

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2004

Third Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS K. HODSON-THOMAS (Carine) [7.15 pm]: I will make a few remarks on these Bills. During the second reading debate I made a number of comments on road funding and expressed some of my concerns about the portfolio. I will take up an issue with the Minister for Health while he is in the Chamber. It concerns some information I sought during the estimates committee about the Warwick clinic, which supplies dental services to the community. I received information today as a result of requesting supplementary information from the Minister for Health. He states that the Warwick clinic is 2.1 full-time equivalent dental positions understaffed and that the clinic normally has 12 FTE dentists. It is interesting that the minister provided that information to me today, as I also today received an e-mail from a constituent who states that he has been told the clinic has only four dentists. The individual has been on the waiting list since 2002. There appears to be no correlation between what I am told by the Minister for Health and my constituent. I am trying to work out what is the case.

Mr J.A. McGinty: I was caught by surprise when the member asked the question; I did not know the background to it. As the member has again raised the question, I will undertake to have the matter further investigated tomorrow and hopefully provide more information if the member believes there is conflicting information.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: It is perhaps best if I provide the details of the e-mail to the minister. I will not go into it now. If I provide the information to the minister, perhaps he can follow it up. I can perhaps then allay the concern of my constituent and he can receive the dental treatment he requires. I appreciate that the minister has stayed to listen to my comments on this. I also appreciate that the minister provided the information to me during the estimates committee.

I will make a brief comment on the health estimates committee. I found it a very interesting opportunity as a member of this Parliament to sit in on the proceedings, although I have responsibilities in other areas. All of us are impacted on by health issues, particularly in respect of our community members. We do not always have the opportunity to attend the estimates committee for that portfolio. It was a very enlightening experience for me.

I will raise another issue affecting my electorate, which is electricity supply. It is something that concerns us all. I will talk about power in relation to the lack of funding. I have been inundated with complaints from constituents in my electorate who have told me of the number of power failures they have incurred over a period. As I said during my contribution to the second reading debate, not only has this Government had to deal with power failures, but also I acknowledge that they go back to when we were in government. However, the minister has given an undertaking that he will improve the service. This issue relates particularly to the Duncraig area. Recently I received a letter from the Minister for Energy explaining to me why people are experiencing power failures in that area. When I read his correspondence, it was quite clear that the real issue is about funding and improving the service that is supplied to that community.

I will refer now to some other issues that I raised, as I do not want to lead into an issue that may be outside the parameters of the third reading debate. I am well aware of the standing orders and I am mindful that they preclude members from introducing new material. During the second reading debate I raised the issue of road funding. During the estimates committee hearings, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure advised the committee of the amount that has been allocated to new capital works, which showed a clear lack of new funding for capital works. It was clear that the Functional Review Taskforce indicated that the Main Roads Western Australia budget will be cut by \$200 million over four years. There has already been a cut of \$150 million; therefore, in the next financial year there will be a further \$50 million cut from the Main Roads budget. As I said in my speech during the second reading debate, a meagre increase of \$12 million, or two per cent, in road funding in the 2004-05 budget is trivial compared with a cut of \$150 million to the capital works budget in the past few years. It is simply not good enough to cut the capital works budget in that way. Investment in road infrastructure is absolutely critical for our economy. I encourage this Government to review its policy on cutting road funding. We know that the reason the Gallop Government has cut road funding to the extent it has largely relates to the funding for the south west metropolitan railway. Certainly during the time of the Functional Review Taskforce it was said that that \$200 million would be allocated to health. I have not seen that \$200 million, in fact, allocated to health. To my mind it has been shifted from roads and put into the railway. I am not suggesting that we on this side of the House do not support the railway, despite the numerous comments that are made every day saying that we do not support it. We do support the railway, but we support the Kenwick route. We do not support the direct freeway route. It does not matter how often the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure comes into this place and tells us that she has got it right; we know that she has got it wrong.

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Mr P.D. Omodei: Capital works had already started on the freeway and the Canning Bridge.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The member for Warren-Blackwood is quite right: capital works had started on the Kenwick route. Two years of planning went into the Kenwick route proposal, two tunnels had been built and the busways were under way. That was all part and parcel of the south metropolitan railway project, as was the northern extension. Although this Government lays claim to the success of that extension, it was part and parcel of all our planning when we were in government.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Ha, ha!

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The member for Mandurah can rewrite history, but he was not in this place.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I have been very patient; I have been listening to you tonight.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The member for Mandurah was not in this place at the time.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I have not interrupted.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I know that; I do not mind the member for Mandurah's interruption. However, he was not in this place and he does not understand that planning was done by the previous Government and was under way.

Mr D.A. Templeman: How much track did you lay?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Here we go! Did we lay any track? This is starting to sound very hollow.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Did you?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Of course we did not. However, the railway is not just about the laying of track; it is about planning and all the preparation work that goes into it. The Government can lay track but it must prepare to lay the track.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Have you admonished Hon Simon O'Brien for his comments in the other place? He believes that the Fremantle line should be closed and the northern suburbs line should never have been built; indeed, the southern suburbs line should not be built either.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: What Hon Simon O'Brien says in that place is irrelevant to what I am saying in this place right now. I believe that the member for Mandurah would have had his railway to Mandurah by 2005 if the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure had not seen fit to change the route after 17 weeks in office. It would have been there.

Mr D.A. Templeman: What do you think the public's view is of the Kenwick route versus the Government's route? What is your honest opinion?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The member for Mandurah would be surprised. A lot of people support it. There was a great opportunity to make the Kenwick line into a ring route by building it from Thornlie over to the freeway and across to Fremantle. It would have been a circle route. This was long-term vision. Government members claim that they have a vision and only the Labor Party could possibly have vision.

Mr D.A. Templeman: But we have a track record. We reopened the Fremantle line after it was closed by the Court Government. We electrified the whole system. We built the line to the northern suburbs, which is very well utilised and a very important piece of infrastructure. Now we are saying that the same should be delivered to the southern corridor. That is where this debate comes from. However, please continue, as I am always interested in your speech.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Yes, I know. The member for Mandurah has distracted me and I am not sure of the other comments I wanted to raise. There were a few other matters I wanted to raise, such as the Fremantle eastern bypass and the Peel deviation. The Peel deviation, again, is extremely important.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It is extremely important for the whole of the south west.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The member for Mandurah should listen to me, because he is obviously the only one who is interested in this issue.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Indeed, I am very interested, as is the member for Peel.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The member for Peel is not in the Chamber at the moment. Let us look at this issue for a moment. If the member for Mandurah takes off his political affiliations, I will take off mine too. Just imagine for a moment that we are starting with the Kenwick route at a cost of \$1.1 billion. The member for Mandurah and I know that the Peel deviation project is worth \$300 million. The federal Government has come up with \$150 million. The minister's proposal for the south west metropolitan railway is \$1.5 billion. The

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

member for Mandurah knows that mathematically \$1.1 billion plus \$300 million - \$150 million of which is coming from the federal Government - is much less than the minister is proposing for the direct route to Mandurah. That is where my concern lies. Key areas are being ignored because the member for Mandurah's minister has decided that is the best route. I am not convinced; I never have been. I am not convinced that the patronage will be there and I am not convinced that we will see numbers of people rushing to catch a train between Murdoch and the central business district. Those outlying areas certainly need a good public transport system and the people there must have access to a good public transport system; however, I am not convinced that this Government has got it right. I know that the member for Mandurah wants to say something, but I have two minutes left on the clock and my time is limited. Perhaps the member and I might have this conversation privately. There are a number of issues with public transport provision; however, given the very limited time I have left in which to speak, I will not be able to take up those matters.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [7.30 pm]: I will keep my comments brief. I am always interested in listening to the member for Carine and I really have a great deal of respect for her views. The issue that is very important to the electorate I represent, the fastest growing electorate area and region in Western Australia, is the delivery of quality public transport to that burgeoning population. I take note of the comments of the member for Carine about the importance of planning, particularly for environmental and social reasons, and why public transport is becoming even more critical as we plan for the future for not only the Mandurah and Peel region, but also the whole of the Perth metropolitan area. During the second reading debate, the railway certainly was given more than its fair share of an airing by both sides of this House. However, I will reiterate some of the comments I made in the second reading debate about the railway and broaden that to include the issue of public transport.

