

Mr P.D. Omodei: He did not mention forest products.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The entire primary industry of this State was neglected. The Treasurer did not mention it. How can the Treasurer of Western Australia present an hour-long budget speech and not -

Mr E.S. Ripper: It was 66 minutes. Did you want me to go on for 76 or 86 minutes?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I would have thought that in 66 minutes the Treasurer could have found one minute in which to mention farming. We will tell the farmers that in 66 minutes they, and the fishing industry, did not even get a mention. That shows the priorities of this Government. It has no vision or sense of economic development.

Mr R.N. Sweetman: What about the resources industry?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will have to check that, but I cannot remember that much was said. I am sure mining got a small mention somewhere along the line. Where is this State's mining industry going? The Government has had the benefit of high oil prices, due only to the war in Iraq. The Treasurer is complaining that income from oil has fallen. The price of oil over virtually the whole financial year has been above \$30 a barrel. The Treasurer's budget figures estimate a price between \$22 and \$24. The long-term average price of oil is about \$18, and it can get down to \$10 or \$12. I think the figure of \$22 is a bit high. I would have been conservative and gone for \$18 a barrel, and that is probably where it will end up. Nevertheless, the Government benefited. It received a windfall. The Treasurer should not complain the following year because -

Mr E.S. Ripper: Are you saying that your estimate of the oil price over the next year is \$18 a barrel?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am saying that the long-term value of oil is probably around \$18 a barrel. It may not average that over the coming year, but that is about where the price of oil sits.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What do you think it will average over the coming year?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Probably in the range of between \$18 and \$25 a barrel. That is a guess. That may prove to be a bit high, and it is a matter of judgment, because no-one can anticipate what will happen with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, wars and the like. The Government has had a windfall during the current financial year. It should not complain because the windfall is no longer there. It should be budgeting on what it expects to be the long-term pattern.

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In this State since the election, project after project has fallen over. Sure, a couple of projects are going ahead - Mr R.C. Kucera: Kingstream!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Let us start with Kingstream. Let us see what projects have fallen over in Western Australia. Some of these projects might not have gone ahead in any event, but some of them might have gone ahead if we had a Government and a Minister for State Development who were prepared to roll up their sleeves and make things happen.

Mr C.M. Brown: Tell us which ones.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will start in the north of the State and the projects that have fallen over. The Ord River expansion -

Mr C.M. Brown: You had a huge success with that!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Where is that project?

Mr C.M. Brown: Do you know when the Miriuwung-Gajerrong decision came down?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Ord River expansion is not happening.

Mr C.M. Brown: Miriuwung-Gajerrong! You had fantastic success with that! You took it to the High Court - two years and three months in the High Court!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not blaming the Minister for State Development. The minister should be quiet for a moment and let me take him around the State. Ord River stage 2 -

Mr C.M. Brown: Yes, Miriuwung-Gajerrong!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The minister should be quiet and listen. He can blame me for some of these projects. I concede that not everything that I wanted to do in the resources industry took place. However, at the same time, I got \$35 billion worth of projects through in my eight years as minister. It is hard. Not everything works. Since the election, for all sorts of different reasons, Ord River stage 2 has gone; the Kimberley gas project has gone; the Derby tidal project, if we want to include that, has gone; and the Syntroleum Sweetwater Operations project has gone.

Mr C.M. Brown: What does that have to do with us?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am just saying that they have gone. The Methanex Australia Pty Ltd project has most likely gone.

Mr C.M. Brown: You hope!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not. That is five. I am only down as far as Karratha and I have five projects that have gone. The Windimurra project has gone. That is six. Kingstream has gone. That is seven. The Ravensthorpe nickel project has probably gone.

Mr C.M. Brown: Why?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am just telling members. That is eight. The deep pit expansion at Kalgoorlie has probably gone. That is nine. The laterite nickel project has gone. That is 10. Where has Mt Gibson gone? I do not know. That is possibly 11. I will happily debate any of those projects with the minister any day of the week. The point I am making is that probably a dozen projects around the State have been closed down or delayed.

Mr C.M. Brown: What about the HIs melt project?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will come to that. I am happy to debate any project at all. The point I am making is that since the election about 10 to 12 projects have folded one way or another.

Mr N.R. Marlborough: Come on!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member can blame me, and I will accept some blame. About a dozen projects have gone. The point I am making is that in this budget there is no vision for this State. If we get a downturn in commodity prices or a slump in world growth, more projects will fold. The Government has not set the scene for long-term economic development in this State. It has enjoyed some good times. It has enjoyed the benefit of the fourth liquefied natural gas train on the North West Shelf. That was put in place by the previous Government, but this Government will get the benefit. I do not mind that. That is the only thing the Government has really got going in this State. The HIs melt project is a relatively modest project that is in the wrong location. The Government was sold a dummy. It was seen as a pup, and it was taken for a ride.

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Mr C.M. Brown: Talk to the federal Government about that! It was taken for a pup too! Talk to Senator McFarlane about that!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Absolutely. He knows my view about that, and he knows my view about Methanex and Syntroleum. The Government was taken for a ride on the Hismelt project, and it fell for it. What we said to Rio Tinto Ltd was entirely consistent with what I had said to BHP a few years earlier. Rio Tinto has an obligation to process iron ore, but that needs to be viable, and it needs to be in the Pilbara or a regional centre. Rio did not like that. However, there was then a change of government, and it dished up the same deal to the Government, and it fell for it. That is the project that this Government negotiated. The Government fell for a pup. It is building a steel mill, with taxpayers' assistance, in Kwinana in the middle of an urban area, and it reckons that is economic progress! Give me a city anywhere else in the western world that today would locate a steel complex in the middle of an urban area.

Mr N.R. Marlborough: It is one of the finest industrial areas in the world. It has a buffer zone between it and the urban area.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Why would we do it?

Mr N.R. Marlborough: The rest of the world would give their left testicle to have it!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: A good Government - a Government that had both a left and a right testicle - would stand up to the Rio Tintos of this world and tell them that they have the benefit of one of the most fabulous iron ore resources since the 1960s, and they have a clear legal obligation to develop and process that iron ore. That is what I said to BHP, and BHP accepted it and got the project under way, with all of the difficulties that went with it. That project is now profitable and operating in Port Hedland. Rio had a similar obligation. It knew clearly from me as the minister and from the former Premier that it would be relieved of its processing obligations if it continued to develop the Hismelt project, but it should do that on a large scale in a regional area. We would have preferred the Pilbara, but we said it should be in a regional area. Rio knew the deal, from the chairman of the board down. However, it probably could not believe its luck when there was a change of government and it saw the pups come in. It fixed the Government up; the Government fell for it, and it was quick to say that it had negotiated a project. Why would a Government in a State the size of Europe, with an area of 2.5 million square kilometres, and with 13 000 kilometres of coastline, put in Kwinana a steel complex that has fantastic technology and a huge potential for value adding into stainless steel and all sorts of downstream processing, when it knows there will be "nox and sox" - nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide - emissions in addition to greenhouse gases? Why put a plant that is a massive consumer of water in Kwinana when we have a water crisis? The reason is that this Government does not have a long-term vision. The budget shows that the Government and its ministers lack the ability to look beyond the next 12 months, or the next state election, to see what needs to be done to develop Western Australia. The Government has missed its opportunity. If it wanted to portray a vision for the development of Western Australia, it needed to do that in this budget. However, it has failed to do that. Instead, it has delivered tax increases. What is the Government's vision for Western Australia? We have a health minister whose priority this year is to decriminalise cannabis and legalise brothels. That says it all about the Labor Party in Western Australia.

**MR B.K. MASTERS** (Vasse) [4.59 pm]: In speaking on these appropriation Bills let me be the first to recognise the very difficult job that is done by the Treasurer. When we are dealing with a sum of money in excess of \$11 billion - a sum that even an individual member of Parliament when retired might have trouble spending - and in this budget we are spending it on behalf of some 1.9 million Western Australians, that is obviously a long, difficult and complex task for anyone, particularly the Treasurer. I inform the Treasurer that I recognise it is a complex and difficult issue. Nonetheless, many points need to be made - and they will be made over the next few days by members on this side of the House - about different aspects of the budget. I will start with budget paper No 3, which is entitled "Economic and Fiscal Outlook", and deal with some of the matters in the overview summary that I believe are important and need to be taken into account by those of us who are trying to understand some complex papers.

Even if a person is an economist or an accountant, it is a daunting task to go through the 1 406 pages of the budget papers. When one considers that figures can be interpreted in all sorts of ways, it becomes a complex and onerous task to try to understand the big picture. I will refer to a few matters in budget paper No 3, because they help me understand the general direction in which this Government is going and whether it is going down the right or wrong path. I admit that I may not get it right on every occasion. I am not an economist or an accountant; I do not think the Treasurer is an economist or an accountant. I believe his background is in school teaching. I hope he taught economics at school, but I have not checked to ascertain whether that is the case. Certainly, I am concerned about the debt levels that this Government has increased over its reasonably short two and a quarter years in office since the February 2001 state election.

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I refer to page 1 of budget paper No 3. The very bottom line of table 1 shows net debt at 30 June in millions of dollars. From 2001-02 to 2002-03, the debt increased by some \$500 million, an increase of more than 10 per cent. From 2002-03 to 2003-04, which is the current budget year estimate, there is an increase in total public sector net debt of some \$951 million, which is approximately a 20 per cent increase. The Leader of the Opposition earlier talked about a three per cent increase in inflation and a four and a bit per cent increase in funding from the federal Government. The Treasurer responded by saying that it is only a 0.9 per cent increase in federal government grants. However, this debt level has increased by almost 20 per cent in one year. The forward estimates from 2003-04 to 2004-05 show another increase in total public sector net debt of almost \$500 million, which is roughly equivalent to an eight per cent increase. There are minor decreases in net debt in the two years after that, and I will refer to that in a minute. Clearly, increases over a three-year period of 10, 20 and eight per cent are unsustainable by any measure, and that is a very worrying aspect of the state budget.

Page 11 of budget paper No 3 shows the State's net worth. I say what I am about to say with great reluctance. This time last year the member for Roleystone corrected me on one economic line in the budget with which I was dealing. It did not make a huge amount of difference to the point I was trying to make; however, I got it wrong, and I am happy to admit it. Therefore, the member for Roleystone can correct me again if I am misquoting or quoting out of context. Figure 1 on page 11 of budget paper No 3 shows that net worth of the total public sector is increasing year by year by a considerable amount. I am disappointed that the graph starts at 2003. It would have been nice to go back and compare the past two years of this Labor Government and the next three years of forward estimates with what happened in the previous eight years under a coalition Government. I have not looked up the figures. I do not know whether the answer would be a good one for the Labor Party, a bad one for the Liberal Party or whatever. It is unfortunate that we have a budget paper collection, as I mentioned a minute ago, of over 1 400 pages, yet the graphs and tables are simplified to such an extent that in some instances it is difficult to understand what has happened over an extended period.

Mr M.P. Whitely: If you think about it, given that it has run budget surpluses, as opposed to budget deficits, net worth would increase under this Government.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I inform the member for Roleystone that I will talk about that. As Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen would say, "Don't worry about that." On page 13 of budget paper No 3, figure 3 shows the net debt as a share of revenue. The Leader of the Opposition referred to this figure, because it shows the total non-financial public sector net debt. It has a magic line at 47 per cent and defines that as the upper limit. The net debt as a share of revenue over the past two years has gone from 37.1 to 42.6 per cent. For the year after this one, 2004-05, net debt as a share of total revenue will go to 44.4 per cent, remembering that 47 per cent is the upper limit. Thereafter, the figure decreases a little. The first table to which I referred showed that net debt increased by 10, 20 and eight per cent, then decreased by about one per cent in the forward estimate for 2005-06, and decreased by about two per cent for the forward estimate for 2006-07. The reason that the net debt has not continued to increase at those unsustainable levels is that this Government is getting so close to that 47 per cent upper limit that it has finally realised that it must be very cautious. It must make sure that a bit of leeway is left so that should things go wrong, should the Australian dollar go through the roof, should there be a world recession or should there be more scares around the world, such as with severe acute respiratory syndrome and the Bali bombing or whatever, there will be a few per cent of net debt as a share of revenue to play with if the worst happens. It is not as though the Government has adopted a policy of trying to keep debt as low as is reasonably possible; it is all about credit ratings. The fact is that 47 per cent is the agreed upper limit, and the State cannot afford to put its credit limit at risk.

I now turn to pages 16 and 17 of budget paper No 3. Many dozens of figures are in table 1, which is headed "Summary of General Government Revenue and Expense Variations since the 2002-03 Budget". I will not in any way attempt to go through those figures. The point I raise about table 1 is that the Premier and especially the Treasurer have made significant comments about the fact that the revenue to the State from oil and gas is decreasing, and that in the next 12 months the royalties from mining will decrease as well. However, pages 16 and 17 show that at the 2002-03 midyear review, which was a few months ago, there were variations to the state budget. For example, North West Shelf royalties went up by a windfall factor of \$105.4 million. In the coming financial year, 2003-04, it was projected that North West Shelf royalties would increase by \$70 million and for the two forward estimate years thereafter by \$27.5 million and \$55.5 million. In other words, the midyear review said that in that four-year period the State would benefit significantly from higher North West Shelf royalties. The reference to mining royalties presented the same picture: an increase of \$17.2 million in 2003-04 and \$17 million, \$46.6 million and \$67.9 million in the following three years.

I am labouring these numbers because table 1 continuing on page 17 indicates the variations between the midyear review of only a few months ago and the budget we are now discussing. Guess what? North West Shelf royalties, although up by \$16.2 million in 2003-04, will decrease in the next two forward estimate years by

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\$6.9 million and \$6.7 million respectively. The Treasurer implied that that is a very poor, unacceptable and negative set of consequences for Western Australia. However, the figures I quoted from the previous page indicate that a few months ago at the midyear review the two figures for North West Shelf royalties had increased by \$27.5 million and \$55.5 million. This Treasurer would have us believe that for the coming financial year an increase of only \$54 million in North West Shelf royalties beyond the figure estimated a year ago at budget time is bad news for Western Australia. He has tried to tell us that an increase in North West Shelf royalties for 2004-05, which was fully \$21.6 million higher than was estimated a year ago, is bad news. Clearly, that is not true. With the price of crude oil at \$US25 per barrel, this State will benefit significantly. By trying to indicate that there is a problem inherent in the price of oil coming down from \$US30 to \$US25 a barrel, the Treasurer is, in my view, fudging the accounts because this State will be significantly better off than the Treasurer estimated 12 months ago.

The story with the mining royalties is absolutely identical. The numbers are different, of course. For example, the 2005-06 mining royalties will be fully \$36.8 million higher than the Treasurer estimated a year ago. That is nothing but good news. I find it very difficult to understand how the Treasurer can suggest that it is bad news and justification for an increase in taxes and charges.

I move to another subject. On reading the overall budget, it is clear that some agencies, such as the police and health, have received reasonably worthwhile funding increases.

Mr M.F. Board: Thanks to the Commonwealth.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: Thanks to the Commonwealth, said the member for Murdoch and shadow Minister for Health. However, it is important to look at the little picture in addition to the big picture. I know, for example, that the Water and Rivers Commission has had a 10 per cent cut across the board in its funding allocation. In my electorate, a group called GeoCatch - the Geographe Catchment Council - has had to find a saving of 10 per cent across the board. I can only hope that some of the good projects and some of the good people working in GeoCatch will not be lost.

I will give another example. When I was driving to Perth this morning I received a phone call about the closure of the Department of Indigenous Affairs office in Bunbury and the relocation of its two officers to Perth. The point of contact for someone in Bunbury who wants to make use of the Department of Indigenous Affairs is now to be in Albany. The member for Albany might be pleased about that, but a four-and-a-half hour drive from Albany to Bunbury is an awfully long time. Delays will obviously increase and the ability of officers in Albany to service Bunbury will be significantly reduced because of the logistical problems they will have servicing Bunbury. The person who phoned me about this matter is a small family developer of land. The family is developing a series of blocks of land in the south west. The earthmoving contractor recently came across some bones in the earthworks. He could have continued with the earthworks or he could have picked up the bones in the bucket of the machine, dug a hole somewhere else, buried the bones and not told anyone. However, to the credit of the developer, he stopped everything and phoned the Bunbury office of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, as it still existed then. An officer by the name of Joe Northover went to the site that day or the following morning to look at what was found. They were Aboriginal bones and under the law, those bones had to be put aside. In theory, the whole site could have been closed for up to two months, at a cost to the developer of \$4 000 a day, while the equipment stood idle and an assessment of the broader area for Aboriginal remains was undertaken. To the credit of the department, a decision was made then and there that the bones were very old and probably had no recent significance attaching to them. They were then reburied elsewhere on a site where no development was intended. However, today the developer phoned me and asked what would happen if his earthmoving contractors found more bones. He is committed to doing the right thing for reconciliation and for Aboriginal people, and he would tell his earthmoving contractor to stop work but he would face the risk of a \$4 000 a day penalty while he waited for someone to come from Albany or Perth to assess the site and make a decision on whether development could continue. That is an example of the sort of difficulties that will be experienced across the board, other than in some large government agencies, because many cuts have been made to many smaller government agencies.

I will spend a few minutes talking about how the electorate of Vasse has benefited from this budget. The reason I will spend only a couple of minutes is that there are two - I repeat two - new funding initiatives for the Vasse electorate.

Mr R.N. Sweetman: Aren't you lucky?

Mr B.K. MASTERS: There are just two initiatives. The Shire of Busselton is the fastest growing municipal area in Australia. It is the third largest rural electorate in Western Australia, yet it attracts just two new expenditures. The first was the \$320 000 upgrade of selected intersections on Bussell Highway between Vasse and Margaret River. Some of those might not have been in the Vasse electorate, but I am being generous in assuming that they

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were. This is on a section of road where the fatal accident rate is more than double the state average for roads of that quality, and a trifling \$320 000 is made available by the State Government. The second new commitment has no dollar figure attached to it and is simply a promise that the Western Australian Museum will provide interpretive and exhibition information to the new Busselton Jetty underwater observatory. I welcome that funding initiative, even though I do not know how much it is, and I welcome the \$320 000 for intersection upgrades. However, bearing in mind the 18 500 electors, the population of approximately 26 000, and all the pressures in the Vasse electorate, one must accept that there is a problem when only two very small new projects are funded by the Government from this budget.

I have gone through the budget papers as exhaustively as I can and I have come up with only five ongoing projects - projects for which expenditure was previously committed either last year or this year, and will continue into the coming year. These are all good, worthwhile projects, but there are only five! They are the Waterloo to Busselton powerline; the water allocation plan for the Busselton-Capel area; release of the Busselton wetlands conservation strategy, which is currently in a draft form; continuation of works to provide flood protection to Busselton; and completion of the new primary school at Dallyellup. Areas such as Dunsborough, Capel, Vasse, Gelorup and Yallingup - the other population centres in my electorate - do not even rate a mention in the 1 406 pages of the budget document. It should not surprise anyone that I have released a statement reminding the media in the south west that this is yet another example of what the Minister for Peel and the South West considers the chardonnay coast being treated the way it deserves - basically without any new funding. I remind everyone that two Estimates Committees ago the Minister for Peel and the South West described the Capel, Busselton and Augusta-Margaret River area as the chardonnay coast, and he said it did not deserve additional government funding. I commend the minister for living up to his word. There has been no additional funding for my electorate. That really disappoints me, because we have significant pressures, problems and needs in the Vasse electorate.

The Busselton Senior High School is bursting at the seams and a local area education planning program is under way right now. I believe it will report in the next month or so. I am confident it will recommend major expenditure on either a new school, an upgraded school or splitting the school into a middle and upper school, with the upper school to move probably to the township of Vasse. Even though the Busselton high school needs funding, this budget contains no funding. I am told that a major expansion of a high school takes six years; in other words, about four years for planning and 12 to 18 months for construction. I hate to say it, but the Busselton community will miss out on any significant improvement to its high school facilities for at least the next six years.

The Busselton District Hospital is now at least 30 years old. Two years ago the then Minister for Health advised that because of the age and design of the hospital, the planning for a new or upgraded hospital would need to commence in about 2003 - about now. The budget papers contain no reference to the planning for a new Busselton District Hospital, or an upgrade, remembering that even after the planning is done over a one to two-year period it will take another one to two years for construction. Busselton will miss out for at least the next four years on any sort of hospital upgrade.

For the past three years the Busselton community has been No 1, 2 or 3 on the list of areas needing crisis accommodation, with funding to come from the supported accommodation program of the federal Government but administered by the Department for Community Development. We have missed out for three years. I express my disappointment that we did not get it in the last year of the previous Government, but we certainly have not had it in the past two years and will not get it in the next year of this new Labor Government - I describe it as new because it is still learning. Unfortunately, women and their children who are the victims of domestic violence still must go to Bunbury for emergency accommodation. Over the past few months I have been told that Bunbury crisis accommodation is so much in demand that sometimes people from Busselton who go to Bunbury must then be moved to Perth because nothing else is available in the south west.

I could go on and talk about the needs for transport and road upgrades. Bussell Highway south of Vasse needs not just intersection upgrades, but also passing lanes and a whole range of safety and other improvements. I could go through all the different portfolios and indicate the needs of Busselton and the Vasse electorate, and then emphasise how they have been ignored in this budget, but I will not do that because I now need to talk about the portfolios for which I have responsibility; namely, science and the environment.

The science portfolio falls under the Premier's responsibilities and is referred to on page 93 of budget paper No 2. It is very difficult to understand the budget papers because of small subheadings, such as "Adjustments are related to movements in cash balances", "Includes user charges and fees", and all sorts of variations which make life very difficult for a non-economist or a non-accountant to understand. Can the member for Roleystone tell me whether what I am about to say is fair and reasonable? At the beginning of any portfolio section in the budget papers the first table is headed "Appropriation and Forward Estimates" and it refers to the net amount

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appropriated to deliver outputs, amount authorised by other statutes, capital contribution and then a grand total. I understand there are many ways of modifying those figures - I am not suggesting that they are deceptive or the books have been cooked - but the accounting techniques used make it very difficult to understand exactly what the community of Western Australia is receiving by way of total services or facilities. For example, the table on page 69, which is the appropriation summary, shows the amount of money that taxpayers contribute. In the case of most portfolios in the budget paper, two pages further on there is another table showing a summary of output and appropriation. I refer to the table at page 71 and the line for the total cost of outputs. My belief is that this line is a far more realistic way of presenting information on how this Government is spending money and providing services and facilities in a portfolio area. We should add to that line the second last line in the column, which is the appropriation for capital contributions. The two lines added together show the total amount of money from all areas of funding to be spent on that portfolio. I have not heard any interjections from the member for Roleystone, so he might be reasonably happy with this.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I will not criticise him. When I examine the budget papers I do not examine only appropriations because they cover only the taxpayer contributions. I examine the total cost of the output; in other words, the total amount of money from the State Government, the federal Government, private contributions and fees and charges etc. On that basis I now refer to science. On page 93 of the *Budget Statements* the total cost of output budgeted for the 2002-03 year was \$28.9 million. How much of that was expended? The estimated actual expenditure for this financial year is \$15.7 million. It will be \$13.2 million below-budget or underexpended. Worse than that, an adjustment shows that \$11 million from this financial year was effectively carried over from the last financial year. Despite promising a year ago to spend \$20 million of taxpayers' funds this year, new money spent on the science portfolio was less than \$5 million. It is a severe disappointment that this Government, particularly the Premier, who has milked the science portfolio for all it is worth, has overseen a portfolio in which the actual amount spent was barely 50 per cent of what was committed in last year's budget. The amount of new money spent from taxpayer funds was not even \$5 million. That shows the considerable lack of commitment by this Government to science and innovation. It is clear that over the past 12 months the Government has underspent in areas in which it thought nobody would squeal should expenditure not match the amounts promised. Science is clearly an area in which funding has been severely curtailed.

