

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

MINISTER FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Motion

MR M.J. BIRNEY (Kalgoorlie) [4.00 pm]: I move -

That this House notes with grave concern that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and other members of State Cabinet have been consistently and deliberately refusing to answer official parliamentary questions, providing false, misleading and deceptive answers to questions and that they have failed to correct the parliamentary record at the first opportunity after providing factually incorrect, misleading answers to Parliament;

and further that, after carefully considering the gravity of the abovementioned indiscretions, this House regretfully expresses that it no longer has confidence in the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to undertake her ministerial duties and to provide open, accountable and factually correct answers to the Parliament of Western Australia.

At the conclusion of my contribution to this motion, I hope to paint a picture for you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and for members present, of a Government that is deliberately and purposefully frustrating the flow of information to this Parliament and consequently to the people of Western Australia. I wish to paint a picture of a Government that, by its own actions, has created a web of deceit and trickery. I wish to paint a picture of a Government that has absolutely no respect for the institution of this Parliament, a Government that is the least open and accountable Government in the history of this State. That smacks of hypocrisy! I remember this fellow who is now the Premier, who was once the Leader of the Opposition, going on ad nauseam about the need for an open and accountable Government in Western Australia. I intend to prove today that the Government in Western Australia is not open and accountable; in fact, it is intent on doing anything possible, by using all means available to it, to frustrate the supply of information to this Chamber.

One of the worst offenders - if not the worst - is the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I do not move this motion lightly. The moving of a motion of no confidence in a minister of the Crown should be done only after careful research and consideration. I have undertaken that research and I have given this motion due consideration. I have arrived at the decision that we have no choice other than to move this motion of no confidence in the Minister for Police. I will go down the list -

Mr D.A. Templeman: Yes, you will go right down in a screaming heap.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I will go down the list and I will outline this to members. I sincerely hope that particularly Labor backbenchers, who do not get an opportunity to contribute much to anything, are listening very clearly when I outline a number of indiscretions that have been committed by not only the minister but also the Premier and other members.

It has reached the point at which the Opposition cannot get a clear-cut answer from the minister in this place. The Parliament represents democracy in this State; it is in fact the pinnacle of democracy. If we cannot get answers to questions posed in this place on behalf of the people of Western Australia, that is the beginning of the end. If a duly elected and appointed Minister for Police and Emergency Services is intent on frustrating the supply of that information, if she is intent on providing tricky and cute answers to official parliamentary questions, and if she has provided in the past factually incorrect answers to this Parliament, that is the beginning of the end. I will cite a number of examples of the Minister for Police and her attitude towards this Parliament and the people of Western Australia. Her indiscretions range from the minor to the very, very serious, but they are many and varied. For instance, some time ago I put question 1393 to the Minister for Police, which concerned the way she uses her government credit card paid for by the taxpayer. The Minister for Police is also the president of the Australian Labor Party. I thought it was entirely reasonable that the Opposition should question the Minister for Police's credit card expenditure with a view to finding out whether she had used that credit card to provide meals, drinks or entertainment for members of the Australian Labor Party, given her position as the head of that organisation. I am sure you would agree with me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that is a fairly reasonable request. Question 1393, asked on 6 May 2003, states -

- (a) will the minister supply the names of all individuals whose meals, drinks and/or other expenses the minister paid for with her Government credit card;
- ...
- (c) has the Minister ever used her credit card to pay for meals, drinks or other entertainment expenses for any member of the Labor Party;

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The Minister for Police simply answered -

All occasions were in accordance with Premier's Circular 1601 "Guidelines for Expenditure on Official Hospitality".

How will we ever know, if the Minister for Police refuses to give us the names of the people who have been the recipients of government-funded entertainment? How will we ever know if the Minister for Police refuses to tell us whether any of those people were members of the Labor Party, preferring instead to hide behind what is an exceptionally lame excuse by saying that "all occasions were in accordance with Premier's Circular 1601". How will we ever know?

The job of the Opposition is to hold the Government to account. We believe we do that well, but we cannot do it when a minister is intent on frustrating the supply of information to this Chamber. Instead of providing that rubbish answer, why did the minister not say that the names of the people for whom she has provided meals or drinks on her government-provided credit card were X, Y and Z and, no, none of them was a member of the Labor Party? I do not know whether any were members of the Labor Party, but if the minister had given us the names of those individuals and if she had provided us with that information about whether they were members of the Labor Party, we might have had an opportunity to find out. That is anything but open and accountable. I just do not know; that is the problem. Has the Minister for Police been getting her ministerial duties blurred with her Australian Labor Party duties? Once again, I just do not know. We frequently see members of the ALP with their snouts in the trough swanning around the Strangers Bar and also in the courtyard, presumably enjoying the hospitality of the Labor members of Parliament. Have they also been enjoying the hospitality of the Minister for Police, courtesy of her government-funded credit card? We will never know. I think that is a disgraceful answer, and I am sure you would agree, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Who could forget the high-risk parolee who went mad in the southern suburbs one or two months ago. It is alleged that he shot one person and held many others hostage. The member for Nedlands, who was right on top of this issue at the time, was given information that this fellow may have been subject to a warrant for his arrest. If that were the case, it would have conjured up a whole heap of questions. Why was he not arrested? How much effort had gone into arresting him? How long had he been the subject of a warrant for his arrest? Ultimately and importantly, could that shooting have been avoided given that this individual was the subject of a warrant for his arrest? At least, that was the information that the member for Nedlands had been given. As she did not conclusively know whether that information was correct, she did the right thing and did what any member of the Opposition would do, which was to question the Minister for Police officially in this place, the Western Australian Parliament. The member for Nedlands asked in question without notice 958 of 20 August 2003 -

I refer the minister to the tragic death of a young woman caused by an offender on parole . . .

. . .

(3) Has the minister ascertained whether a warrant had been issued for this offender and on what date?

The minister replied -

. . . no official bench warrant was issued from the Department of Justice.

Of course, the member for Nedlands knew otherwise and could not understand how the Minister for Police could reply no to her question. She checked with her source and came back into this place six days later and questioned the Minister for Police again, asking -

Will the minister confirm or correct her advice to this House of 20 August that no official bench warrant had been issued for the offender?

To which the Minister for Police replied -

Of course the member has misrepresented my answer - that was not the question she asked. She asked whether the Department of Justice had issued a warrant. The answer is that the Department of Justice had not issued a warrant. However, the Police Service had issued a bench warrant.

Let us explore this matter further. The member for Nedlands made no mention in her original question of the Department of Justice. She asked -

Has the minister ascertained whether a warrant had been issued for this offender and on what date?

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She did not ask whether a warrant from the Department of Justice had been issued. She simply asked whether a warrant had been issued. Two bodies in this State can issue a bench warrant for somebody's arrest. One is the Department of Justice and the other is the Police Service. The same minister is responsible for both organisations. She sits opposite me now. Presumably, when the member for Nedlands asked whether a warrant had been issued, the Minister for Police would have said yes, instead of attempting to twist and turn the question. On 26 August the Minister for Police said -

... that was not the question she asked. She asked whether the Department of Justice had issued a warrant.

The member for Nedlands did not ask that. She asked -

Has the minister ascertained whether a warrant had been issued ...

No mention was made of the Department of Justice in that question. The Minister for Police was covering her own tail because she did not want to answer those questions about that alleged offender. She did not want to tell us how long a warrant had been issued for his arrest. She did not want to tell us what effort had gone into arresting him, or whether the shooting could ultimately have been avoided. She twisted the question from the member for Nedlands, preferring instead to believe that the member for Nedlands had made reference to the Department of Justice when in fact she had not. The truth was that the police had issued a bench warrant for this offender, yet the Minister for Police refused to take the opportunity in this place to come clean and tell us the truth. This is one of the most, if not the most, serious indiscretions that the Minister for Police has committed in this place since her term in that seat. We are talking about somebody losing her life and numerous people losing their liberty over the space of a day because of this offender. We cannot get the truth out of the Minister for Police! She twists, turns and frustrates the flow of information into this House. She is a disgrace.

It also begs another question: if the Minister for Police knew that she had said the wrong thing, why did she not come into this House of her own accord and tell us that the police department had issued a warrant? Why did she wait six days for the member for Nedlands to raise this issue again? If the member for Nedlands had not been so diligent and on the ball, we may never have found out, because the Minister for Police was not about to tell us. It is the practice in this Parliament that if members make an error or err in terms of the facts they present in this place, at the very first opportunity they should correct those facts. The Minister for Police did not do that. Instead, she twisted, turned and frustrated the flow of information. That is an absolute disgrace.

Who could forget the ongoing saga of the new police issue Glock pistols? Many members in this place will be aware that over a long period - some 12 months - I brought to the attention of the Minister for Police and the Parliament -

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: With vigour.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: With vigour. I thank the member for Mitchell. I brought to the attention of the minister and the Parliament the fact that Glock pistols had a dubious reputation, to say the least, in the eastern States. I told the Minister for Police that these pistols were going off accidentally in the eastern States and were responsible for the accidental killing of police officers in those States. Many of these guns had gone off accidentally or unintentionally since their introduction in those States. I attempted to bring that fact to the attention of the Minister for Police. I said over a long period that there were too many occasions on which the triggers needed to be depressed when a person was not attempting to shoot someone or something. For instance, when a person breaks down the gun to service it, he is first required to pull the trigger. If he has not checked the gun for bullets and is perhaps a bit absent-minded, he can pull the trigger and the gun will go off. That is exactly what had been happening in the eastern States. I told the Minister for Police that but she did not care. We had numerous head-to-head radio debates on this matter. She maintained that these guns were exceptionally good and that they did not go off accidentally. It came to my attention that one of these guns had in fact gone off unintentionally. Someone had let me know. I could not confirm that, so I did what any dutiful member of the Opposition would do, which was to come into this Parliament and find out whether that was the truth. During the budget estimates committee hearings on 22 May 2003 I asked the Minister for Police -

Have any of the Glock pistols been accidentally discharged since they were issued to the Western Australia Police Service?

The minister replied simply that they had not. I scratched my head a little after receiving that answer. Somebody had told me that one had. Either that person was wrong or the Minister for Police was wrong. One would assume that the Minister for Police, being a duly elected minister of the Crown, would provide the correct information when speaking in the Parliament of Western Australia, so I assumed that my source was wrong. However, I took the opportunity to go back to my source to ask whether he could confirm that the gun had gone

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off. His answer to me was the same as the information he had earlier provided: a gun had gone off. He told me all about it. I put another question to the Minister for Police on 5 June 2003, which stated -

I refer the minister to the confirmed report that on 18 April 2003 a Western Australia Police Service Glock pistol accidentally discharged.

. . .

- (3) Will the minister now admit that she misled the Parliament during the Estimates Committee hearings last month when she specifically and repeatedly stated that there had not been any accidental discharges involving the Glock pistols?
- (4) Is the minister continuing to deny that neither she nor any of the senior police command team that attended the Estimates Committee hearings were aware that a Glock pistol had discharged accidentally?

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services answered in part -

I was informed by the commissioner yesterday - and he was made aware of the incident for the first time yesterday, when he was advised by Deputy Commissioner Brennan

The fact of the matter is that an incident did occur on 18 April this year. At that time, the Commissioner for Police was on leave and Mr Bruce Brennan, the deputy commissioner, was acting in the commissioner's position. I have been given to understand that Mr Brennan was not aware of the incident. That is wrong and I can prove it. Deputy Commissioner Brennan, who was sitting alongside the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the estimates committee, was informed of the accidental discharge one month prior to the estimates committee hearings. The minister said no, a gun was not accidentally discharged. It begs the question: did the Deputy Commissioner of Police tell the minister that a gun had been accidentally discharged and did the minister mislead this Parliament, hoping to cover up the fact that she may have made a bad and hasty decision to purchase the Glock pistols? For the record, I will read question on notice 1653, which I asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 11 June 2003 -

- (1) I refer the Minister to recent reports that a Glock Police issue pistol had recently accidentally or unintentionally discharged and ask . . .

the name and rank of the most senior ranking officer that this incident was reported to prior to 22 May 2003 -

That was the date of the budget estimates committee hearing during which I asked the minister about this. To continue -

and the date that he first received this report and the name of the reporting officer;

The answer in part was -

- (g) Deputy Commissioner B. Brennan 22 April . . .