Both the railway and the Peel deviation are critical projects to the people of Mandurah and the Peel region. The Peel deviation is a major infrastructure project that is also important to not only the people of Mandurah and those living in the southern corridor, but also those living further south in the south west region. In the coming weeks and months I know that the Peel deviation issue will certainly be debated over and over in this place and in the public arena.

Ms K. Hodson-Thomas: Which one do you think should come first?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I think they both are critical projects that will deliver, in many respects, different outcomes. Therefore, I have always said publicly to the people in my electorate and those in the wider community that the two projects should not be played off against each other. That is when I have been critical of Senator Ian Campbell who has made comments about the southern railway project that have been derogatory and have not helped the debate on the Peel deviation at all. Both projects are absolutely critical. People must understand that the railway project will deliver public transport infrastructure to the fastest growing city in the State; the biggest regional city outside the metropolitan area. It is a two-way project. I have had discussions with people from Perth and people from the northern suburbs. Many of the positive comments about the extension of the southern suburbs railway have come from people in the northern suburbs. The member for Carine wondered how many people would get on the train at Mandurah. I can tell her that a huge number will get on at Mandurah, and a huge number of people will come to the Peel region via that public transport route. They will feed into our economy a huge range of benefits to local businesses. Local businesses have already started preparing for the benefit from that economic spin-off that the railway will bring.

We must also consider the social aspect of the rail project. Earlier in the third reading debate, the member for Dawesville made a couple of very valid comments. One of them was about public transport to Mandurah after 7.00 pm. I support him and his concern in that regard. The fact is that currently, Mandurah people do not have access to the Perth central business district or the Perth connection via the current bus route after 7.00 pm. At 7.00 pm the bus leaves from Perth and quite often I have had complaints about how it is chockers. I also get complaints from people further down the line in Singleton and from people in the electorates of the members for Rockingham and Peel that by the time the buses get to Singleton, which is only 15 kilometres north of Mandurah, they are full. Unfortunately, people have been left at the bus stops. We must provide for adequate public transport now in preparation for the arrival of the train.

The other important point to note is that many people from Mandurah are in their senior years; there is no doubt about that. A greater number of seniors live in the city of Mandurah than the state average, and they will continue to be a larger and significant part of our population. Many of those people do not like travelling to Perth by car. Many of them find that, as they get older and more infirm, it gets more difficult to use even the bus service. However, the train service will allow them greater access.

Mr P.D. Omodei: How will they get to the train station?

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member has raised a good point. We have to make sure that they have a range of options. In a moment I will come to another issue that I was going to raise as a grievance in this place. The fact is that the senior members of the Mandurah community are looking forward to the train being there. They have asked me whether it will get there. They have said that they have been hearing about it for a long time and they want to be around when it arrives. I was doorknocking the other day in Greenfields and a 91-year-old bloke who lives not far from the train station terminus said that he just hopes that he will be able to bloody well walk there and see this train come.

Earlier, the member for Warren-Blackwood made an interesting point that I will touch on, and my concern relates to gophers. I have a real issue in my electorate at the moment about which I have written to the minister. The transportation issue of gophers, which are used by elderly people and people with disabilities, is an issue that is under the radar at the minute. Burgeoning numbers of people are using motorised wheelchairs and gophers in the community, and so they should because we want to make sure that people keep as -

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will continue because my time will run out. The member for Warren-Blackwood made a point before, so I want to elaborate. The fact is that, unfortunately, more and more people are using these machines on footpaths, roads and in the communities. Currently, due to the speeds at which these vehicles can travel, regulations are in place that govern their use. However, as more and more of these vehicles start to use the roads, footpaths and public access ways, issues will arise in the future that will need to be addressed. One thing that worries me is how quickly we encourage our elderly citizens to start using these mobility aids and the implications of that for people's health. Many people are utilising them because they are obviously not as agile as they used to be. However, we do not want to encourage them to use these mobility aids too early or before they need to use them because we will be discouraging them from keeping as physically active as possible. Gophers present a real issue that is bubbling away but has not actually exposed itself as it should. Hopefully, some thought will go into the matter. I have spoken to the Minister for Community Development about this, and she has informed me that a group of key interest stakeholders has discussed this issue only recently because it is now starting to become a concern. A person has only to drive through Mandurah or one of the many other communities in which a significant number of elderly people live to see the increasing number of gophers appearing on our streets.

An important issue for Mandurah as it waits for the rail to reach it in December 2006 is the provision of an integrated bus system to feed that railway station as quickly as possible. To be honest, there has been a great improvement in the internal bus service in Mandurah, but it has by no means reached the standard it should be. In some areas of Mandurah, citizens from various backgrounds require a good bus service but do not yet have it. We need to service those people, and to make sure that as many people as possible are encouraged to turn to public transport, so that vehicles can be taken off the road that would not be there if a fast and efficient public transport system were in place. One of my goals is to find ways to ensure, through education, that people are aware of their public transport options, and to lift the standard of services, so that when the rail service reaches Mandurah, there will be a fully integrated public transport system that is efficient and effective. My worry about the train is that it will be at full capacity from day one, and that we will have to look at other ways of accommodating greater numbers of people up and down that line. There will be huge benefits for Mandurah from that project.

In my second reading contribution I mentioned the importance of carers in my community, and I want now to touch on that issue. I have a lot of contact with people who are caring for loved ones suffering from various diseases and disabilities. Many people who come to see me have partners, parents or elderly relatives with Alzheimer's disease. A report last year showed that the prevalence of Alzheimer's is increasing in Western Australia and across the nation. There is a real need to examine how the issue of Alzheimer's and dementia is to be addressed into the future. As the population ages, the prevalence will continue to increase. There has also been some evidence that shows that Alzheimer's and dementia are increasing in younger people, which is a real concern. Planning for the future, at both the state government and federal government level, should begin to address issues affecting elderly people. Those who are caring for partners, ageing parents or other loved ones touched by a whole range of disabilities and ailments need the support of members of this Parliament. Anyone who has not experienced this would not really understand. The Government must look at improving support for people caring for loved ones. I congratulate the Mandurah Carers Group, which not only has been at the forefront of putting issues about carers to those in authority in the government agencies responsible for supporting carers, but also has started to assist carers to deal with the challenges they face. Many of them must cope 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with little respite throughout the year. Those of us who have not experienced this with a family member or loved one really need to understand what these people have to go through.

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (Mr A.P. O'Gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

The final point I want to make, which I mentioned in my second reading contribution, is about the Peel waterway, which is the jewel in the crown for the Peel region. It is the largest waterway body in the State in terms of what it offers to the population, and has offered since before colonisation to indigenous people. The Peel waterway is critical to the lifestyle, the economy, the ecology and the environment of the people who live in the area. It is the very reason people have come to live in the Peel region. I am therefore calling on Governments, both state and federal, to look at the state of the Peel waterway and at how we can work collaboratively with the community to make sure that that precious, pristine environment is protected into the future. If we do not do so, we will face a catastrophe. The population is exploding around that waterway, and without it we will be in trouble.

MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [7.45 pm]: I begin my remarks by drawing attention to something that concerns me greatly. I have just been given information that Gary Narkle, the repeat rapist, has been located in my town and is living within 400 metres of the senior high school. There are some 700 students at that high school, and there is a primary school just down the road. A large number of students walk to and from the school. I was hoping that the Minister for Justice or the Attorney General would be here to give me some assurances that there are funds in the budget to monitor the movements of these kinds of people in our community. It seems to me that Mr Narkle is in transit. He was in Toodyay or Northam a few weeks ago, and now he is in Manjimup, in my electorate.