I refer to the Department of Conservation and Land Management listed in volume 2 of the *Budget Statements*. The total cost of outputs added to the total amount of capital contributed to an increase in the total allocation of 1.86 per cent, an amount less than the inflation rate. Clearly CALM has suffered a cut in real funding. That is amazing considering the pressures on the natural environment in this 2.6 million square kilometre State. Last summer we experienced severe wildfires. In Walpole 39 000 hectares were burnt out by one fire, and there was enormous concern about whether wildfires would strike in the hills of the eastern suburbs of Perth because of a build-up of fuel. CALM was under severe pressure to find extra money to undertake extra burning and to provide additional fire protection, yet its budget has been cut in real terms over the next 12 months. I predict a bad wildfire season next summer unless CALM internally reallocates the money needed to protect Western Australia against wildfires. The federal Government's biodiversity audit, which was released only a month or so ago, indicates that almost 3 000 ecosystems in Australia are threatened in one way or another. Surely the Government of Western Australia, controlling a State that comprises fully one-third of the Australian landmass, would see the purchase of land of high conservation value as a very high priority. However, the total cost of outputs for CALM is up 1.86 per cent this year, which is less than the inflation rate. Surely in a State as large as Western Australia, with new colonies of seriously endangered animals, one of which is Gilbert's potoroo, found only last week in bushland on the side of Mt Gardner, east of Albany, some new innovative projects should be proposed. However, not one single new project or initiative is proposed under CALM.

I refer to division 37, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, which manages Kings Park, Araluen and Bold Park. What do we find there? The operating capital expenditure for Kings Park has been increased by 1.1 per cent. After allowing for inflation, that is a real cut of 1.9 per cent, and that is in spite of ongoing and increasing pressures on the natural environment. The point was made in the budget papers that, last year, Kings Park received 5 334 550 visitors, yet, in real terms, the budget is decreasing. I am surprised at this Government, which was elected on so-called green credentials; namely, the cessation of logging in old-growth forests. The member for Nedlands almost did not win her seat because she stood against a Greens (WA) member. The green issue is very much alive. However, in spite of having five and a half million visitors last year, funding for Kings Park will be cut in real terms.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Next time, we will try harder.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I do not think the Government will have a next time after 2005.

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Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Are you saying that the present member will not be endorsed?

Mr B.K. MASTERS: No; this Government will not get another chance after the 2005 election.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: She will not be endorsed.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: No.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: I do not think she will be endorsed.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I was answering a different question from that which the member for Eyre was asking. I would be surprised if anyone stood against the present member for Nedlands for endorsement.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Would you put money on it?

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I would not want to take money from the member for Eyre.

I refer to the Department of Environmental Protection at page 581 of the *Budget Statements*. Over the past few weeks, this Government has been crowing very loudly about the department's employing 30 new staff for environmental enforcement and licensing, the \$50 million to be spent on contaminated sites and a range of other initiatives. However, the bottom line of the total cost of outputs, added to capital contributions, shows that the increase in funding for the Department of Environmental Protection is 3.2 per cent, which means, after inflation, that funding will be increased by 0.2 per cent. That is certainly not generous and it is certainly not recognising - I almost sound like a cracked record - that in Western Australia's modern, complex, industrial society, significant allowances must be made for problems, issues, crises and occasional catastrophes such as the Bellevue fire. This Government is not really acknowledging the need to be proactive in the way it manages the environment; instead it is allowing the Department of Environmental Protection to tread water.

The Department of Environmental Protection budget is broken up into five outputs, the budget figures of four of which are down. The waste management budget figure is down by \$3.5 million, which is primarily, as I understand it, because the money was allocated to the relocation of the Brookvale site and other issues like that. The budget figures are down for output No 2, environmental impact services, and output No 1, policy, education and advice. The minister and this Government have still not learnt that one needs to be proactive and put more money in, not less. Page 585 of the budget papers indicates that in 2001-02 there were 2 512 instances of ministerial and parliamentary requests for advice. The budget papers indicate that the number would have dropped to 1 746 in the following year, but what do we find was the estimated number of requests for advice that were received? There were 2 230, which is some 500 more than were estimated the previous year.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Half of those may have been yours

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I think half a dozen of those were from me. I am afraid the Government's green groups were making most of the requests. From 2 512, the requests for advice drop to 2 230, but this is still 500 more requests for advice than the Government had estimated the previous year. How many requests for advice does the Government estimate will be asked in the coming 12 months? Guess what - the number has dropped back down again to 1 780. Page 585 of the budget papers contains a note that reads: "Many contentious issues were dealt with in 2002-03." I do not know what the issues will be for 2003-04, but I will bet my bottom dollar that as the election approaches, some environmental or conservation activist or group will find or manufacture a contentious issue. I believe that the Government has been negligent in not adequately funding this particular section of the Department of Environmental Protection so that it can handle what I estimate will be about 2 500 requests for advice.

I am running out of time, so I must very quickly summarise some comments about the Swan River Trust. The Swan River Trust budget goes up by 2.9 per cent, which, after allowing for three per cent inflation, means that it is down by 0.1 per cent. This is in spite of the fact that the Swan River Trust division on page 613 refers to marked increases in all sorts of pressures, threats and activities that impact upon the Swan River. There will be huge increases in pressure, yet funding in real terms goes down.

The Water and Rivers Commission has an increase in funding of 2.5 per cent. One needs to look hard to find it, but hidden away in the documents is an increase in rural water supply assistance of almost \$3.5 million. That is partly unspent money from this year. If that is taken away, it means that the Water and Rivers Commission's environmental protection activities will be reduced by 3.7 per cent. If inflation is added, it represents a 6.7 per cent reduction in funding.

How does the Perth Zoo fare? I am sorry to say that it gets a \$37 000, or 0.3 per cent, increase after inflation. The Government has been negligent in funding environment and science.

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**MR R.F. JOHNSON** (Hillarys) [5.47 pm]: I am very sorry that the Treasurer is unable to be in the Chamber at the moment, because I want to highlight the benefits that people in my electorate have received from this Labor State Government's budget and this Treasurer in particular. I want to highlight those benefits, but I cannot. What have the people of Hillarys received? They have received practically nothing whatsoever. The only thing that they received was announced by the member for Joondalup and his colleague Hon Graham Giffard, who is one of the North Metropolitan Region members. In an edition of the local newspaper last Thursday they published a notice that highlighted a new fire station for Padbury. I wondered why the member for Joondalup would be announcing a new fire station for Padbury. I wondered if he had any good news for Joondalup that he wanted to announce. I asked myself why he had to pick my electorate, and had nothing happened in the electorate of Joondalup. The trouble is that the member for Joondalup has forgotten where Padbury is, because he announced that a new fire station would be built on a portion of Lilburne Reserve. I know you are very aware, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms K. Hodson-Thomas), that Lilburne Reserve is in Duncraig. Not only did the member for Joondalup get wrong his electorate and where he looks after people, but also he got wrong the facts when he talked about a new fire station for Padbury, because he placed it in the wrong suburb. Lilburne Reserve is off Hepburn Avenue in Duncraig. I am staggered that he should want to go to the trouble of announcing a new fire station to be built in my electorate, which would certainly affect the member for Carine. How can members have any credibility when they get something so wrong? They try to milk what they think is good news in my electorate, but they do not even get the right suburb. If they cannot do that, what hope do we have? Those two Labor members are joint signatories to that notice and they got the facts wrong.

Mr R.C. Kucera: That has never bothered you.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Minister for Health is interjecting on me. I knew he could not resist it. He interjects on me every time I get on my feet, but he never answers a question.

Mr R.C. Kucera: I do not like to hear hypocrisy in the House.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Hypocrisy! I would have thought that the Minister for Health could lead the way.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Tell us about the car park and the Department of Fisheries building in your electorate.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will come to that. It was not in this Government's budget but in ours, unfortunately. I opposed it.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What has this Gallop Labor Government done for my electorate? It has done very little, if anything at all. All it has done so far is to erect some signs indicating no parking for more than four hours. It has done that in one of the busiest and most popular tourist attractions in Western Australia - Hillarys Boat Harbour. Any families who want to go to Hillarys Boat Harbour and want to go onto the beautiful beach, which is probably the safest beach in Western Australia -

Mr S.R. Hill: Who built the boat harbour?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It was not this Government, because it was not in government then.

Mr S.R. Hill: Who built it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I admit that the previous Labor Government built it, but it got it wrong. It based roads and infrastructure on one million visitors a year. It got it wrong completely, because Hillarys Boat Harbour now attracts 3.5 million visitors a year. It is chaos. Why does the Government not spend some money and undo that chaos? A Labor Government set up the chaos in the first place.

Mr S.R. Hill: Why didn't you take it up when you were in government?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I assure the member that I did, because I was not going to have the Department of Fisheries building there. It will exacerbate the problems there. What is the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure going to do? I believe she is looking at extending the amount of commercial development there. She is thinking of allowing construction over the seabed to provide for more commercial development. That will cause nothing but problems for the people who go there in their cars and who want to take their families. From the point of view of the people who live in my electorate of Hillarys, there is nothing good in this budget. The budget contains only bad news for them. They will be slugged 15 per cent if they decide to purchase a new home. They will be slugged the other increased taxes and charges, all of which are in contravention of the Premier's promise before the election. It is hypocrisy. The Minister for Health mentioned the word hypocrisy. What about the hypocrisy of the Premier and the Labor Government, which promised before the last election that

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it would not increase any taxes and charges? That did not last long. Within the first six months the Government introduced the premium property tax. It was most unpopular.

I would also like to be able to highlight to this House the benefits of this state budget for seniors, for which I have portfolio responsibility.

Ms S.E. Walker: I noted when the premium property tax was introduced that the members on the other side sniggered.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: They would.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Rottnest calling.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Lombok calling.

Ms S.E. Walker: Who has been to Lombok?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I think the Minister for Health went when he was a police officer.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Many times.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I asked him whether it cost him very much money, and he told me to mind my own business.

Mr R.C. Kucera: I have been twice actually.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Then he would know how much it cost.

Mr R.C. Kucera: I do. I would be delighted to talk to you about it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He should not talk to me about it.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Do not get sidetracked. Get back on track.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He wants me to talk inside the Chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K. Hodson-Thomas): Order, member for Eyre!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This Gallop Labor Government's budget does absolutely nothing for seniors except clobber them with increased taxes and charges.

Mr J.N. Hyde interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Those senior citizens -

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He is causing the trouble.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, please do not carry on conversations across the Chamber. It is very difficult for the Hansard staff to hear the member for Hillarys, which surprises me. I remind members that it is highly disorderly to carry on conversations in the Chamber. The member for Hillarys has the floor.

*Point of Order*

Ms S.E. WALKER: The member for Perth keeps making personal remarks. We could all make personal remarks in this place. He made personal remarks about the member for Hillarys. Plenty could be said about the member for Perth's physique. It is very poor of him.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Back to the fish shop!

Ms S.E. WALKER: I rest my case.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K. Hodson-Thomas): There is no point of order, but I remind members that they should not carry on conversations and make remarks that cannot be heard by the Chair, which then cannot determine whether they are personal comments. I do not think it lends anything to the debate, so I remind members not to carry on conversations across the Chamber.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: As I was saying, this budget contains nothing good for seniors. It contains nothing that will assist them. The budget provides no extra assistance by way of discounts or rate reductions. However, it imposes financial burdens on those senior citizens who want to move home. When many people get to retirement age and beyond, they decide to move from what for many years might have been their home, in which they raised their families. Only mum and dad - they might be grandparents - are left in the family home, and

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they decide to move to a retirement home. The average price of a home in a retirement village is well in excess of \$250 000, and this Government is imposing an extra \$1 000 burden on those people who have worked and paid taxes all their lives. The Government is imposing a 15 per cent hike in taxes. That is a 15 per cent grab from, or mugging of, senior citizens who desperately want to move to a smaller home within a retirement village complex that contains the necessary amenities for when they reach that time of life. That is all they have to look forward to. The costs of other utility services will rise, and senior citizens will also have to pay those. This budget contains no financial benefits for them whatsoever.

I would like to be able to inform the House of the benefits of the budget for people in the tourism trade and Western Australians who love to holiday within this State, particularly on Rottnest Island. Unfortunately I cannot do that because it would not be true. Just a few weeks ago the tourism minister told us that anybody who wants to enjoy a holiday on Rottnest Island will pay more. It was a very crafty move as it was not linked with the budget per se. Mooring and accommodation fees will rise. People will experience higher prices no matter what they want to do on Rottnest. That is what this Government is doing for ordinary Western Australians who want to enjoy a holiday on Rottnest Island. It is a very popular place that is enjoyed by Western Australians.

Mr A.J. Dean: Not the working class.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It will not be able to afford it. The member for Bunbury referred to the working class. I do not know what the member thinks is the working class, but his perception is different from mine. I think most people who work belong to the working class. That is old Labor talking. Never mind new Labor; the member for Bunbury is talking like old Labor.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: What is the difference?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My friend should tell me.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: On your side it is all old Liberals. You do not have any young ones. Are there any young ones on your side?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member and I are about the same age.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: You would be the youngest. You all have grey hair.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am blond. I dye my hair blond. I look too young if I have it dark, and I like people to think I am mature. I do not mind taking the odd humorous interjection, but I object to the inane ones.

This is another broken election promise. The lengthy tourism policy that the Premier and the Labor Party released before the last election states that a Labor Government would -

- ensure that \$14 million is allocated over four years -

I accept that it is over four years -

to upgrade and repair holiday accommodation units and settlement areas on Rottnest;

The member for Eyre has ducked his head because he knows that I am telling the truth. That was an absolute lie. It has not eventuated. Instead, the Government increased the prices. That policy also states -

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Do you concede that, despite that, it is still very cheap by any standard?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, I do not.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: How long has it been since you went to Rottnest?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: About 18 months.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: I go every year. I still think it is very cheap.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Eyre is a wealthy man with stacks of money. He is a millionaire. Of course it is cheap to him. I am talking about average Western Australians. It is not cheap for them. We like families to be able to enjoy the island.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: I have five kids.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member does not take five kids to Rottnest these days.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Excuse me, we are having a conversation again.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I remind the members for Kingsley and Eyre that it is highly disorderly.

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Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I do not mind taking interjections, but now the member has started talking to one of my colleagues.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Your colleague is talking to me.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Government's tourism policy, prepared for the last election, said that a Labor Government would spend \$14 million upgrading and repairing holiday accommodation units and settlement areas on Rottnest. Two and a half years into its term, the Government has done zilch with that. Nothing in the forward estimates indicates that the Government will spend that money. The policy also states that a Labor Government will -

- work to ensure that holidays at Rottnest remain affordable to the average citizen;

That is hypocritical nonsense. Just a few weeks ago the Government hiked the prices for those average Western Australian citizens who want to holiday with their families on Rottnest. Further, the Government organised it so that the Rottnest Island Authority would get the blame. The minister should take the rap. He directs what happens on Rottnest, and he dictates the prices. Even worse, the Government has said that it is not a one-off price increase. It is looking at increasing the costs for Western Australian families every year.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Acting Speaker -

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Mr Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

[Quorum called.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.D. McRae): A quorum is present.

*Point of Order*

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Mr Acting Speaker, the time had finished before that member arrived in the House.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.D. McRae): There is no point of order. I looked around when the time fell due and I saw the member walk in as No 19.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: That is disgraceful. You are a shame to this place.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the member for Murray-Wellington to order for the first time.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: That is disgraceful.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the member for Murray-Wellington to order for the second time.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am delighted that so many members are in the Chamber to hear my comments on the budget. I am sure there will now be a quick evacuation by some members, but that will be a great shame, because some of the comments that I have to make I think are quite pertinent. I know the member for Peel is desperate to hear what I have to say. Before the dinner suspension I was highlighting the fact that there is nothing in the budget for people who live in my electorate of Hillarys other than tax increases. There is nothing in the budget for seniors - a portfolio that I represent as a shadow minister - other than tax increases. There is nothing in the budget for the general public of Western Australia who want to go to Rottnest Island for their holiday, or who want to holiday elsewhere in Western Australia, as we try to encourage, other than an increase in charges. This is a disgraceful budget for the people in my electorate.

I want to highlight a couple of points about Rottnest Island. This Government has again broken an election promise. The Labor Party promised that it would spend \$14 million on Rottnest Island over four years if it got into government. By some miracle it managed to get into government, but it has spent only a pittance of that amount. In the Government's first two years in office, rather than spend more money on Rottnest it cut funding in two areas. In capital works there was a cut in funding of about \$800 000, and in the grants that would normally come to the Rottnest Island Authority from the Western Australian Tourism Commission there was a cut of about \$400 000. That is a decrease of about \$1.2 million in funding for Rottnest. The Government wonders why the Rottnest Island Authority is running at a loss and has a debt. If the Government is not willing to fund it properly, then it will continue to have a debt. Instead of putting in more money for Rottnest, the Government is proposing to hike up the price for ordinary Western Australian families who want to holiday on Rottnest. That is an absolute disgrace. Many people enjoy going to Rottnest Island for their holidays. Many people go to Rottnest on their boats. There are 864 moorings at Rottnest Island, and 2 700 boats visit Rottnest every year. What those people have to look forward to is a hike in their mooring fees. The problem is that this

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is not just a one-off increase. As I said earlier, this increase goes against the election promise of the Premier that he would not increase taxes and charges. This is clearly a charge, not a tax, but it will be increased substantially through the Rottnest Island Authority so that people will have to pay a lot more money to go to Rottnest. That is disgraceful.

There is nothing in the budget for tourism. This week the Minister for Tourism put out a press release to try to deflect the media attention that the Opposition has brought on this dreadful budget that the Government has handed down. It is said that if we do things in haste we live to regret them. The minister has released a concept plan for a new 100-room hotel complex on Rottnest Island. All we can see from the web site is two fuzzy pictures or artist's impressions of what the proposed hotel will look like. There is nothing in the announcement to address the environmental, heritage and infrastructure impacts of the proposed project, yet the Government wants the public of Western Australia to respond to this panic press release that the minister has put out. As I said in question time, there has been a 72 per cent decrease in funding for Rottnest since the Liberal-National coalition was in government. The minister questioned that and suggested that I get a calculator. I suggest the minister have a good look at the budget figures and get a calculator, because he has obviously not worked out the figures properly. It is very clear in the budget papers that what I said earlier is the truth. I believe the minister will live to rue that comment. I warn the minister that I will be taking up this matter in the budget estimates, and if the minister has misled the House then appropriate action will be taken

The problem with the Gallop Labor Government is its priorities.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Health and education.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Where would it sooner spend money? What has it spent the first two years of its time in government on? Has it really spent it on addressing the crisis in health that the Premier said was in existence before the last election? There are more hospital bypasses now than ever before. The crisis is worse but he will not admit to it because he is the Premier. I am afraid that the hapless Minister for Health cannot control what is going on and he cannot manage his portfolio. I cannot find a person who has a good word to say about him other than the members of the Labor Party. Where have this Government's priorities been?

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Mandurah says that they have been in education. The increase in funding for the Department of Education and Training is a pittance when compared with what it should be. There is no commitment to education by this Government. At best its commitment is very minimal.

Earlier I said that this Government's priorities are all wrong. What have we seen over the first two years of the Gallop Labor Government? Where has it directed its energies and finances? Everything it does in this House has a monetary cost. This Government has pandered to criminals. It is a Government that is bereft of moral thinking. This Government is worse than and has the morality of a bunch of alley cats. That is a strong statement to make but I will explain why I say that and why I say that this Government has pandered to the criminal elements in society.

It all started with the Government's industrial relations Bill. It has now made an illegal act legal. The illegal act of union representatives going onto building sites and intimidating and using standover tactics on decent honest tradespeople, has now been made legal. What did this Government do next? It brought in the gay and lesbian law reform Bill. What was illegal before that Bill was brought in? It was illegal for older homosexuals to commit sodomy with any male under 21 years of age. This Government has now made it legal for older homosexuals to commit sodomy with boys of 16 years of age and under if they believe them to be 16-years-old. What a thing to do and to leave behind in the history of this Parliament. That is the second illegal activity that this Government has now made legal. What is the third thing? It relates to the cannabis reform Bill. I always thought that with reform, things were done for the better. It is illegal to smoke, hold or grow cannabis and it carries a criminal conviction. However, this Government has pandered to the people committing criminal acts and will basically make it legal because a person committing an offence will only get a fine equivalent to that of a parking ticket.

I listened to some interesting talkback radio this morning on my way to Parliament. The Premier was under the pump because many people were phoning in about the cannabis law reform Bill and were absolutely disgusted with this Government's performance in making it legal to smoke, grow and hold up to 30 grams of cannabis. This Government says that it is still illegal, but that is a technicality. I asked members opposite to visit Lambeth in south London to see the effects that these sorts of proposals have had there over the past few years. More will be said on that at a later stage. The third point on which this Government has made something that was illegal now perfectly legal is that people will be able to grow their own cannabis plants. The Minister for Health could not even answer questions during the consideration in detail stage of the Bill. I put the question to him that if a

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husband and wife are living together and growing two plants, how can it be proved who is growing the plants? How can someone be charged? It is impossible - just ask any prosecutor! Unless one of them actually puts his or her hand up and says that the plants are his or hers, it is impossible. What happens if a family of six - mum, dad and four adults - live in the same house and have half a dozen plants growing? How can one prove which of those six adults is growing the plants? It is impossible unless somebody puts up his hand and confesses. This Government is making it legal just to pacify a small element of criminals who want to smoke, grow and carry around up to 30 grams of cannabis. What sort of epitaph will this Government leave? I feel ashamed to be a part of this Parliament at a time when Bills such as these are passed.