That date was one month before the minister stated in this place that none of these pistols had discharged accidentally. The deputy commissioner knew. The minister made further comments in this House in response to one of my questions. She said -

I made it quite clear when I gave the answer during the Estimates Committee hearing that the advice from the commissioner was that there had been no accidental discharge. Both the commissioner and the deputy commissioner have assured me that, although it is debatable whether it was an accidental discharge, if they had been aware of the incident, they would have said so at the time and we would have reported it fully in the Parliament.

The deputy commissioner was made aware of it one month prior to my asking the minister. Why did she say no when I asked the question? Not only that, Mr A.J. Taylor, director of asset management in the Police Service, was also sitting in the budget estimates committee hearing. Surprise, surprise, he had also learnt that an accidental discharge of a Glock pistol had taken place one month prior to the time that I asked the minister. Does the minister expect us to think that everybody around her knew the answer and she was the only one who did not? Is the message she is trying to get across to us that the Deputy Commissioner of Police and the director of asset management knew but she did not. I find that to be a highly dubious proposition.

In summary, on 18 April a Glock pistol was accidentally discharged. On 2 April the deputy commissioner and the director of asset management were advised. On 22 May the minister denied that the gun had accidentally discharged; and on 5 June the minister denied that the deputy commissioner knew anything about it. The whole

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thing stinks of a cover-up. The cover-up I am referring to is the hasty decision that the minister made by ordering the Glock pistols without them being subjected to thorough scrutiny and without examining the numerous examples of accidental shootings that occurred with that very same brand of pistol in New South Wales and Queensland. The minister knew that the police union wanted new pistols. Officers did not want to be on duty with the old revolvers and I do not blame them for that; the old revolvers were outdated. The Glock pistols are undoubtedly better. However, there are safety issues connected with them. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services did not care. She just wanted to appease the Western Australian Police Union so that she could front up to the union conference and everyone would give her a standing ovation for getting them new pistols. That is what it was all about. The minister did not like it when I discovered that safety concerns about these pistols were emanating from the eastern States. When I asked her whether one went off, she said no. That is an undeniable fact. She said that the deputy commissioner did not know about it. He did. That is an undeniable fact. The manager of assets in the Police Service also knew about it and was in the same committee meeting. The Minister for Police would have us believe that she was the only person who did not know about it.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: And the commissioner.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I do not believe it.

Police numbers continue to be a significant issue in Western Australia. In particular, the staffing of individual police stations continues to be of great concern to the general public. The Labor Party's pre-election policy is quite interesting. I will quickly quote from it. The executive summary of the "more police, better policing" policy, as it is known, states -

Labor will:

- ensure that all police stations are staffed to their authorised strengths;

After two and a half years in opposition, any Opposition worth its salt would want to find out whether the new Government had kept its written pre-election promises. I put a question to the Minister for Police, which I believe is consistent with my job as the opposition police spokesperson. I will read the question for the benefit of members. I asked question 1685 on 18 June 2003, which states in part -

Will the Minister advise the percentage of Police Stations in Western Australia that were operating below their authorised strength as at 31 May 2003?

The Minister for Police's response was, in part -

... due to operational sensitivities, specific information relating to staffing levels of individual police stations will not be provided.

How will we ever know whether the Labor Party kept its election promise? I say again that the Labor Party's pre-election policy states -

Labor will:

- ensure that all police stations are staffed to their authorised strengths;

The Minister for Police stated -

... due to operational sensitivities, specific information relating to staffing levels of individual police stations will not be provided.

How will we ever know whether the Labor Party kept its promise?

Mr P.D. Omodei: If you were talking about *Yes, Minister*, all she would have to add is that there are legal and technical reasons.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I take the member for Warren-Blackwood's interjection. It is very timely indeed.

We have an obligation on behalf of Western Australian taxpayers to hold the Government to account. If that lot opposite went to the electorate prior to the election - which it did - and trotted out that document to make people think that a Labor Government would ensure that they felt safe and secure in their homes and their communities, the Opposition has an obligation to those people to ensure that just that is happening. The Minister for Police will not tell us now and would not tell us when I asked the question: what percentage of police stations are operating below their authorised strength? We will never know.

However, of extreme interest is a similar question that I asked the Minister for Police on 28 June 2002. I said -

Will the Minister advise which Police Stations in Western Australia are currently operating below their authorised strengths of Police numbers?

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The minister replied in part -

Currently less than 15% of stations are operating below their authorised strength.

She answered that question a year ago. She told us that about 15 per cent of stations were operating below their authorised strength. However, a year on, for some reason she has decided that she does not want to answer the question any more. All of a sudden it has become an operational issue. I wonder whether that might coincide with the fact that we are approaching an election year. Why did she answer the question a year ago and say that 15 per cent of stations were operating below their authorised strength, and why is she now consistently refusing to answer that very same question?

Mr R.F. Johnson: I think it is because the position has got a lot worse since then, so the minister will not answer the question.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The member for Hillarys has raised an interesting point. He thinks that the position has got much worse. I think it has. Let me cast members' minds back to what happened when I first raised this subject publicly. Paul Murray, that eminent talkback radio journalist, picked up on the issue. He invited me to go onto his program to discuss the matter. Unbeknown to me, he had invited the Minister for Police to go head-to-head with me on the radio. In fact, had he told me, I would have thought it fine and looked forward to it. I do not think I have ever seen a more systematic destruction of a minister of the Crown by a journalist. He had her backed into a corner. She was babbling and bumbling. She did not know what she was saying. He kept putting the same questions to her, "Why won't you tell us? Why won't you give us the numbers? Why did you tell us a year ago what you will not tell us now?" What the Minister for Police did under sufferance, and certainly under a great deal of sustained pressure from the eminent talkback radio journalist Paul Murray, was to say that she would give the figures of the districts. I think she managed to trick everybody. We were not asking for the figures of the districts. For the benefit of those members who are not up to speed with how the Police Service works, a number of police stations can be included in a policing district. There could be 10, 15 or 20. We did not ask the minister for the numbers for the districts, but she said under sufferance and under sustained attack by Paul Murray that she would provide the district figures. She managed to trick everybody and get off the hook, and Paul Murray let her go. Off she went back to her office.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Her bunker.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Yes, with a black eye and a bloody nose, metaphorically speaking.

The minister did provide the figures. Guess what? They are among the worst on record. They showed 18 policing districts of which 12 were below their authorised strength. No wonder the minister did not want to give us the information in the first place. The member for Hillarys is obviously a very astute person. He alluded to the fact that perhaps things had got worse. He is absolutely right. If 12 of the 18 policing districts are operating below their authorised strength, how many of the 170 or 180-odd police stations are operating below their authorised strength? Sadly we will never know.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You can work it out mathematically. It is probably about 60 per cent.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I suspect that the member is right on the job again.

The Minister for Police once again tried to twist and turn my question by saying that she would not give me information on individual police stations. At no time did I ask for information on individual police stations. I simply asked what percentage of police stations across the State were operating at below their authorised strength. She would not tell me. It is no wonder when one gets the district figures and realises that 12 of the 18 policing districts are below strength. That is the answer.

Hon Alan Cadby is also somewhat aggrieved by the actions of the Minister for Police. Of course, that was the subject of a rather interesting editorial in *The West Australian* only a few weeks ago. Hon Alan Cadby was very concerned about the number of cars that were going missing or being stolen from the Whitfords and Edgewater railway stations, among others. That is an issue of some concern to the people in those areas. Of course, it is a vital issue for those people who park and drive into the city on a daily basis. For example, why would someone park his car at a railway station that has an exponentially high number of car thefts? The answer is that he probably would not. Hon Alan Cadby when doing what he is paid to do - that is, ferreting out these issues - simply asked the Minister for Police how many of those cars had gone missing. Obviously, if he discovered that there were one or two or more train stations that had a particular problem, he would have taken the matter further and attempted to get a greater police presence there, or at the very least, have the police tackle the problem. What do members think was the answer he received from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services? I will read the question and answer and members can make up their own minds about it. Hon Alan Cadby asked question without notice 1265 on 16 September 2003 as follows -

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How many cases of car stealing or car burglary were reported in 2001, 2002 and up to 30 June 2003 at the railway stations of Whitfords, Currumbine, Joondalup and Edgewater?

Hon Nick Griffiths replied in part -

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has provided the following response -

... the extraction of the requested information would provide inconclusive results that could lead to misinterpretation.

Have members ever heard a more extraordinary answer from a minister for police? She does not trust us to adequately comb through the results and come to our own conclusions.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I have a grave concern. Whitfords train station car park is of great concern to me and of course the member for Kingsley. We want to know what is happening there and how many thefts are taking place. I am sure the member for Joondalup would like to know what is happening at the Edgewater train station car park. I wonder whether he has bothered to ask the question or whether he would get the same response.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: It is a good question. It is no wonder Hon Alan Cadby saw fit to ask it. I can understand why he was a little aggrieved by the answer. Hon Nick Griffiths, representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, also said in answer to that question -

Further, the Police Service advise that this information is collected to provide operational police with local intelligence and is not for external reporting purposes.

Somebody forgot to tell that to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, because when she was asked that very same question by the member for Kingsley, she answered it. For the benefit of members, I read question on notice 711 of 3 June 2003 by the member for Kingsley to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. It says -

I refer to the Minister's announcement that more than 200 vehicles were stolen from train car parks in the past financial year and ask -

- (a) how many of these were from -
 - (i) Whitfords;

The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure answered, "22 vehicles stolen". Twenty-two cars went missing from Whitfords train station. Why could the Minister for Police and Emergency Services not give that answer instead of a cock-and-bull story about the results providing inconclusive information that could lead to misinterpretation?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: My department did not have that information. It was unable to provide it.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Is the minister saying that the department of police did not have that information?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That is right. That is what it advised me.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: What sort of police minister is the member if she cannot extract a simple crime statistic like that, but the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure can? The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure can get that information but the Minister for Police and Emergency Services cannot.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: Perhaps when we want to know the number of police officers at particular police stations we should ask the Minister for Heritage or the Minister for Health.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: That is a novel idea. Instead of asking the Minister for Police and Emergency Services about how many police are at certain stations, we will ask the Minister for Heritage or transport.

Mr P.D. Omodei: The Minister for Small Business would know where they all are.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Certainly, anyone but the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: They are very wise words from my colleagues. The reality is that one minister answered the question and another did not. One is the minister for transport and the other has responsibility for crime. I wonder whether the Minister for Police and Emergency Services refused to answer that question because she did not want to give the impression that crime was out of control under her stewardship. Could that be the reason? I think we are starting to see a pattern, and I intend to expand on that so that by the conclusion of my contribution nobody is under any illusion about the motivation of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I wondered whether any other members of Parliament had asked that very same question about either the

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Whitfords or the Edgewater train station and if they had received an answer from the minister of the day. I nearly fell off my chair when I noticed in *Hansard* that on 9 March 1999 the member for Thornlie asked a question of the minister representing the Minister for Transport. The Minister for Transport in those days was ably represented by my friend the member for Warren-Blackwood. The member for Thornlie asked -

How many vehicles have been recorded as stolen during the years -

(a) 1997-98; . . .

She then listed a number of railway station car parks, one of which was Edgewater. Mr Omodei replied -

The Hon Minister for Transport has provided the following response -

He then stated regarding Edgewater, 55. That is a simple statistic - 55 went missing - yet the Minister for Police and Emergency Services cannot tell us. I had a further look at whether anyone else was concerned about that issue, and I came across the member for Thornlie again. Obviously she was very concerned about this matter for some reason. On 27 June 2000, the member for Thornlie asked the minister representing the Minister for Transport -

How many vehicles have been recorded as stolen -

(a) during the 1999 calendar year; and

(b) from 1 January 2000 to 30 April 2000,

from the following railway station car parks - . . .