I am concerned that the Labor Government has treated my electorate with contempt. The effect of the restructure of the timber industry on my community over the past three or four years is nothing but a disgrace. Businesses have suffered, and a number of people have been retrenched, taken their redundancy payments and left the district. A huge amount of money has been spent, and probably two-thirds of it has gone out of the district. A number of low-income families, families at risk and indigenous families are being relocated into the district without any support services. We have a remarkable group of people in Manjimup and the Warren district. The human resources committee is independent and has no bureaucracy. The Minister for the South West's task force, headed up by Superintendent McRoberts, came and had a look at the human resources committee and was amazed that it operates so well. It operates so well because it does not have bureaucracy hanging over its head. The problems are many, and relate to domestic violence, homeless people and young children at risk. At the last count about 90 students in our primary school were at risk. I put in a submission for the early childhood SmartStart program. I sent it to the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Community Development, but it was sent back with the message that my community was not recognised as an area that needed this kind of program. Children who have not had breakfast and do not know how to brush their teeth are going to preprimary school. There are children whose mothers have children from three different fathers, and our people are left to pick up the threads and assist these kids. At the special education centre and the early childhood area, teachers are bringing toast, jam and cheese to give kids something to eat before the teachers begin teaching. It is a great disgrace, and if Mr Narkle is not removed from my area in very swift time, I will come into this place and I will be very angry - angrier than I have ever been before. It is not good enough. The State Government knows -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): I remind the member that his third reading contribution must be related to the budget debate. Bringing in additional information like this is not helpful, and there are other opportunities to do that.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I have already referred to the justice budget, and my concern that adequate funds have not been made available in that budget to monitor the movements of repeat rapists. What would any member say if Mr Narkle was living in his or her electorate? This fellow should not be in the community. He should be held at Her Majesty's pleasure until such time as somebody does something about him. There is no doubt that he has fallen between the cracks. We have heard all the excuses. It is always somebody else's fault.

A health forum was held in Warren-Blackwood recently. I am referring to the health budget, Mr Acting Speaker, and the budget increase for the South West Area Health Service of three per cent, when inflation is 2.5 per cent. That leaves 0.5 per cent to allow for all the growth in the south west area; that is, the growth in Busselton, Bunbury and Margaret River. The Minister for the South West spruiks about that and has his photograph in the paper, but he does bugger all about it.

The community conducted a health forum in Warren-Blackwood, and invited the Minister for Health -

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Members, the member for Warren-Blackwood has the floor. With the level of conversation that has just arisen, I am finding it very difficult to hear; therefore, I am sure that Hansard is also finding it difficult to hear.

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I am talking about the health budget and how it is impacting on the South West Area Health Service in particular, and the budget overruns, which I intend to raise in a grievance to the Minister for Health. I believe it is appropriate that I do that. We held the health forum. In excess of 300 people were in the town hall in Manjimup. One would have thought that the Minister for Health could find some time to attend such a forum. There was well and truly enough notice in advance for the minister to be able to get there. There was well and truly enough advance notice for the manager of the South West Area Health Service to attend that forum. Anne Donaldson, who is a very good person from the South West Area Health Service, attended the forum and took on board information. The community wants answers.

The local doctor, who is the only anaesthetist in the community, wrote to the Minister for Health and to the manager of the South West Area Health Service months ago, and still has not received a response. Most of the people in that neck of the woods are being told that they need to go to Bunbury to access a range of services. A bloke who is bitten by a snake in Northcliffe is sent to Pemberton, on to Manjimup and on to Bunbury. When a bloke breaks his leg at a soccer game, he does the rounds, like snakes and ladders. People must travel up and down the road. If a woman needs an anaesthetist for a caesarean section, the local doctor, Dr John Rosser Davies, who is an excellent doctor, will try to get the anaesthetist from Bridgetown. If he is not available, what happens? The plane is brought in again, and the person is flown out. It is just not good enough. We have modern medical facilities and excellent nursing staff, and we are dying the death of a thousand cuts. I will give the example of physiotherapy. In the past people could get physiotherapy treatment from Monday to Friday. There were 1.5 full-time equivalents. That is now down to 0.4 of an FTE. People can get podiatry services one day a week in Manjimup. The podiatrist treats only children and diabetic patients. The figure has been reduced from one full-time equivalent to 0.6 of an FTE.

The manager of the primary health service moved to Perth with her husband for his employment. No-one has been appointed to the position she held. That is the most important area of preventive health. All the budgets have been cut. The central sterile supply department, which does the autoclaving, is rumoured to close. How can operations be performed in Manjimup if there is no autoclaving system in the hospital? How can that be done if the operating theatre is not up to date?

A range of clerical staff have been removed. Stores have been removed. Palliative care has been removed from the Silver Chain Nursing Association into the hospital. The palliative care people are experts in that area. They are wonderful people who have worked in palliative care for years. They have great credibility and trust in the community. That is being destroyed by a Government that does not give a damn about people in rural Western Australia. The health service manager positions in each of the hospitals from Northcliffe to Pemberton, to Manjimup, to Bridgetown and over to Margaret River and down to Augusta and Nannup are being centralised. There will be about three health service managers in those areas doing the job that 17 people did previously. What will happen? The services will be reduced. The Government has depopulated our town by stupid economic decisions, and now there is the possibility that our district will be depopulated because there are not enough health services to provide for those elderly people who really need them.

The member for Mandurah has talked about carers. We have a wonderful carers' system in the Moonya Nursing Home and in the Geegelup Village Hostel in Bridgetown, and with Silver Chain in Margaret River and Augusta. Dr Williams was the doctor in Augusta for many years. He delivered 500 babies without one problem. Expectant mothers are now being told that they must go to either Margaret River or Bunbury. Likewise, in the old days, up to 30 babies were born in the old hospital in downtown Pemberton, which was held together by the white ant crap. We now have a state-of-the-art brand new hospital worth \$7 million, with a permanent care wing and an acute care wing. Where do the mums go? They go to Manjimup. Otherwise they are told to go up the goat track. People talk about the southern corridor railway line. The South Western Highway is a road on which 50 per cent of the horticultural produce, milk products, timber products and a range of other products from that district are transported. What do we have? We have a goat track. There is the potential that the railway line from the Diamond chip-mill to Greenbushes will close. All the chip logs will then be transported on that road. Therefore, young mums who must go to Bunbury at least nine times, and who possibly have young kids in their cars, will have to negotiate that road. What do we get? We get a couple of pieces of silver to expand the road. We cannot even get four lanes. It is two and a half lanes, with passing lanes. It is a deathtrap. Sooner or later people will be killed on that road. It is a wonder it has not happened already.

Only a few weeks ago I took my mother to her sister's funeral. I had to pass a big B-double in one of the passing lanes. It was raining quite heavily. She reported back to my brothers and sisters that I drove like a maniac. I was doing 40 kilometres an hour. However, that was her perception. The road is dangerous. It is dangerous for me, and I drive 100 000 kilometres a year. Members can imagine what it is like for young pregnant mums, with young kids in their cars, who must visit their gynaecologist in Bunbury because the facilities are not available in the excellent hospitals in that area, with the most excellent care.

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Our other doctor, Dr Bowie, is a wonderful guy. He is a Vietnam veteran who has been a surgeon of note. He has made a wonderful contribution to the community. He became very ill just recently. He had to go to Perth to the Mount Hospital to have an operation. He went back to Bunbury and then to Manjimup. He said that the care in the hospital in Manjimup far and away surpassed the care that he received anywhere else in the State. He was very grateful to those people. What has happened? All the services have been removed. Stories are going around that the operating theatre will be closed. I am glad that the Minister for the South West is in the Chamber. He can take this on board. I am sure he is taking notes for the Minister for Health.

Mr R.C. Kucera: You're the one who has been spreading the rubbish down there.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Am I?

Mr R.C. Kucera: Yes, you are.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Is that right?