What is next on the agenda for this Government and already before the House? It is the prostitution Bill. I know prostitution is not illegal, but it is illegal to live off the earnings of a prostitute and run a brothel. Therefore, this Government is going to pander to the criminals again; that is, the people who want to proliferate brothels throughout Western Australia in every local government area. This Government wants to legalise it so that almost anybody can open a brothel. What a wonderful indictment and historic epitaph to leave -

Mrs D.J. Guise: What page does it appear on?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It does not have to appear on a page. One can talk about anything that one likes under this Bill because there are monetary aspects to everything. I assure the member that there are monetary aspects to all the things that I have referred to so far. Monetary aspects are attached to the industrial relations Bill, the gay and lesbian law reform Bill, the cannabis Bill and the prostitution Bill - I can assure the member of that. However, members opposite are pandering to criminals. That tiny segment -

Mrs D.J. Guise: We are trying to clean it up.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: How can the member justify saying that when in the Bill before Parliament at the moment - the prostitution Bill - the Government is proffering that brothels can be opened in every local government area? Up until now a containment policy has been in place. It worked well for a long time, but prostitution was contained basically to Northbridge and Kalgoorlie -

Mr J.R. Quigley: Street walkers were everywhere -

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It was my Government that brought in a Bill to stop streetwalkers -

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: And it worked very well.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, as the member said, it worked very well. In government we legislated to stop an illegal activity; that is, streetwalking. We targeted not only prostitutes, but also the men who were kerb crawling and who were the cause of prostitutes streetwalking. If the men did not kerb crawl to pick up prostitutes, the prostitutes would not be streetwalking. We legislated to stop both those activities, not just the prostitution but also the kerb crawling, because we on this side of the House have some compassion for prostitutes. Many of them are not prostitutes by choice. Each prostitute is somebody's daughter, sister or mother and most of them are not engaged in prostitution because they want to be. Without a doubt the vast majority of prostitutes do not want to do it. I have met with groups of prostitutes and the ones that I have spoken to do not want to be engaged in prostitution; they do it because they have to. Some of them have drug addictions and it is the only way to feed their addictions. Others do it because it is the only way they can afford to get through university. Some women - even nurses - have been known to engage in prostitution because it is a way of earning some extra money to supplement their income. Many young single mums have to work as prostitutes just to keep their children fed and watered and to provide a roof over their heads. Very often the choice to work as a prostitute is not a positive one, but it is a job that they must do. However, this Government is not helping the prostitutes. It is helping the people behind prostitution - the brothel owners - by allowing them to open brothels in any local government area. Members opposite cannot deny that, because that is what the legislation will allow. As long as a person does not have a previous criminal conviction, he can open a brothel. Members opposite are quite happy for men to be brothel owners, whereas under the containment policy men were not allowed to run or own a brothel. We know that brothels will always be around, as will prostitution.

What has the Government also done? It has done nothing to help local governments have some say about a prostitute who is working from home. People come and go at all hours of the day and night, and often knock on the wrong doors, to access the services of a prostitute. The Government has done nothing about that. It has taken away the rights of local authorities to deal with that situation. The Government has pandered to criminals. If I were sitting on the other side of the Chamber, I would hang my head in shame, bearing in mind those four significant Bills that the Government has introduced to this Parliament. If members opposite go home tonight and think they have done a tremendous job for the people of Western Australia, I am sorry, they are living in

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cloud-cuckoo-land. They have pandered to the small minorities in society and totally ignored the plight of the vast majority of Western Australians. They have done nothing that is good.

I was pleased to hear that the federal Government has brought down a budget today that gives people a reduction in their personal tax. What a wonderful thing to happen! We hear this Government knocking the federal Government all the time and blaming the federal Government and the previous State Government for all the ills that it is now dealing with; yet it will never take responsibility. I mentioned a while ago that the Premier was on the back foot this morning. I understand that he does not like going on the 6PR morning show. I will tell members why I believe that is so. When he is in this place and is asked a question by the Opposition, he never answers it. He goes off on a tangent and never answers the question. I ask members to read all the questions he has been asked in the past two years to see whether there is any correlation between the answers -

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will talk about paedophilia in a minute, if my friend wants me to do so, and about the lack of resources that his Government has put in place. This is the only Government in Australia that will not have mandatory reporting. Does the member think that this Government has got it right and the rest of Australia has got it wrong? How many people -

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: If the member is going to interject, he should make it a sensible interjection that is relevant to this Parliament and the budget in general.

Mr P.B. Watson: I think paedophilia is a very important thing for this Parliament to consider.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It certainly is, yes.

Mr P.B. Watson: Answer my question: do you think the Governor General should be -

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will tell the member one thing: under his Government's gay and lesbian law reform legislation, there will be more paedophilia than we have seen in our lives, because the Government has opened up the door to boys of 16 - who are not adults until they are 18 - and younger, if people believe they look 16. The member asked me about paedophilia. He should look at what goes on. I could tell him.

There was a big announcement by the Minister for Community Development that anybody who deals with children must have a police clearance. Organisations have been doing that for years. I am associated with Radio Lollipop. Volunteers work with children at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and many other hospitals in Western Australia. Volunteers also work on the eastern seaboard and internationally - in America, New Zealand and England. Every person who wants to work for Radio Lollipop has always had to go through a police check. There used to be a federal and a state police check. Now the federal check covers both. That has always been done, so what is new? As I understand it, foster carers have always had to undergo a police check. What was the big news today? It was another announcement to deflect from this dreadful budget that the Treasurer has brought down.

Just before Christmas I put a plea to the Treasurer to ensure that the neurotrauma research unit would be guaranteed funding to continue the tremendous work it is doing. The Treasurer told me before Christmas that he would talk to the Premier and get back to me. I am disappointed that it took the Treasurer three months to do that. People who have spinal cord injuries and are paralysed and people who are brain damaged desperately need a commitment that that research will continue. This Government is without heart. It is very simple. An amount of \$500 000 is needed - a pebble on the beach. It could come from the Road Safety Council again, because it was the body that instigated it. I do not think it should come from the council; I believe it should come from the Department of Health, because it concerns health. The Treasurer told me in a letter - I will paraphrase it because I do not have the letter in front of me - that he felt that the money raised by the Road Safety Council should be used for prevention rather than after the event. It saddened me greatly when I read that. What have we seen in the past couple of years? Accidents and deaths have increased. It is heartless to say that the Government will spend this money on trying to prevent accidents rather than on the care of innocent people who will be completely disabled for the rest of their lives as a result of a road accident. It is heartless for the Government to respond by saying that it does not necessarily think that it is a priority for the Road Safety Council to -

Mr E.S. Ripper: I think I was describing the way in which the Road Safety Council was approaching its funding decision-making task.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I hope Hansard got the interjection, because I said to the Treasurer before Christmas that I did not believe the money should come from the Road Safety Council. It showed some fortitude and foresight when it said that perhaps some of the millions of dollars that the Government collects every year from

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Multanovas and red light cameras - I believe I heard that the figure was \$60 million - should be used to help people who are severely injured in road traffic accidents. Of that money, a pittance could be used to help people who have suffered brain damage or spinal cord injuries. It is false economy. As I said, I believe the money should come from the Minister for Health, but he did not seem interested in giving a commitment to pay that \$500 000 a year to help people in that situation.

This is a heartless Government because it is not helping the people who really need to be helped. It is taxing them to the eyeballs. It is taxing seniors, families and young couples who want to buy a home. When they buy their first home, it will cost them almost \$1 000 extra. It is all right for the Treasurer. He gets a whacking great salary every year, so a 15 per cent increase in the tax on conveyancing charges would not affect him; but what about those young people? The Treasurer is leaving the Chamber. That is a shame, because it is his Bill, after all. Maybe he is getting a touch of conscience. Those young people who want to buy their first home will find it doubly difficult now. To most people in this Chamber, \$1 000 is no great shakes. Members of Parliament are on a very good salary of \$100 000 a year. We might get taxed to the hilt and there might be other areas in which we must pay out, but \$1 000 would not be impossible for us to find if we wanted to buy another house. However, most people in this place would not buy a \$200 000 house; they would buy a much dearer house. They would probably have to find an extra \$1 500 or \$2 000 more under the new tax regime that this Government has introduced. I am not worried about members of Parliament, because they have a choice. They already have a house. However, the young couples and senior citizens will find it difficult. As I said earlier, senior citizens, when they reach about 65 or 70 years of age, often decide that they do not want to live in the house in which they have lived for many years, which has four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a carport or a garage, and a reasonably sized garden that they have had to tend. They want to move to a retirement village. The average cost of a retirement village home is about \$250 000. What will they do now? They will be sluggish with this extra tax - 15 per cent! Where on earth does the Treasurer dream up a tax increase of 15 per cent on a tax that was already very high? It is the easiest thing in the world for this Treasurer to do. Of course he can balance the books. It is as easy as pie; he just has to tax the poor Western Australian public more. That is all he has to do. He does not have to use his initiative. What about the blow-out in the number of staff in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet? It has gone from 26 to 39! We all know what they are doing. How many people do the ministers have working in their offices? How many people are being paid? What are the parliamentary secretaries getting? They all have credit cards. It would be interesting to see what they are spending money on. It is the public's money. It will be a question at some stage. It will have to be on notice because it is the only way to get an accurate answer. We will not get an accurate answer if we ask a question without notice; we only get flannel.

Mr P.B. Watson: Be careful or we might backdate the question by five years!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Feel more than welcome. I do not think I ever used a credit card; I was issued one but did not use it.

Mr P.B. Watson: Cash!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Money in paper bags.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What a wonderful interjection from the member for Mandurah - cash in paper bags! Are we getting back to that now? That is what happened during the years of WA Inc. The member has given me a wonderful interjection. Are we going back to the WA Inc years when ministers used to receive wads of cash in brown paper bags that they kept in their wooden drawers?

Mr J.R. Quigley: Your team had special bank accounts.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, they did not. What did a previous Premier have? He had 13 leader's accounts with about \$1 million in each.

Mr J.R. Quigley: None of them illegal.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: None of them illegal? He had his brother going around collecting cash. He had his secretary pay it in and draw it out when it was needed to help fund some of the campaigns for Labor's marginal seats. I know some of the people involved.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Was it immoral? Would the member for Innaloo suggest it was immoral? This Government is bereft of moral thinking; it is bereft of morals. This Government has no standards of moral thinking; none whatsoever. We have seen it in all the legislation it has introduced so far. The Government's "priority" legislation panders to criminals. I will keep saying that. The member for Innaloo was not in the Chamber when I brought it up. He is a lawyer; he will understand that the people the Government has been

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looking after for the past two years are criminals. The Government has made illegal activities legal in this Chamber. I have been through the various aspects. What do we have to look forward to?

My time to speak has almost lapsed. I will leave members of the Chamber with one thought. Some government members will leave this Parliament at the next election. Will they be proud of the achievements by their Government on behalf of the people of Western Australia? Will they be able to hold their heads high? I do not think so. All they have done is condone and legalise criminal activities.

**MR P.B. WATSON** (Albany) [7.34 pm]: Before I got into Parliament I was told that it is very hard to follow a good speech. I do not have that problem after the last speech! I was also told that it is very good to sit and listen. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition; he had some very good points on some things and bad points on others. I thought the last speech was very negative. I have been involved in different activities including sport and coaching children. They have all been positive. I am very glad I am on this side of the House.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We would not have you on this side of the House, my friend!

Mr P.B. WATSON: For a start, I am very careful who I call a friend. I consider that the member would not be one of them. If he were to claim me as a friend, may he forever try!

I always want to look at the positive side of things.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I am not taking interjections because I know the member is paired. He will have to leave soon. If we can put up with him for a few more minutes we will be okay.

I will look at some of the positive aspects of the budget. Nearly 90 per cent of the Government's new spending is in three key areas. The State will have more nurses, teachers and police officers. Over the past two years the Government has employed an additional 428 nurses, 525 teachers and 115 police officers. That is an additional 1068 nurses, teachers and police officers already recruited. Over the next year, an additional 150 nurses, 40 teachers and 60 police officers will be recruited. That is an additional 250 nurses, teachers and police officers. People often ask me whether I am fulfilling my promises as a member of Parliament. No-one thought I was going to win Albany so no-one can claim that I was going to deliver this and that. The Labor Party said it would deliver on three main issues and it is.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I can hear screeching from the other side.

The Government is delivering a record \$3.5 billion capital works program that will fund new economic and social infrastructure across the State. The Government has delivered three balanced budgets in a row.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You will believe anything.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I do believe; I believe things that are put in front of me. The State has a AAA rating and this Government has delivered three budget surpluses in a row.

I want to get to the best part of my speech. I will talk about my electorate. Albany is one of the world's best kept secrets. I could talk about Albany for three hours. The member for Nedlands could probably talk for only five minutes about her electorate. I could talk for three hours and still keep going. The Government has been great to my electorate. The Albany Regional Hospital has been given \$930 000 to complete a \$1 million upgrade of the paediatrics ward. Once again, the Gallop Labor Government is looking after the younger members of our community. The Albany justice complex has been given \$4.4 million of a total cost of \$11.5 million. An amount of \$1.33 million of a total cost of \$9 million has been allocated to the new district police complex. It is very interesting that the previous member for Albany was the Minister for Police and we could not get a new police complex; Albany had one of the worst in the State. In Albany on Friday, I will have the pleasure to talk about and show people the design of the Albany police and justice complex. I am chairman of a group of concerned people from Albany. They all looked at the plans yesterday and are absolutely delighted with them.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I have heard that the member was an outstanding chairman.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Thank you. The Great Southern Development Commission has been given \$302 000 to commence work on the Albany small boat harbour. Someone has been appointed in the past two weeks to oversee the work. An additional \$630 000 has been given to further develop the Vancouver waterways project. Education and training are an integral part of Labor's promises. An amount of \$1.1 million has been allocated to complete works at the Great Southern Regional College of TAFE. Also there is an allocation of \$0.2 million of the \$0.8 million required to complete the Albany university centre. I was at the University of Western

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Australia's old Penny Post building - which is being done up remarkably with the help of the Gallop Labor Government - to present a cheque for \$137 000 for new computer equipment.

[Quorum formed.]

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is nice to see the Minister for Education and Training in the House while I speak about the University of Western Australia and how great it has been at the Penny Post, where I presented a cheque on behalf of the minister yesterday.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is a tremendous initiative. Albany is a great learning centre. If the member for Nedlands went down there she might learn something.

Mr D.A. Templeman: The member for Nedlands interjected earlier. Is she aware that the federal Government just announced a 30 per cent increase in the higher education contribution scheme fees?

Mr P.B. WATSON: Is that true? We are trying to get HECS places in country towns to encourage young people to stay there. If HECS is being increased by 30 per cent, young children in country areas will not be able to afford to stay there. If they leave because they cannot afford to stay in the country, it will have a steamroller effect: if the children leave, their siblings will leave, their parents will leave - everybody will go to the city. That would be an absolute disgrace. I am glad the member for Mandurah brought that to my attention.

The Water Corporation has spent \$30.7 million on capital works throughout the great southern, including \$6 million for the south coast water treatment plant at Albany, and \$5.3 million to commence construction of the Two Peoples Bay distribution main. Many people believe there is no problem with water in a place like Albany. There is a real problem with water down there. Our run-offs are not the best. It is very hard to trap water in Albany and it will be a real problem in the near future. I am glad to see that this Government has done something about it. The previous Government did not bother about it in the previous eight years. Water has been dripping away and it is good to see this Government doing something about it.

The Gallop Government has committed \$75 million across the State to issues raised by the Gordon inquiry. Of that \$75 million, \$1.8 million has been allocated to employ specialist domestic violence police officers in regional police districts, one to be placed in the great southern region. An amount of \$5 million has been allocated for 14 new Aboriginal support workers across the State, one to be based in the great southern, who will provide advice and support to Aboriginal children. An amount of \$7.7 million has been allocated to extend the strong families program by employing 10 new coordinators, one to be located in Albany.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Investing in the region; that is what it is all about.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It certainly is. An amount of \$348 000 has been allocated to the Department of Conservation and Land Management for works in national parks, including the redevelopment of the Castle Rock lookout. I must compliment our Minister for the Environment and Heritage, who is in the House tonight, for all the great work she has done on the forest and the environment in the great southern. I know that the green movement is very pleased with everything that is happening in our region. An amount of \$2.7 million will be spent on remediating the former Albany gasworks site. Once again, we are cleaning up the environment that we were left with.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You could lobby the top off a cappuccino. You are the best lobbyist I have heard.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I thank the member for Mandurah. I hope he will let me say a few words. Before the budget was announced, the former member for Albany was quoted in the local paper as saying that the Albany Regional Hospital was in diabolical condition. When we came into power, the Albany Regional Hospital was \$700 000 in debt because it had to use its capital works budget for the previous year to run the hospital. Straight away we put \$700 000 into the hospital to make sure that it could get going. Since then, we have pumped more than \$3 million in extra funding into the health system in the lower great southern. We have provided more funding for specialist services. A new surgeon has been appointed and we are hoping to have another new surgeon in July. There is \$930 000 in this year's budget for a new paediatric ward and \$480 000 for a new health facility in Denmark. It is interesting to note that, because the previous Government went to the election saying that it would give Denmark a new hospital. There was no allocation in its budget estimates that indicated it intended to do that. It is interesting that the member for that region does not attend any of the meetings about Denmark's hospital because, unfortunately for him, he was caught out.

I will refer to a couple of other matters affecting Albany. The Leader of the Opposition came to town, and we love his coming to town because he gives us some great one-liners. He said that Albany was standing still. That means it is going forward, because when the previous Government was in power we were going backwards;

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therefore, standing still for Albany means going forward. I know that all the people who work in the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Great Southern Development Commission and the City of Albany were disgusted with his remarks. I am sure he would have received plenty of correspondence on that. Albany is going forward. I know that members opposite must try to find a few things wrong here and a few things wrong there. However, Albany is isolated, it is down south and it is a fair way away, so it must be self-sufficient. The hinterland relies on us. If members continue to knock Albany, people will start to think that bad things are happening there. I have referred to pumping up tyres. If members knock people all the time, they start to believe what is said about them. The Opposition has a job to do. However, when the Leader of the Opposition came to our town and said things such as he said, it was a kick in the guts not only to the people of Albany but also to the people there doing a lot of hard work.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: It is a bit like slashing their tyres, isn't it?

Mr P.B. WATSON: I am very lucky to have scriptwriters either side of me tonight.

We talk about industry in Albany. There are two major industries in Albany. One is Mt Romance Pty Ltd, which started off in Denmark as an emu farm selling emu eggs and emu oil.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: It is a fantastic product.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is. Steve Birkbeck and his staff think so much outside the square. They have exports -  
Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I am talking about something productive and the member for Nedlands is being negative again.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Knock, knock.

Ms S.E. Walker: Who's there?

Mr P.B. WATSON: The member for Nedlands certainly is not. If the member for Nedlands wants to ridicule business in my electorate, I will let her. She wants to make fun of business in my electorate, while people in the community are getting off their backsides and making a living, not sitting on their backsides in Parliament chitchatting away and making idiotic remarks. The member for Nedlands should get on her broomstick and fly back home.

As I said, people in Albany work very hard. Steve Birkbeck and his staff at Mt Romance are exporting their products all over the world.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Does the member for Albany notice the advantages?

Mr P.B. WATSON: Yes, but I did not think the member for Kingsley needed a product like that; I thought she was natural.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Thank you; I use their products.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Some products make some pretty average people look better, but I did not think the member for Kingsley needed them. It may be that the member on my left, the member for Innaloo, could get some to soften his forehead.

Those people at Mt Romance think outside the square. In Albany we have also Fletcher's abattoir. I want to make a point and I will probably go a bit over my time. Fletcher International Exports Pty Ltd in Albany employs over 300 people. From there, sheep are sent overseas, so there are live sheep exports; however, none of the money comes into Western Australia. The money goes to the ports, and then overseas. When one considers the sheep coming into the abattoirs, the employment of 300 people in Albany and the exporting of those sheep around the world, one realises all the different things that can happen for this State. I have approached the Minister for Agriculture about getting more stock for the abattoirs, instead of the live sheep trade.

Next year is the one hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the Swan River Colony. It is also the centenary of the State's parliamentary building. I call on the Premier to have the first regional Parliament at Albany. Why?

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: They have already identified your seat as a marginal seat.

Mr P.B. WATSON: The member for Kingsley can sit there and chip away. Albany was Western Australia's first settlement; therefore, where else should the first regional Parliament be held?

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: There are two Houses.

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Mr P.B. WATSON: No. The lower House should sit in the heart of the Labor community in Albany, which is also the heart of Western Australia. Albany is the world's best kept secret. Given that Albany was the first place of settlement, the centenary of Parliament House should be held in Albany.

Mr A.J. Dean: The first Premier came from Bunbury, so we should have it in Bunbury.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Bunbury is always second. Albany was the first settlement.

I congratulate Eric Ripper on his budget. Eric is a quiet little guy, but he is like Clark Kent -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.D. McRae): Member for Albany, the standing orders state that members must not refer to each other using their personal names.

Mr P.B. WATSON: The Deputy Premier is the world's best Treasurer.

Ms S.E. Walker: Really.

Mr P.B. WATSON: One must think ahead to the next budget. I congratulate the Treasurer on a great budget. I support the Bill.

**MRS C.L. EDWARDES** (Kingsley) [7.54 pm]: I welcome the opportunity to participate in the budget debate. This is one of those rare opportunities for individual members of Parliament to examine the budget allocations for the areas of concern within their electorates. We are all elected first and foremost to represent the views of our constituents; that is, the people who have entrusted us to look after them and their concerns, to push for the improvements they require and to oppose the matters with which they do not agree. Since 1989 - nearly 14 years - it has been my privilege to represent the seat of Kingsley and to express the sentiments of the people in that electorate in Parliament. I propose to do that again in my response to the budget tonight.

There is nothing in this budget for the Kingsley electorate. The compact disc that accompanied the 2003-04 state budget was easy to follow, because it allowed members to type in and search for the schools and suburbs in their respective electorates. After searching that CD, I could not find one improvement for the seat of Kingsley; nor could I find any improvements for any of the schools in the Kingsley electorate. Some of those schools require major works, yet none of them has been identified in the budget. Further, the budget refers to only one train station in my electorate. There is no specific mention of the train stations at Whitfords or Warwick. The only reference is to the Greenwood train station, a station that does not yet exist. That station has been promised time and again, and, in this budget, its completion has again been delayed. That station should already be up and running. In last year's budget, the Government indicated that the Greenwood train station would cost \$6.8 million. The delays have now contributed to a blow-out of the cost to more than \$7.7 million. The Government was originally scheduled to spend \$1.1 million on the Greenwood station this financial year. However, the current budget papers indicate that that expenditure is expected to be less than half that amount. The Government has allocated \$4 million for 2003. However, even if the Government were to spend that whole amount in the forthcoming budget, another \$3.2 million would be needed based on today's estimated cost of completion. When I spoke in the Address-in-Reply debate in May 2001, the completion of the train station was scheduled for the end of this year. That completion was then delayed for a further 18 months. Even the Government's latest projection of September 2004 has been amended several times. The March edition of the Government's on-line newsletter "OnTrack" states that there will also be a new station at Hepburn Avenue in Greenwood and that construction will begin on this station early next year to enable services to Greenwood also to commence by September 2004. That is a tight construction schedule, even on the Government's own time line. If the residents of Kingsley and Greenwood want to use the new Greenwood train station, I am sure that they hope that the Government is right. I would not be so cynical as to suggest that the Government will push the completion of the station prior to the next election so that it can make a big noise by trumpeting that it has been able to build rail one kilometre at a time. The Greenwood community wants a train station that is up and running. It does not want continued promises and further delays. As I indicated, on today's figures the Government must spend another \$3.2 million in the 2004-05 budget to be able to complete the station, which is supposed to be open by September 2004. That is almost an impossibility. Next year I hope I will not have to deplore the fact that the Greenwood train station has been delayed yet again.