One of those car parks was Edgewater. The minister provided the following response -

Westrail has received reports of stolen vehicles at Warwick, Edgewater, Cannington and Kenwick during the period 1 January 1999 to 30 April 2000 totalling 33 vehicles.

That is a pretty simple answer once again. The answer continues -

However, it is understood that the Police Service has also received reports of vehicles stolen during that period at those stations. Accordingly, I suggest that the member direct the question to the Minister for Police. It is most likely that the reports of vehicles stolen made to Westrail were also reported to the police and any information that may be provided by the Minister for Police would include the 33 vehicles reported to Westrail.

I wonder what was changed between then and now. One thing that is obvious is that there has been a change of Government. It is no longer the Liberal Party that is in power, but the Labor Party.

Mr R.F. Johnson: So who would you report it to if your car was stolen from any of these stations - the police or the Department of Transport?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I do not think I would be ringing the bloke who drives the train. In the first instance I would report it to the police, and certainly Hon Hendy Cowan was of the same view back in 2000. The Minister for Police is intent on hiding crime statistics. That is extraordinary. Crime statistics are a very good indicator of just how well a Government is doing with regard to the law and order portfolio. When the Minister for Police and Emergency Services fudges and hides figures from the public, and, indeed, from this Parliament, we have to ask ourselves: what is going wrong? Is it the beginning of the end?. I suspect it probably is.

Mr A.J. Dean: Can you repeat that, please?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I cannot hear the bumbling from the other side. I wish I could. The bumbling from Bunbury! I like that! I will write that down!

I now want to move on to another issue that involves the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Sadly I have only one hour to deal with this matter; I could probably take three hours. I want to discuss the Midland Police Station. Those more astute members among us would be aware that Midland is in the electorate of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. It has been brought to my attention that -

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the member is well aware of the fact that he is not to have his phone on in the Chamber.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: It is not on, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Several members interjected.

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Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I am not sure what you are alluding to, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I assure you my telephone is not on.

I am led to believe that for quite some time the Midland Police Station was open to the public 24 hours a day, which meant that people could walk into the Midland Police Station and go up to the counter at three o'clock in the morning and be duly attended to by a police officer. Sadly, there has been a downgrading of the Midland Police Station to the point at which it now closes at eight o'clock at night. People in Midland were aggrieved to the point that they contacted me about that rather than their local member. That in itself speaks volumes. Nonetheless, I followed the matter through. People would not believe it but the eminent talkback radio journalist Paul Murray picked up the very same matter again. Once again, the Minister for Police and I went head-to-head on the Paul Murray show on this matter. The Minister for Police asserted that the Midland Police Station was still open 24 hours a day and that the police officers in the station could be contacted by pressing a buzzer at the front door. I thought that was interesting because my information is that there is no buzzer at the front door. The Channel Seven journalist who picked up the story went to the Midland Police Station at night and did a story from the front doors of the station and said words to the effect that there was not even a buzzer. That very morning the Minister for Police had told all and sundry and anyone who was prepared to listen that there was a buzzer on the front door to contact police. Notwithstanding that, let us remember that the Midland Police Station used to be open 24 hours a day. I may stand corrected but I was certainly not corrected at the time by the Minister for Police. I will be interested to hear her point of view.

A little friend of mine in the Midland electorate contacted me the next day with some information. I must say that I do not know whether the information is correct. I put it to the Minister for Police at the time that my little friend in Midland told me that the non-existent buzzer was hastily fitted the next day in a mad panic after the police realised that the minister had told everyone there was a buzzer on the front door. The buzzer was fitted and the Minister for Police - I will stand corrected on this - went out there that night to test the buzzer, presumably so that she could come into Parliament and say that I did not know what I was talking about because she had tested the buzzer and it worked beautifully and a policeman had attended to her.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I have made no such visit; the member is talking sheer fantasy.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Has the minister ever tested the buzzer?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I have never depressed the buzzer at the Midland Police Station and I have made no night visits, let alone late night visits.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The minister has never pressed the buzzer? How does the minister account for the fact that there was no buzzer when she said there was a buzzer?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I will get to that when I get on my feet.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: There was no buzzer.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The member is wrong.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The Channel Seven journalist stood in front of the Midland Police Station and said there was no buzzer. The camera panned around and, guess what? There was no buzzer. Notwithstanding that, the Midland Police Station was available to the public 24 hours a day and then downgraded to close at eight o'clock in the evening. The Minister for Police had everyone who listened to the Paul Murray show believe it was still open 24 hours a day when, in fact, people could not get after-hours police attendance.

I could probably go on all day about the Minister for Police and her many and varied indiscretions but I would like to deal briefly with the Premier. This is the same person who, prior to the last election, went on ad nauseam about the need to have a Government that is open and accountable and said that his Government would be such and would make sure that it did not hide anything from the public. Did he not trot that out at every public appearance? Every time people turned on the radio or television they could hear the current Premier go on about accountability and openness. It got to the point at which people were sick of it. It is the old saying; if something is said often enough people will believe it. When a person gets sick of saying something, people are just starting to remember it. It would be assumed that a future Premier who said all those things prior to the last election would be just that: open and accountable. I will give one example of the Premier not being open and accountable. I received a document; a leaked document would be the best way to describe it. It is a memorandum from the Commissioner of Police to the police command team, which comprises the assistant commissioners, the commanders and the Deputy Commissioner of Police. It deals with Safer WA. Members who have followed Safer WA closely will be aware that, despite the Labor Party saying in its election rhetoric that it would support existing bodies such as Safer WA, it has decided to turn it on its head, axe the Safer WA

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program and replace it instead with what it calls the community safety and crime prevention council. I am sure members will agree that that is a big mouthful. Nobody knew exactly what the Labor Party's plans were for Safer WA, despite the 2 000 volunteers attempting to get a handle on it over the past 18 months. The first indication from anybody about the point of view of the Labor Party is a memo from the Commissioner of Police to his command team, which states -

At today's meeting of the Human Services Director Generals Group I was provided with the attached briefing note which provides information about the new Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council and the Safer Communities and Crime Prevention Program, which will replace Safer WA.

I asked Hon Derrick Tomlinson to put a question in the other place to the Leader of the House representing the Premier. He began by saying -

I refer to the decision taken by Cabinet on September 15, 2003 to axe the SAFA WA program as we know it and to replace it with the 'Community Safety And Crime Prevention Council (CSPC)' . . .

I went on to ask 11 questions about the amount of funding the new body can expect to receive, the make-up of the new body, etc. The Premier replied, in part, that Safer WA will not be replaced by a community safety and crime prevention council. The document from the Commissioner of Police says it will; it is clear. It is not only the Commissioner of Police who says it will be replaced, because I also received a leaked document from the Office of Crime Prevention, presumably answerable to the Premier. It states -

On 15 September 2003 Cabinet approved new directions for crime prevention in Western Australia through the Safer Communities and Crime Prevention Program and the establishment of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council. The new arrangements will replace the current SAFER WA structures and programs.

It is as clear as day, yet the Premier says, and I quote again, from his response to my question -

SAFER WA . . . will not be replaced by a Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council.

I went on in my original question to ask how much funding the council can expect to receive, how many new councils there will be, who the chairperson of the new council will be, and a whole host of other questions. I asked 10 questions in total. The reply to questions 2 to 11 was "not applicable". How on earth could he say it is not applicable? The Commissioner of Police himself is saying that the new council will replace Safer WA. Would not a duly elected Opposition be entitled to find out the funding and structural arrangements to be put in place as a result of that change? How can the Premier say it is not applicable?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Maybe his interpretation would be "not answering".

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Yes, maybe "not answering" was what he meant to write, but some bureaucrat probably got hold of the answer and told him that he should not put that on.

I will return to the Minister for Police, because I forgot about this little pearl.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Can you ask the minister if she went out at any time during the night to answer that buzzer?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I have had a question on notice on that very issue for two and a half months. I checked only one hour ago, and it has not been answered, unless the minister has suddenly rushed around and answered it in the past hour. Why did it take two and a half months to answer it? That is extraordinary; it was a very simple question.

Time is short and of the essence. I draw the attention of members to the issue of police numbers. Who can forget the Labor Party's pre-election promise to increase police numbers by 250 above and beyond the attrition rate in Western Australia? I certainly cannot. The Labor Party was elected in February 2001, which was slightly more than halfway through the last Liberal budget. Its first opportunity to influence the budget, and hence the police numbers in this State, was 1 July 2001. This was the first opportunity to bring down a budget and implement the plan to increase police numbers by 250. Therefore, I thought it was reasonable for me to ask a question on notice 1725 on 12 August 2003, as follows -

- (1) Will the minister advise how many extra Police Officers have been employed by the Government, since 1 July 2001 -

The Labor Party's first opportunity to influence the State budget -

above the annual attrition rate, in accordance with the Labor Party pre election commitment to increase Police numbers by 250?

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The answer I received read -

- (1) As at 30 June 2003 the Government has employed an extra 115 police officers above attrition.

I thought that was extraordinary. I did not think the Government had employed that many police officers. Consequently, I did some checking. I have before me the Police Service annual report, which states that at the end of 2001 - the very date to which I referred - there were 4 993 police officers. I then had Hon Derrick Tomlinson ask question without notice 1109 in the upper House regarding the number of sworn police officers as at 31 July 2003. The answer provided was 5 031, which indicated an increase of 38 police officers over that period. However, this minister runs all over town trying to get people to believe that the Government, as a result of its budgetary management, has increased police officer numbers by 115, when the truth is 38. It is undeniable. If members want to look at this information afterwards, I am happy to provide it; they will come to the conclusion that the increase in police numbers was 38, not 115. Again, it was a tricky and deceptive answer from a Minister for Police and Emergency Services who is famous for such answers.

However, it is not just the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Premier who provide such answers. Another interesting question was asked by Hon Peter Foss to the Leader of the House in the Legislative Council representing the Premier. In question on notice 224, Hon Peter Foss asked -

Were any Ministerial resources committed to or used in the \$1 000 a head 'Meet the Ministers' dinner arranged by the ALP?

Hon Kim Chance responded no. Hon Peter Foss was not to be deterred; he later asked question on notice 323, which read -

I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 224 -

- (1) Were any Ministers driven to or from the \$1 000 a head 'Meet the Ministers' dinner arranged by the ALP by Government drivers, public servants or by persons arranged for by the Government?
- (2) If so, what was the cost in -
- . . .
- (b) overtime; . . .

Hon Kim Chance replied \$1 800.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Who drove the Leader of the Opposition to the 500 Club the other day - answer me that, member for Kalgoorlie!

Several members interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The Premier responded firstly that no ministerial resources were used. In the second instance, when pushed by Hon Peter Foss, he replied that \$1 800 was used for ministerial transport.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order members!

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The Minister for Small Business may well have a point. Is it acceptable for a minister to use government transport to get to an Australian Labor Party function? I think varying views would be found in the House on the matter. My point is accountability. If taxpayers' money is used, why not say so when questioned in Parliament? Government members refused to do so, and only answered the question at the insistence of Hon Peter Foss, who is a fairly busy member of Parliament. Members would be aware that he was heavily involved in the affair of the Attorney General passing to the now Minister for Small Business, the then Minister for Health, the famous affidavit from Anthony Lewandowski. The minister will shut up in a minute. Hon Peter Foss asked the Attorney General question on notice 983 in the Legislative Council, which reads -

It has been stated by reporter Alison Fan that the entire tape of the interview with Tony Lewandowski was played to the Attorney General.

- (1) Is it correct that the Attorney General had all or any part of that tape played to him?
- (2) If so -
- (a) how much of the tape did he see . . .
- (b) who initiated the viewing and when;

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- (c) who else was present at the time the tape was viewed;
- (d) were any notes . . . made . . .
- (e) was the Attorney General briefed in writing . . .
- (f) what was his purpose in viewing it at that time?

In response Hon Nick Griffiths said -

I have an answer in general terms but I prefer to seek further particulars before providing the member with it.

I think that was because he was embarrassed with the answer. When Hon Peter Foss pushed him for an answer, again the response was -

Channel 7 provided the Attorney General with its full tape of the Lewandowski interview and the Attorney General watched it.