Mr R.C. Kucera: I heard the reports about it.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I will put this on the record: the Minister for the South West believes that I am spreading rubbish in the south west community about these issues. These issues have been raised by the local doctor and by the local health forum, which was chaired by the Warren-Blackwood economic alliance. One could hardly say that that was the member for Warren-Blackwood. I say to the Minister for the South West that the human resources committee was at pains to explain to the minister's task force committee that, although the local member was interested and instrumental in assisting the human resources committee, I did not have an active role on a day-to-day basis. We provided the secretariat to get it going, and it works very well. The minister's suggestion is an insult not only to me but also the people of the lower south west. I have received a number of letters from people across the south west.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members! The member for Warren-Blackwood has the floor. It does not help if members on my left and on my right have conversations across the Chamber.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I know that the Minister for the South West has had experience in running jails and things at Belmont. However, he does not have to tell me how to look after my electorate. I have not had to go out and buy hamburgers for my community yet.

These issues are very serious. I have letters in my file from people who had been long-term registered nurses and sisters under the old system. They have written to me and to the minister, so the minister must have a pile of letters to which he needs to respond. I will raise the matter again.

It is a shame that I have had only 15 minutes in which to respond to this budget, because a whole range of other issues are important. The fact is that a convicted repeat rapist is residing only 400 metres from a senior high school and a primary school in my electorate. The fact is that the State's health system is in decay because of this Government's stupidity and its failure to deliver services to country people. They are matters to which I attach the greatest importance, and I will continue to do so. If that guy is not moved out of my electorate by next week, I will be coming into this place and doing whatever I need to do to draw the matter to the attention of the public of Western Australia at every opportunity. I ask the Government to make sure that the budget is available, to make sure that people are monitoring the movements of this guy, and to make sure that somebody is on his elbow at every move because we do not need that kind of person in my community, particularly so close to schools.

MR W.J. McNEE (Moore) [8.02 pm]: The contribution by the member for Warren-Blackwood has been outstanding. When he spoke about current health needs and services in the bush, it left me thinking. I can remember being a small boy in the 1940s in the middle of the war years when a man suffered a serious accident. It happened at about this time of the year and he was very badly injured. There was no ambulance. I do not know if there was a flying doctor service. I think the airstrip at Wyalkatchem in those days was a paddock. The local doctor had to handle the situation. He removed the man's spleen among other things, and he did so in the old building. I do not know where the anaesthetist came from. I was only a kid, but as the patient was part of our family I remember being there. We kids thought we had to give blood. I think that some of us must have been too young. However, the doctor performed the operation. I am quite sure that today's country doctors are just as skilled, perhaps even more so than that doctor, yet, as the member for Warren-Blackwood said, they are not allowed to deliver a baby.

Mr T.K. Waldron: It is the same in Wagin.

Mr W.J. McNEE: Yes.

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Mr B.J. Grylls: It is the same at Merredin.

Mr W.J. McNEE: Yes, and Merredin is a big town. I think if a lady in Koorda, Dowerin or Wongan Hills was about to give birth, she would have to go to Northam. It is ridiculous because all those towns have good hospitals. I was chairman of the then Wyalkatchem Hospital Board when the hospital was built. We then had a good Government of course. I think it might have been the Brand Government or even the Court Government, but a 22-bed hospital was built. I spent a few weeks in it last year. Until then I had never been sick in my life. It brought home to me the absolute need for the hospital. The hospital had patients like me; people who had had accidents, the young and old, people who are cared for permanently, and people in the Wallambin Lodge who are cared for, with meals and that sort of thing being provided, and who have their own vehicles and can go off and do what they want to do. The families of those people live in the area. One old lady there who is in her 90s was a friend of my mother's. She seems to have been in the district forever. Will the Government say to her that she should kick off somewhere in the city to be a number in a nursing home? That is what the Government is doing. This is a hopeless Government that knows no bounds and has absolutely no idea. I have my doubts sometimes that government members know where Midland Junction is. They certainly do not know where Mundaring is. I do not give a continental about new Country Labor (WA). What a front! What hypocrisy for the Premier to get up and spout on about his love for the bush with his new Country Labor. I have seen neither the length nor breadth of it. It is terrible, and they say they believe. They do not.

I want to make a few points on matters that concern me. Members have said that their electorates are considered with disdain by this Government. The electorate of Moore certainly is because there is not much money in the budget for the electorate of Moore. The new Moora hospital was mentioned. I have not yet been told what the program is or when tenders will be called. When I see trucks loaded with bricks and people arriving to do the job, I will believe it. There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. Government members are very good at sliding out of promises.

This is a high-taxing Government. An example of what annoys me and other people happened only the other day to a very law-abiding fellow. He said that he was travelling through Sawyers Valley the other morning and the next thing he knew was that he was being pinged for speeding. He said that he was not angry because he was caught, but he felt that the Multanova operators were sitting there ready to rip whatever dollars off him. He said that he had not seen the machine and he did not know what happened. He does not yet know how many kilometres per hour he was over the speed limit, but he knows that it was enough to get a flick. Those operators carry on like this Government; they lurk in the bushes. It was strange that the fellow mentioned it to me on Saturday, because I was travelling to Parliament this morning in exactly the same circumstances. The machine did not flash at me because I always do what nearly everybody else tries to do, which is to stay within the speed limit. There was the Multanova in the bush. There was no sign of the operator's vehicle. The sign that thanks motorists for not speeding was not visible either. Even the operators are bright enough to turn the sign on its side so that motorists cannot see it and it will not reflect motorists' lights or the sun. Those operators, like this Government, lurk in the bush. They are not there for my safety, because the Multanova this morning was positioned so that motorists could easily be caught. That is why it was there. They do not give a damn about my safety as long as they are pulling in more money for this avaricious Government, which is all it is worried about. The Government has no conception about road safety or it would place the Multanovas at the black spots and, under its road program, there are plenty of those. The Government need only look at my electorate.

During the estimates I was surprised to hear that the budget for the Department of Agriculture had been cut again. I cannot remember by how much it was cut. The Government is saying that it does not care any more. If Country Labor (WA) were doing the right thing, it would be in the caucus room fighting like Kilkenny cats. Once we could be proud of the Department of Agriculture. Although it still employs good people, this Government is putting it in the situation in which it will be virtually useless. The Department of Agriculture must be at the forefront of research. It does not need to talk to farmers about how to do things or about extensions. That information is readily available through the private sector. We need reliable people in the department to do very serious, proper and real research. They should help push the industry ahead. The Government talks of a vision. The Government has no vision at all. The agricultural industry needs the right sort of people to push it ahead. The industry is doing quite well and it can make a massive contribution to the State.

Did this Government give the lead on a simple matter such as genetically modified organisms? No, it did not. What did it do? It opted for the green politics. The branch opposite the Labor Party - the Greens (WA) - said, "Hang on you bunch, don't get into that GMO." The Government gave a lily-livered answer. That is what it did. The Government hid behind the green belt. That is not what this State needs. I do not care what any other State has done. Western Australia needs to have a vision and it must lead. Mr Acting Speaker, I am as scared about GMOs as you or anyone else in this Chamber; I am frightened of them. We use them. When chemicals

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

were first used, there was some concern about them. We have learnt to use them and we need to do the same with GMOs. Research must be done into GMOs. We need a vision, which the Premier wants people to believe he has. We need someone to push ahead. That is the role the Department of Agriculture should play. We need that help. If chemicals had never been introduced, I doubt that farmers could produce grain for the Australian public and the world at affordable prices. The farmers could not produce it as cheaply. It might be that GMOs will help us over the next hurdle. I understand that not doing the research and sticking one's head in the sand will not provide an answer. I will not hold my breath waiting for this bunch opposite to do anything. As long as the Greens dictate the direction in which the Government goes - and it does - the Government will do nothing.

The people in the northern part of my electorate are concerned about the problem of wild dogs. This Government has walked away from that issue. The other day a young fellow from a cattle station was at my place. I said that he would not have any trouble with dogs and he said, "Don't you believe it. They can pull down young calves." I would not have thought that that could happen.

This Government has shown its colours. Members could talk for hours about the Government's problems. The land clearing regulations are ridiculous. The Greens are running the show there too. If the Government wants to go down the green track, it had better decide what it will do because the Government will soon run out of money. The greens want to do nothing. The people I know are as green as the Greens (WA). However, there must be a balance between where we want to go, how we will get there and how it is done in a sustainable way. That is not the way this Government is going at all. This Government should lift its game.