This delay has increased the pressure on the Whitfords and Warwick train stations. Some improvements have been made to the Whitfords train station. New parking bays have been built and a roundabout has been installed to assist with traffic light changes. Main Roads also installed major steel fencing along the freeway to prevent train patrons from parking their cars and crossing the freeway. Although that has been in place for about five or six months, in at least two locations residents have removed the steel pins from the fences in order to cross the freeway at the south eastern end of the Whitfords train station. One can try to change people's habits and suggest that they walk towards Whitfords Ave, follow the path that was created for them and cross at the traffic lights. However, human nature being what it is - the pickets have been replaced on a number of occasions -

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Main Roads has decided not to replace them. An overpass is needed at that location. One was originally planned, to coincide with the increased parking, to cater for those who would park in the new parking bays on the eastern side of the freeway. The residents did not want new parking bays in their front yards, and I do not blame them. Main Roads, Westrail and the City of Joondalup were fantastic, coming together and sitting down with the residents in many meetings over many months, to come up with a solution to the parking problems at Whitfords train station, without putting extra bays in their front yards. If the residents and people parking there want to get to the train station at a point further south of the traffic lights, the only alternative is an overpass. I have written to the minister on this issue, and I urge her not to wait until an accident occurs there before appreciating the gravity of the problem.

Warwick train station car parking is at more than capacity. The area has developed to the point where the Hawker Avenue access to the Warwick train station car park should be closed. Statistics from the City of Joondalup show a weekly traffic count of 3 000 cars along Hawker Avenue and 6 000 along Dorchester Avenue, which is a significant link between Warwick Road and Beach Road, and adjoins the western side of the Warwick shopping centre. Those 3 000 cars are travelling along an ordinary suburban residential road with houses fronting on to it, as well as the Hawker Park Primary School. There is also a church in Hawker Avenue. The car parking at the Warwick train station must be restructured. The previous Government was looking at this; it was not on the immediate plans, but it needed to be considered in the future. That time has now arrived, and some work is needed to restructure the car park, in consultation with the local residents, not only in my electorate but also on the western side of the freeway. They also have problems with people parking along the residential streets because they cannot get a space at the Warwick train station. The restructuring of the car parking at the train station needs to be done in such a way that the access to and from the car park along Hawker Avenue is removed. It was never meant to carry the amount of traffic it carries today, as it passes a church, a school and homes. The residents have put up with quite enough. I am sure that the access from Hawker Avenue to the car park can be closed at the time the car park is restructured. If the new Greenwood train station schedule had been adhered to, some of those difficulties would already have diminished.

Has the Government got its priorities right? All members will have encountered common community problems such as juvenile justice, violence, vandalism on buses and graffiti. If communities are hoping this Government will solve those problems, particularly in relation to the buses in the northern suburbs, they are in for a disappointment. The only mention of buses I can find in the *Budget Statements* is on page 687, where, under the heading "Major Achievements for 2002-03", the final dot point reads -

Implemented the Safe Buses operation in response to community concerns over escalating problems with stealing, assaults and damage on some metropolitan bus services.

If that is referring to the transit police working both trains and buses, then it is not happening. If it refers to the joint funding, which has been in place for a number of years, for a security patrol assigned to trouble spots and certain times, that is still continuing. It is a jointly funded effort between the Government and the individual companies that run the bus services. The member for Carine and I have argued in this place in the past that a mobile service is needed. We are not advocating for a member of the transit police to be on every single bus, but for a better service than what is operating now - that is, absolutely nothing. Rocks are still being thrown at buses. People thrown off trains by the transit police then get on buses, still being absolutely disruptive. The bus drivers, passengers and people outside on the walkways all have to put up with the abuse. Nothing is happening to improve the safety on our buses. It is not fair, particularly to young women, who do not want to catch the bus any more. We all know what time it gets dark at this time of year. They catch the train to wherever they catch the bus to get home, and it is starting to get dark. There are not too many people on the buses between 7.00 and 8.00 pm, which is not late in getting home from work. The only thing that will help is a mobile patrol service that can be jointly utilised by rail and bus services, to maximise benefits for both.

Graffiti is still being done, and vandals are still scratching windows and doors. Ten per cent of the buses in the northern suburbs are damaged by graffiti every day. The company employs a person in the early hours of the morning before the buses go out, and again in the evening when the buses return, to clean off the graffiti. Members can imagine what the costs are. Young people have moved on from scratching the windows and doors of buses, and have gone back to the old felt-tipped pen. The graffiti task force, which operated very effectively under the previous Government, was removed, leaving a perception among young people that it is again okay to do graffiti. In our area, the City of Joondalup is prepared to come out and clean up the graffiti, but it is not doing the same job as the previous Government's graffiti task force. I am sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you notice in your electorate, as I notice in mine, an increase in the amount of graffiti on walls and paths. A gentleman spoke to me tonight and told me about his house in Mullaloo, with a beautiful big wall that has become a permanent billboard. He now has to pay for cleaning it up. We are finding the same situation in Woodvale. We had a very active community group at work before the Government's graffiti task force was

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established. It had worked itself out of a job, but it is now back up and running again, cleaning up graffiti. The doors on my office have also been scratched. The level of graffiti is once more on the rise.

Bus drivers tell me that the new security screens that are fitted to the buses are reflective and make it very dangerous for drivers' night-time vision. It is a major issue which I am sure the Rail, Train and Bus Industry Union will take up on their behalf. They indicate to me that they are still having problems with patrons who are thrown off the trains and then catch a bus. Bus drivers do not have very much support when dealing with unruly passengers, so they can get very disheartened with their job. The issue has been raised on numerous occasions. Last year the minister called together the companies, the drivers and the unions in an endeavour to provide a long-term solution, but the budget contains nothing, other than the fact that the safe buses program has been implemented in response to community concerns. When one talks to bus drivers and bus companies, they say that nothing has happened.

Still on the issue of safety, could I ask again for black spot funding? It is important federal and state funding which is distributed by the State Government through local councils. The Kingsley electorate has been very fortunate in having traffic lights installed at the junctions of Warwick Road-Dorchester Avenue - because of all the cars I mentioned earlier - and Kingsley Drive-Whitfords Avenue. However, there are three other major hazard spots, one of which is the Ocean Reef Drive-Trappers Drive junction. Ocean Reef Road is a major road. The hazard spot in question is a junction, not an intersection, and it is in the most northern part of the suburb. As it is the only real access into Woodvale, one can imagine the numbers of drivers who take their lives in their hands morning and night every day when trying to get in and out of Woodvale. Several roadworks have occurred in and around that area over the past 12 months, but nothing will work unless traffic lights are situated there.

The other two hazard spots where traffic lights are required are the Moolanda Boulevard-Whitfords Avenue junction, which is a major access point into Whitfords Avenue, and the Cockman Road-Hepburn Avenue junction, which is another major junction. All those hazard spots have similar traffic problems. What is needed is a better and safer solution than motorists taking their lives in their hands. I hope that it does not take the 15 years that it took to get traffic lights at the Kingsley Drive-Whitfords Avenue junction, because those junctions are major hazards and a danger for motorists. I hope that a tragedy does not occur before those lights are in place.

When it comes to essential community services, from looking at the budget, one can say that the northern suburbs are fast becoming a wasteland, yet if one looks at the growth of the northern suburbs, it is enormous. I mentioned police numbers in the Joondalup police district having been cut. It defies logic when one looks at the area that Joondalup police must cover, the number of people and the growth in population. Nothing is being put in place to deal with that. We must make sure that the northern suburbs are not forgotten in any discussions on a new intake into the Joondalup police district. The northern suburbs lost the parenting information centre when the Government decided to close it. Funding was stopped for six occupational therapists for the northern health service. I have already mentioned the highly successful anti-graffiti program which was axed.

Cadet programs are an important part of youth activities. I have seen young people become involved in an unprecedented way in cadet programs being operated at schools. There are waiting lists for young people who wish to join those cadet programs. The Government is putting in place changes that will limit the number of young people who can get into those programs. It is wrong, because not everybody wants to play sport or to join the Girl Guides or Boy Scouts. We must provide activities for young people. If we are talking about juvenile crime and doing something for young people, whatever our philosophical views of cadet programs, we should think about the emergency services cadet program at Woodvale Senior High School, which is a very active and excellent program. The police rangers program at Greenwood Senior High School is excellent and run by excellent volunteers. They put in their time to help young people develop skills, gain confidence and grow in themselves. What is done in those cadet programs helps young people in their school life as well. It is absolutely essential that the Government revisit what it is doing. These are preventive programs. What on earth are we doing spending money after the event, when, if money was invested up front in the early years, money would be saved in the long term? There is at present no recognition of that fact.

No mention of Kingsley electorate services is complete without mentioning something that has been smelling for years, and that is Beenyp wastewater treatment plant. It has been the bane of many of our lives. I live in the buffer zone, so I know when the Beenyp wastewater treatment plant smells. Our Government began a major two-stage \$46 million capital works upgrade program to stop the smell. The first stage of the program is about to be completed next month when, according to the Water Corporation, odour emissions will be reduced by 30 per cent. Some of the residents certainly hope so. On a dry, still night when there is no wind, it pongs. Some residents have told me that the odour problem has improved in some streets. I am really pleased that although there is still a smell, those residents regard the problem as improving. However, this is the worst summer season

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that I have experienced in all my years of living within the buffer zone. I live right on top of the hill, and the smell has been appalling to the point at which I must shut windows; there is no alternative and even the airconditioning does not assist. Other residents and I are looking forward to the second stage of the capital works upgrade being completed. The first thing I did when I received the budget papers was to check to make sure that the Water Corporation would still be spending that money on carrying out the second stage. My office still receives calls of complaint.

Mr P.B. Watson: You should spray it with Mt Romance products.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: I can tell the member for Albany that there is not enough Romance to get rid of that smell.

The second stage is due to be completed by June of next year. The Water Corporation says that the emissions will then be cut by another 60 per cent. I urge the Water Corporation to keep on track and on time, and to keep the residents informed, as it is doing at this stage. The problem will not be fixed until the residents say it is. Whatever the Water Corporation does or does not do, we will be out there continuing to monitor the smell. So long as an offensive odour continues to emanate from Beenyup, I will continue to remind this House about this issue and pursue it on behalf of those electors.

The northern suburbs, including the electorate of Kingsley, deserve far better than they have received from this Government. In the past couple of years they have experienced fewer services and higher taxes and charges.

By far the single biggest event to have affected the Kingsley electorate in the past year was the devastating tragedy that struck the Kingsley Amateur Football Club, as well as many other families around Australia, in Bali on 12 October last year. It is only when an act of terrorism strikes so close to home that one can really understand the magnitude of the impact of such an event on so many lives. I pay tribute to the survivors for their courage, and to their parents and friends who are still coping with the aftermath of the Bali bombing. I do not think many people fully understand that when a person goes through such a traumatic time, post-traumatic stress disorder often results and can last for many years. It has been six months since that tragedy occurred. The club has played its first game of the season. The 12-month anniversary is still to come. The Bali bombing has impacted upon many people's lives. I pay special tribute to the players, who have rebounded with such determination on the field this season to win all their games on behalf of their mates. I also thank the many sponsors who have contributed many dollars to the fund for the club. The fund is separately held through one of the Lions Clubs and managed by an independent committee. People who have donated money to the club can have great confidence in the fact that the money is being used wisely, particularly in support of the survivors but also in support of some others who have been severely affected by this event. I pay special tribute to those who are helping the club to get back on its feet, particularly sponsors such as Dale Alcock and the contractors and subcontractors who are helping with the new clubrooms that will serve as a permanent memorial of this event. Not only the Kingsley Amateur Football Club but also all people within the Kingsley electorate sincerely thank those sponsors. Their generosity, strong support and commitment have helped the club and its members to go forward.

I also acknowledge 20 very special citizens of the Kingsley electorate who have received a personal memento of their own; they are recipients of the Centenary Medal awarded by the Prime Minister for their contribution to Australia. All too often the voluntary contributions of the people who serve their communities without the slightest thought of personal gain go unnoticed and unrecognised. This medal recognises people for community activities in areas as diverse as the elderly, youth, rural fire services, emergency services, veterans and their families, and indigenous Australians. The medal also acknowledges those who have made significant achievements at the national or international level in science, research and the arts. I place on record both my own thanks and the thanks of all those who have been helped through the contributions of the people who have been awarded these medals. I take the opportunity of acknowledging those people from my electorate individually: Rosanne Allen for her early intervention programs; Peggy Bird for the work she has done for the Burmese community for more than 30 years both here and in Victoria; Donald Bohan for his long service to the community; Edna Brown for her service to the community, particularly in respiratory disorders; Ross Capes for service to sport - I remember him as a great umpire, although he did not do too kindly by Mal Brown at South Fremantle; Marjorie Cruz for her work for the disabled over a period of 20 years, especially in the area of advocacy - she changed how disability services were funded in the local community; Reg Dawson for service to the public; Herb Elliot for his long service in promoting Australia through sport and commerce; Beatrice and Norman Ellis for their outstanding service to the community; David Grew for service to recreational shooting; Milton Kirk for service to veterans affairs; John Lane for service to the community - he is a serving police officer and senior instructor with the Woodvale Senior High School emergency cadets, and has held many executive positions on P&Cs; William Loader for service to Australia and the humanities through religion; Peter Loughlin, another very strong individual who has organised sporting events for disadvantaged youth and

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indigenous communities; Terry Penhale for his work for the RSL and its members for 58 years; Joanne Pollard for service to the community, particularly for her charity work; Violet Taylor, a centenarian; and Moreen Wills for her service as President of the Police Widows' Guild. That is a fantastic group of people. They are a constant inspiration to the rest of us and a reminder to all of what a great country we live in and just how much we can cherish those fundamental values of freedom, democracy and helping others in need without seeking personal profit.

I also acknowledge the Joondalup Rotary Club. Rotary is a fantastic service organisation and I am proud to be a member of Joondalup Rotary. Joondalup Rotary has had a significant impact on the community in the past 12 months. We have helped a blind sportsman represent Australia at the world blind tenpin bowling championships in Finland; provided a television set, video recorder, portable CD player and sandwich maker to help furnish premises for Teens Unlimited, a group of disabled children in Woodvale; donated 100 blankets to Daisy House for distribution among the needy in the local community, particularly children; donated a dust extraction vacuum cleaning system to Eddy's Carpentry Shop in Wangara, where underprivileged and delinquent youngsters learn a trade in carpentry and cabinet marking; and gave local Joondalup identity Granny Pat Davies a new lease of life by providing her with a gopher. That is the sort of self-help that abounds in the Kingsley electorate. The people and groups I have just identified were not going to get any money from the State Government because they fell outside the guidelines. As such, members can see the enormous support that service clubs can be to the local community.

On a sporting note, in March the Wanneroo Joondalup under nines tee-ball team won the state championships in the A division. The Warwick Bowling Club's number one team has been promoted to first division red, and Yokine says that it is the team to watch and beat in the future; this is the highest it can go after winning the white division midweek pennants. Wanneroo Giants Baseball Club's state league team won the state grand final; the juniors under 16 division 1 team won its grand final; the juniors under 14 division 1 team won its grand final; and the juniors under 14 division 3 team won its grand final. A variety of young sportspeople of various ages from within the electorate have represented or will represent Western Australia in a variety of sports. Michael Ardagh will represent Western Australia at the state schoolboys football championships in Melbourne in July. Ryan Purcell is a name to watch, member for Albany, as he will be a winner at the Olympics in the future. He has been chosen to represent Australia in the world junior under 20s track and field championships in Jamaica in July. Shayna Allen will represent Western Australia in the under 16 netball team on Lindeman Island next year; Pippa Hendon will represent Australia at the national cross-country championships in August; and Jacquie Buchanan, Sarah Bettini and Aaron Kotula will represent Western Australia in Little Athletics at the international track and field event in Kuala Lumpur in July. Jeremy Blab will represent Western Australia in the under 14 baseball team in the national championships in Alice Springs in January this year and Phillip White will represent Western Australia in the state soccer team for the under 14s in Sydney. Karly Hoar and Jennifer Greathead will represent Western Australia at the state schoolgirls national netball championships in Brisbane in August and Stephanie Chew will represent Western Australia in the under 17s national lacrosse championships in Melbourne this year. That is a fantastic level of sporting achievement for the young people in this State and these youth will continue to need support.

I mentioned all those activities to show the good, positive things that occur among people in the community and what they can demonstrate to others. There is a wonderful calibre of people in my electorate - as there is in all electorates - and they can achieve great things of their own volition. They do not necessarily want the Government to support them. However, there is an obligation on Government to acknowledge the effort being made at a local level and to respond positively to problems as they arise. The young people whom I mentioned get to represent Australia and Western Australia, which is a tremendous opportunity for them to achieve sporting success. However, individually they do not get any funding from the State Government to support them in their endeavours to represent Western Australia and Australia. They need to raise the funds for their air fares, accommodation and the like. Some of those people are young enough to also require adult supervision on their trips. That is not always possible given the fact that the cost for participating in some of those sporting events is quite expensive. Yet, all those families participate so that their children can grab the opportunities given to them. We would want them to do so. This is an issue that I have raised on a regular basis over many years with not just this Government, but the previous two Governments. We must ensure that even if funding is not provided on an individual basis, at least clubs or organisations, when they have participants representing Western Australia, receive some level of financial support for those individuals.

The Wanneroo Basketball Association is based in Joondalup and has been an important organisation in the northern suburbs for a number of years. The club has now been given notice to leave its premises in Joondalup and the Government has suggested that the Joondalup Arena be its future location. That will not work for a number of reasons, apart from being a costly exercise. The Government, together with the City of Joondalup, has basically given the club its notice. I strongly suggest that the Government and the City of Joondalup put

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their hands in their pockets and ensure that the Wanneroo basketball club has premises in which to continue supporting these young people. If the organisation decides that it is best to relocate to the grounds of Edith Cowan University, then funds must be made available. Over the decades the club has put a considerable amount of its own funding into its clubrooms. Therefore, if it is to be tossed out, it will need to relocate and to be given facilities in which it can continue to ensure that its young people have one of the best possible opportunities in life; that is, to play sport. In playing sport, they grow and develop - something that we all encourage. I urge the Government to think positively about the Wanneroo basketball club. I am sure that all local members, including you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will be strong supporters of ensuring that the club has new premises to which it relocates.

In raising all these issues for the Kingsley electorate, I hope that members get a feel for what is happening in my electorate. I also hope the Government heeds my message that from a government point of view, there is very little in this budget for the residents of this electorate. The Government will continue to hear from me as those needs arise and I look forward to a more positive budget for the Kingsley electorate in the next round.

**MR M.F. BOARD** (Murdoch) [8.35 pm]: Tonight, in my speech on the third budget of the Labor Government, I will concentrate on youth issues. As the shadow minister for health and youth, I have had the opportunity in this Parliament on many occasions to put the Opposition's point of view on health issues. On many occasions, whether it be in matters of public interest or questions, we have debated health issues. However, the youth portfolio, to some degree, has been ignored in this Parliament and in this budget. It is time that we raised the profile of young people and government initiatives for young people. We need to consider where the previous Government was going and the intention of its programs, and where this Government is leading us today with what is virtually a non-allocation of funds for youth.

When considering the budget, one would say that the youth portfolio no longer exists and that it has been consumed by a children's policy unit. Children's policy has nothing to do with the demands and priorities of adolescent youth; that is, the way in which the Government should be dealing with their issues. I am afraid that the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth, who is consumed by other issues within her various portfolios, has forgotten about what are the needs of youth and the election promises that this Government made. In many ways, she has deserted and betrayed them.

The youth portfolio has not been established for long in Western Australia. The youth portfolio was established following a considered and long debate about whether there should be a dedicated youth minister overseeing a youth portfolio that concentrated on initiatives for young people. What does a youth minister do? The Minister for Health deals with youth issues along with the Ministers for Education and Training, Sport and Recreation, Indigenous Affairs and Police. In fact, there are issues involving youth in every ministerial portfolio. Why then do we need a dedicated youth minister? The answer is simple: first, to ensure that Cabinet is proactive on youth issues by being a youth advocate in Cabinet; secondly, to act as a champion for young people when funds are allocated and to ensure that there are dedicated programs for young people; thirdly, to ensure that young people have a voice in government by being proactively involved in government decision making. Hence, the creation of the youth portfolio. That opportunity has been lost by this Labor Government, which for some reason issues all sorts of statements and makes calls about its being representative, particularly of young people's issues. However, when it comes down to examining what it has done, its initiatives, how proactive it has been, the genuineness of what it has done and the way in which it has gone about its business, it is lacking. In fact, the new initiatives for young people in both last year's budget and this year's budget occupy about four lines. They are just not in there. This Government has forgotten where young people are in this State. It is preoccupied with those young people who have already fallen by the wayside and have problems with homelessness, drugs or health issues, or are young indigenous people who have problems. Those things have existed for a long time and have already been funded and supported by other ministers. The point of having a youth minister is that that minister would create new initiatives and be proactive and a champion for young people. That has not happened under this Government. It makes excuses about changing priorities. However, it has prostituted the youth portfolio and sold it out to other ministers, who I believe have left the interests of youth behind.

That can be seen in the budget allocations. I will not talk a great deal about budget allocations specifically, because there is no information in this budget about the way in which the Government went about establishing the Office for Children and Young People's Policy or allocating funds to it, apart from the fact that we know that \$4.5 million in total has been allocated to that office. That figure is about 50 per cent of what it was three years ago. It means that there is absolutely no money to staff the unit, let alone introduce new initiatives or proactive programs that will involve young people.

Our side of politics has recognised that it is important to consider all young people. The social difficulties that face young people, whether they be problems with drugs, homelessness or family disruption, are not based on socioeconomic conditions. They affect all the community. They affect people whose families have a large

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income, migrants and various socioeconomic groups and nationalities. The previous Government recognised that if it wanted to address the majority of youth issues, it had to be proactive; in other words, it had to consider all young people. It was not to the advantage of the Government or the community to address only programs and deal with situations after young people had found themselves in difficulty. What was the point of spending more and more money on homeless youth, young people who had found their way into drug addiction, those who had suffered the consequences of abuse in their family and those who had suffered family disruption and violence - a whole range of issues - when we could be proactive in giving young people the skills and the knowledge base to deal with some of those issues prior to their arising? Hence, the previous Government decided that it would be proactive and make sure that it involved young people and gave them a knowledge base and a skills base to deal with some of the social and other difficulties in life.

That is the area in which this Government has failed. It believes that the youth portfolio should deal only with young people who are in trouble, those who are affected by drugs, those who have broken the law and those who have already found themselves in difficult situations. Our Government wanted to prevent that. We believed that it was equally important to have preventive programs and programs to deal with young people who had problems. That is not to say that programs should be cut in any way or that the funding of existing programs that deal with homelessness, drugs or young people who find themselves in difficulty should be diminished. That is not the case at all. We must make sure that additional money is spent on proactive programs to give young people an opportunity to be involved with each other and share their experiences to ensure that in many ways they understand some of the difficulties that they face. This Government has failed to recognise that by cutting out those programs, all it is doing is creating a situation in which further expenditure will be required down the track.