There was no mention of who else was with the Attorney General at the time, whether any notes were made, and, specifically, why he wanted to watch the tape.

My time is just about up. I hope that I have provided ample evidence and proof for members of the House that this Labor State Government is using this Parliament as its plaything. It refuses to respect the integrity of the Parliament, and, in doing so, is refusing to respect the integrity of the people of Western Australia. We will continue with this push right up to the next election to debunk the myth and the rhetoric put forward by the Premier at the last election that he would provide an open and accountable Government.

MR R.A. AINSWORTH (Roe) [5.02 pm]: I support the motion moved by the member for Kalgoorlie and reflect on the old adage that I am sure we have all heard: a minister in some mythical Government somewhere, who, when challenged about not answering questions, made the comment that it was question time, not answer time. Although that might be humorous on the surface, the fact is that this appears to be part of the methodology of the current Government and it does not do anything at all for its policy that stated it would be open and accountable. The Government's election policy on accountability states -

A Gallop Labor government will aim for the highest standards of openness and accountability.

It also says that if the public elects Labor, they will know where their money is being spent, how public services are being delivered and if they are being delivered effectively. From listening to the answers - I should probably call them responses rather than answers - to some of the Opposition's questions, it is clear that, if the public can work out from those responses where its money is being spent, how public services are being delivered and if they are being delivered effectively, it has a much better grasp on Labor doublespeak than the rest of this House because it is not very clear at all. In fact, it is totally unclear in many of these so-called answers. I will provide an example. Seven times the National Party asked the Minister for Health and the Premier a question about information on budget allocations to each hospital in country Western Australia. Various ministers were asked a range of questions to try to get some answers. On each of those seven occasions, very little information, if any, was forthcoming. In fact, the answers are worth listening to. One said -

As budgets are not allocated to or reported at hospital levels since the new structures were put in place, it is not possible to provide the level of information as requested by the Member.

It is beyond my comprehension how the public is supposed to know where its money is being spent, how public services are being delivered and if they are being delivered effectively when the Government gives that sort of answer. Another classic answer said in part -

. . . the budget allocations to individual health service units or cost centres are not an appropriate measure of available resources for health care in each community.

For heaven's sake! That is an astounding assertion that the budget is no measure at all of what is being provided in the health system. I find that extraordinary! I will backtrack a little. Our records indicate that the Premier has never responded to a letter sent to him by the Leader of the National Party in July this year about the Government's lack of accountability on expenditure for country health services. Even a written request for information has elicited no response at this stage.

I will now move on to the Minister for Police. In June this year in the other place, Hon Murray Criddle asked the minister, through her representative in the other place, a very specific question about the number of police officer vacancies in this State and when those positions would be filled. The reply states -

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Location and dates of vacancies are listed below. Positions are filled in accordance with Police Service procedures and guidelines. Some positions have proven difficult to fill . . . Vacancies that do not arise because of reallocation of funding to priority operational requirements within districts are being progressed.

Again, that is doublespeak. It is good luck if members can work out exactly what the latter half in particular means. It is not clear in anyone's language. The reply from the minister at the time - this is in June this year - indicated that there were 36 unfilled vacancies across seven regional police districts in Western Australia. However, there was no indication of how or whether those positions would be filled, and, if they were to be filled, when that might take place. The Leader of the National Party wrote to the minister on 8 July seeking an answer to that question. According to my information, we have never received a reply from the minister on that particular question, and I hope we get something shortly.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That surprises me, and I will certainly make it a priority to check whether that is the case.

Mr R.A. AINSWORTH: If there has been a breakdown in the mailing system, and we have not received the letter but the answer is there, we would be delighted to receive it; there is no question about that.

It concerns me that in the answers we have received to the questions about police numbers, the number claimed to be additional officers over and above those lost to natural attrition - I interpreted the member for Kalgoorlie to mean that these numbers were very flexible - seems to differ depending on whether it was a ministerial answer, police report or whatever other source was looked at. However, the numbers that we were given in June indicated that there were 36 unfilled vacancies across the seven regional districts. The more recent figure indicates that there are now 57 full-time vacancies across the seven regional police districts. That number has increased from 30-odd to nearly 60, yet we are supposed to have, in real terms, an additional 115 police officers. My question is: if all these extra officers have been trained and are floating about in the system, but the vacancies in country regions have doubled and we are seeing headline news in the paper about problems with a lack of officers in Fremantle, among other places, where on earth are these officers being placed? I know that the minister has said at various times that she does not directly allocate officers to police stations, and I understand that. However, there must be some communication between the minister and her commissioner seeking an explanation of what the commissioner, as the person who allocates those officers, is doing, why the positions in some of the areas that are already short of full-time officers - there is a growing list of those in the regions - are not being filled even though there are extra officers in the system, and why there are officers missing in action in places like Fremantle. I am not blaming the police officers for the fact that they are not there. If they have not been allocated, they cannot do the job. However, where on earth are these extra 115 police officers?

Although it now appears that very glib lip-service was paid to accountability prior to the election, and probably after the election as well, when it comes to the one major opportunity for the people of Western Australia to have questions answered that are raised in this place by members on this side of the House, rather than receiving clear answers, we are seeing a great degree of obfuscation. Obfuscation does the Government no credit at all. The Gallop Government came into the Parliament with a platform of accountability as the major reason for its election. The election campaign was run on exactly that issue. One of its major platforms was that the electors should turf out the terrible coalition Government and elect the Labor Government because it would be open and accountable and would introduce new measures to lift accountability across the State. The first place that accountability should happen is in this Chamber. That has not happened, and I find that very disturbing. It makes it extremely difficult for the average elector in the broader community to have even the faintest idea of what is going on if members of this Chamber cannot get reasonable answers to questions asked in the House. I will not say that I have pleasure in supporting the motion; in fact, quite the reverse. Unfortunately, I regret to say that it is necessary to support the motion.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland - Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [5.10 pm]: I am very disappointed with the motion that the member for Kalgoorlie has moved today. I pride myself on being accountable to the Parliament in answering all questions as fully as possible on all occasions. For the record I will take the opportunity to go through each issue raised by the member for Kalgoorlie. None of the issues is new; they have all been raised and commented on by him before. I will go through the issues roughly in the order in which he raised them.

In the first instance the member for Kalgoorlie referred to a question on notice that he had asked on 6 May this year, and answered on 12 August, about credit card use and the like. He asked a range of questions about my credit card payments, the meals I had paid for, which individuals I had entertained and the like. He implied back

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then and again today that there was some connection between my credit card expenditure and my role as State President of the Australian Labor Party in Western Australia. In part of that question he asked -

- (e) did the Minister, at any time since her appointment as Minister, use her Government credit card to pay for the meals, drinks, or any other expenses incurred by Mr Bill Shepherd?

Frankly, I do not know from where the member for Kalgoorlie gets his intelligence - or, as I call it, non-intelligence. I had to scratch my head as to who was Mr Bill Shepherd. I asked a couple of people whether he is or was a public servant. Someone said that he may be the father of Fiona Shepherd, the girl who has been lobbying on road safety funding. The question was a mystery to me, because I have never entertained Mr Bill Shepherd in any way. I asked my staff whether any of them had entertained Mr Bill Shepherd and they told me that they certainly had not entertained him.

The member for Kalgoorlie has started from a position of misinformation. He has asked questions that I find offensive, and I found his remarks in the House today offensive. He drew some innuendo from my position as State President of the ALP and suggested that I misused my position as minister or misused public funds to enhance either my position as State President or the position of the Labor Party. I responded to him by saying that from 2001, when the Government was elected, to June 2003 - more than two years - I had used my credit card to pay for meals on four occasions, totalling less than \$500, and all occasions were in line with the Government's circular on such expenditure. Further I noted that I had not used my card for any meals, drinks or expenses incurred by Mr Bill Shepherd.

The member for Kalgoorlie's question puzzles me. He clearly has some misinformation from somewhere. However, I really must question how in two and a half years I would find myself - as much as State President or on behalf of the Labor Party - with less than \$500 expenditure on four meals. Since that question, the member for Kalgoorlie has asked a follow-up question on notice; that question will be answered in the appropriate time frame. I will attempt to be as frank as possible. I have nothing to hide on that matter. I reject the innuendo that expenditure on my credit card may have had something to do with my role as president of the state ALP. Did it pay for anything for Labor members of Parliament? I am a member of the Labor Party. Yes, I was present at those meals, and that is why they went on my credit card, so the answer to that is yes. I could have been cute and said, yes, it did pay for meals for persons who were members of the Labor Party - and that includes me - but it is not my intention to be cute. The member for Kalgoorlie asked a very offbeat question based on misinformation. He has put a follow-up question on notice and he will receive a detailed answer. Frankly, his innuendo that somehow or other this credit card expenditure and my position with the state ALP are linked is just crazy - it is totally crazy and offensive.

The next matter raised by the member was to do with a bench warrant. People opposite obviously give me credit for knowing everything about every single matter that happens in my departments - plural - on a daily basis. I said at the time that I took the matter of Mitchell very seriously. The moment I found that the offender who had held people hostage and shot and killed a woman was someone who had been at large and on parole, I came straight into Parliament on that day and outlined what I knew of the events that had occurred and of the offender's status. Before that day I had never heard of Mr Mitchell. The only information I had was information that the Department of Justice had given me. I received advice from the Department of Justice. I asked whether he was in breach of his parole and whether warrants had been issued and the answer from the Department of Justice was no. I then asked whether that meant no warrants had been issued, and the answer from my staff was, "Well, not necessarily. Potentially a police warrant has been issued, but we do not know. We will ask the police". It took the police days to get back to me, despite constant questioning on the matter by my staff. When I answered the member for Nedlands' question I was being very careful. She asked a very broad question about whether there were any warrants. I wanted to be sure not to be caught out, because it was becoming clear to me that the member for Nedlands was getting information from somewhere - information that I did not have. She raised matters to do with Geraldton police and the offender that I consistently had to raise with the Department of Justice and ask whether it was true and where the information was from. Some information the member had was correct and some was incorrect, but I had nothing to hide. The member for Kalgoorlie then made a suggestion that I should have immediately corrected my answer to the Parliament. I asked officers at the Department of Justice whether the statement that I had made to the Parliament was correct, and they said yes. The Department of Justice had not issued a warrant. I had nothing to hide in that regard. There was nothing to be gained. I am really appalled by members opposite attributing intentions to me that are not correct. I had nothing to hide and I had no reason not to be fully frank. After all, I was the one who came into Parliament and announced that the said person was on parole and that I had concerns.

Mr M.J. Birney: Only when the member for Nedlands challenged you again.

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I called for a very full report. I listened to what the member for Kalgoorlie had to say, which I found insulting. He said he regards this as a serious matter; so do I, and I want the opportunity to clarify all of the matters that the member has raised.

The next matter that the member for Kalgoorlie spoke about was Glock pistols. Again he tried to be rather cute. Obviously he was given some information, which had not been given to me, that a Glock pistol had been discharged. For the record of the House I will again explain what happened. During the Estimates Committee, I was sitting in the Chamber where the Premier sits. Mr Barry Matthews, the Commissioner of Police was on my right and Mr Bruce Brennan, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, was on my left. Other members of the police hierarchy were sitting around me, including Mr Taylor to whom the member for Kalgoorlie referred. I suspect he was sitting behind me at the time. The member for Kalgoorlie asked me a direct question about whether a Glock pistol had been accidentally discharged. I asked the commissioner what the answer was. He said that he was not aware that there had been an accidental discharge. I then turned to the deputy commissioner and asked him the same question and he said, "No." I asked quietly under my breath what the member for Kalgoorlie was on about. I asked why he would ask that question if a Glock pistol had not been accidentally discharged. Deputy Commissioner Bruce Brennan said that he did not know because there had been no accidental discharge. I said - and it is not the way it is recorded in *Hansard* - that I was advised that the answer was no.