I was going to mention salinity, but I do not have time to do that. I will talk about that on another day. The Government's performance on that issue has been abysmal. It will never achieve anything until it involves the farmers. The bureaucracy has control of the issue now, and that will not work.

MR B.J. GRYLLS (Merredin) [8.16 pm]: I rise to speak on the Bill. In deference to the lack of recognition from the Government of the great contribution to the State's economy made by the electorate of Merredin and the wheatbelt in general ever since European settlement of Western Australia, the wheatbelt is booming. It is an exciting time to be in the wheatbelt of Western Australia. That has come off the back of last year's record-breaking crop. Almost 15 million tonnes of grain was produced in Western Australia last year. The vast majority of that was produced in the wheatbelt. Indeed, the vast majority was produced in the electorate of Merredin. That 15 million-tonne wheat crop delivered \$3 billion to regional Western Australia.

I am very happy to report that this growing season has started even better than last year because of the opening rains. Crops are growing in the vast majority of the grain-growing region. The regions have received wonderful follow-up rains and are experiencing dry, warm weather during the week and rain on the weekends, which are absolutely perfect grain-growing conditions. I am very optimistic about another bumper crop being produced this year. The benefits of the production of bumper crops flow into the whole community. The business sector, which really copped it during the 2002-03 drought, has now been rebuilt. I am happy to report that I spoke to someone from one of the major businesses in Merredin on the weekend and he told me that in the past three months he has made up for the decrease in sales he experienced during the drought. That is a fantastic result for that business in Merredin. It is fantastic that the seasons have favoured the farmers and that that business can report a growth in sales that more than outweighs the decrease in sales it experienced during the drought. It is fantastic that I can report to members of the House that we are looking forward to another very successful cropping program this year. The business sector is seeing the benefits of a bumper season last year and has a confident outlook for the future.

I cannot forget to mention the great work done by the volunteers in the community. With a more buoyant regional economy, those volunteers can once again get on with and do the job. I congratulate the efforts of the sporting clubs and volunteers in maintaining the social fabric of their communities. As I make my comments on this year's budget, it is fantastic for me to report that despite this Labor Government's lack of recognition of the contribution that my electorate makes to the State, the region is looking forward to making another massive contribution this year. I will give an example of how that comes into play. I was visiting Dowerin last week during a lunchtime. I normally go to the local hotel but I instead went to a new cafe at the end of the main street. I did not know much about it but I wanted to introduce myself and see how the owners were going. It is called the Tin Dog Cafe. It really made my day. The owners are a couple new to town. The husband works in the Dowerin community. They have two young children, who attend the local school. The wife wants to make a contribution, not only through community groups, but also through business. She started the small cafe. It has first-class food and service. It is clean and friendly. What a fantastic result for the wheatbelt to have businesses like that springing up. We were chatting and discussing various issues when I said that the family story was so great that all they needed to do was to tell me that the husband was the centre half-back for the local football team. That is exactly what he is! The family brings injection into the school, injection into the local economy and a centre half-back for the local football team! Good luck to the Dowerin team this year.

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Mr T.K. Waldron interjected.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I do not know about that, member for Wagin.

Those are the sorts of stories that we are seeing right across the wheatbelt. It just goes to show that when the rain falls at the right time, wheatbelt people are the best people to make a massive contribution to the State.

I will focus on one issue because it is something that has escaped the radar of the Government. It has certainly escaped any allocation in the budget. It is the issue of housing in regional Western Australia in general, and the wheatbelt in particular. I will focus on the role of the Government Employees' Housing Authority and how it goes about its very important duties in providing housing for government employees such as nurses, police officers and teachers. Every member of this Parliament knows that those people are very important to metropolitan and regional communities. The issue of housing is right up there with power, which the House has debated many times. The issue of housing is very high among my concerns because of what we see take place in regional Western Australia. The GEHA cannot keep up with demand; there is a huge demand for housing. Private enterprise cannot keep up either. Most definitely, shire councils cannot keep up with the demand for housing. The issue for GEHA is similar to that of power poles for Western Power. The 1960s saw great growth throughout regional Western Australia and many houses were built throughout the regions. Just as the power poles are showing serious signs of decay and are falling down around our ears, so is the housing. It is untenable to promote regional development and to try to attract police officers, nurses and teachers to regional Western Australia to live, work and contribute to the community when they are offered only 1960s-style housing in which the asbestos addition out the back is falling off the wall. That is the sort of housing we are showing prospective employees in regional Western Australia, particularly in the wheatbelt. Quite simply, we will not attract people if they have to move from a comfortable four by two house in a nice suburb in the metropolitan area and are offered a three by one house built in the 1960s that has no garden and a ratty bathroom, the tiles of which have seen better days.

Mr B.K. Masters: Brick or asbestos?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Probably asbestos, I would suggest. If an audit were done, many concerns would be raised. We are in an untenable situation, member for Vasse. If an audit were conducted, problems would arise with people being thrown out of those houses. I am extremely concerned about the quality of housing and the amount of housing that is available. There is no additional support in the budget for GEHA or for attracting private investment into the sector. I was lucky enough to meet a delegation from the Shire of Narembeen, which visited Perth today to speak to the Minister for Housing and Works in his office. Narembeen is a small community with fewer than 1 000 people. There are many communities like it across my electorate and in those of the member for Wagin and other members from the heartland of Western Australia. The Shire of Narembeen is holding 14 unsatisfied applications for housing. We talk about growing the regions and regional development but we cannot find housing for people. It will be pretty difficult to deliver that outcome. The reason there are 14 unsatisfied applications for housing is that the two main businesses in Narembeen - Aquip Machinery with 26 staff and Sonic Boomsprays with 24 staff - have received huge boosts through the agricultural process and the strong agricultural season. They are looking to employ more people, to increase their production and to add to the economy of the State. Aquip Machinery is renting houses for its staff in Merredin, which is 70 kilometres from Narembeen, and Bruce Rock, which is 43 kilometres from Narembeen. How does a small community such as Narembeen, which is trying to drive its economy and the growth of its town, achieve that when it has to locate the employees of good, solid businesses in the community in outlying towns? The employees and their families are shopping in Merredin and buying their newspapers in Bruce Rock. That is not delivering any benefits to the community of Narembeen. That is why the shire is so concerned about this issue. Although it is showing a slight increase in population and business growth and bucking the trend, it cannot get housing for the valuable members of staff. The supply of houses is a very serious problem which, just like the Western Power issue in supplying power to the regions, is becoming critical. There needs to be some recognition of the type of housing that needs to be built. Not all employees have families. A concentration on four by two family houses is not always suitable for those members of staff. I want GEHA to look at a variety of housing, including unit-type developments in which young, single people can have a common area to allow them to socialise after work and to have a feeling of a small community. That will build their sense of community and enjoyment outside the workplace. I encourage GEHA to look at the common four by two houses, which we always hear about, as well as units.

I refer to the GEHA policy. It is always interesting to read the web sites of agencies to compare and contrast their vision for the agency with what we see in the budget. GEHA states that it will make a strenuous effort to attract much greater interest from the private sector, particularly in the supply of new construction outside those locations traditionally attracting investors. That is the key. For GEHA to get this right, it needs to focus on one key issue: areas such as Merredin, Narembeen, Narrogin and Pingelly, as well as smaller areas in inland Western

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Australia, will not show the capital growth that areas on the coast and in the metropolitan area show. Private investment will not be attracted to those areas unless there is some compensation in rent values for the capital growth that is not shown in those areas. The reason I raise this is that if a person is an investor with \$200 000 to spend, the strong capital growth that can be shown in coastal communities such as Albany, Esperance and Geraldton is far different from the capital growth that can be achieved in Narrogin, Merredin or Corrigin. To drive property investment in the regions and relieve some of the heat of the metropolitan property market, there needs to be strong recognition by GEHA that extra assistance must be given to areas that do not show a capital growth component in investment. Without that, it will be simply a forlorn cry for GEHA to attract investment to areas that do not traditionally attract investment. I have met with GEHA and discussed this. I look forward to continuing to raise this issue because some very successful projects have developed housing in regional Western Australia. I turn to the main base of the member for Avon, which is Northam, and a project called Mitchell on Avon. The shire council bought all the old railway houses, which were showing serious signs of decay. They were in a very undesirable end of town. The shire repainted them, redeveloped the area, tidied up the gardens and, I am sure, tidied up the insides of the properties. The shire turned an undesirable area of town into a very attractive area, not only for people driving through the town but also for people who live in the area and, I am sure, investors. The Shire of Northam, in investing in that project, has made a profit of \$1 million and turned a very undesirable area into a very desirable area. The extra housing in that project has attracted workers into the community and is a credit to everyone involved. We need more projects like that in my electorate of Merredin and in the electorates of the members for Wagin and Moore. Investments such as that are not happening in those electorates. It is up to the shires, the Government Employees Housing Authority and government agencies to examine very closely such investment and incentive schemes. Without them, people will not invest in housing, which will retard the potential for inland areas of Western Australia to capitalise on the very strong agricultural seasons and increase the development of business and the population so that they can buck the trend and shed the label with which they are constantly tarred. I look forward to raising the issue of housing with the responsible minister and to finding a solution to the growth and prosperity of those areas.