I will deal with some of the programs in detail, why the previous Government initiated those programs and the areas in which this Government has failed to support young people and to create a momentum of change within our State, which I believe existed under the previous Government. Two issues confronted the previous Government when it established the youth portfolio. One of them was that it needed to challenge what was becoming a degrading image of young people in this State, particularly with elderly people. The media had continued to focus for some time on the negative images of young people. Through surveys and other means, it was found that many young people in the State were starting to feel a bit down on themselves because they were young. The front page of *The West Australian* and the television news were focusing continually on only young people in the community who had offended. I will give a clear example of that in my own electorate. On a given day, something like 600 young people gave up their whole weekend to raise money for Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. They raised a record amount of money - it was a national record - by doorknocking throughout their community. I thought that was of major significance. On the same day two young people decided to steal a car from our local hospital. They drove it down the freeway at 120 kilometres an hour and caused a number of collisions. Nobody was killed, but a number of people were injured. The only news regarding youth that was reported that weekend was about the stolen car and what had happened as a result of the speed involved. The fact that 600 young people had given up their weekend did not raise so much as a two-line article in the local newspaper, let alone in *The West Australian* or on the television or radio news.

As the Minister for Youth, I said that we had had enough of that. Hence, we introduced a positive program to raise the image of young people. Today, the youth minister, who has cut the youth budget in half, spends most of her time handing out youth awards under a program that the previous Government put in place to raise the image of young people. She has kept that program going because it increases her profile. However, the reality is that the point of the exercise was to increase the profile and the positive media exposure of young people in this State. I can assure the House that I do not give too many gongs to the media, because the previous State Government was not the recipient of many gongs from the media over a long time. However, Paul Murray, to his credit, when he was the editor of *The West Australian*, recognised that *The West Australian* had a responsibility to publish positive stories about young people to counteract the continual negativity in the media. He guaranteed to me that he would put colour positive image stories about young people on page three of *The West Australian*. To his credit, not that he is there any more, that practice continues today. It is a commitment that *The West Australian* has made that has filtered through the print and electronic media. Through the Positive Image program, which was initiated by the previous Government, the Government of the day gives media awards. I mention that tonight because the program was about initiating change for young people in the State; initiating positive images and getting older people to start thinking differently about what young people were contributing. It recognised that less than three per cent of young people offended and that 97 per cent of young people go about their business in a very positive and constructive way with their families and add to our community. The program was supposed to be the catalyst for a range of other programs that would feed off the awards and give young people a voice in the community. It was to help young people participate in government decisions and to play a role in local government. It was to help them play a mature role in the community. This

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Government has failed to support that. It has cut the budgets of a range of programs that were initiated to give young people a voice.

The previous Government put in place coordinating networks. The youth of this State were often considered to fall between the cracks. Various ministers and portfolios, such as health, police and community welfare, had all sorts of programs yet young people were not connecting and did not know of the programs available. Youth workers in the field, whether employed by the church, local government or the State, did not know about any of the programs. There was a general lack of coordination towards young people. Believe it or not, most of the youth workers had never met each other, even in small country towns. Coordinating networks were put together to ensure they met on a regular basis, discussed programs and initiatives, and got the most effective value from government grants and programs across all portfolios. It was designed to maximise the return to young people. Why are the programs falling over; why do they no longer exist; why are the young people no longer meeting; and why is there no longer any priority in having an effective coordinating network for young people in the State? It is because the minister and the Government do not give a damn as long as they hand out some ribbons and gongs occasionally. As far as the youth awards are concerned, that is enough. The Premier and the Treasurer have made a huge error in diminishing the youth portfolio in this State and it will come back to bite them in a big way. The Minister for Community Development is responsible for a number of portfolios. The youth portfolio is at the bottom of the totem pole. That is shown by the budget allocation to the area.

Youth grants comprise another area that has been cut. It has been made virtually nonexistent by this Government. What were youth grants? The previous Government decided to allocate funds to youth programs and any private or public sector group that was involved with young people, including the previous Government's Youth Advisory Council of WA. The groups and programs could apply for funding for initiatives that would show a positive image of young people or get young people involved in the community. It was a connecting program; it got young people involved. One of the conditions of the grants was to obtain additional support from a local authority and the private sector. That happened. The majority of grants, whether \$2 000, \$5 000, \$10 000 or more, were matched by funds from the private sector and local government. The youth councils were able to motivate their communities to get behind them. It was always particularly difficult to obtain resources in regional areas for many of the initiatives, whether for sport, art, building a skate park or whatever. A seed grant would give the youth councils the opportunity to knock on a few doors and get support from local businesses and local authorities. As such, \$5 000 often grew into \$50 000. That was the whole point of the youth grants program. What have the Government and the minister done? They have virtually cut it out. It is down to about one-tenth of what it was three years ago. There is no longer the opportunity for many of the youth groups and programs to apply for grants to be proactive in their own areas. That will come back and bite this Government big time.

One of the most successful programs established by the previous Government was Cadets WA. It has been much maligned by this Government. It hates the fact that young people in droves have chosen to join an organisation that requires them to wear a uniform. It appears to the Government to be a "military-type" program. That is not what it is about. It never was and was never intended to be like that. There were military cadets - army, navy and air force. The cadet programs had only 1 500 young people in 1995. That was 10 per cent of their heyday 20 years earlier. The previous Government knew that many young people in the State wanted to be part of a proactive program that gave them life skills. Not every young person can play a musical instrument or be involved in a band. Not every young person can jump high, run fast or be in a competitive team. Many young people want to be part of a program that involves them in life skill activities and their peer groups and gets them into the outdoors. Many want to acquire skills that they can take further in their lives. The previous Government recognised that. Unashamedly, it put the Cadets WA program in place. It created a range of cadet programs outside the military cadets. It took a great deal of work, energy and commitment to talk to the emergency services and establish a new cadet program in schools. The same happened with the Department of Conservation and Land Management and bushranger cadets. There were also cadet programs sponsored by the Australian Red Cross and St John Ambulance in addition to lifesaving and police ranger cadets. All the programs gave schools the opportunity to be involved in a program not connected with sport or music and gave young people a range of additional skills. It was unashamed; young people obtained skills in first aid, emergency situations such as fires and road accidents, and communication. Young people went on camps and so forth. We live in a changing social environment in which many families are dysfunctional or under pressure. The idea was to allow young people to gain skills when they often did not have family support after school through other mechanisms because families could not get young people to various activities. It was often because both parents worked or young people came from one-parent families. Often there were financial and time challenges in supporting a young person.

We based those programs in schools and conducted them during school hours so that schools could be involved in them and could utilise the many skills of teachers. Many volunteer organisations supported those programs

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because they wanted to connect with young people and did not have their own programs to recruit young people. The programs connected young people to voluntarism and gave them an opportunity to be involved in something different. The cadet program was unashamedly funded annually by the State at a cost of \$450 a head. That was the national rate set down by the Commonwealth for the training of cadets through its three-year study program. The previous Government set that figure so that it would put its money where its mouth was. It gave the people in the program an opportunity to buy equipment, to accumulate some funds and to have some resources for travel. It also ensured that they had resources in the second and third years of the program to build a mobile unit at the school or some other resource for storage. The program was designed to alleviate the continual pressure on families to resource the cost of young people's activities, which I would have thought a Labor Government would support. It was a tremendous activity funded by the State for young people to be involved in. It gave them skills that employers would look for later in their life. Young people who participated in these activities gained first aid, communication and participation skills that would be a benefit to an employer in a group situation. The program was all about creating good, strong citizens and giving young people opportunities. What is wrong with that?

Why is this Government not proactive? Why must it wait for someone to become a drug addict or become homeless before he gets any help? That is what this Labor Government does; it does not do anything up-front. It waits until people fall off their perch, because they have failed in society. They then become Liberal Party voters. This Government does not support people who want to be proactive and who want to be involved in something; it regards that as a Liberal Party function. That is absolute crap! It goes against every convention around the world that is proactive with young people and that provides them with opportunities. In that regard I do not understand the negativity of this Government. All I can put it down to is that because the previous Government initiated many of these programs, this Government does not want to know about them or resource them because it does not have its name on them and does not own them. It does not want to know about our successful programs; it just wants to let them die on the vine because it does not own them. This Government would rather see a proactive and successful program die because it did not initiate it.

Governments do not work like that. Governments continue successful programs. I assure this Government that when it leaves office and the Opposition takes over - if I am a minister again - I will not let successful programs die. I do not have the problem that this Government appears to have with successful programs that the previous Government initiated. I will continue any community program of this Government that has worked and I will be proud to say that it is a good one and should be supported. Why does this Government just let things go? It is because it does not have the political courage or gumption to say that a program initiated by our side of politics was successful.

The Youth Advisory Council of WA was another very successful program. To think that this minister has stopped all funding to that program brings me nearly to tears. I am talking about thousands of young people who give their time to their local authority every week, fortnight or month, depending on when their council meets. Some young people in the country drive hundreds of kilometres. Thousands of young people in more than 150 advisory councils throughout Western Australia play a role in innovative programs in their local area, connecting with their local authority and giving a feed to government on the way young people are thinking. What sort of negativity and naivety would cause a Government to cut out funding to the Youth Advisory Council? Is it solely because the Labor Party name is not on the program? I honestly scratch my head. Every person involved in a youth awards program in the State, whether it be the Positive Image award or the Western Australian Citizen of the Year award, has been a member of a youth advisory council. The young people who participate in the Youth Parliament have been members of a youth advisory council. Youth councils are an integral part of the forum for young people to have a say.

I was in a shopping centre the other day and I was wearing an old Youth Advisory Council polo shirt. The girl at the checkout grabbed me and said, "You are a supporter of the old YACs. It is a pity what this Government is doing." She did not know who I was; all she saw was the YAC logo. She said, "Why can't it be like it used to be? We used to come together as a regional coordinating group. Young people used to meet annually at the YAC conference." Funding for the annual YAC conference has been cut. All the regional youth advisory councils used to meet with young people coming from all country areas to examine initiatives to support their local area. What is wrong with that? What is wrong with the Government? This is nickel and dime stuff. I am talking about \$1 million or less - \$900 000 - to support these young people. This Government is not giving them anything. The money for youth advisory councils was intended to help young people travel to council meetings. Most of them decided they did not want the money and gave it to the programs that they put in place. This Government does not have the bloody courage to even do that. I cannot understand this Government at times. I cannot understand a Government that purports to but does nothing to support young people in trouble who want

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to have their voice heard. This Government has done sweet f.a. and it will be judged accordingly because the community absolutely knows it.

Youth advisory councils are not about young people discussing and promoting issues only for themselves. They are continuing to strive to do things in the community without support. Most will continue because they will get the support of local government and the local community because those councils are entrenched in the community, but young people will stop supporting the Government. The councils in regional towns are attempting to change the way in which the community views young people. Young people want to be involved in issues and want to change the community's view of them. They say that they are regarded by the community as people who want to break into other people's homes, who want to smash the local video shop, who want to graffiti the town or who want to snatch an old lady's bag. That is not true. Only two in 100 people want to do those sorts of things. The youth advisory councils want to change that view of young people. The youth grants program that I referred to earlier was initiated by a request from the Youth Advisory Council for a small amount of seed money to establish a program to change that view. Local authorities and the private sector supported the initiative. Although the previous Government put only \$1 million or \$2 million into the youth grants program, it generated \$20 million or \$30 million-worth of programs. How will this Government get support from the private sector for young people? What mechanism has the Government put in place for the private sector in the large regional towns or the minor towns in which, as a result of this measure, mining companies have stated that they will put in place the youth facilities, including the pool tables, initiated by the young people? Indeed, the young people were the spark that made it happen and this program coordinated all of that. The Government has sucked the life blood out of it. I cannot believe that this Government - a Labor Government - pretends to support young people, particularly those in trouble, while it sucks the life out of the youth programs that serve to work with and connect young people, and bring in additional funds. That is naive and incomprehensible.

The Opposition will address a range of issues in the youth portfolio. The purpose of the Youth Advisory Council is to give young people participation and a voice. Many of the programs that were taken away from the council have been duplicated nationally. The Prime Minister established a youth council, which unashamedly copied the Western Australian model. It is agreed that the Western Australian model should be implemented nationally. The same has occurred with the cadet model. In recognising that a proactive youth program was important for young people, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia established a cadet model. New South Wales was slow to move, but it energised the military cadets, and, in conjunction with the Commonwealth, provided additional funds. As a result of Western Australia's leadership in this area, the federal Government initiated a review and provided a range of additional support for military cadets in Australia. That is only one view. We were the only State in Australia that provided additional funds to military cadets to ensure that both the military and non-military cadets were funded equally. Not many State Governments have contributed to a federally-initiated program and supplemented its funding to ensure the programs are at the same level.

I have raised the subject of youth initiatives tonight because I know that, as a result of the lack of funding, many of these programs will start to die. Young people are motivated and committed, and they have a lot of energy. They can provide a great deal to local and State Governments and to their communities. Young people today are fairly astute; they are aware of the issues, problems and challenges that face their peers and they want to play a role in finding resolutions. They want to play a role in combating youth suicide and drug addiction. They believe that their voice should be heard when it comes to funding programs that affect young people. They do not pretend to have all the answers, nor do they pretend to have the maturity to take over from the older generation. However, they believe they can play a constructive role. Further, they know from their own experience that other young people will listen to them. They can identify and help feed many of the programs that we would like to see become successful. As volunteers, and by involving their families, they contribute in a cost-effective way. Hence, for a very small amount of money - that is, seed money, petty cash or less than the credit card limit of some of our ministers - we could have incredible programs that involve thousands or tens of thousands of young people who could provide an effective voice and achieve results in many portfolios, including health, community development and the police.

How can the Government be so naive? How can it just cut that small amount of money in half? Over the past six to 12 months, the razor gang has slashed money from various areas. What do those people know about youth participation, passion and commitment? What do they know about the effects on the ground? They know absolutely nothing. Do they know that the private sector in Dalwallinu added tens of thousands of dollars to its Youth Advisory Council program? They know nothing about the effect that that has had on the ground, particularly the effect it has had on youth suicide and in keeping young people at home or on the farm. They know nothing; they are merely bureaucrats with a mission to make the Treasurer look good during his budget deliberations.

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These incredible programs are being cast aside while huge amounts of money are being wasted. Prior to the budget, we highlighted the fact that the Minister for Health spent \$260 000 promoting prostitution. He did not want to do that, nor did he know he was doing it. However, he did it because there was no follow-up or contract management to support the program. On top of that, he gave \$95 000 to prostitutes who are affected by cultural diversity. In effect, the minister stated that prostitutes who do not speak a certain language will be supported with a range of brochures that will give them the opportunity to attract and keep men who speak another language. That was all laid out. The minister did not know he had done that, and he did not want to do it. However, there was no follow-up and no management.

The Auditor-General indicated that \$800 000 that had not been accounted for had been given to an indigenous group for the delivery of health services. I do not want to pick on that group, because it needs all the help it can get, particularly in the area of health. If the Government wants to waste money to that degree, especially when there is no service delivery, why does it not spend another million or two giving tens of thousands of young people some direction? Let us get our priorities right in government. The Minister for Health also spent tens of millions of dollars on another research program that shows where the priorities and changes in health delivery will be over the next 12 months. That is something it should have done two and a half years ago; in fact, that is something that the Health Administrative Review Committee report, which also cost millions of dollars, should have done. Real people with real issues are prepared to give 99 per cent free for a little bit of the chip that falls from the Government's table. With a little bit of support, those people will provide volunteers, family support, intellectual property and passion for their community. However, the Government has cut them off, because it does not have the courage to support a program that the previous Government put in place. It is happy to continue to spend millions of dollars reinventing the wheel, continuing to throw money at professional lobby groups to come up with programs the same as those two, four or six years ago. When will we get real, and start to realise that there are people who can give us something for nothing? They will give us their passion and their intellectual property and get involved. They are the ones we support. This Minister for Youth is not really a Minister for Youth, because she does not pretend to be one. She has gone missing for young people. She might be involved in children's activities, but they are not youth issues. The youth of this State will condemn this minister and this Government for their lack of support and commitment, and above all their lack of belief that they can play a role in youth affairs in this State.

**MR J.H.D. DAY** (Darling Range) [9.21 pm]: I am pleased to have this opportunity to make some comments on the 2003-04 budget. This budget will be remembered primarily for three things. Firstly, it will be remembered for the extensive and unprecedented pre-budget publicity, and the vast amount of spin-doctoring. The Government was very keen to get across its positive messages instead of dealing with the substantive issues. We saw the Premier out in the community for about two weeks before the budget was brought down, with the relevant ministers, on different days, dutifully standing behind him and nodding at the right time. After the budget had been delivered and all the bad news came out, the Premier has barely been seen defending the budget. He has left that to his Treasurer. To his credit, the Minister for Education and Training did not look very comfortable standing behind the Premier when the education budget was being announced a few days before budget day. I can understand his feelings.

The second thing the budget will be remembered for is substantial increases in taxation and debt, in particular significant increases in stamp duty on property purchases. The effect of the taxation increases will be an extra \$182 million in taxes collected in the next financial year, over and above the \$250 million increase over the past two years. Home affordability will be affected to some extent as a result of the 15 per cent increase in stamp duty. We are very conscious of the effect the extra capital and running costs of the Perth to Mandurah railway will impose upon taxpayers, in particular as a result of the route the Government is following, over the Narrows Bridge and through the expensive tunnel that will be constructed under William St. That will impact on the Government's ability to provide public transport in other parts of the metropolitan area and the State as a whole, and on the Government's ability to provide services in a number of other areas.

The third thing for which this budget will be remembered is the Government's being hoist with its own petard in health spending. The Government has made much of the fact that it is increasing the budget by \$232 million, when the actual increase, according to the *Budget Statements* will be only \$212 million, if the estimated actual expenditure for 2002-03 is compared with the budgeted amount for next year. The \$232 million results from comparing budget to budget. It is a significant increase, but the Government has been forced to put in such an amount because of the lack of a coherent and comprehensive plan to get better value for money out of the health system. I have spoken about this issue in this House and in other arenas on a number of occasions since the election. The Government made a lot of simplistic promises in the lead-up to the February 2001 election campaign, about extensive capital works in the teaching hospitals, without taking a more balanced approach to the needs of the system as a whole. The Premier made the promise, which he has repeated on many occasions,

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that the Government would fix all the problems in public hospitals. The Government is now finding that very difficult because it does not have anything like a comprehensive or coherent plan. I have made reference in numerous debates to the Health 2020 plan, put together in the time of the previous Government. Finally the message may be getting through. The Government has begun its own second review process, headed by Mick Reid from New South Wales. I was interested to see, in the news media last Friday, Professor Gavin Mooney of Curtin University, who is very informed about a lot of these issues, drawing attention to the need for a much more balanced approach to developing and delivering health services in Western Australia. If the Government has a good look at the Health 2020 plan, in particular the nine-point plan presented at the end of the document, it will get some very good advice about what it really needs to do. I know the shadow Minister for Health, the member for Murdoch, has been talking about these issues, and I will continue to remind the Government of its need to consider these issues in a balanced way.

Enormous pressure has been put on other parts of the budget, for example in the area of disability services, where there are high needs. Families in Western Australia are in a great deal of difficulty, particularly the parents of quite severely disabled children who still have to look after their children into their old age because of the difficulty of providing sufficient funding to meet the needs in the community. I am very conscious, for example, of the Stathy family of Forrestfield in my electorate and their daughter Raelene. I drew attention to their issues in the presentation of a petition in this Chamber about six weeks ago. I very much hope that, in the next round of funding for support and accommodation from the Disability Services Commission, Raelene Stathy will be provided with much-needed support. Ian Taylor, the former Labor Deputy Premier and Minister for Health, was on the mark when he made comments after the budget to the effect that the Government has not taken a balanced approach to the needs of the community. Of course there are major needs in the health system. As a former Minister for Health I know that, but the Government is finding, to use another cliché, its chickens coming home to roost, because it has let nearly two and a half years go by without any sort of coherent or comprehensive plan in place.

In the past six months the Department of Education and the former Department of Training have been combined into the Department of Education and Training. The total budget for the new combined department is predicted to be \$2 502 million, compared with \$2 402 million in the 2002-03 financial year. That is an increase of \$100 million, or 4.16 per cent. In real terms, it is an increase of just over one per cent - a fairly modest real increase, but nevertheless an increase, and I am pleased to see it in this budget. Another issue that needs to be taken into account, however, is the negotiation process going on at the moment for a new teachers' enterprise bargaining agreement, which includes a claim for a 10 per cent salary increase each year for the next three years. As the minister has pointed out, most people, including the teachers, do not expect them to get the 10 per cent they are claiming, but they are very determined to get a serious increase, like the 4.5 per cent received in the last EBA, during the time of the previous Government. Any percentage increase of that sort will put the education budget under a great deal of pressure, as the Government attempts to fund what most people regard as a reasonable salary increase. The outcome therefore may well be substantial pressures on other areas of the education budget. Bearing in mind that about 90 per cent of the education budget is consumed by salaries, it would be very difficult to squeeze other areas of the budget. The second possibility is that the Government will be able to put in place only a modest salary increase for teachers. The third possibility is that the Government will need to provide additional funding, over and above the amount it has indicated in this budget, to ensure that the Department of Education and Training will be able to fund a reasonable salary increase for teachers.

I also note that for schools in the Department of Education and Training figures there is only a modest increase in allocation of \$64 million, which is a combined increase for primary and secondary education taking the total to \$2 363 million, and which is a 2.8 per cent increase. I know that three per cent is a little more than the Government has estimated in its budget papers, but it is probably more realistic than the 2.5 per cent that the Government has estimated, given that inflation in the past 12 months has been in excess of three per cent. If we assume a three per cent inflation factor, schools funding will decrease in real terms. I predict that the education budget will be under a great deal of pressure over the next financial year.

Most of the announcements, particularly those in respect of school education in the budget and the associated media statement, are not for new programs but for programs that have already been announced. I do not criticise the Government for that particularly unless it tries to present them as new initiatives. For example, the additional 40 specialist literacy and numeracy teachers funded for the next financial year were announced in last year's budget. The \$7 million towards the \$28 million for the literacy and numeracy strategy was announced previously. Similarly, the additional funding for the behaviour management and discipline strategy has already been announced, as has been the information and communications technology plan, which was originally announced by the previous Government. The Government therefore needs to bear in mind that most of these programs are already pretty well known to the education community in particular.

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One of the other matters of interest is the forecast \$5 million savings listed on page 904 of the budget papers under the line on the Functional Review Taskforce, which will result from the merger of the Departments of Education and Training. Some \$5 million in savings is estimated in the 2003-04 financial year and \$30 million in each of the following three out years. Many people will be interested to know how in 2004-05 the Government will be able to achieve savings of \$30 million, which is a pretty substantial amount. We will be pursuing that through the Estimates Committee. Many people would predict that this amount is on the generous side of the estimate of savings.

It is also worth noting that the capital works budget for school maintenance and construction programs has a real decrease of 2.6 per cent over the 2003-04 financial year. Many of the older schools in Western Australia have major maintenance needs, particularly those built around 40 to 50 years ago. The previous State Government certainly made a serious attempt to deal with that problem by allocating \$20 million from the sale of AlintaGas. I am pleased that that money is still flowing through the system. However, many schools still have quite major maintenance and refurbishment needs. One of the questions I have on notice at the moment requests information about the maintenance needs in all schools across the State. I have not yet received an answer but I certainly look forward to receiving one from the Minister for Education and Training.