Mr M.J. Birney: You said no and got stuck into me.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Kalgoorlie can listen to the tape if he likes. The member for Kalgoorlie then asked me what I said and he looked shocked with the response. I was concerned that the member looked shocked because it was clearly not the response he expected to get. I made my response louder and I said that the answer was no. The *Hansard* record actually says - I checked it some months ago now - that I just said no. Members in this House know how the Estimates Committee works. Members of the Government and the Opposition who were there know exactly what was said. The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Police know what was said. The member for Kalgoorlie raised the issue again and I sought further advice from the Police Service. It was not until then -

Mr M.J. Birney: You still did not come into the Parliament and correct the record.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I was blithely unaware that the information I had -

Mr M.J. Birney: By your own admission you were told the day before that there had been a shooting but you still did not come in and correct the record.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): I want to hear what the minister is saying. She can look after herself in this place without any worries. However, the member for Kalgoorlie is raising his voice over the top of the minister's voice and I cannot hear her.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The fact is that Deputy Commissioner Bruce Brennan stands by the answer he gave me that evening during the Estimates Committee because it is his view that there had not been an accidental discharge. He refers to what occurred as an unintentional discharge.

Mr M.J. Birney: Stop it!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member may think that is a cute differentiation, and maybe it is; however it places me in an awkward position as the Minister for Police when I am surrounded by the commissioner and the deputy commissioner and I am told that they are unaware of an accidental discharge. That is the information they gave me and that is the advice I gave to the Parliament. To this day the member will find that Bruce Brennan will say that the answer he provided to me was the correct answer; that is, there was no accidental discharge. As I have said from the start, I would prefer to give full answers where possible.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member does not need to read *Hansard* to me because I have all the answers on this issue in front of me.

Mr M.J. Birney: You said that if the commissioner had been aware of the incident, you would have reported it fully to the Parliament at the time.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I said that that is what I believed, because I could not believe that the Deputy Commissioner of Police would mislead me. I felt confident, when I gave the member that answer, that had the Deputy Commissioner of Police been aware of the incident, he would have told me. I cannot help what the Deputy Commissioner of Police believes is an accidental discharge versus an unintentional discharge. I cannot help the advice he gives to me. All I can do is to act on the advice that I am given. That is exactly what I have

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done. As I have said to the House, the Deputy Commissioner of Police would still describe it as an accidental discharge.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As was pointed out, the Deputy Commissioner of Police said that it was an unintentional discharge.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This is clearly a matter of interpretation. What I can clearly say to this Parliament is that had I been aware of the unintentional discharge, I would have fully disclosed it to the Parliament. I would have happily done that.

Mr M.J. Birney: Why didn't you correct the record?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): The member for Kalgoorlie has interjected three times. Obviously after the second time, the minister will continue. There is no point repeating it.

Mr M.J. Birney: She will not tell us.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The first time that I became aware of this matter was when the member for Kalgoorlie raised the issue again. If I had come into the Parliament and said something ahead of him asking the question or whatever on that same day, he would have said, "Aha! You are just 'fessing up now because I put a question to you", and so forth.

Mr M.J. Birney: You have a duty to the people of Western Australia to do just that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Kalgoorlie should have a look at the pages of answers that I have provided on this matter. What can I say? The Deputy Commissioner of Police still believes that the correct answer was given on the question of the Glock pistol.

Mr M.J. Birney: That is not true. Do you want me to read out your quote again?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, I do not need the member to read that out again. How much more detailed does the member want my answers to be than the one that I gave to question on notice 1653? The member asked a question that went for about one and a half pages. He received an answer from me in incredible detail, which went for well over a page and provided all the details. I am more than happy to provide details when they are given to me. In this instance, the Police Service was not as full in its response to me as I would have liked. I have made that clear. I have said that if it is to provide me with information in the future, it is my preference to fully disclose as much information to the Parliament as possible. I cannot do that unless the information is actually given to me.

I refer to authorised strength, which was the next area of criticism of the member for Kalgoorlie. The member has consistently quoted from Labor's election policy that we would -

ensure that all police stations are staffed to their authorised strengths;

In so far as is humanly possible, the Government has ensured that. I drew the attention of the Parliament some time ago to the authorised strength of the Western Australia Police Service, which is 4 945 full-time equivalents. I advised the Parliament at that time that the service was about 24 up on its authorised strength. I asked the question again today and was told that the actual strength as of 29 October 2003 is 4 982.45 FTEs. That is the information that the Police Service has provided to me today.

Mr M.J. Birney: It has come down.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If the member for Kalgoorlie is saying that this figure has come down, his maths are worse than I thought.

Mr M.J. Birney: It was 5 031.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: His maths are clearly worse than I thought because I gave the same number - 4 945 - when I last gave the figure and when I tabled the information in Parliament. That is more than 37 FTEs above authorised strength. This is clear evidence that this is a Government that has nothing to hide on the issue of authorised strength because the Police Service is operating at more than 37 officers above authorised strength. Therefore, the police commissioner has at his disposal more than enough officers. In fact, that is 37 more officers than he needs to staff every station and unit at authorised strength.

Mr M.J. Birney: Is every station staffed at authorised strength?

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have answered that before. The member for Kalgoorlie is like a broken record. As at today, not every station is operating at authorised strength. Why is that so? It is the way the commissioner allocates the resources he is given by the Government. If the member for Kalgoorlie is being critical today, he is being critical of the commissioner's deployment of his officers. In addition, I have tabled in this Parliament previously advice given to me by the Police Service on staffing at individual stations. In this case, Deputy Commissioner Bruce Brennan, state commander, states in a letter -

With regard to the release of staffing levels at Police Stations it has been a consistent policy that due to operational sensitivities, specific information relating staffing levels of individual police stations is not released in a public forum.

Resources are principally allocated at a District level, and District Superintendents deploy these resources within their District to provide the best possible policing service to meet operational requirements and the varying needs of the community. Variations in authorised strength of a station can occur on an almost daily basis due to retirement, resignation, transfer or promotion of officers, and secondment of officers to specialist units within the Districts. Also, authorised station strength does not include specialist units for the district that may be located in the Police Station.

In addition to those authorised strengths there are specialist units, many of which operate at above authorised strength. Some of them are located in police stations. I will not repeat them, but I have previously tabled in this House actual and authorised strength as at 31 August. I have asked the Police Service for updated figures but it was unable to provide me with them in time for this debate today.

Mr M.J. Birney: Why is that?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is a good question. I asked for the information this morning. However, the Police Service has been unable to provide me with a breakdown at even district levels as at today. I hope it will provide that to me very soon.

I note for the record that the actual full-time equivalent staff number in June 2000 at the Goldfields-Esperance district, for which I lobbied very hard when I was in Opposition, was 170 and the actual number of FTEs in June 2003 was 182. There are 12 officers more than there were three years ago when members opposite were in power. Furthermore, to the best of my recollection - I do not want to be accused of misleading the Parliament - this Government has increased the number of hours police officers can work in Kalgoorlie to 44 hours a week. That provides at least the equivalent of about 10 extra police officers for that district. That signals to me that the staffing strength, with actual numbers on the ground, at that district is 20 officers better than it was three years ago.

The next matter is the question raised by Hon Alan Cadby regarding railway station crime statistics. It is my practice to be as open as possible about crime statistics. In fact, the Internet site to which the public has access is regularly updated with the most up-to-date crime statistics possible. We provide those crime statistics on a quarterly basis for the whole range of crimes. Anybody can go on to the police computer at any time and see how crime has been tracking in any district in recent times. It is very difficult to be more accountable than that.

The answer to Hon Alan Cadby was not an answer that I dreamt up to be tricky or that I personally crafted; it was the answer provided to me by the Western Australia Police Service. I do not believe the answer was as clear as it could have been, and, in retrospect, I would like to have made that answer clearer. With the way things are with questions in the upper House, I routinely see those questions and the answers that have been sent up by the Police Service some time after lunchtime, prior to question time in the upper House in the afternoon. My staff and I do our best to provide the most adequate answers possible to those questions in the time frame given. Very occasionally we ask for extra time or for a question to be put on notice. However, that is the exception, not the rule. The answer that was provided in that instance was provided by the Police Service.

The member for Kalgoorlie has again raised the question: why is it that the current minister responsible for transport and previous transport ministers have been able to answer questions about cars taken from train stations, yet the Minister for Police is unable to do so? I believe the member for Armadale has already said on record quite clearly that until the end of last year, her department kept records of car thefts from train stations. Other than the advice the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has given to the department, I am unaware of the records her department keeps. However, I am aware of the advice that the Police Service has given to me.

Members in this place will note that Hon Cheryl Edwardes followed up on Hon Alan Cadby's question and asked me a further question about the matter. Quite simply, I advised the member for Kingsley that if I had the figures, I would table them. I said to her at the time that, unlike the situation with the Police Service under the

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former Government - I cannot speak about the records the Department for Planning and Infrastructure keeps - the records that the Police Service has kept of car thefts from train stations have not been a separate category. We are now putting in place technological solutions that will enable us to do that, and I am more than happy to make that information public.

I note that Hon Alan Cadby's original question was -

How many cases of car stealing or car burglary were reported in 2001, 2002 and up to 30 June 2003 at the railway stations of Whitfords, Currumbine, Joondalup and Edgewater?

I am not sure what is meant by car burglary. I presume the member was asking about something different from car theft or car stealing, as he refers to it. Neither of those terms is used by the Police Service. By car burglary, I assume he means theft from motor cars. Again, the Police Service advice to me is - I have explained this in the House before - that the police do not keep information in the form asked for.

I advised the House on 24 September - I have clarified this matter in the House before - that when police officers enter offences into the system, they must make a locality choice. There are choices relating to the locality, with prompts like bus stop/train station, and also the potential to put in a suburb locality. There was therefore a spread of offences across those two categories.

Under our new system that is being rolled out there is a lot more information. Police officers will be able to give information under a whole range of different headings, which will enable people in future to be able to better interrogate the computers. I gave an undertaking during question time on 24 September when there was a full House that if members opposite want me to provide information on the categories, I am happy to provide it, and if they want to ask more general questions, I am happy to answer them. To the best of my knowledge, no-one has followed up on that. I said that I was happy to provide advice in that form in the same way that other Ministers for Police have, but nobody has put any questions on notice to me asking for that information. I repeat my offer: I am more than happy to provide that information in the form in which we have it because my understanding is that the figures are nothing to hide. I am more than happy to make our figures public.

The other diatribe from the member for Kalgoorlie was about the buzzer at Midland Police Station. He seems to have what he called an informant or somebody in Midland who speaks to him out of concern. It would seem that the person from Midland who speaks to him, if indeed there is such a person, feeds him misinformation, because his reference to my attending Midland Police Station late at night, at night or in the evening is incorrect, because I did not attend the police station at night and I did not check it.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: What about during the day?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I go to Midland Police Station quite often.

I want to clarify matters because I certainly have nothing to hide. The day on which I went on radio with Paul Murray to talk about the situation at Midland Police Station - people can check the record - there was a graduation of firefighters at Forrestfield. The Police Service was represented at that graduation by Deputy Commissioner of Police Bruce Brennan. The issues had been raised with me. I was concerned about the allegations that were being made. I questioned the Deputy Commissioner of Police. I said that it was my understanding that when I had entered and left Midland Police Station I had seen a buzzer on the wall that enabled people to access the station 24 hours a day. I asked him whether it was or was not correct. I asked him whether it was his understanding. The Deputy Commissioner of Police said yes, that would be correct.