MR B.K. MASTERS (Vasse) [8.31 pm]: I rise to raise a few matters that were mentioned in the estimates committee hearings a few weeks ago. The estimates hearings are equivalent to the consideration in detail stage of a Bill. As I said an hour or two ago, I was disappointed with the estimates committee process because of the inability to obtain detailed answers to a number of questions that members would otherwise get during the consideration in detail stage of a Bill. Overall, I was disappointed that very few questions were able to be asked of some ministers during the estimates committee hearings and I was even more disappointed that so few answers were given.

You will have to forgive me, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.W. Andrews), as I am getting over the flu and I am not thinking straight at the moment.

I commend the Minister for the Environment, however, for the comparative brevity of her answers and for the relative detail in their content. In comparison, however, I regret that the Minister for Education and Training took so long to answer so few questions; although I commend him for the incredible detail and historical summaries he provided in many of his relatively few answers.

I wish to spend a few minutes on the education portfolio. I asked the Minister for Education and Training during the estimates committee hearings whether the \$1 million as shown in the budget papers was for the purchase of land for the new Busselton middle school site. I was surprised to get the unexpected answer that although \$1 million or thereabouts has been allocated for the purchase of land for the new Busselton secondary school, in fact, the money in the budget is for the relocation of the Busselton campus of the South West Regional College of TAFE facility; in other words, the Busselton TAFE. During the few questions that I managed to ask, it transpired that the site for the repositioning of the South West Regional College of TAFE is at what is called Vasse Newtown. I was surprised at that answer, as it was unexpected. In the past few months in my electorate a local area education plan option has been very heavily debated. The preferred option of the Government is to build a middle school at the same site at Vasse or Vasse Newtown. Therefore, it appeared to me to be somewhat unusual to co-locate a middle school with a TAFE college. I managed to finish my questioning of the Minister for Education and Training on how many sites there were in Western Australia with a TAFE college co-located with a middle school. The answer was none. I ran out of opportunities to question the minister further. I take this opportunity to say to the minister that to me it is very strange and unacceptable to co-locate two somewhat exclusive rather than inclusive education facilities on one site. I said to the minister that although I agreed with the amalgamation of the Department of Training with the Department of Education - which I think occurred last year - a difficulty had appeared 12 months after that amalgamation; that is, the two sections of the new Department of Education and Training appeared not to be talking to each other or coordinating their activities. I suggested to the minister that he very quickly bang a few heads together and get the two until recently separate

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

arms of his department to talk to each other. I anticipate - please note it is not my preferred outcome - that the Vasse Newtown area, which is a new urban development to the south west of the existing Busselton town site, will eventually host an upper secondary school for the Shire of Busselton as well as the Busselton campus of the South West Regional College of TAFE. To me, combining those two education facilities makes enormous sense; whereas combining a middle school with a TAFE college does not make sense. I say to the Minister for Education and Training that although I appreciate he has been pushing quite hard, and I think quite rightly, for his preferred option from the LAEP process to be accepted by the local community, nonetheless the resolution of what should happen with the TAFE college at Busselton was not part of that LAEP process. As a result, as I said, the two arms of his department appear not to be talking to each other.

There are some serious distractions going on in this place, Mr Acting Speaker, but I think I will survive!

It is beholden on the minister to ensure that those two parts of his department talk to each other and come up with a coordinated answer to the education needs of the Busselton area. I said earlier that the Government's scenario is not my preferred scenario. I say that because the Dunsborough community has been very strongly claiming that it needs a middle school in the Dunsborough area. I agree with that. I think a middle school needs to be built in the western part of the Shire of Busselton. However, based on the statements that have been made by the Department of Education and Training to people such as Kerry Brandis and Richard Wain of the Dunsborough Middle School Action Group, and on the minister's advice to me in response to letters I have written to him on various matters on the Dunsborough middle school issue, it is regrettably unlikely to happen. Although I would love to see a middle school built at Dunsborough, and I think there are good, solid, logical and demographic reasons for building one, nonetheless I think it is likely to be some years away.

On the issue of the environment, I asked the Minister for the Environment during the estimates committee hearings who wrote the preamble to this year's budget statement on the Swan River Trust. On page 646 of this year's *Budget Statements*, the four dot points under significant issues and trends are all goody-goody type answers or statements. They all seem to talk about high community values, how much has been accomplished and how managing the ecological system will require additional work and activities and so on. It is important that those sorts of not wishy-washy but sanitised statements be compared with the preamble or the statement contained in last year's *Budget Statements* on page 613 for the Swan River Trust division. The vast majority of the six dot points on that page painted a very different picture than the one painted in this year's *Budget Statements*. Last year's budget papers for the Swan River Trust talked about a marked increase in pressure on the waterways as a result of all sorts of developments such as residential and commercial developments, recreational and commercial use of the waterways and the potential for environmental degradation of the waterways and foreshores. It then went on to talk about the increasing pressure on the use and conditions of the rivers requiring a planned approach to development, algal blooms continuing to cause poor water quality, seasonal erosion and accretion along the foreshores demanding increased corrective works and the need for better integration and planning activities affecting the Swan and Canning River system. My memory tells me that last year's very realistic summary - I will not call it a doom and gloom summary - of the conditions that were applying to the Swan and Canning River system was identical to the sorts of statements used in the 2002-03 and the 2001-02 budgets. I have to say that after three years of very significant expressions of concern by the staff from the Swan River Trust who wrote that section headed significant issues and trends, I am disappointed to find that this year the statements seems to have been watered down or, as I said a minute ago, sanitised.

It goes without saying that I obviously welcome this year's worthwhile increase in funding that the Government gave to the Swan River Trust. However, I also have to express my disappointment that it took more than three years of this Government being in power for this significant increase in funding to come. It has come three years late, and although it is not too late, it is still too little to meet the many demands being placed on the Swan and Canning River system by the large number of people who are now recreating and doing other things that impact upon the many values in the Swan and Canning Rivers system.

I am also disappointed that the Minister for the Environment still seems to be more interested in addressing the public or higher profile issues than in rolling up her sleeves and getting involved in some less iconic but far more important issues affecting the environment. I will give one example. Windsurfers and kite surfers are interfering significantly with the Pelican Point nature reserve and marine park in the Nedlands area. I was taken on a tour of that area last summer by three members of Birds Australia Western Australia. I thank them very much for that opportunity and for their ongoing interest in the issue. If I had gone to that area 20 ago and had a look at the bird life down there, I would have seen hundreds or thousands of waterbirds and waders at Pelican Point. Some of them would have clearly been common species but many of them would have been migratory waders coming from the northern hemisphere. Today, because of the interference being caused by human beings, the most a person will see is dozens or perhaps a 100 or 200 birds. There has been such a significant reduction in the number of birds from 20-odd years ago to today because, finally, the birds are not prepared to accept the

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

disturbance by people, people with dogs or dogs that are not under any sort of control by people. They are also not prepared to accept the disturbance from windsurfers and kite surfers. Compared with patting bilbys on the head or handing over a cheque for tree planting, it is much harder to support departmental staff when they should be taking action essential to the protection of our biodiversity. However, the difficulty is that when the minister wants to support her departmental staff on issues, that will upset some people. That is not good news. It is harder to do and it takes a little more backbone, and I am sorry to say that we seem to have a minister who is clearly an honest, hard working and nice person, but who seriously fails in her ministerial responsibilities by not being able to make the hard decisions, especially the decisions that are not supported by the green movement, but that is another story.