A number of other issues concern the education sector at the moment. For example, I understand there has been quite a substantial increase in the number of staff in district offices, whereas the focus should be on providing an increase in the support and staffing of schools. This is contrary to the "Investing in Government Schools: Putting Children First" report, which the Government had completed for it under the chairmanship of Professor Alan Robson in July 2001. One of the main aims has been to try to get additional support for schools themselves. If the staffing levels of district offices have increased, that is a matter of concern. I note that there is concern in the education community about it, and I am seeking further information on it. It is pleasing that there has been a real, albeit modest, increase in the education and training budget, but major pressure will be exerted on the school education allocations, in particular for the reasons I have mentioned. I believe that we will see that played out over the next 12 months or so. We look forward to pursuing some of those issues in the Estimates Committee deliberations next week.

I will make a couple of comments on some specific issues in the health budget, one of which concerns my electorate in particular and one of which concerns the funding for mental health services in our community. When we were in government a very deliberate increased amount of attention was given to improving the provision of mental health services in our community. It was recognised during 1995 in particular, when Hon Graham Kierath was Minister for Health, that real deficiencies existed in the provision of mental health services in Western Australia. There was a lot of public concern about it. Hon Graham Kierath made a very genuine attempt to better address those major mental health needs. Hon Kevin Prince did the same when he followed Hon Graham Kierath as Minister for Health, and it continued when I became Minister for Health.

It is absolutely the case that people with mental health problems are among the most vulnerable in our community. In many cases they are the least able to speak up for themselves. They have quite major social, financial, psychological and family issues to deal with. The State was not doing very well until 1995-96, when a major review was undertaken. That is no reflection on any particular Government, whether the previous Labor Government or us when we were in government. One of the outcomes of the increased attention that was given to mental health services in this State was a substantial increase in the budgetary allocation for mental health. In the past couple of budgets of the coalition Government it went up to around 10 per cent of the health budget as a whole. I will be interested to know what it is as a percentage of this health budget.

Mr M.F. Board: It has slipped.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That sounds right, given the anecdotal evidence that we are receiving.

One particular example that has been made known to me in the past month or so is the funding for the Centre for Mental Health Services Research. The centre was opened in 1998. It flowed out of the increased attention being given to providing better mental health services in Western Australia. It was established to make recommendations to the Government and to health professionals about how best to deliver mental health services throughout the community and how to be as effective as possible in improving services for some of the most vulnerable people in our community. The intention was not only that it should be of benefit to Western Australia, which was its primary focus, but also that it should play a role in informing people involved in mental health service delivery across Australia and internationally. The intention was to make a serious academic contribution as well as a practical contribution to mental health services in Western Australia.

The Minister for Health and this Government have apparently ceased government funding to the Centre for Mental Health Services Research as from 1 July this year. No government funding will be provided beyond 30

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June this year. That is unfortunate and sad, given the beneficial effect this centre and the people working within it have had in improving the delivery of mental health services throughout the community of Western Australia. I would like an explanation from the minister, if not in this debate then in the Estimates Committee process, of why this funding has not been increased. If the Government is increasing the health budget by as much as it says it is, it must give due recognition to the needs of the mental health sector in this State and organisations such as the Centre for Mental Health Services Research.

I fear that the more noisy aspects of the system and the community, not only in the health sector but also in other parts of the community, tend to get the most attention from this Government. That is very sad, because Governments have a strong responsibility to hear not only the noisy but also those who are less noisy but who nevertheless have a good case to make. Unfortunately, this Government is not good at that. According to the feedback I have received, many of its ministers are reluctant to meet with community groups, many of which are substantial organisations in the community. Therefore, they are much more likely to be out of touch with the community and will not hear about some of the genuine needs that exist, as opposed to hearing from those who may make much more noisy approaches to the Government. That is unfortunate. I call on the Government to review its decision to cease funding to the Centre for Mental Health Services Research and to reinstate funding, so that the good work that has been undertaken by some well-qualified and well-intentioned people at the centre can continue beyond June this year. If the Government does not do that, it will be an absolute indictment on its sincerity to genuinely provide better mental health services in Western Australia.

I turn to some local issues. The first issue I will raise does not fall within my electorate, but it is very close to it. I am pleased to see an allocation in the police capital works budget of \$12.3 million out of the original \$42 million allocated by the previous Government for a new forensic centre for the Police Service to be constructed on the site of the old Midland railway workshops. The decision to relocate the police operations support facility as a whole was made when the coalition was in government. The first building - the communications centre - was completed around 18 months ago and finally opened by the Premier on 22 April this year. I am pleased to say that it is now in operation. It has taken quite a bit longer than we would have liked to relocate the communications centre and other aspects of the support facility to Midland, given that the original decision was made when I was Minister for Police and Emergency Services at the beginning of 1998. That has taken a lot longer than anybody would have liked. Unfortunately, things seemed to slow down somewhat after the change of government, but it is pleasing that the communications centre is now operating from the new centre in Midland. The Police Service now has much better and more up-to-date facilities from which to operate. As I said, I am pleased that the initial allocation has been made for the forensic centre to be constructed on the general site of the police operations support facility in Midland. I hope that other services will soon be relocated to new buildings in Midland as part of the police operations support facility.

I add, while commenting on police issues, that there is concern in my electorate about the level of police presence in the area. The police who are posted to the Kalamunda and Forrestfield Police Stations in my electorate do the best they can. Unfortunately, there has been a reduction in police numbers in the area in recent times as a result of the Government's decision to station about 50 police on the public train system in the metropolitan area. That is not a bad decision in itself, but it is one that has had an impact on the police presence elsewhere. We need an increase in police numbers as a whole so that areas such as Kalamunda and Forrestfield do not suffer as a result of a police presence being provided on the public train system. I understand that the reduction has occurred also because a decision was made to allocate police to the various district communication centres that were established as a result of the change in the way in which police are tasked to attend various incidents and so on. That has unfortunately had the effect of reducing police numbers at stations such as Kalamunda and Forrestfield. I hope the Government will give serious consideration to fulfilling its election promise to increase police numbers. The reality is that police numbers have increased only slightly at best since the February 2001 election.

The main issue of concern in my electorate at the moment in terms of state government responsibilities is the intended redevelopment of Kalamunda District Community Hospital. This has been on the cards for many years. I have spoken about the issue in this Chamber on a number of occasions. I remind the House that \$5.5 million was allocated in the previous Government's final budget in May 2000 for a substantial redevelopment of Kalamunda District Community Hospital. The budget papers presented last week show that \$711 000 of that \$5.5 million has now been spent. About \$500 000 was spent on the initial planning and design work, which was completed just before the February 2001 election, and about \$211 000 has been spent in the current 2002-03 financial year on maintenance work undertaken at the hospital at the end of 2002. The 2003 budget shows that only \$120 000 has been allocated for the continuation of the redevelopment of the hospital. This project has unfortunately been delayed for two years since this Government came to office. The effect of the very minor allocation in this year's budget is that the redevelopment will clearly be delayed by at least another year. At best the redevelopment will get under way in 2004-05. That is three or four years too late. That is a real indictment

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on the genuineness of the Government to get on with the much-needed redevelopment of the Kalamunda hospital. The point also needs to be made that, because of the effects of inflation, the real value of the \$5.5 million originally allocated in 2000 for this project has declined. By the time it finally comes to be spent, it will be an even smaller amount in real terms. Therefore, the redevelopment work undertaken at the hospital will have to be more modest. Otherwise, the Government will have to increase the amount somewhat. I hope it will do the latter.

The other aspect of concern about Kalamunda District Community Hospital is the future of obstetrics services at the hospital. Currently, more than 400 deliveries take place at the Kalamunda hospital each year. About 435 deliveries occurred in 2002. It is a significant number. It is obviously far from being the largest delivery centre in the State; naturally, that is King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, which has something like 5 000 deliveries a year. Nevertheless, a significant number of deliveries occur at the Kalamunda hospital. A review of statewide obstetrics services was recently undertaken, under the chairmanship of Dr Harry Cohen. The project working group produced the discussion paper that will lead to a final report, about a month or so ago. One of the effects of the recommendations in the report is that there be a maximum of five public hospitals providing obstetrics services in the metropolitan area compared with the existing nine. It is pretty obvious therefore that one of the first to go as far as the provision of obstetrics services is concerned would be the Kalamunda District Community Hospital. That is of major concern to residents in my electorate. There is a strong desire for obstetrics services to continue at Kalamunda hospital with a strong degree of support from local residents. I can assure the Government that there will be a strong negative reaction if obstetrics services at Kalamunda hospital are not supported. The point has been made in the paper - I entirely agree with it - that where obstetrics services are provided appropriate specialist support and adequate general practitioner expertise must be available in the appropriate hospitals. In other words, obstetrics services must be provided in a safe and responsible manner. I am very conscious of that and if that professional expertise and specialist support is not available at Kalamunda, clearly obstetrics services will need to cease. However, that is not the case at the moment. Obstetricians are providing support at Kalamunda hospital and experienced GPs are delivering babies on a regular basis, which is very much appreciated by the local community. The doctors and the midwives concerned want to continue providing their services at Kalamunda hospital and, as I said, the community very much wants the service to continue. In the event that conditions change, I would certainly not argue for unsafe or irresponsible practices to continue. No-one is more aware of that responsibility than I.

In that context, it is worth drawing attention to recommendation 14 of the "Western Australian Statewide Obstetrics Services Review". It states that there should be -

... a plan to ensure that General Practitioners are encouraged to pursue the specialty of Obstetrics and support General Practitioner Obstetricians to maintain involvement, training and credentialling.

If obstetrics services cease at Kalamunda hospital, it would be in conflict with this recommendation of the Cohen discussion paper. Clearly, there is a need to ensure that GPs are, in some cases, able to continue providing deliveries in Western Australia and that the opportunity for training is provided. Kalamunda is an ideal site for such training in conjunction with King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. If the Government does not have a commitment to continuing obstetrics services in a safe and responsible manner at Kalamunda hospital, it would, among other things, be in conflict with one of the recommendations of the report.

In this context, I was interested to read a comment by the Minister for Health in *The Echo Newspaper* on 26 April. He said -

"John Day needs to consider the safety of mothers and babies,"

I can assure the minister that I am very conscious of the need to do so. I find the comment made by the minister rather silly and I take strong exception to it given that it was I, as Minister for Health, who established with cabinet support the inquiry into obstetrics and gynaecological services at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. That was a substantial and significant inquiry and was established after a lot of hard consideration. The decision was not made lightly in any sense. I will provide a little background to the establishment of the inquiry.

Its inception occurred in early 2000 following serious concerns being raised, initially with the management of the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. Those concerns were then communicated to the higher levels of the Metropolitan Health Service and to the then Chief Medical Officer, Professor Bryant Stokes, and the Commissioner of Health, Mr Alan Bansemer. After some preliminary investigation, the concerns were communicated to me as the Minister for Health at the beginning of 2000. The Metropolitan Health Service put in place an initial inquiry into obstetrics and gynaecological services at the hospital and Dr Andrew Child from New South Wales and Ms Pauline Glover from South Australia were appointed to conduct that initial review. They made a report to the Metropolitan Health Service, of which I was made aware, and following the major

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issues raised in that report together with the other information that had been provided, a decision was ultimately made to set up a more formal inquiry under section 9 of the Hospitals and Health Services Act 1927 and section 11 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994. The terms of reference were made clear to the community at the time. In general, they provided for a consideration of the incidence of adverse clinical events at the hospital. The inquirers were also asked to make recommendations about any relevant changes to improve the delivery of services at the hospital. A three member panel was appointed to undertake the inquiry and included Mr Neil Douglas, an experienced legal practitioner from Western Australia who was experienced in conducting inquiries of that nature. Two medical and midwifery experts were also appointed from outside of Western Australia deliberately. A change needed to be made after the initial appointments but ultimately those positions were held by Professor Jeffrey Robinson, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Adelaide, and Associate Professor Kathleen Fahy, who was at the time Master of Midwifery Course Coordinator in the Department of Nursing at the University of Southern Queensland. I understand that she is now located at a different university.

Unfortunately, the inquiry was unable to be completed prior to the change of government. All of us, particularly me as Minister for Health, would have liked it to be completed before the election occurred. Unfortunately that was not possible. There was a change of Government in February 2001 and I am sorry to say that the new Government was less than supportive of the inquiry. When it was in Opposition, the then shadow Minister for Health, the member for Thornlie, called for an inquiry of this nature to be undertaken. There was no need to convince me as Minister for Health, but it was pleasing to have the support of the Opposition in that respect. Once the change of Government had occurred, the new Minister for Health came into office. It is disappointing that from the public comments that were made, the incoming Government was much less supportive of the inquiry than it should have been. The time for the completion of the inquiry needed to be extended towards the end of 2001 and the cost was much higher than any of us would have expected when the inquiry was initially appointed - around \$6 million. However, it must be remembered that this was in the context of just one damages settlement for a serious adverse event in the hospital to the tune of about \$4 million, not to mention the other cases that have been settled and will presumably need to be settled in future. The cost of the inquiry - \$6 million - must be considered in that context, not to mention, more importantly of course, the very serious human and personal costs to families and individuals as a result of adverse events occurring, which in some cases would have been preventable.

The report was finally presented by the inquiry panel in December 2001. Unfortunately, two significant sections of the report were not made available to either the Parliament or the public. I raise this issue in the context of the minister making the comment that I need to consider the safety of mothers and babies, as I said. Effectively, the minister has invited me to comment on this issue, because it is a very serious issue. It is one that I do not deal with primarily - I am not the health spokesperson for the Opposition - but it is one with which I have some degree of familiarity, of course, having dealt with the issue when I was Minister for Health.

Two sections have been removed from the report for legal reasons. In total, the first section is 200 pages, and the second section is about 41 pages. They involve summaries of clinical cases that were made available to the inquiry and were written in a summarised and de-identified form in the final report which was presented to the Government but which, unfortunately, has not been made available publicly or, more significantly and importantly, to the clinicians at the hospital. I will come back to that in a moment. From the briefing that was ultimately provided by the Solicitor General on this issue, I understand that there was concern that it might be possible to identify some of the individuals involved, whether they be clinicians or some of the families or babies involved, from the case summaries that were written, despite the fact that I understand the inquiry members went to extensive lengths to remove any identifying information. Nevertheless, given that that was the advice of the Solicitor General, I can understand the Government accepting the advice, taking a cautious approach and not making the information available, initially at least, because of the concern, in particular, that in the event that some of the individuals might be identified, the full provisions of natural justice and procedural fairness had not been provided to those individuals.

As I said, the sections that have been removed from the report involve about 96 clinical summaries, which would be very instructive to clinicians at the hospital, in particular, in improving clinical practices in the future. It would be reasonable to assume - I understand it is the case - that these sections were written primarily by clinicians. They were not written from a legalistic point of view but by clinicians largely for clinicians. They contain powerful material and need to be made available to clinicians at the hospital so that they can learn from the mistakes that have been made in the past. This is not about a witch-hunt against anyone; it is about ensuring that the clinical cases and the clinical examples can be made available to clinicians involved in the provision of obstetrics and gynaecological services, whether it be at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women or in other parts of Western Australia, or indeed in other parts of Australia and internationally - there is wide interest in this

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issue, both in Australia and internationally - so that people can adequately learn. The reality is that women and babies have died unnecessarily as a result of preventable adverse events occurring. If this inquiry is to have the maximum benefit in improving services in the future, at the very least this information needs to be made available to clinicians. The matters are, as I said, of national importance; there is a great deal of interest outside Western Australia in this issue.

There has been concern about the alteration of records in some cases, about information not being adequately considered and about e-mails having been written by midwives after babies died but the midwives not being included in the follow-up consideration; in other words, a lack of accountability and a lack of real professional learning from some of the experiences at the hospital, at least until this inquiry was called and possibly even afterwards.

The real issue in all this is mothers and babies. As the Minister for Health commented about my remarks on the Kalamunda District Community Hospital, the bottom line in this issue of the King Edward Memorial Hospital inquiry is mothers and babies and doing everything we can to ensure their safety in the future. There are ways in which the Government could conclude this process. It could put the information that it has received to the clinicians and ask for a response in a considered way, or it could reconstitute the inquiry for the purpose of adequately finishing off the inquiry and enabling the maximum benefit for the people of Western Australia, and mothers and babies in the future, to be derived from it. If the Government does not do that, I believe that it will be guilty of a cover-up and of not making all the information available that should be made available, particularly to clinicians at the hospital so that they can adequately learn.

**MS S.E. WALKER** (Nedlands) [10.06 pm]: I suppose I could start my speech by correcting some members opposite, particularly the member for Albany, who said that I would not speak on my electorate. In fact, I will speak mainly on my electorate. However, I need to start off with what the community has been saying about this budget. I quote from the editorial in the *Sunday Times* of 11 May, which states -

Let's be clear. The state Government has skinned taxpayers to balance its books.

The \$83 million Budget surplus announced this week has little to do with good accounting. The surplus relies heavily on increased taxes.

From July 1, West Australians must find an extra \$162 million a year in their already tight household budgets.

Homebuyers will be hit hardest.

I will come back to that. Strangely enough, I do not have to look at the budget papers to talk about what is happening in relation to taxes being imposed on people in my electorate. In the Premier's pre-election commitments, he said on television that there would be no increases in taxes and charges. I now recall the first time I spoke in a budget debate, on 20 September 2001. We were talking then about the Premier's premium property tax. When I spoke then about the hardship of families, I noted that members opposite were sniggering. The night before the budget was handed down, the Treasurer had taken 20 journalists to dinner at the Globe Wine Bar and Restaurant at the five-star Parmelia Hilton. By chance it came out that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure was spending taxpayers' money on a barbecue for 700 of her staff. When I spoke of the hardship of families, the member for Riverton interrupted. He has continued to interrupt. The same players on my left on the backbench still interrupt. The member for Riverton interrupted and said, in effect, that he knew people would be unable to pay, but that was okay; did I not know that payment of the tax would be deferred? In response to my analysis of elderly people who would be forced to sell their properties at unrealistic prices, the member for Perth said, "They are greedy kids." He was talking about people who inherit money from their parents. I said then, and I say again now, that I have inherited nothing. It does not worry me who inherits money from their parents. I have worked hard and made my own money. During the Leader of the Opposition's speech, the member for Roleystone interrupted and said, "They will inherit millions and millions." When I first came into this Parliament I was surprised to see the intensity of the resentment and jealousy of people in the western suburbs. That was borne out by that premium property tax measure. Despite all the interjections by people on the backbench, the Government clearly backed off on that, as we all know.

In that speech I also spoke about my visit to the emergency ward at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. I commented then on four members of our community who were in beds outside the emergency ward in full view of the public. They had been all night in the waiting area. Not long ago, before work commenced on the emergency department of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, I again visited the department. I was surprised to see more patients in the same position in beds. I could not work out the logic of a full glass partition that had been built around the emergency area. I would have thought that a cheaper rail with curtains would have been better to provide patients with privacy. That would have been more appropriate. We can all imagine a member being taken ill

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tonight and carted off to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Imagine the indignity of being ill, in bed, in a night dress and fully exposed to the public. It defies logic that the matter has not been attended to. Hopefully the Minister for Health can tell me that it has been attended to. I raised the issue in 2001 but nothing had been done when I visited recently. Some money has gone to upgrade the emergency department but I know from talking to staff at the hospital that there is insufficient funding for some important machines. The shadow Minister for Health will raise the issue, particularly during the budget estimates. Most of the funding the hospital receives is from the Commonwealth. The shadow minister will also allude to that.

I was taken aback by the attitude and viciousness I witnessed from the Treasurer, the Minister for Education and Training, and the members for Roleystone and Riverton on one issue. Their attitude is recorded in *Hansard*. I raise this because I want to get back to the issue of the sale of the Sunset Hospital site and the manipulation that has been going on.

The second year of this Government's budget did not improve. At the time, I noted that in *The Australian*, John McGlue called the Treasurer a "bumbling, struggling ideologue". He said that the Government should use its imagination to replace the rich revenue stream of privatisation with something other than taxes. It is clear that this Government has no imagination and no vision. We have seen that recently with the Tourism Commission. The stakeholders vented their spleen over this Government having no vision for tourism. Thousands of dollars will have to be forked out by taxpayers. I commented last year on an eight per cent increase in compulsory third party insurance, and taxes on water, drainage and sewerage that increased by 2.9 per cent. Public transport fares increased by 2.6 per cent, drivers licences by 2.5 per cent and car licences by three per cent. In this budget we again see taxpayers being skinned by this Government to balance its books. Taxpayers will pay an additional \$112 on household taxes. Returning to the article in the *Sunday Times* and the percentage increase in taxes I raised in last year's budget, the article continues -

Household water bills will rise 3.3 per cent, delivering an extra \$20 million into state coffers.

...

The Government argues that it had no alternative but to hit taxpayers. But why has it got itself into this position?

...

The funny thing is the Government expects the same taxpayers it is punishing to re-elect it because it has supposedly been a good financial manager.

It's not as though people wanting to buy a home deserve to be hit with a 15 per cent increase in stamp duty, or that families are using so much more water they need to pay 3.3 per cent more on their bills, or that households have lodged so many claims that they should now pay 10 per cent tax, instead of 8 per cent, on their insurance policies.

I do not know who wrote the speech for the member for Albany. Some of it, concerning his electorate, was good. It seems clear to me that part of it was a spin on this tax by the Government. In the *Sunday Times* of 11 May there was another article on how the budget will affect the average family. Stamp duty will go up by 15 per cent; duty on general insurance will go up eight to 10 per cent; car insurance will go up eight to 10 per cent; stamp duty on compulsory third party vehicle insurance will go up eight to 10 per cent; water bills will go up 3.3 per cent; sewerage charges will go up 3.3 per cent; drainage charges will go up 3.3 per cent and public transport fares will go up 3 per cent.

When in opposition, the then Leader of the Opposition, who is now the Premier, gave a pre-election promise not to increase taxes. Reports in newspapers from all around the State are bad news for the Government. Grahame Armstrong wrote -

What I see here is a \$162 million increase in taxes and charges.

I don't get it. In our first Budget we broke an election promise and hit people hard with an extra \$132 million in taxes and charges.

Last year, we slugged them another \$119 million in increased taxes and charges. And now in our third year you want to whack people again - with \$162 million. And every year we tell the people this is going to hurt us more than it will hurt you.

All up, in our three Budgets we've increased taxes and charges by \$412 million. This is not good.

I also note a media release by the Property Council of Australia, which states -

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The WA Government's 2003 budget is a recipe for disaster. The announcement of a \$109 million stamp duty grab will place excessive reliance on property taxes for Government revenue.

The Property Council Executive Director, Mr Joe Lenzo, said, "The Gallop Government is acting irresponsibly by relying on a high number of property transactions to fund essential services."

"The Government will be left with its own budget black hole if it succeeds in crippling the property industry."

"The irresponsible tax slug on all WA property owners is unsustainable."

Regardless of what the member for Albany or other members opposite say, the taxes that this Government has imposed since it came to power are appalling. I wonder how members of the community are faring now that all these taxes have been imposed on them as they struggle to pay bills each week.