Mr M.J. Birney: What about the Channel 7 report?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We will get to that. All police stations, of which Midland is one, have either a buzzer or a phone so that people can have access out of hours to someone inside the police station. I did check the situation at Midland Police Station despite having received that assurance from the Deputy Commissioner of Police. When I went to Midland Police Station during daytime hours, I saw a buzzer on the wall.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The buzzer was not working. The member for Kalgoorlie has jumped to some wrong conclusions. The way in which many police stations, especially larger police stations, are designed means that they often have two sets of doors. Certainly stations that are typical of the era when Midland Police Station was built have two sets of doors. They have a first set of secure doors, then a bit of a lobby or entry area, which is simply a walk through area, and then a second set of doors that open and shut electronically as people approach them. My understanding is that at many police stations, the front doors are open for people to walk through and that the glass electronic doors behind the main doors open as people approach them. I have been to Midland Police Station many times during daylight hours. It was my understanding that in the evening only the electronic

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doors were locked. That would make sense as the buzzer was immediately next to the electronic doors in the foyer area. Unbeknown to me, Midland Police Station had adopted a practice of locking the very front doors so that people could not access the buzzer. The buzzer was also inoperable but, obviously, no-one had discovered that because no-one was able to use it. I believe that I was, if anything, misled by the Police Service, which assured me that, contrary to the member for Kalgoorlie's claim, Midland Police Station remained a 24-hour police station. I was assured that it was accessible 24 hours a day and that a buzzer was in place. When that was discovered to not be the case, the service immediately assured me that steps would be taken to put a buzzer in place. I understand that the buzzer was moved to outside the front doors.

Mr M.J. Birney: Only after you said it was already there.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Kalgoorlie talked about me running back to check up and so forth. The fact is that it occurred on a Friday when I was out in my electorate. I had a pre-organised media engagement with the local paper to talk about a strategy for communicating information from the police complex to the justice complex in Midland that was to be adopted statewide. That was programmed in well before this became an issue. I visited Midland Police Station on the Friday morning as arranged and I noticed that a new buzzer had been affixed to the front of the building. I did not see it as my role to test the buzzer. I accepted the assurances about that and, to the best of my knowledge, that buzzer is still there and still works.

The Western Australia Police Service has shown that the statements made by the member for Kalgoorlie are incorrect. Today I again received advice reaffirming that Midland station is a 24-hour station.

The member for Kalgoorlie still has his mobile phone turned on.

Mr M.J. Birney: Where?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Talk about deception!

Mr M.J. Birney: Talk about allegation!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): Members, I do not know what the noise is. Is it a phone, a laptop or what?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is a mobile phone. We have had a problem during this debate with the member for Kalgoorlie's phone ringing.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Kalgoorlie has his phone on. It should be turned off. However, I am hearing another noise.

Mr M.J. Birney: I will check.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. The debate has been interrupted by the member for Kalgoorlie's phone on three occasions.

Outside the advertised hours for which the Midland Police Station's front doors are open, an officer from the Midland station is on duty to attend to issues. However, as the member pointed out, the front doors to the police station are closed. I am advised that outside those advertised hours, if someone presses the front door buzzer, a police response will be provided. I have had that reaffirmed today by Assistant Commissioner Atherton.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: From that station or from somewhere else?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: From that station.

Mr M.J. Birney: People used to be able to walk into the station 24 hours a day. It has been downgraded.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That shows how little the member knows. Any downgrade that has occurred at Midland Police Station occurred when the former Government was in office, because when we came to government Midland Police Station did not have its doors open 24 hours a day.

Mr M.J. Birney: Six months ago it did.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Kalgoorlie is wrong in making that assertion. The member is alleging that six months ago, Midland Police Station had its front doors open 24 hours a day. I am advising him clearly that he is wrong. The member for Kalgoorlie does not like what I have to say. He gets numerous information wrong. He speaks to a range of individuals - or so he says - who tell him stories. I do not know whether individuals give him this incorrect information or he just makes it up. However, his source in Midland was wrong. Whoever was his source and talked to him about my entertaining someone called Mr Bill Shepherd was also wrong.

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Mr M.J. Birney: I never made any such allegation.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Then why would the member ask whether I had spent money on entertaining him?

Mr M.J. Birney: I never made any such allegation. Once again you are being tricky.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member is saying that he has never made an allegation about my entertaining, at government expense, a Mr Bill Shepherd. The member for Kalgoorlie actually asked me that as a question. Why would he ask me that question if he did not believe it to be true? Was he expecting an answer? Again, that just points out that his source, whether it is himself, or whether there really are people who give him this information, is wrong again.

I think what is annoying members opposite is the strong commitment of the Gallop Labor Government to law and order in this State and the fact that we have made a massive increase in police resources. As I have pointed out time and again, we have increased the police budget by \$110 million, or 24.8 per cent. The Gallop Government has increased the police budget from an accrual appropriation of \$442.1 million in 2000-01 - the last budget of members opposite - to \$551.7 million, which was the Gallop Government's 2003-04 budget. That is an increase of \$109.6 million, or 24.8 per cent. We should not talk about our record. We should talk about the record of members opposite and look at their figures. Between 1996-97 and 2000-01 - that is four years - the Court Government increased the cash appropriation to the Police Service from \$345.8 million to \$395.6 million.

Mr M.J. Birney: That is pretty good.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It may be pretty good to some, because it is an increase of \$50 million, or 14.4 per cent. Some people may say that is not too bad. Obviously it is good enough for the member for Kalgoorlie. I say that is a pittance. Let us look at what we will do. From that starting point of 2000-01, when the Police Service cash appropriation was \$395.6 million, in 2004-05 the Police Service cash appropriation will be \$560.4 million. That is an increase of \$164.7 million, or 41.6 per cent. The figures speak for themselves - 14.4 per cent compared with 41.6 per cent. We have already delivered an increase of nearly 25 per cent. That is why the Opposition wants to tackle the Government on law and order.

Mr M.J. Birney: Accountability.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member says that he is attacking the Government only on accountability and not law and order. Maybe he is acknowledging what a great job the Government is doing on law and order.

I will table this information for the benefit of members. Total recurrent expenditure on police services per head of population in Western Australia is higher than in any other State. It is not higher than in the Northern Territory, which has a population of only 200 000 but covers a vast area. Compared with all other States, Western Australia's recurrent expenditure is considerably higher. For the enlightenment of members opposite, in 2002-03 total recurrent expenditure per head of population in Western Australia was \$295. That compares with \$252 in Queensland, \$244 in Victoria, \$271 in New South Wales, \$281 in South Australia, \$245 in Tasmania, \$253 in the Australian Capital Territory and \$639 in the Northern Territory. Of all the big States, not including the Territories, the highest expenditure per head of population is in Western Australia.

Mr R.F. Johnson: This has nothing to do with the debate.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite do not like hearing about this Government's great record on law and order!

I refer to the "Report on Government Services 2003". I have photocopied the relevant page of the report that lists police staff numbers according to sworn and unsworn status. It gives the number of staff per 100 000 head of population. For 2001-02 the number for Western Australia was 249. The Australian average is 218. This Government is delivering better police numbers than any other State per head of population. It is also providing greater expenditure on policing per head of population. The State's Police Service is operating considerably above its authorised strength. The Commissioner of Police and the police command team have that strength at their disposal.

This is an excellent record on law and order and that is why the member for Kalgoorlie is trying to trivialise this debate to make out that things are wrong when they are not. He has not raised one new issue today. Because of his motion, I have looked at all the answers I have given this year. I have given dozens of answers; some are several pages long. It is certainly my intention to continue to be very open and accountable in this Parliament. This Government has nothing to hide because it has given the Police Service more police officers and a larger budget than it has ever had. However, we expect results from that. In terms of the Government's commitments, I do not think we could be said to be not delivering, in any shape or form, on our policing and law and order promises, because we are. Concerning the authorised strength, we have ensured that the Commissioner of Police has at his disposal more than enough officers to staff every police station in this State at authorised strengths.

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MR D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.58 pm]: This motion touches on the entire notion of accountability in government. Although the member for Kalgoorlie has put the Minister for Police under some pressure, I point out that the problem we are alluding to is not confined to just that portfolio. Let us return to the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters. Part II of the royal commission's report had some very wise words to say about accountability matters. I will read some quotes -

In a democratic society, effective accountability to the public is the indispensable check to be imposed on those entrusted with public power.

...

As the Commission has emphasised, accountability can only be exacted where those whose responsibility it is to call government to account are themselves possessed of, or are able to obtain, the information necessary to make considered judgements.

...

It is for the Parliament to make responsible government a practised reality. It has a crucial role to play in acquiring and in publicly disseminating information about the actions and activities of the executive and administrative arms of government.

In a nutshell, that means that Parliament simply cannot meet its obligations when question time and questions on notice - which are important means of obtaining information and keeping the Government accountable - are abused to the point of irrelevance. Earlier this year I placed a number of questions on notice to do with some very important aspects of government policy; some very important matters of financial accountability; some very important services provided to members of the community, including members of the Western Australian Deaf Society - in which the former Minister for Health would have a strong interest; and specifically a number of government promises made before the last election. I asked those questions to determine whether the Gallop Labor Government had indeed met its commitments to the people. There were about 154 questions all up, and they were asked of each of the ministers equally. It is very interesting that a number of ministers did not answer one single question. Among those was the Premier. The Minister for Police answered nine per cent of the questions - one question out of 11. The former Minister for Health, the present Minister for Small Business, did not answer one question. The odd thing is that a couple of ministers answered all the questions. The Attorney General answered 90 per cent of the questions. They were all the same questions; there was no reason one minister could answer the questions, while another did not. It is no wonder, then, that *The West Australian* was incensed about this matter. In an editorial on 9 September, under the headline "Gallop falls short on openness", it made the following comments -

Labor promised to aim for the highest standards of openness and accountability . . . and asserted that the public had a right to know how its money was being spent

...

But, judging by the Government's performance so far, it looks increasingly to have been a political expedient rather than an undertaking based on substance and a genuine commitment to reform for openness.

The editorial goes on and states how a list of parliamentary questions was asked - referring to those I just mentioned - and continues -

The questions dealt with government credit card use, advertising costs and car uses and expenses - all in the mainstream of public financial accountability issues.

So the people are denied information on how their money is used, and whether the promises that attracted votes are being kept. They cannot tell whether money spent by ministers and their bureaucrats is squandered on indulgences or used in the public interest.

And the Government's response to this borders on the unbelievably insulting.

Mr M.J. Birney: Was that written by a member of the Liberal Party?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: It was not written by someone from the Liberal Party; it is the editorial from *The West Australian* on 9 September. As a result of the substantial criticism in the media and the fact that the Liberal Party took this matter up in Parliament, the Premier, under pressure, gave a statement in Parliament that was reported in *The West Australian* on 10 September. The article was headed "Gallop promises answers" and stated -

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Premier Geoff Gallop has promised to ensure a raft of unanswered questions from the Opposition in Parliament will be re-examined.

...

Dr Gallop said departments would go through the 10 questions to provide answers.

I have referred to them as 11 questions because one was broken into two significant components.

The media got onto it, and, along with the Opposition, put pressure on the Government. It was thought that at last we would get some answers. It is seven weeks later, and guess what? We have not had one answer. We thought that, in fairness, we should give the Premier the opportunity to explain why we have not received answers yet, and I asked him that question in question time. I cannot quote the Premier exactly, but, if I remember correctly, his response was along the lines that all the information the Government required on these matters was being gathered. Why did the Premier not say that seven weeks was a bit slow? Why did he not say he would push the barrow harder and get some answers? There was nothing like that; there was no cooperation. He started by saying that he had been hit by a gentle wind from Bunbury. I do not remember having had onions for lunch. The Premier had the opportunity to set the record straight and say that opposition members were right, the Government should have answered the questions and he would get onto it as soon as possible.

We saw the same attitude today from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. She had the opportunity to set the record straight and say that she was responsible for this area. She need not have explained how she got the information provided or how she had not provided the right answers, but she could have given an undertaking to do her darnedest to ensure straight answers were provided in future. She could have said she was not happy that in the budget estimates hearings she did not get the right indications about what was happening, and that she would ensure that we would get the right answers. She did not do that. She tried to justify her position, and at every stage possible she passed the blame to the Police Service. Frankly, when good news is around, this minister is desperate to be in front of television cameras and to read statements in Parliament. In terms of accountability, it requires a motion from the member for Kalgoorlie to bring her in here kicking and screaming. Even then, she desperately tried to wriggle out of every breach of accountability.