I have almost run out of time. I would have liked to have made a comment or two about science, but I cannot because the Premier still has not provided me with the supplementary information that I requested of him and which he had promised. All I can do is repeat the criticisms that I made during the estimates committee hearings that for the past three years, the budget papers have indicated very large sums of money to be spent on new research priorities in the State. However, when we see the following year's budget, lo and behold, the money has not been spent. To give an example, on page 93 of last year's *Budget Statements* the 2003-04 budget estimate total cost of output was supposed to be \$32.276 million, but on page 90 in this year's *Budget Statements* the 2003-04 estimated actual was \$16.598 million, which is roughly half. I am disappointed with the Minister for Science.

However, there is one positive; I thank the federal Government and the Commonwealth Grants Commission for making more money available to Western Australia.

DR J.M. WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [8.48 pm]: This is a chance to stocktake the budget. In this stocktaking, one must look at the budget that was presented to the Parliament, which shows that we started going into debt as soon as the Government was elected. In 2001-02, the debt was \$24 million; in 2002-03, it was \$70 million; and, in 2003-04, it was \$635 million. I am not adding up these figures but giving the debt figure for each year. For 2004-05 the forward estimates show that the debt will be a further \$910 million; for 2005-06, a further \$455 million; and, for 2006-07, a further \$322 million. These are the year-by-year stepped increases in debt. When the Treasurer says how well we are doing, I wonder how we can be doing so well when he is putting us into more and more debt? If the Liberal coalition Government wins the next election, we could almost have a repeat of the WA Inc situation in that it will start selling off community assets to bring down the debt because of the repayments made on the debt.

Let us look at some of this Government's promises. Unfortunately, the Minister for the Environment has just left the Chamber, but what has happened with the old-growth forests? Do you realise, Mr Acting Speaker, that we have two sitting weeks left in this session of Parliament, a recess for six weeks and then a further eight sitting weeks until the end of the year? What happened to this Government's promises on national parks? We have 10 sitting weeks left in which the Government can put a Bill on the table that must pass through this House and the upper House to classify state forests as national parks. We have seen no sign of that happening. I have heard from the minister's department that the minister anticipates tabling a Bill in October. The only Bill that has gone through this Parliament in a fairly short period was the Reserves (Reserve 43131) Bill 2003. That Bill was declared urgent, and went through both Houses and had the Governor's assent within four weeks. Will this Government give a guarantee to all the people who supported it at the last election, when it promised to save the old-growth forest, that when the Bill to create those national parks is put on the Table it will be declared an urgent Bill and the Government will ensure that it goes through this year, during this Government's first term of office? Is this something that the minister is expecting to hit the Table in October? If the Bill is not on the Table by the beginning of September, we could probably say goodbye to those forests, because the Government will not have kept its promise.

We have only 10 more sitting weeks left, and this Government has had almost four years in office. The excuse it is giving at the moment is that there are some problems with native title. Nothing has changed. If there were claims for native title, I am sure that they were not made within the past six months, so why is the Government sitting on this? Why has the Government made these promises? One of the key issues that got this Government across the line at the last election was its promise about old-growth forests, and it has not done anything. A couple of parks were nominated within a few months of the Government coming into office, and I congratulated the Government for that, but now I have to ask what the Government is doing. It has been sitting on its backside. Government members are not sitting on their backsides at the moment, however, because there are only three of them in the Chamber, but they are certainly sitting on their backsides in dealing with the promises made to the community about old-growth forests. We have 10 sitting weeks left.

I will not bring up the other environmental issues, because the member for Vasse has addressed many of those issues very well. I will, however, raise the issue of transport because of the implications of some of the

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Government's decisions on our future debt. The figures I gave a few minutes ago for yearly increments in debt - I have not yet worked out the total - do not include the cost to the community of the southern railway line. When the Government made its promises, it did not say it would alter the route of the railway and hit the taxpayers for billions of dollars more. This issue has already started to affect people in my electorate, because it is already taking them an extra 20 minutes, if they work in the city, to get to work in the morning. Some of the works have already started on the freeway. What happens when the bus lanes are dug up? The bus lanes are being dug up and a railway line is being put down the middle of the freeway so that people living Mandurah can come to Perth 12 minutes quicker. Let us balance those 12 minutes for the people of Mandurah. It is a plus for Mandurah. However, many buses from Rockingham, Spearwood, Cockburn and many other areas south of the river now come up Canning Highway. The suburbs they service have a population of over 100 000. If those people want to catch public transport to get to Perth, when this new railway line comes in they will have to get off the bus at Canning Bridge and catch the train if they want to get in without being held up in the traffic for possibly an extra half hour to 45 minutes.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I missed that interjection from the member for Girrawheen.

This money could have gone on building new hospitals and employing more nurses. It cannot be said that it could be used for employing more doctors, because there is a real shortage of doctors. There is a shortage of nurses, not because we do not have the nurses in Western Australia, but because this Government has not addressed the nurses' workload issue, and therefore they have no job satisfaction, and so the main problem in nursing is a problem with retention. The nurses will not stay in the workforce because this Government does not care about the conditions they work under. That problem could have been addressed with all this money that is going into the railway. We could have used it to encourage more nurses to stay in the system. We need more nurses in the system to improve patient care. Patient care has not improved, not because of a lack of performance on the part of the nurses or the doctors, but simply because of a lack of resources.

Waiting lists are growing, and people are being sent away from hospitals, particularly in the mental health area, because there are no beds for them. I went down to Fremantle Hospital with one of my constituents who had gone to the mental health section and had been sent away with sleeping tablets and told to come back the next day because there were no beds. The doctor admitted that, had there been a bed, he would have admitted that patient. The patient needed to be admitted, but the doctor had no choice; there was no bed for that patient. What is the Government doing about mental health? The Government has put no extra money into either the acute or the chronic sectors of mental health. Four times a day a bed analysis is done through a phone around. For Fremantle Hospital for the past year, and I think for a lot of other hospitals, that analysis has shown the Government that the shortage of beds is at crisis level. In the past year, it has been coming up on a daily and a weekly basis - crisis, crisis, crisis. What has the Government done? For whom is the Government caring? It is not caring for the people who are committing suicide because they cannot get help in the hospitals, or for the families who are struggling to cope with their loved ones who have a mental illness. This Government is just ignoring those people. It is not worrying about them.

The Government is spending money on a railway line, yet it has not met the core promises that it gave to the community that it would improve health. It has not improved health. The Government promised that it would improve law and order. Some wonderful police work in the two stations that look after my electorate; namely, Murdoch and Palmyra Police Stations. However, a person can be asked to do only so much. They are not given support. They are stuck in their stations, doing mounds of paperwork, and they are not out on the street. The community wants to see police officers patrolling the streets. Sometimes I hear that people phone the police and wait several hours for a response. In fact, it can be days, because the police must respond according to the urgency of the situation. Some people's calls are put on a moderate urgency level, and they might see a police officer after three or four hours. When there has been a problem, and people have seen someone trying to burgle them, those three or four hours are a very distressing time for those people. This Government has done nothing to improve those times.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [9.02 pm]: I have been a member of this House since 1986, and I have seen the estimates process in that period. In my early years in this House, when the estimates hearings were conducted as a Committee of the Whole in this Chamber, it was a very ordinary process. In fact, it desperately needed to be changed, and I appreciated the change when it occurred.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I saw the old process as well. It was terrible.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It was an absolute shocker; I agree with the Treasurer. It had to change. As time went by, I was privileged to be included on a committee of this House that had an opportunity to look at the

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

functions of a range of Parliaments, such as those in New Zealand, and in North America and Canada in particular, and the methods by which the budgets in a range of Parliaments in the western world were assessed. Obviously, there were not hundreds of Parliaments. We probably would not have seen 10 Parliaments. The Treasurer was with us. I cannot remember exactly how many Parliaments we saw. We would have seen eight or so, and we saw different methods of dealing with estimates.