I refer to another tax that was imposed during the year that is not part of the budget - the tax on guild fees. That tax affects people in my electorate. They are being sluggish with all the taxes I have referred to and they have been sluggish additionally for guild fees. This tax affects 70 000 students. Many people in my electorate are single mums and dads who are struggling to try to make their way in life and have to juggle children and an income. They must work and have to pay additional taxes that have been imposed on them. By and large, that group can ill-afford to pay an extra tax, particularly this tax. I wonder how people who struggle with the discipline of academic life while trying to juggle other aspects of their life are doing. I wonder how they will cope with all these new taxes. I know how hard it is to study, having worked full time in a very demanding job and having studied part time as a single parent. It was and is a nightmare. The guild fee is another savage tax imposed on people who are struggling to better themselves.

At the time the Acts Amendment (Student Guilds and Associations) Bill was debated, I considered the tax that was to be imposed on students and where the money was intended to go. For example, the taxes imposed on the students at the University of Western Australia will go to the guild president. That tax could amount to more than \$1 million. I said at the time that that young person would get all that money handed to him to apportion. Only a few weeks earlier I attended a parents and citizens association meeting at a local primary school in Subiaco. I met parents who both worked but were at the meeting to try to raise funds to provide facilities for their children. Workers who pay taxes must leave their children at home at night and go to school to try to raise funds to pay for school facilities. This Government is taxing students and people who are struggling to get ahead. It is giving university guilds money that could be apportioned between schools - I will use my electorate as an example - so that those parents would not have to struggle to come home from work, make tea for the kids and then go to the school to raise funds. That Bill repealed voluntary membership under the Student Guilds and Associations Act 1994, which was a Liberal Party initiative that allowed people a choice. The Bill was basically a no ticket, no start tax. It was, and is, economic bullying and thuggery. At the same time, the Treasurer showed callousness to self-funded retirees. He refused to address the unjust and inequitable situation for pensioners in retirement villages who do not have access to the 50 per cent local government rates discount that they enjoyed prior to selling their home. I raised that matter in a grievance to the Treasurer on two fronts. The first front related to the Nedlands Aged Persons Homes Trust, which is owned 100 per cent by residents. Their individual residency agreements are based on lifetime leases of their units, although they do not have individual titles. The second front related to my constituents at St Ives Subi Centro. The chairman of the residents committee conducted a survey on my behalf that indicated that out of the 49 of 50 households that replied, 41 had received the rate discount before moving to St Ives. They are now all being penalised and discriminated against. The point I make is that one need not look only at the budget when considering these issues in my electorate. These residents are being penalised and have to pay an additional tax to the taxes that have just been handed down in the budget.

As I said, it is a good thing for elderly people to go into a village. They are not socially isolated; they are healthier; and they are less of an economic burden on the health system and society because they are helping themselves. How did the Treasurer respond to those facts? He said that they do not pay stamp duty. If the Treasurer did his sums he would discover that they pay more. The community wants the Treasurer to do his sums. It wants him to take a long-term view. In the long term, is it better for the State to give pensioners and senior citizens in this position a rebate? For example, one of my constituents sold a unit in Crawley for \$435 000 with rates of \$782.75, yet he bought a unit for \$340 000 in St Ives with rates of \$869.70. Although the price of the unit in Subiaco was approximately 25 per cent less than the unit in Crawley, the constituent is paying \$81 more in rates plus 50 per cent of \$782.75; that is, approximately \$482 more a year. Any fool can work that out. However, the Treasurer has been described as a bumbling, struggling ideologue. In my view, he has shown a callous indifference to senior citizens in our society. That attitude will not encourage baby boomers, when

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they do their sums, to enter retirement villages. It is easy to keep taxing people when a Government has incompetent policies and is not managing the State well economically.

That attitude has also been obvious in this Government's approach to selling the Sunset site in my electorate. I became a member of the Sunset steering committee because I believed I could oversee the process on behalf of my constituents, notwithstanding that I was uncomfortable with the committee's terms of reference. The financial objective of the committee was to raise \$15 million from the site to use for health-related services for the wider community. That was to include the subdivision and redevelopment of part of the land. The heritage and conservation objectives of the committee were to achieve redevelopment of existing buildings and any new development on the site in a manner sympathetic to the heritage of the place and to meet Heritage Council requirements. The social objectives of the committee were to explore a range of community uses and to provide public access to at least part of the site. Following the first public meeting of the committee, I received letters from approximately 12 constituents who attended that meeting and who were unhappy with the attitude of the recently dethroned mayor and other issues. They asked me to make representations to the committee on their behalf, which I did at the next committee meeting. I raised the concerns of my electors, who are, of course, also ratepayers of the City of Nedlands. It became apparent to me from comments of the chairman of that meeting that my electors' concerns would not be treated with anywhere near the level of respect that I accord my electors. It was apparent to me that I could not properly represent my electors. Moreover, I could not be part of a committee unless it showed that level of respect for my electors. I do not include all the committee members when I say that. I take the view that I am elected and paid to represent the views of my electors and my first loyalty is to them. After that meeting, when I was resolving how I would resign, the member for Alfred Cove asked a question in this House on 22 August 2002. She had asked the Premier about the auctioning of the heritage-listed Duncraig House to raise \$4 million, which was less than 0.2 per cent of the health budget. I raise this matter because we are talking about the budget and selling irreplaceable community assets to try to keep this Government's policies afloat. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that the term of reference for the Sunset committee involved the contemplation of raising \$15 million from that site. Let us say it was \$16 million. In last year's budget figures, that would have been only 0.8 per cent of the health budget, or even less in this year's budget. Dr Woollard said -

I have a supplementary question. The Government hopes to realise \$4 million from the sale, which is less than 0.2 per cent of the budget of the Department of Health. What does the Government intend to sell next? How does it intend to manage the health system next year?

I recall the Premier turning to me when I was sitting in my previous seat, and stating -

Next on our agenda is the redevelopment of the Sunset hospital site, where we hope to achieve similar objectives not only in the preservation of our heritage, which is important, but also, in consultation with the City of Nedlands - which has been working with the minister to resolve this issue in a cooperative way - to provide good public access in that area represented by the member for Nedlands. We are looking at some of these sites to improve the performance of our system.

Dr J.M. Woollard: You are not listening to the community.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I am.

Dr J.M. Woollard: You're selling off community assets; you have started now!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We are listening to the community.

Dr J.M. Woollard: What about the 22 000 who signed petitions?

The member for Alfred Cove went on to say -

Come on! You said you would listen to the community. What are you going to do next?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: There has been a change of policy since we came to power.

There has been a change of policy in relation to taxes and selling off irreplaceable community assets. He continued -

The public of Western Australia will endorse the strategy developed by the Minister for Housing and Works and will applaud our efforts to improve the health system and protect our heritage.

Many people in my electorate do not feel that way. I stand to be corrected, but shortly after that I resigned. As the member for Nedlands, I wanted to truly represent my community. I do not want to be in cahoots with other people in power, giving them a nod and a wink and manipulating the electors in my electorate; my first loyalty is to them. The sad thing is that there has never been proper community consultation about this Sunset Hospital issue. In my view, it was cut off at the knees shortly after it started. With proper and honest community

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consultation, we could have solved the Sunset site issues a long time ago. It really does not matter what the community wants, because it did not matter that 22 000 people did not want Duncraig House sold, and it does not matter with this Government if a petition is put up by 2 500 people, because the Government will override and do what it wants anyway. This gets back to the resentment felt by Labor people who this Government thinks are well-heeled and from blue-ribbon seats. In the absence of any proper attempt to work out what the community wanted, I did a survey of 5 500 electors in my electorate. I asked them whether they disagreed to let me know. I told them I supported an aged care facility, and I did that because when I first became member for Nedlands, I received strong representation from people in my electorate who had relatives, family and friends in the Melvista nursing home which was going to close. The survey introduction reads -

In my last newsletter I said, “. . . Nedlands Council and State Government negotiations have to include making land available for a graded care facility . . .

As your local member I am opposing the sale of any land at Sunset unless directed otherwise by the electorate. My office has been inundated with letters opposing any sale and a 500 signature petition . . .

Actually it was 2 500 signatures. I received approximately 70 surveys back. I have only received one or two calls to my office supporting the sale of the land; one from a developer. The community has not indicated to me that it wishes the land to be sold. That is a different issue from whether the community wishes the land to be leased for a retirement village, or wants an aged care facility, which it does. If this Government were genuine and honest about what it truly wanted to achieve at Sunset, it would have proper community consultation, because then the problem would be solved. I am not attacking the committee, I am attacking the way it has been steered.

I have considered my shadow portfolio areas in relation to the budget, but I feel I can deal with those adequately through the Estimates Committee. Issues raised with me in my electorate are far more important. The one I will speak about next is lack of funding for mental illness services in this State, and apparent lack of support for the resourcing of services for members of the community who suffer from mental illness, from minor depression to very severe illnesses. I have noted with concern, as have members on both sides of the House, accounts of young people who knew they were unwell and tried to get access to Graylands Hospital. They have gone there and been unable to get access. I recall that, on some occasions, they have committed suicide. It has come to my notice because recently a constituent family of mine contacted me and said they had seen a newspaper report recently on two cases, in which parents said that lack of resources had led to particular tragedies for their children, one of whom committed suicide and another murder. The family came to see me to speak about their own experiences with Graylands and the locked ward. They wished to remain anonymous, for the protection of their son, who has a bipolar disorder and has been a user of the mental health system, in particular Graylands Hospital. I will read some of the comments they made to me, because I was very moved by what they had to say, and it led me to look at some articles about funding for services in this State. I spoke to the shadow Minister for Health this morning, and he said that not only had there not been equivalent funding this year, but he believed that there had been a decrease. I asked the family whether they would mind if I read this out, and they do not, although they wish to remain anonymous. The document reads -

I was moved by the account of the suffering of two families in “The West Australian”, Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003, (p.8) and would like to add my own experience to their concerns.

- When people are psychotic their world-view is distorted and it has no relationship with reality. They can suffer from delusions that people are trying to kill them, or that they believe that they are another person, e.g. the serial killer or in the case of the newspaper article, the Bali bomber. We have had first hand experience of this when our son, who has been diagnosed as having bi-polar disorder (manic depression) has experienced this condition and has had to be hospitalised in a locked ward at Graylands Hospital. At one time he believed that his father was trying to kill him . . . and he became seriously disturbed.
- He has had three episodes that required hospitalisation in a locked ward at Graylands Hospital, the first in 1993 when he was 18 and the other two in 2000 and 2001.
- Our experience with the locked wards was that they were prison-like, more a place of punishment than a hospital. The wards were so crowded that there were frequent outbreaks of fighting between patients, and on some days the nursing staff were at their wits end to manage. We have nothing but praise for the nursing staff of Graylands Hospital, but they are put into an impossible position by inadequate accommodation and short-staffing.
- As far as I can gather there is a gym to which patients in a locked ward can have access if supervised, but little space for these patients, mostly young men, to let off steam and get proper exercise . . .

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- It is of great concern that, far from increasing and upgrading locked ward facilities when the need for them is on the increase, the present State policy seems to be to reduce and downgrade, or certainly not to improve and develop these facilities for psychotic patients.
- We had the experience of our son being removed from the locked ward into an open ward without our being notified, and also of our son being discharged from the hospital without consultation with us, at times when he has been very much at risk of taking his own life.
- It is worthy of note that when he was in this psychotic state, quite removed from reality, our son was content to go into a locked ward at Graylands, because he knew he could no longer manage in the normal world as he knew it. Interestingly, there are many accounts of patients requesting admission to Graylands but being turned away because of pressure on numbers of beds, and many of these have ended in disaster . . .
- Our son smoked marijuana, although briefly, when he first left school and along with alcohol it triggered his first episode . . . I find it difficult to imagine how it could be possible that the present Government could be proposing the legalisation of marijuana use, when there is a wealth of medical evidence in reputable medical journals and mental hospitals that it can lead to mental illness. While some people can smoke without adverse effects, many young people's (particularly young men's) lives, and in the lives of their families, have been destroyed by their use of marijuana and other substances that cause mental health disturbances.
- We saw all this first-hand at Graylands. Why is it that there is not a huge objection from mental health providers who know the truth about the irresponsibility of any plan to make the mind-altering substances like cannabis freely available, knowing they have such a proven track record of irreparable damage to the lives of the young?
- In the article of April 17<sup>th</sup>, p8, Graylands Action Urged, Dr Groves, Mental Health Department Director, is quoted as saying "an important concept enshrined in the WA Mental Health Act 1996 was that the least-restrictive environment should be the standard approach to mental health care." If he is quoted correctly, that shows a complete lack of understanding of psychosis and the dangers psychotic patients present not only to themselves but to others in the community. Certainly, when patients are in recovery and rehabilitation, while they need assistance, there is no need for a restrictive environment, but surely psychotic patients whose whole world view is completely distorted must be protected from themselves and from society at large.

It takes a lot of courage to speak to a member of Parliament about a very personal matter such as that. I have not spoken to Dr Groves or made any inquiries of Graylands Hospital. I therefore cannot comment from its perspective. I can only say that constituents have raised this and it has led me to look at commentary by Keith Wilson, who I believe is a former Labor member, and to undertake some other research. I understand that there is a second five-year national mental health plan on behalf of all Australian health ministers based on the fact that mental illness represents 20 to 30 per cent of all patients, but only seven per cent of the state budget. This has remained the same for the past 10 years, since reforms deinstitutionalised the mentally ill to the care of the community without the proper resources to support them. I see evidence of that in my community. I have had calls from constituents who live in large blocks of flats to say that people who have been released from prison and people with mental problems are living there but they are receiving no support or services and they are causing problems. This is an issue. It is obvious that if people are to be released into the community there should be proper funding for their adjustment. The need for proper funding has existed for some time. Given that this problem exists in the community, it is disappointing that the budget does not address it. Apparently, according to Hon Keith Wilson, the Chairman of the Mental Health Council of Australia, a one per cent increase for the next five years is needed to appropriately resource this area.

The tragedy is that the outpouring of mentally ill people from institutions into the community has made it easy for these people, particularly those with no family looking out for their welfare, to simply disappear into the community. That is the case unless they cause a nuisance or disturbance through a criminal act. I have been in court often at the sentencing of a person with mental health problems who does not belong in prison. The judges speak to the person providing the report, but there is nowhere for the person to go. A flurry of phone calls is made to different institutions to try to accommodate the person.

This situation has allowed the proliferation of widespread neglect, which has a damaging effect on families, the mentally ill person and, in some cases, other members of the community. Without follow-up support, the person can hurt himself or herself or commit a crime. Involvement in the criminal justice system becomes a further burden on the community, to say nothing of the damage done to the person involved. Care and compassion should be shown.

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It is a matter of increasing funding. Instead of putting the money up front, the Government leaves the matter to pretend it is not happening, and these people disappear into the community somewhere. Some people become involved in the criminal justice system, and probably end up incarcerated in the Franklin unit of Graylands Hospital, or whatever other institution they go to for the rest of their lives.

I was interested in the recent comments by *The West Australian* journalist Kate Gauntlett, who wrote about these people in terms of a revolving door: people go into hospitals, and then out into short-term hostel accommodation, and then move to homelessness. I have seen the results of this process through the window of opportunity presented with residents' complaints to me. A real effort is needed to de-stigmatise mental illness, ranging from depression to severe mental illness, such as bipolar disorder.

Greater effort should be made to resource the service system. Policies are okay, but not if they are not resourced. Basically, Governments need to walk the talk. It is easy to talk about policy - I have seen it time and again with this Government - and forget about funding so nothing underpins the policy. The current situation is a disgrace and a tragedy for these people.

A proactive energy must be directed to these areas to prevent the looming mental health crisis; I think we have a crisis already, but Dr Fiona Stanley stated there will be a looming health crisis unless Governments commit funds to enhance children's wellbeing and establish a responsive and properly resourced mental health system. Psychosis identification programs, suicide prevention activities, positive parenting programs, programs to reduce children's anxiety and depression, and postnatal depression services, have been identified.

According to Hon Keith Wilson, the greatest area of unmet need is with children and adolescents. This State has one of the highest suicide rates for young people, particularly young men, in Australia. We need more accountability. It is very difficult for members of the public to look into the practical workings of the mental health system. We only gain a window of opportunity through people who come forward, such as my constituents, or people whose circumstances end in tragedy, as they did recently for those two families in which one son murdered someone and another committed suicide. I applaud the courage of people who come forward and shine some light on the difficulties and experience of members of the community. There needs to be a real, proactive commitment, not just to spouting policy initiatives, but to funding. I note with concern that the member for Darling Range spoke about the closing down of the Centre for Mental Health Services Research. The fact that it will close down a facility like that says a lot about this Government.

I looked at the paper of the year's report of that facility, which reads in part -

After 10 years of mental health reform, it has been recognised that the quality of services have not improved for consumers as recently recognised in the mid-term review of the Second National Mental Health Plan that recommended a national network for mental health services research be established to evaluate cost-effective treatments and service models.

The centre reported that its areas of research concentration were service effectiveness and outcomes, population studies, mental health promotion and illness prevention service, and mental health information. I raise that because it is an area of significance in the community across all electorates as a result of the rate of depression in our young.

A newspaper article refers to the depression of the carers of people who suffer disabilities and the fact that the need for funding is simply not being met. A media release of the Western Australian Council of Social Service relates to one of my shadow portfolios of community services and follows on from the issue of homelessness of some of these people. The media release of 8 May states that the State Government lacks long-term vision. It describes the state budget as one that responds to some social needs in the community but fails to provide a long-term and sustainable vision for the State. It reads -

The portfolio areas of health and law and order were described as prime examples of the mismatch between the Government's commitment to sustainability in its Budget priorities.

"Research has repeatedly shown that investment in strengthening communities is the most effective way to address the health and well-being of people", said Lisa Baker, WACOSS Executive Director. "It is this approach which needs to drive the way funding is directed to social policy areas.

"Whilst WACOSS supports the increased dollars in the Budget to improve health outcomes for the community, there is an urgent need to develop a long term strategy aimed at prevention, early intervention and general well-being. WACOSS supports the Government's proposed Health Reform Committee and urged the Committee to consider reforms aimed at a longer-term approach . . .

"There are significant gaps in relation to addressing the housing situation for many low to middle income groups in our community . . .

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The Government's commitment to pass on 2.25% indexation to non-government organisations is welcome. However, it is not sufficient to offset the combined impact of the CPI, wages growth and current levels of unmet demand. Unless Government and the community sector are able to arrive at a more realistic figure which reflects the true costs of providing services, we will see increasing numbers of disadvantaged people turned away or in the worst case scenario services closed entirely.

We are already seeing that in the mental health system. It continues -

We must remember that these services provide an essential buffer for the poorest members of our community.

... WACOSS is disappointed that the Government has done little to directly address poverty. WACOSS recommended a number of strategies in its Pre-Budget Submission, however these have been largely overlooked.

Many social issues, such as poor health or crime, are the result of poverty. It makes sense to address poverty as a root cause rather than focussing on the symptoms alone.

I raise those issues because they have been raised by community members. I have also had raised the issue of the provision of underground power in my electorate, which seems to have suffered a severe setback since this Government has come to power. I am putting forward support for the new stage 3 state underground power program. I am hoping that in this budget some money will be found to address the provision of underground power that seems to have regressed in the City of Nedlands.

I will briefly talk about the three underground power projects in Nedlands. The first is stage 3, which will ensure the complete removal of the overhead powerlines along both sides of Stirling Highway as it passes through the City of Nedlands. The City of Nedlands' submission outlines that the second proposal, or stage 4 -

... covers the area of Nedlands, north of Stirling Highway as far as Aberdare Rd and the Perth/Fremantle Railway line. It covers a total of approximately 1200 lots. The western boundary of the proposal is Loch St where it joins the area of Claremont already converted to underground power as part of Round 2. Hampden Rd forms the eastern boundary.

Stage 5 covers -

... the remaining areas of the City of Nedlands to the north, which tend to be separated from the main body of the residential areas of Nedlands. The proposal comprises of two medium sized Nedlands residential areas nominated as follows:

- i. A medium size section of south Floreat, north of Underwood Ave.
- ii. A medium size area of Mt Claremont to the north of Alfred Rd.

These areas are just outside my electorate but within the city of Nedlands. I hope that the Government will provide project funding for Nedlands stages 3, 4 and 5. The council will contribute 50 per cent of the project costs on the understanding that the State Government and Western Power will contribute the remaining 50 per cent. The survey of ratepayers to determine the level of support for the installation of underground power showed an 86.9 per cent willingness to contribute to the costs involved. I will address in detail aspects of my portfolio during the budget Estimates Committee.

**MR T.K. WALDRON** (Wagin) [10.51 pm]: I begin my reply tonight by congratulating the member for Albany on his speech. It was really interesting, because he should have said, "I've got heaps to talk about because I've been given plenty". The highlights in the budget overview for the great southern, which is part of my area, are all for Albany.

Mr P.B. Watson: It's a great town.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It is a good town. I do not begrudge Albany getting benefits because it is a good town and a lot of people from my area go there. However, when I looked at my area, I struggled a bit to find anything. I will talk about that in a moment.

I will be serious for one minute when talking about Albany and offer my condolences to the Menegola family, which recently lost Joe Menegola who was a famous country cricketer whom I played with and against. I acknowledge his passing and offer my sympathies.

This is the third budget reply speech I have made since I have been a member of this place. For my constituents it is probably the worst budget of the three since I have been a member. As I said, there is not much in it for my constituents. I often refer to the inequities that exist between the city and the country. I guess I have witnessed first-hand those inequities. I acknowledge that country people always realise that there will be differences

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between the country and the city. They do not expect to have everything that is available in the city. However, the problem is that inequities are widening in many areas. That concerns me. It is one of the main reasons I became involved in politics and stood for election to this Parliament. I acknowledge that there are increases and benefits in this budget; I will not say that it is all bad. There are some good areas, which I welcome. However, it is blatantly obvious that the budget focuses on the metropolitan area and some of the major coastal centres. Some of those allocations are fair enough. However, the focus is definitely on those areas, and a lot more could have flowed to where it is much needed in rural Western Australia.

When I looked at the budget papers to try to pick out things for my area, I could not find anything. The local papers rang me to ask what was provided in the budget, because they could not find anything either. It became obvious that very little was provided for my area. There were only a few little allocations. I found an allocation for some passing lanes on Albany Highway south of Kojonup, for which I am grateful. There was also an allocation for the completion of the pilot oil mallee plant in Narrogin, and some general stuff flowed through the general allocations. However, there was nothing really specific for my area. As I said before, I am not saying that the funding that goes to the city and major centres is not needed, because all people need facilities, services and support. I guess what I am saying is that people who live in inland areas are probably looking for fairness and equality, which is something that the Government often talks about but does not deliver. This budget further entrenches that. I have a genuine concern that our country communities, particularly those in the inland and smaller areas, are losing confidence because they feel that they are continually ignored and forgotten.