We saw that in respect of a couple of issues. The buzzer at the Midland Police Station was a classic example. Why has it taken a motion today on accountability and a sustained line of questioning from the member for Kalgoorlie before the minister gave a full account of what happened with the buzzer at Midland? She could have made a statement weeks ago that she would look into the buzzer in Midland and provide the answer regarding the two doors, or whatever was involved. She could have been nice and honest and accountable through the Parliament. Had that happened, we probably would not be debating the motion tonight. If government members learnt from what the Opposition is stating - the Opposition's job is to keep the Government accountable - the Government would avoid headlines like "Gallop falls short on openness", and maybe its position in the polls would not be as serious as it is today. Instead, members opposite are digging in their heels. The Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services refuse to be accountable.

Let us look at some of the issues involved. I will touch on a couple that the shadow Minister for Police has effectively drawn to our attention. He spoke about police numbers. Some of my constituents with relatives in the Warburton area wanted to know how many police officers were in Warburton and whether police numbers had increased. I lodged a question on notice in August. I subsequently received a reply from the minister. It will not surprise members that the answer read -

The Police Service advises that due to operational sensitivities specific information relating to staffing levels of individual police stations will not be provided.

I was asking for information as at 12 February 2001. I cannot see the operational sensitivity in telling people how many cops there were in Warburton in February 2001. Apparently it is a state secret and I cannot have that information. I cannot take it to my constituents. As a member of Parliament, I cannot be accountable to the constituents I represent in this Parliament because the Executive will not give me the information. Where does one draw the line? Today it is police numbers, credit cards, ministers' expenditure at Perugino Restaurant and other restaurants, and a range of information on which we cannot get information. If we do not make a fuss about this and if *The West Australian* and the other media do not take the Government to task on this matter, we may as well all pack up and go home because there will be no accountability to the people through this Parliament.

In a question on notice in the upper House on 12 December 2002, Hon Norman Moore asked the minister's counterpart -

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

Can the Minister provide information showing the number of police rostered on each shift in the metropolitan area on -

- (a) Tuesday, November 5 2002; and
- (b) Saturday, November 2 2002?

The answer states -

It is not the practice due to operational sensitivities to provide this information.

Mr R.A. Ainsworth: I have heard that somewhere before.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I think we will hear this more and more from this Government as we head towards 19 February 2005. It is not glorious! Now we know that the election will be held on 19 February 2005, we can indicate that perhaps on 20 February 2005, unless the Government sorts these things out, some people on that side of the Chamber will be looking for a different occupation. If they are not accountable, that will be the case. What lunacy when one month after the day in question the Government cannot even provide the number of police rostered on in the whole metropolitan area because it is operationally sensitive information. What an absolute load of hogwash! I have no idea how we can gauge the Government's commitment to meeting election promises if we cannot get answers to questions.

Today, the member for Kalgoorlie was talking about the Labor Party's commitment to ensure that every police station in this State - not one or two - was resourced to its full authorised strength. Under questioning from the member for Kalgoorlie, the minister admitted that a number of police stations do not have resources to their full authorised strength. In fact, it is a growing number. How do we keep the Government honest if we do not know which stations they are and how far under strength they are? Are just three stations involved that are one officer under strength or are 20 stations involved that are six officers under strength? How serious is the problem? How close has this Government come to meeting its election commitment? The Government's election commitment in that respect was firm, clear and totally unqualified, yet, it will not provide us with the information by which we can hold it accountable to that promise it made to the people.

As I said earlier, that is not the only area. The questions to which I referred earlier covered a range of important areas, particularly the area of financial accountability. For example, we asked questions about the amount of government advertising. This is an area in which the Government has made some specific election commitments. In fact, it has committed to specific funding cuts in the area of government advertising. However, I looked at the list to see how many ministers answered a question on that matter, and only the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth and the Attorney General answered. Good on them both!

Mr M.J. Birney: What about the Minister for Police and Emergency Services?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: No, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services did not answer that question at all.

Another commitment we might all remember the Government making prior to the last election was to convert around a third of all government cars to use liquefied petroleum gas for propulsion; something that environmentalists would look forward to and something that, provided it was done in the right way, might also save the taxpayer a few dollars. We asked a simple question of the ministers: what proportion of their cars had been converted to use LPG? Again - goodness me - only two ministers answered that question - the Attorney General and the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth. The Government had a very firm election commitment, and, yet, for some reason or other, it has decided that it will not provide any answers. Among the ministers who did not provide an answer was the Premier. In opposition, the Premier took great delight in goading his predecessor about this very matter. In *Hansard* dated 21 September 2000, the then Leader of the Opposition stated that -

the Opposition raised the issue of the Government car fleet converting to LPG; along trotted the Premier behind it.

Even back then the now Premier gloated about a Labor Party policy that would convert the government car fleet and so on. However, when I asked the Premier a very simple question on notice - I did not even put him on the spot; I asked him the question in a way that enabled him to go to his public servants for the information - the answer was that I could not have the information. That is absolutely ludicrous.

Let us look at another area. I decided to look at what the Government is doing in the provision of services for the people in our community who are deaf. The deaf community obviously has a lot of interaction with a range

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

of government departments, so it is very important to ensure that each of our government departments and agencies has a very workable and effective policy for providing, for example, interpreting services for deaf people, and to ensure that they understand the needs of this group in our community. We asked a fairly broad series of questions to ensure that the Government was serious about providing services to members of the deaf community. Five ministers answered this question. I reluctantly say that the Premier did not. The former Minister for Health, who we all know has had some direct dealings with members of the deaf community and who I thought would have learnt his lesson by now, did not bother to answer this question either. To give him his due, the Attorney General, the current Minister for Health, answered the question in great detail. Subsequently, I am aware from members of the deaf community that, within his portfolio, some improvements have been made to the provision of services for members of the deaf community. Five ministers answered that question but nine did not. The Premier, the Minister for Education and Training and the former Minister for Health, quite frankly, do not give a toss about members of the deaf community in our society. That is reflected in the fact that they are not prepared to answer a very simple series of questions in this Parliament. That says an awful lot about the level of accountability.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Questions were asked about other important matters, including, for example, the provision of government vehicles that are home garaged for public servants.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Members will agree that people in the community would be very keen to know what proportion of vehicles run by the Government and funded by taxpayers are used by public servants and are made available to them to take home and privately garage.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, it sounds like question time. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the call. If members wish to make a contribution, I am sure they will get the call.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Another matter that has received a considerable amount of publicity in recent times, and which I assure members will receive more publicity, is the use of credit cards by ministers. If ever there was an area in which the community would wish us to make the Government accountable, it is the use of ministers' credit cards.

Mr A.J. Dean interjected.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Members of the community have a right to know how much ministers spend on their credit cards on wining and dining people at fancy restaurants, such as the Perugino Restaurant, and whether they took the member for Bunbury there for a little jolly or whatever. Unless we have the information, we have no way of knowing whether members, such as the member for Bunbury, are complicit in the waste of taxpayers' funds. We have no way of knowing whether, for example, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who is also State President of the ALP, is, inadvertently or otherwise, blurring the bounds of the use of taxpayers' funds for legitimate purposes or otherwise. We want to ensure that we keep the Government accountable. We hope that when we go through all the information obtained under freedom of information, there will be no adverse consequences for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

The onus is on the Government to respond to these questions in this Parliament in a sensible way, and then we will all know the answers to the questions. We can ensure that if something wrong has been done, we can set the matter straight. That is the point I made earlier and I will say it again: if the Government does not learn from this matter and if ministers maintain their arrogance and do not provide answers to questions we ask in Parliament on behalf of organisations, business groups and so forth, I suggest they will draw to a close their accession to this Parliament far quicker than they might do otherwise. I say that because the Labor Party went to the last election with some very firm commitments on accountability.

Mr R.C. Kucera: As did you, member for Mitchell.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I remind the Minister for Small Business of the Australian Labor Party's policy statement on accountability, which states -

A Gallop Labor Government will aim for:

- the highest standards of openness and accountability in government;

Mr R.C. Kucera: What a joke; from you of all people.

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker;
Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John
Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I did not hear the minister, who was droning on, but I will repeat it for him. The policy states -

A Gallop Labor Government will aim for:

- the highest standards of openness and accountability in government;

This is another thing the policy stated -

Labor will:

...

- make all government contracts publicly available, ...

Why then did I not get answers to my questions about government contracts? In fact, I got one complete answer from the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection, half an answer from the Attorney General and half an answer from the Treasurer. Altogether, I got two full answers from 14 ministers to a series of questions about government contracts. That is just one example of the Government simply not meeting its specific commitment. I asked 154 questions. The top score, as I said, went to the Attorney General, who answered 90 per cent of questions asked of him and left unanswered half a question; the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection answered 70 per cent of the questions asked of him; and the Treasurer answered 30 per cent of the questions asked of him. Five ministers, including the Premier, did not answer a single question.

Mr M.J. Birney: What about the Minister for Small Business?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I think I mentioned the Minister for Small Business, but I am happy to educate the Chamber again. The Minister for Small Business, the former Minister for Health, did not answer one question.

Mr M.J. Birney: Surely he answered one?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Not one. I would have thought that the questions on the provision of services to the deaf community would have been important to him. An article in the *Sunday Times* of 1 July 2001, which has a huge heading "BEG YOUR PARDON, MINISTER", states -

Deaf angry at Kucera remark in Parliament

It went on to say that a representative from the Deaf Society of WA said -

‘Our belief is that it was an attempt by Mr Kucera to crack a joke and get a cheap laugh’

I did not intend to raise that matter but, now that the minister has interjected, I must say that I cannot understand why the minister did not answer my question about the provision of services for the deaf community. He did not answer any question on government advertising expenditure. He did not answer my questions on the use of credit cards by government departments and agencies. He did not answer any question on government contract statistics. He did not answer any question on the use of motorcycles by government departments and agencies. What political sensitivity is there in asking whether a government agency or department has any motorbikes? I am struggling to think of the answer to that one. The Opposition is doing some work with an organisation in the community that really wants to know the Government's policy on the use of motorcycles. We are working with that organisation so that it can develop some incentives and initiatives -

Mr R.C. Kucera: Are you going to mislead the House again?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: How am I misleading the House?

Mr R.C. Kucera: Because you are making it up as you go along.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: What am I making up - that I am working with an association on motorcycle policy?

Mr R.C. Kucera: Name the organisation.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: No. The minister should repeat his allegation so that I can send a copy of it to the association.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Do you want to take the interjection?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister can go on interjecting.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Is this the same way in which you misled your constituency over your superannuation?

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker;
Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John
Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: No, the minister is not interjecting. A moment ago he alleged that I was not working with any motorcycle organisation on the policy on motorcycles in this State. The minister will in due course find out all about that. I am, in fact, not dealing with one organisation but with a few organisations. To date -

Mr R.C. Kucera: Name them.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I need a second to think about this. To date seven motorcycle organisations that I have been working with come to mind immediately. The minister will be delighted to find out later, when all the motorcyclists throughout the State say that the Liberal Party has listened to them and it has provided policies that will assist them. That will not be as a result of any answers from the Minister for Small Business, because that is another of the questions he would not answer. Will the minister tell me by way of interjection why he did not answer my question, and will he now say how many motorbikes his agency has?

Mr R.C. Kucera: You got an answer from me.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: No.

Mr R.C. Kucera: I will go and get the answer and read it out to you if you like -

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Can the minister tell me how many motorcycles and so on?

Mr R.C. Kucera: We said that we would not commit government funds at this stage, with the priorities we have in health, to talk about motorcycles. It is as simple as that. It is more important for you to score political points than it is to support the people of your current constituency.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: During the last week four people died on motorcycles and the minister does not give a stuff.

Withdrawal of Remark

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Mr Speaker -

The SPEAKER: Clearly, that is unparliamentary language and I direct the member to withdraw.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister does not give a damn -

Point of Order

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a point of order.

Mr M.J. Birney: Sit down!

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Kalgoorlie! It is highly disorderly to interrupt on a point of order. I call the member to order for the second time.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The member for Mitchell has indicated that the Minister for Small Business does not give a damn, I think were the words he used. That is an unfair imputation on the member and it cannot be inferred from anything the minister has said in relation to this issue.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: As I was saying, the minister has indicated that he does not give a damn about motorcycle road safety. In the past few days four motorcyclists have died in terrible accidents and, as far as I am concerned, the only way we will get to the heart of the issue is to develop policies that really do improve motorcycle safety in this State. We cannot do that unless we receive a whole range of information about the use of motorcycles. When the previous Minister for Health is not even prepared to provide that information, I do not know where we go.