I must express extreme dissatisfaction with the current estimates process. I am a person who has an interest in the functioning of this House. I believe that the mechanisms and the processes of this House are fundamentally important. I have never been thrown out of this House since I was elected in 1986. However, basically, I was begging for that to happen in the estimates committee hearings last month because I was so frustrated with the process. That frustration flowed from the fact that in the committee hearing with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the minister was allowed to say what she wanted to say for as long as she wanted to say it, and to criticise the Opposition as much as she wanted to. When the Opposition, and particularly I, got involved in that criticism, I was called to order constantly. I was determined to get thrown out, because I thought the process was ordinary to the greatest extent. It was an extremely unfair balance of power between the minister and an opposition member. I usually do not take that view. However, I was so angry that I was prepared to make that point.

The member for Mandurah came into the Chamber and took the Chair from a person whom I will not mention, because I was having a fairly serious interaction with that Chairman. Because of my respect for the member for Mandurah - he did smile at me a couple of times - I decided to leave the committee because I would be a problem to not only the committee process but also myself, because I was very angry.

There is no point criticising the system without saying what may be done to rectify it. In many cases, the problem is with the chairing of those committee hearings. It really is not appropriate in estimates for ministers to come in with set statements and to have them as a policy position. That is not the purpose of estimates hearings. However, that is happening regularly. It is not just now; it is a process that has been going on for some time. One of the things I learnt early is that we all learn from each other in this place. That is one of the things that occurs. In earlier days, Premier Burke was supreme in this Chamber. He was certainly a fantastic operator. Some of his skills and methods have been carried on. They were his skills and methods. In his hands they were an appropriate tool. However, they are not always an appropriate tool in the hands of others. We all know what happened to that Premier and his Government. However, that is not the point I am trying to make. The point I am trying to make is that if we allow bad practices to develop in this Parliament through its processes, the estimates hearings will degenerate to a point at which the Opposition really has no place in them. Surely, of all the processes of this House, Oppositions - whether it is an Opposition of members from this side or from the other side of the House - should have a capacity to participate in estimates hearings. It is not tolerable in estimates hearings for a minister to put forward policy positions, and to then accuse and abuse, and for the Opposition to not be able to respond to that process. Even though I know that is not the role of estimates hearings, the Chair in the case to which I referred was allowing that process to occur.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Surely that is the fault of the Opposition.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Why is it the fault of the Opposition?

Mr R.C. Kucera: Because you have not done your homework and you do not have the capacity to ask the proper questions.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: What a stupid statement. Let me start again. The minister about whom I speak had come into the hearing with set positions and set statements, which she took a considerable time to put in front of the committee. It is not the role of the minister to make policy statements in estimates committees. Estimates committees are not about policy; they are about the budget.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Surely it is up to the Opposition to ask questions about that.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: No, it is not. It is a process of the Parliament. Right now, if I am out of order, the Deputy Speaker will call me to order. That is the process. We all live by that process in this place, particularly the Opposition. Whoever sits in opposition lives by that process. We all know, regardless of who sits in the Chair, that it is slightly weighted to the government side. None of us argues about that too much. That is just the way it works; that is the way it falls. However, in estimates hearings, if members of not only the Opposition but also the Government want to ask questions about their constituency - that happens - but cannot ask those questions, why do we have estimates hearings? Why do we do it?

Mr R.C. Kucera: I have not struck that situation in my estimates hearings. People from your party, such as the member for Wagin, were in my estimates hearing this year. He asked plenty of questions, and I must say that they were very sensible questions.

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O'gorman); Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: When the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure appeared before the estimates committee, she used the opportunity to pursue her own agenda, which is not the purpose of the estimates. She used the opportunity to attack the Opposition. That is fine, because none of us in this place would be worried about being attacked. However, if members are attacked, they must have the ability to retaliate. The minister made a range of statements that went on the record, which she believed was smart for her purposes and denigrated the Opposition. If the Opposition is attacked, it must have the opportunity to respond at the time. The Chairman said I was out of order during that process. I was quite happy to take on the Chairman, and I would be happy to take him on anywhere, because I was not the person at fault - the Chairman was. If we arrive at a situation, Madam Deputy Speaker, when your authority is being challenged, this place will not be functioning.

Two people have advised me over the years that I have been a member of this place. One was the former member for South Perth who had been a member of the federal Parliament, as members may be aware, and had been a member of this Parliament for some 40 years - an exceedingly long time. His advice was always that no matter what, we must respect the Chair, because if the Chair is not in control of the Chamber, we do not have a Parliament. At the same time my predecessor Hendy Cowan, the member for Merredin, also clearly made the point. Sometimes in this Chamber back in the days of a pretty infamous Speaker, we in the National Party got in a little bit of strife with the Liberal Party because we refused to go along with motions against the Chair. That was because of Hendy Cowan's view that the Chair was always to be respected even if he or she was making a mistake. We adopted that attitude on a number of occasions. I still agree that the Chair must be respected, because if the Chair is not respected, the Parliament has no process. However, the Chair must run the system in an unbiased manner. The Chair must allow people to ask questions. We all know that the ratio of members in that role is approximately fifty-fifty government and opposition members, and that process should continue. The answers in the estimates committee were exceedingly long and often had little to do with the questions. The questions were an opportunity for the minister to go on to the next written statement that had been prepared by her office. She launched into a statement that continued for a considerable time, but the question was never answered. She had the opportunity to put whatever position she wanted onto the record of the estimates committee, but that is not the role of the estimates committee.

The major part of this process is to look at the functioning of the estimates process. If we are to maintain the Western Australian Parliament as a bicameral system, the process of examining the budget should stay in the House. However, if the process of examining the budget is to deteriorate to the point at which it is not worth anything, we will face the question of whether the process should be moved to the other place. In some Parliaments it has happened. In the case of the New Zealand Parliament, where there is no upper House, it has moved to a more extensive committee process. We cannot do that here, because we have only 57 members and a limited committee process. My appeal to the Chair, however, is that we need to look at the estimates process. In my view it is the worst process that we run in this Parliament. The only way to make short-term changes to the process is to make sure that those people who chair the committee - they are not always from the minister's side of the House - are given a stronger direction about what should occur in the estimates committee process. The estimates committee process must be about the Opposition seeking to ask questions and answers being given. There must be some control over the minister.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Does that not come back to the competence of the Opposition also?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister is a drop kick - a major drop kick. I am trying to put something on the record that will benefit all members of this Chamber. I have had some experience. I have been here a couple of weeks! I am really concerned about the estimates process.

Mr R.C. Kucera: As the Opposition, you have the opportunity of questioning.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I was in government for eight years. I have only two minutes left in which to speak. I am concerned about the estimates process. I do not believe in revolution. The process needs to remain in the House, because the House is required, and always will be required, to examine the budget. However, a stronger process is necessary, which means that there must be some control of the ministers, whatever colour they might be. One day this Opposition will be in government. It makes no difference who is in government. If ministers are allowed to abuse the process, it will break down this Chamber's control and the capacity of each member of the Chamber to participate. Every member of this Chamber has the capacity to question ministers. It is a very important capacity for all members. It does not matter whether they are in government or opposition; there must be the capacity to ask questions. Sometimes government members ask questions of a somewhat hostile minister. The minister is not always tame, because if that were the case, the member could always wander down a corridor, ask the question and get the answer the member wants. Sometimes government members want the answer to a question on the record for their own purposes in looking after their constituencies. I have a gripe with estimates and will be happy to talk to the appropriate committee if it wishes me to.

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 15 June 2004]
p3693c-3707a

Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; The Acting Speaker (mr A.P. O’gorman);
Acting Speaker; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bernie Masters; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Max Trenorden

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr C.J. Barnett (Leader of the Opposition).