Education is an area which interests me greatly and which I continue to study and research. Although the increase in the education budget of some \$91 million is most welcome, I note that the increase in real terms is probably a fairly modest 1.4 per cent. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that earlier. I agree with the minister's attempts to ensure that more 15 to 19-year-olds are realistically catered for through valuable learning. The linkage of schools, technical and further education colleges, businesses and vocational training is an excellent idea, and I support it. I can see some problems with it but generally it is not a bad focus. However, some other areas that need attention have probably not received consideration in this budget. I highlight these issues, many of which I have raised with the minister in this place and personally. The first is the great need for incentives for teachers to work in country Western Australia. I have put forward ideas such as length-of-permanency incentives. I feel that if we developed incentives whereby teachers gained permanency earlier by working in the country, regional Western Australia would attract more teachers. We also need to provide teachers with a direct career pathway. Too many people in country Western Australia are in an acting capacity. We cannot get continuity of teachers and principals. We can certainly improve in this area. I am sure a career pathway would be good for the teachers. I established a committee to consider education problems on behalf of the National Party, and one of the things teachers are telling me is that they need that pathway.

The budget should have contained more incentives for access to specialist teachers, including qualified language other than English teachers. I raised that with the minister in a grievance last week. We need to attract those specialist teachers to country Western Australia because we want to offer children in the country the same opportunities that are available in the cities. If we cannot offer those opportunities in the country, parents who want the best for their children will send them to Perth, and our communities will suffer. The loss of one family from a community affects other parts of the community. It has a huge flow-on effect in small communities.

We also need to acknowledge the cost to families of children having to live away from home. Greater financial support is needed. In some areas in country Western Australia, children must leave home to complete years 11 and 12. The minister quite rightly wants a greater retention rate. However, the costs for families who have two or three kids who will have to go away to complete their schooling might prompt parents to discourage their children from continuing their education. At the end of the day, families must make ends meet. That is an important area that needs to be addressed. Commonwealth and state government funding is available, but it needs to be increased. People often say that the families do not need the extra financial support because it would cost the same amount to keep the kids at home as to send them away. That is not true. I have done the figures. Those families who send their children away face many associated expenses. It is not a good argument.

We also need a greater allocation for the professional development of teachers in country Western Australia. Teachers and principals put to me all the time that there is not enough money for country teachers to undergo proper professional development. More of that development needs to be done in the rural centres. That could save money. Perhaps we need to train the trainers and have more people in country Western Australia who can conduct professional development. That could be a saving to the Government.

The future of district high schools and the range of subjects and learning options available to country children also is a big issue. I have approached the minister about this. I thank him for organising a meeting between me and some of his staff on this very issue tomorrow. I hope to learn more about a review that is being carried out in this area. The district high schools are important to our country towns and our children and their families.

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Many families do not wish to be separated from their children. Last year I asked the education minister why the Government does not adapt the staffing formula for secondary schooling to allow the provision of more teachers to country high schools, particularly district high schools. That would enable country students to be offered a similar range of subjects to their city counterparts, and allow them to do more of their secondary schooling in their home towns instead of at the larger senior high schools in Perth. I will not run through the details. However, only a small number of teachers are allocated to these small district high schools; therefore, the teachers must teach a large range of subjects. The best teachers cannot always be attracted to these schools. Parents then lose confidence in them because they realise that the teachers are not really qualified to teach the chosen subjects. They then take their kids out of the school and send them elsewhere. Therefore, if enough students leave, the school eventually loses another teacher and the problem is magnified. Once again the community suffers. This is a problem that must be addressed.

It is time to look closely at putting school bus services back under the Department of Education and Training. In discussions with principals they have agreed - along with me and everybody in regional Western Australia - that there is a real problem with school bus services at the moment. I am not just talking about the contracting side of it, but also the spurs and the delivery of service - getting kids to school. It is an education problem that should be put back under the Department of Education and Training because fair and reasonable access to education should be available to all. We really need to improve in this area.

There are some good things to come out of amalgamation of the Department of Education and the Department of Training, particularly for 15 to 18-year-olds. However, in its budget papers, the Government continues to rationalise corporate service activities across education and training portfolios. In this place I have previously expressed my concern at the rationalisation of corporate services, particularly regional TAFE colleges. I know that the leader of the National Party, the member for Avon, has also expressed the same concerns. Quite often the reality is that the staff working in the area of corporate services also perform other critical functions within the smaller TAFE colleges. If we lose those people due to rationalisation and they move back to Perth, who will carry out these functions? Will replacement support be offered? Once again people, including families and kids, move out of town and so on.

Someone has already mentioned the cadets program tonight, which I fully support. Its funding has been cut back to a certain level but it is still operating. Over the past couple of years I have spoken with Mr Stephen Bullied from the Bridgetown High School on this issue. The program has had a huge success and I encourage the Government to continue supporting it as it needs more funding.

Road funding is an important issue to country WA. Everyone understands that reasonable roads are essential for business, social activities and general access around country WA. I also stress the safety factor of well maintained roads. It is a fact that there are many road deaths and injuries in country WA. Many things contribute to that but the one thing we can do is provide reasonable and safe country roads. The loss of almost \$15 million - without consultation - from our local government regional road group is a real blow to local government and to country WA. With the 56 planned but not funded country road projects, it is no wonder that country people get angry, especially when they see money being spent elsewhere and the burgeoning cost of the Mandurah railway. They see their services being depleted and the money being spent on other projects. That is something to which the Government must give closer consideration.

With respect to my electorate and road funding, it was disappointing to see that the Narrogin link road did not receive further funding. It was funded by the last Government and this Government came into office and completed part of it, which was great. However, stage 2 of the Narrogin link road still has not been completed; the road leads to nowhere. It is a bit like the unfinished Narrogin hospital which is a great hospital - as the Minister for Health knows - but if the last part of it could be built, it would certainly make it a better facility.

The other point I will make relates to funding for Albany Highway south of Kojonup between Jingalup Road and Tambellup West Road - the member for Albany will notice that I got Jingalup in there. Tambellup West Road is funded by the Commonwealth and the Shire of Kojonup, and it will come onto Albany Highway, but that cannot be done safely until that stretch of road on Albany Highway is completed. It is a very dangerous situation, because Tambellup West Road intersects Albany Highway, and road trains have to come onto Albany Highway at an angle. I urge that road funding be allocated through Main Roads so that both of those roads can be completed. The other funding is sitting there, but it cannot happen until Main Roads can fix that problem.

I am also disappointed that there is no more funding for overtaking lanes on the busy section of Albany Highway north of Kojonup and north of Williams. This highway is getting busier and busier, with increasing volumes of large heavy haulage vehicles, etc. Many people travel on that road. Whether they are city people or country people does not matter. We are all the same at the end of the day. These overtaking lanes have been talked about ever since I have been a member of Parliament, but they still have not eventuated. I know that Main

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Roads locally would love to build them, because there are some real dangers on that road, particularly in wet weather when people get behind a truck and cannot see but get impatient and want to overtake. It worries me that we do not have these overtaking lanes yet. I strongly encourage that, because we need overtaking lanes to allow people to safely overtake large and slower vehicles.

I want to mention also the need for more funding for a section of South West Highway that is not in my electorate but runs between Donnybrook and Bridgetown. I travel that road quite often, and people in that area have spoken to me about it because I have raised that issue. That road definitely needs more funding. It is a major tourist route. There are big log trucks, etc, on that road. That road should be a priority, and I urge the minister to take it up. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services speaks in this Parliament about what the Government is doing for road safety. I strongly support road safety. It is an area in which I have a particular interest. I have seen at first hand the grief and trauma that road crashes bring to families, and I have been involved in my past roles in promoting road safety. Although I agree with the promotional and awareness programs that the Government is running, it also must spend money on the busy roads to reduce the risk. The overtaking lanes that I am talking about in my area are imperative.

I move now to the regional towns infill sewerage program. The timetable for that program has been pushed out over the past couple of years and towns that thought they would be getting infill sewerage have been pushed out and the program is no longer there for the immediate future. That program is very important for our country towns. The member for Warren-Blackwood has spoken passionately about that matter in this place. I acknowledge that today there was a press release from the Minister for Government Enterprises, Hon Nick Griffiths, in which he announced a five-town pilot program. That program includes Kukerin in my electorate, and Tambellup, Hyden, Kulin and Kondinin, which are in neighbouring electorates. I congratulate the minister for bringing this program forward for those towns. Once again, it is a nice press release. I assume that Kulin and Tambellup are in this year's budget, because works will start later this year, and that is terrific. However, with regard to the other towns, including Kukerin, it states that something will happen in the next three years. It will be great if it does, but that is still probably three years behind when they were meant to get that infill sewerage. It is interesting that recently I took a delegation from the Dumbleyung shire to meet with the minister about the Kukerin program, because the Kukerin program is not a very expensive one. Hopefully the minister has taken notice of that delegation, and I congratulate him for that. However, I want to make sure, and I will be watching closely, that that happens over the next three years, because that program is very important to these smaller towns.

I will now talk briefly about the south west. I have continued to visit that area and the timber areas over the past year. I ask the Government what is happening with the proposed sky jetty. That jetty is vital for tourism in the region, remembering that tourism is one of the industries that is always touted to help that area recover. There was a positive announcement about the sky jetty recently. However, I know there is a long way to go. I would like to know what the situation is, and perhaps the Estimates Committee hearings is the time to find that out. I certainly encourage the Government to ensure that that happens. When I was in Tasmania recently with the member for Albany, we visited the air walk in the Tasmanian forest.

Mr P.B. Watson: A cheap imitation of the one in Walpole.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I thought it was good. We need the sky jetty in the member for Warren-Blackwood's territory because it will give the area a boost. From what I saw happening with the air walk in Tasmania, I am looking forward to the opening of the sky jetty.

I would also like to know what progress has been made, if any, in allowing the Northcliffe cluster timber millers to take logs from the forest floor. The National Party put forward the idea that they could take those logs under proper supervision. This commonsense approach would allow probably 10 people or so to be retained in employment in the small town of Northcliffe. As I see it, there is no risk to the forest from this practice. I asked a question about it in this place last year, and the minister was quite positive about the idea and was going to look into it. However, I have not heard anything since; I think it has gone through to the keeper. I again ask the minister to consider this idea. Perhaps in the Estimates Committee hearings I will get the chance to ask that question.

I now move on to water, which has been a very big issue right across Western Australia in the past few years. It is a very important commodity for all of us. The past few dry seasons have brought home the real importance of water as a precious commodity. It is very easy when we start getting a bit of rain, as we have, and it would be nice to get a bit more, but we are going reasonably well. Members will notice that when we get a bit of rain, the problems are not so great in their electorates. My electorate had real water shortage problems and people were ringing me about standpipes and tanks. All of a sudden it rained and the telephone stopped ringing. We must

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remember that we should put projects in place when we have the water supply, so that in the next dry season - which will come again for sure - we are organised for it.

I know that the Government has announced a \$7 million incentive package to install bores, tanks, special shower heads etc. That is fine. However, I will focus on the farm water grants program, which encourages people on the land to upgrade their water catchments and water storage facilities. Some people even put in small desalination units to ensure that they can endure through the dry years. This program is about helping them and supporting them financially to do that. It is an excellent program. However, I think it can be improved. I will put forward a couple of suggestions. I know there is an allocation in the budget for this program to continue. However, I would like to see increased funding to extend the program. At the moment people can apply only during the period of the funding and they cannot commence anything until they know they have the funding. However, sometimes people are in a grave situation and they want to put in place something that will benefit them. If people do that outside the funding period, they risk finding that it is not funded later on. If that happens, fair enough; they take that risk. However, at the time they decide to go ahead, they should be able to put forward a letter of intent to the farm water grants scheme to let the Water and Rivers Commission know what they are doing. Then, when the round opens, they should be able to go through the same process and lodge their applications. If it is a good water-saving device or facility - a friend of mine in Arthur River put in a desalination plant but he could not get anything for it because he went ahead and put it in - it should at least be considered. I have put that suggestion to some people and they have said that they will look at it. However, I ask the Treasurer to pursue that, because I think it is a fair way of going about it.

Another issue is that people on scheme water do not get considered. Although I understand that priority should be given to those people who are not on scheme water, we should consider those on scheme water as well. If people who are on scheme water upgrade their water supplies, it takes pressure off the scheme water, and they do not use as much of the scheme water in dry years. That became very important in the eastern part of my electorate this year. I put that forward as another matter that could be considered.

The parameters and the roles of the assessors need to be reviewed and streamlined. Although I have not been involved closely, I have been told by some farmers and other people involved that sometimes they feel that if they get the right assessor, they can get the funding. I do not think that is the way it should be. Perhaps the minister needs to look at the way in which the assessors carry out their duties and the parameters under which they work, and improvements may be able to be made in that area.

The other water issue I will address is the need for the Government to fund and get behind the Collie catchment scheme, which involves lowering the salinity level of the Wellington Dam. I know that this has been a matter of contention between the State and federal Governments, and I will not go into that tonight. However, it is the biggest dam in the southern part of the State, and it would be of great benefit if the salinity level could be reduced. I know that the member for Collie is also very keen on this. Highly productive irrigators would benefit greatly if we could reduce the salinity level of the dam and provide them with better water. They generate a heck of a lot of produce and income for this State. For their assistance, we should get on with that program.

There is the issue of bringing the water to Perth. I have great sympathy for and empathy with the people in that area. We must make sure that their water supplies are intact before we start ripping the water off them and bringing it to Perth. I believe we can look at other areas to supply the city at this stage. However, if we are able to lower the salinity levels of the dam so that the water is good again, it will be a great reserve to have; and should there be a crisis, that water could be available.

Another important point about supporting that program is the salinity issues upstream in the farming areas around Darkan etc. The proposal to divert the salty water into the disused mining voids at certain times of the year is a wonderful idea, which has the support of the people in that area. We must get on with that as soon as possible. There will be great recreational and social benefits and tourism opportunities from reducing the salinity levels.

I move on to health, which makes up 25 per cent of the state budget. The injection of \$2.45 billion is a huge increase of about \$232 million. However, we need to know exactly where that money will go. When the Leader of the National Party, the member for Avon, speaks, he will deal with this area in some detail. Therefore, I will not go into detail; I will leave that to him. However, it is obvious that regional WA should be given greater priority in a number of areas. I will talk a little about that. We still struggle to attract doctors to regional WA. I know there are various reasons for that. However, I believe we can do more to improve that situation. In the area of health professionals, there seems to be a greater focus on the larger regional hospitals. The smaller ones are dipping out. The minister knows about the situation of the people at Narrogin and Wagin etc. I understand that some activities are best handled at the big hospitals. However, if we are to take that path, we must make sure that the health professionals are available at those hospitals to deal with the situation.

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I will speak briefly on mental health. We must examine mental health in country WA. I talk regularly with the manager of mental health in my region, and I know there have been improvements. However, in country WA the mental health problem is growing all the time. People are much more aware of and open about it now than they were in the past. Therefore, more people are coming forward, which is a good thing. However, we must address those mental health problems. The situation in my area requires urgent and immediate attention. I will watch closely the funding and support allocations in this area. We have excellent people who work extremely hard. However, I have a genuine concern for their health, as their work volume and stress are growing rapidly in this area.

I will mention the dismantling of the health boards. I will not go into that issue in detail; we have been through it before. It is a shame that it happened. We recently asked a question about the district health advisory councils. When I was talking to the regional director in Albany, he said that the district advisory council is being put together. I urge the minister to try to complete that process, because some of the people who have applied have rung and asked what is going on. They feel as though they are being left out. We need to see the advisory boards formed.

It is good to see the Wickepin health centre being built. We have worked hard on that and the people of Wickepin welcome it. It is a shame there is no allocation of approximately \$2 million dollars to complete the final stage of the Narrogin Regional Hospital. It has again been left out of the budget. The upgrade was completed in 2001 as a result of funding from the coalition Government. The Minister for Health opened it. It is an excellent facility but it could run much better and operate as it was meant to if the final stage were completed. The final stage was designed to integrate with the upgrade. The hospital is not working at the level it could and is incomplete. That poses problems for staff and patients.

Sport and recreation is an area about which I am very passionate. It is an important area. I acknowledge the \$9 million allocation to the sport and recreation facilities fund. It is an important program and I trust the money will be well spent. I thanked the minister for his assistance when a large grant was obtained for Katanning earlier this year. In association with the Water Corporation and the local golf club, it was to support using grey and waste water. A dam was built and donated by a local farmer. It has resulted in the fairways being grassed to create an all season golf course. It may not appear important but it is important to the region because the closest courses are at Albany and Collie.

Mr N.R. Marlborough: Good for the golfers.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The golfers love it. It will also attract people to Katanning, a regional centre, during the summer months to play golf. When they do, the families also go to town and the mums will do the shopping. It is good for the town. I appreciate the minister's help; it is a good program and I am sure the money is well spent. I urge the Government to continue with the highly successful sports enrichment program, which was also introduced by the previous Government. It is great that this Government has carried it on. It sees state level sports events being brought to regional Western Australia. It is an excellent initiative and has many health, sporting, social and financial benefits for regional Western Australia. I strongly encourage the minister to continue the excellent program. I do not know what allocation is in the budget but I look forward to obtaining details through the estimates process. I want to emphasise the importance of sport and physical activities to country Western Australia - indeed, all Western Australia. The percentage of money in the budget for sport is not that large. Despite that, it is very important. We sometimes overlook that importance. The value to our community is huge. There are many benefits across the spectrum of all age groups including health, social, financial and community spirit. I emphasise the benefits to our youth, particularly in producing leaders. Country Western Australia looks to its youth. It does not have as many young people as metropolitan areas. It will need leaders from its young population. My experience has shown me that sport provides a great opportunity to develop leadership potential and capability. I urge the Minister for Sport and Recreation to consider including specific leadership programs for young people through sport and recreation. Leadership programs promoted by the Minister for Agriculture in the previous Government, the member for Stirling, were very successful. People gained leadership skills and confidence. Such programs are needed across Western Australia.

I will touch on agriculture. As I said last week, the future of the Department of Agriculture is at the crossroad. This Labor Government has changed the department's direction and reshaped what was very much a cohesive agency that was highly regarded by farmers and businesses. The department was the principal source of scientific and technical advice to farmers. People working in the Department of Agriculture do a fantastic job. I am not having a go at them at all. Some of them have started talking to others and me because they are getting overrun with what they have to do. Things are starting to slip through the net. Recently I mentioned footrot, Johne's disease and skeleton weed. Over the past two years, internal restructuring and funding issues have built up at the Department of Agriculture. The department is at a point where sound decisions are needed to ensure it

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provides a more focused delivery of its services. There is no getting away from the fact that the State Government has slashed funding since it was elected. The agricultural industry produces an estimated \$3.8 billion for the Western Australian economy. Some 15 per cent of the total export revenue has suffered budget cuts of almost \$7 million this year on top of about \$40 million over the past two years. That is a huge loss. The department lost 27 positions on top of the approximately 150 jobs that were cut during the Government's first two years. The budget introduces no-matching salinity funding.

Once again, the Treasurer's speech did not mention the Department of Agriculture. The department is very important for the State. The Government must refocus on this area, particularly on the services that tackle John's disease, footrot and skeleton weed, otherwise more problems will be created. A few months ago at a clearing sale near Kojonup I sighted footrot disease. No-one had picked up on it because there were no inspectors. As a result of that, many farms could have been quarantined. That would cause ongoing costs and problems to the industry. The Government must recognise the needs of agriculture and the strong support services that should be based in the regions, not in Perth.

Police are very important to people in country Western Australia. I note an increase in the budget for the Police Service of around \$29.6 million, which is a real increase of around 2.9 per cent. The Government has made available an additional \$1.7 million to employ 250 police officers over the next four years. How many of those officers will be stationed in regional Western Australia? The budget does not tell us how many will be stationed in regional WA or where they will go. These are serious issues.

It could be argued that not many police have been removed from my region; however, the issue is where they are allocated throughout the State. Some of the larger areas need more police and we must also make sure that police are stationed in outlying areas. When police conferences are held or police are busy being trained in the use of pistols, suddenly there are no police in a number of areas. That can cause problems if something happens for which the police are needed. Many country police services have been centralised. In my electorate, services have been centralised at Narrogin, which has had problems coping. Police cannot be stationed everywhere, but the Government must seriously examine the matter. A glaring omission in the budget is the capital allocation for new police stations in regional Western Australia.

I am also concerned - this matter comes under the Attorney General's responsibility - about the planned changes to the magistrates' circuits in my region, which will mean that some magistrates who currently attend courts in some local towns will no longer attend those courts. The work will be conducted at Narrogin. Although that is not bad for Narrogin, it is tough for people who have to travel for miles, including witnesses. It is an impost on people's time. I am currently talking with the people involved in the various shires. I will leave the matter there; however, I will watch it closely.

Some issues have arisen about which documents can be stamped at country Western Australian courts. Some documents cannot be stamped in local courts because they might not be up to standard. Why can people in country courts not be trained up to the required standard? If they are not trained, the work will be loaded onto the courts in Perth. Instead of getting a trust deed or whatever signed and stamped at a local law court, the documentation will have to be sent to Perth and people will have to wait for it to come back. That is not necessary. I will watch that matter closely.

I will talk about power, and other National Party members will refer to it in more detail. There is an allocation in the budget for a power network and for infrastructure, but I want to highlight the problem and how huge it is becoming. I did not realise how huge it was until eight to 10 months ago when the situation deteriorated rapidly. A huge number of complaints are coming through to my electorate office. The people in my electorate have safety concerns about poles and lines. Last year there was a serious fire on a day of dangerous weather. The fire was caused by decaying infrastructure. It was lucky that the West Arthur-Darkan fire brigade was very well organised. The officers of that fire brigade themselves said they were lucky on that day. It is a real problem and an area to which the Government must allocate more funds.

The workers on the crews who repair such faults do a wonderful job. However, one problem is that although they work hard and long hours and get to a problem area as quickly as they can, there are just not enough of them. Sometimes people wait days to have their power restored. We must examine how these gangs are placed. We need more of them.

The two per cent increase in stamp duty on general insurance will impact on all of us. The 15 per cent increase in stamp duty on property transactions is a huge money grab and was obviously introduced to replace the failed proposed property tax that did not eventuate. It is a huge jump that will affect people across the State. Having been involved in the real estate industry for about 17 years, I know that it will add a huge impost. Today the Leader of the Opposition talked about young people having to borrow extra money just to pay that large amount of stamp duty.

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In closing, I stress - as I did last year - that we are all Western Australians, whether we live in the city or the bush. However, this budget does not treat the country in a fair and equal way compared with the city. The Government continually talks about fairness and equality, and I agree with those ideals, but I do not believe it applies fairness and equality properly across the State. This budget, unfortunately, again reinforces that lack of fairness and equality. I have spoken a lot in this place about people and communities. The budget is all about people and communities. We must acknowledge that funding allocations deal with people and communities. I acknowledge that there are some positive areas in the budget, and I welcome them. However, some positive areas are fairly wide open. I want the Government to make reasonable allocations, and that is what I intend to find out next week in the estimates process. I stress that country people do not want handouts or preferential treatment. They know there will always be a gap between the country and the city, but they want the gap to be reasonable and to reduce and they want some honesty, fairness and equality. As I said, this budget does not deliver that. The National Party will continue to examine the full contents of the budget closely and will strongly question the ministers and departmental officers in the parliamentary estimates process next week.

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