Mr R.C. Kucera: You were given an answer.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister did not provide the information sought. The minister provided the same dross answer that all but a couple of his other colleagues provided. On that score, only one minister - the Attorney General - answered the question. Is the Attorney General not a busy minister? Does he not have a big portfolio? He can answer 90 per cent of the questions, but the Minister for Small Business and the former Minister for Health cannot answer one. Now that the Minister for Small Business does not have the same

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

workload and has a little more time on his hands, perhaps he will revisit the questions that concern his current portfolios and make sure they are all answered.

The next question that the Minister for Small Business did not answer relates to the conversion of government vehicles to liquefied petroleum gas. As I said previously, the Labor Party made a very specific election commitment on the conversion of government vehicles to LPG propulsion. The Premier made sure that he committed the Labor Party to convert at least two-thirds of the State Government's car fleet to dedicated LPG within three years. It is now within three years and we want to know whether the Government has met that commitment. We asked a very simple question. Can the Minister for Small Business, by way of interjection, advise us whether he will be answering the question and saying whether he has complied with that election promise?

Mr R.C. Kucera: You received an answer, the same answer you gave to your constituents over your superannuation.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister has just given us his answer with his total silence; that is the problem. The next question relates to vehicles used by the staff of ministers of the Crown.

Point of Order

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I have a point of order. The member for Mitchell is misleading the House. He invited an interjection. I answered his interjection. He then said, for the purpose of *Hansard*, that I did not answer the interjection, that I remained silent. That is misleading the House.

The SPEAKER: Often in this Chamber members from either side think that other members are not doing the right thing. That is an opinion. The member for Mitchell is giving his contribution to this debate. The minister will have an opportunity to refute what the member is saying.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I could go through all the questions and goad the minister some more if I wanted to, and I do enjoy bear baiting; however, that is not what I am here for. Again another minister has not learnt the lesson. I refer again to the editorial in *The West Australian* entitled "Gallop Falls Short on Openness". I will now be a little bit two-sided. That editorial contains some criticism of the previous Government on accountability matters as well. The point that this editorial made very strongly is that this Government has not learnt its lesson. That was demonstrated again today by what the Ministers for Police and Health said and from what the Premier said earlier during question time. This Government is not prepared to accept the fact that perhaps it has not been as accountable as it should have been. It is not prepared to admit that it should have answered 154 questions. The Government has not said that it will answer those questions and provide full and complete answers within a reasonable time because it does not mind being held accountable, that it has no reason to fear accountability and that it thinks it is good to ensure that the people are kept fully informed.

MRS C.L. EDWARDES (Kingsley) [6.32 pm]: On a number of occasions I have spoken about the issues that were raised in the Commission on Government report and the WA Inc royal commission report and I have also referred to questions that ministers have either answered or not answered. I was not going to participate in this debate but the Minister for Small Business encouraged me. On 13 March 2002 I asked the following question on notice of the then Minister for Health and now Minister for Small Business -

- (1) Since the election of the State Labor Government how many reviews, committees, inquiries and taskforces have been established in the Minister's portfolio?
- (2) Will the Minister list the reviews, committees, inquiries and taskforces that have been established?
- (3) Will the Minister list the commencement date and the completion date for each review, committee, inquiry and taskforce?

The answer was provided to me almost three months later on 11 June, which was just within the time period permissible under standing orders. The minister replied -

- (1)-(3) This information is not readily available. Provision of this information would require considerable research which would divert staff away from their normal duties and I am not prepared to allocate the State's resources to provide a response. If the Member has a specific inquiry I will endeavour to provide a reply.

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

On 27 August 2003 I asked a question on notice of the new Minister for Health for a list of the number of reviews, committees, inquiries and taskforces that had been established since the election of the State Labor Government. The new Minister for Health told me that 40 had been established. I asked the minister to list them and I asked him for the names and qualifications of each person on them. I asked more questions of the new Minister for Health. I asked him to provide details of the names and qualifications of each person who headed the reviews and to list the commencement and completion dates of those reviews. I asked a further question. I asked the minister to list the total cost of sitting fees and the cost for each of those reviews. In fewer than three weeks the new Minister for Health has answered these questions. Why? The former minister was not prepared to answer my questions. He was fudging. He was the only minister out of 13 ministers who fudged. The new Minister for Health answered my questions in fewer than three weeks. The new minister provided answers in great detail. He gave the title and qualifications of the chair of the Drug Summit and he gave details of the dates of its commencement and completion. The total cost of the Drug Summit was \$308 590. He listed the cost of the sitting fees. He provided details of the country health services review; the patient assisted travel scheme review; the practices of optical dispensers review; the Joondalup and Peel Health Campus contracts review; the Bunbury health task force; the report of the review committee on the future of Osborne Park Hospital; the Health Administrative Review Committee; the review of the abortion legislation; the review of the operation and effectiveness of part IXB of the Health Act 1911 and the Health (Smoking in Enclosed Places) Regulations.

Reviews were being conducted by the Selby Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Clinic relocation review group; a comprehensive review of enrolled nurse education was being conducted; a review of the Mental Health Act 1996 and the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Defendants) Act 1996 was under way; and a review was being conducted into dental health services management systems and structures. The emergency services working group, the WA Aged Care Advisory Council and the Ministerial Working Party on Drug Law Reform were established. A lot of reviews were going on. I wonder whether the former Minister for Health knew what was going on. Internal review and planning of the services and operations of the Next Step Specialist Drug and Alcohol Services was being conducted and a statewide review of WA obstetric services was being undertaken. A medical review of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and the Women's and Children's Health Service, and a review of mortuary services were being undertaken. Establishment panels for district health advisory councils were in place. The Derby health summit was held. There was a review of the Office of Health Review. The BreastScreen WA indigenous women's reference group was established in February 2003 and the community health advisory group was set up. A review of sexual health clinical services was conducted. An expert medical panel was set up to evaluate the Kimberley chemical use review, and the food legislation task force was established. A national competition policy review of core practices for regulated health practitioners was under way, a community advisory council of the Drug and Alcohol Office was set up, and a review of paediatric services was being undertaken.

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am finding it difficult to understand how this relates to the motion at hand with regard to the Minister for Police.

The SPEAKER: The motion refers to other ministers as well.

Debate Resumed

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: A review of intensive care services was in place, and the workplace aggressive behaviour and bullying advisory committee was established, as was the re-use of grey water working group. A review of the implementation of Australian Standards relevant to the meat processing industry was commenced, as well as a review of the Poisons Act 1964. The health reform committee and the state health advisory committee on family-friendly initiatives were also established. It was clear that if that information, to the extent that it was given, could be provided in less than three weeks by the new Minister for Health, the former Minister for Health could easily have provided it as well. He made no commitment to provide that information. He had no intention of providing that information. He took the easy way out and said that he would not provide it. He was the only minister to not do so. The new Minister for Health provided that information in less than three weeks.

I will bring another matter to the attention of the House. In raising this matter, I am being critical not of the minister, but of the process. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure provided an answer, as the minister representing the Minister for Housing and Works, on 12 August 2003. That was the date on which the Parliament resumed. A different minister became responsible for the housing and works portfolio from 31 July, and, thus, the policy the subject of the question I had asked had also changed. However, nobody went back between the offices of the Minister for Housing and Works and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

change the answer that the minister subsequently provided in this House 12 days after the change of the policy. The minister subsequently made a personal explanation on 9 September correcting the information she had given. I have no qualms about the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. It was obvious that she had the answer. The Parliament was not sitting at the time, so she tabled it at the first possible opportunity; however, nobody between the two offices had picked up that the answer on a particular policy had changed when responsibility for the portfolio changed. Nobody followed through to make sure that the correct answer was provided to the House until a month or so later. I bring to the attention of the Government that matter of process that it will probably need to follow through.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [6.39 pm]: I am very pleased to have this opportunity this evening to speak on the motion. I am amazed by the very interesting comments of members opposite. I will use this opportunity to focus on the importance of the Gallop Government's election on police numbers in the Peel police district and refute a number of the comments made this evening, particularly by the member for Kalgoorlie. I will be very brief because I know the member for Eyre wants to speak.

Members opposite have spoken tonight about accountability and issues relating to the Gallop Government not fulfilling some of its election commitments. The police district of Peel was established in 2000 as Western Australia's newest police district under the previous Government. From the very start it was under-resourced, which demonstrated the former Government's lack of understanding of the importance of resourcing police services appropriately and acknowledging the growth areas of this State. When the Gallop Government was elected in 2001 representative leaders in the community and I very strongly lobbied the Minister for Police about the need to bring the Peel police district up to the standard required in light of the growth in the area. I will point out some very clear facts.

In two and a half years under the Gallop Government - bearing in mind the Peel police district was very under-resourced during the term of the coalition Government - 34 new officers have been appointed to the Peel police district. In two years, 23 new police positions were allocated. In the past four months, nine more constable positions have been added, plus an additional inspector position, and another sergeant position has been approved. Following the Gordon inquiry, officers will be recruited who have specific responsibility for dealing with domestic violence situations. In two and a half years, the Gallop Government has delivered 34 FTEs to the fastest growing region. It is very interesting that, a few weeks ago, the member for Kalgoorlie and his colleagues from the Liberal Party went to the Peel district. During that visit, the member for Kalgoorlie tried to whip up the issue of police numbers in Mandurah. What happened when he did that? Let us have a look. I quote from the *Mandurah Mail* -

Shadow Police minister Matt Birney this week also criticised the Labor Government for failing to properly resource the Peel police district, saying Peel was currently six officers short.

However, someone said he was wrong. It was not me because I was not on the love bus, albeit I could have taken the members to a few places they should have gone to. I was not on the Liberal love bus with Captain Col up front showing his colleagues around. Who refuted the ill-informed comments of the member for Kalgoorlie? The *Mandurah Mail* also stated -

Liberal colleague and Dawesville MLA Arthur Marshall offered a different view, saying the city was the envy of most other towns in the State, "We're in the top five for numbers of police per population."

I did not say that; the member for Dawesville said it. He told off the member for Kalgoorlie. He slapped him across the face and said, "Get your facts right, sunshine." The member for Kalgoorlie goes out into the community and does not tell the truth. He says things that he knows are not true. He had to be reprimanded, but not by the member for Mandurah or even the Leader of the Opposition. Who reprimanded him? His own Liberal colleague the member for Dawesville. The member for Dawesville is right; I support him.

Point of Order

Mr P.D. OMODEI: The member for Mandurah knows full well that, in the article to which he is referring, the member for Dawesville was referring to Mandurah whereas the member for Kalgoorlie was referring to the Peel district. If the member for Mandurah does not know the difference between the Peel district and Mandurah, he should go back to school.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will go further. The member for Dawesville also said -

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

... break-ins used to be rife in Falcon, which has many holiday homes, but the situation had improved. "We wouldn't want to get any emotion going in the city that police aren't coping," ...

The member for Dawesville was telling the truth when he said that. The member for Kalgoorlie went to Mandurah and tried to whip up a storm about police numbers, and he was severely slapped across the hands by his own colleague the member for Dawesville. It demonstrates the pathetic nature of this motion that has been moved by the member for Kalgoorlie tonight.

I will go further. What else has happened with the police numbers in Mandurah? Thirty-four new police have been added to the Peel police district. Mounted police have now started to be seen in the district.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will speak further about the Peel police district. The Mundijong station has been upgraded. While the member for Kalgoorlie was driving around in his love bus, did he go to Mundijong and find out that the number of police at the Mundijong station had been increased? No, no, no! The member for Kalgoorlie was driving around with rose-coloured glasses when he was on the love bus - those little rose-coloured glasses that John Lennon used to wear, which do not necessarily tell the truth about what is really happening.

I will go further. Under the Gallop Labor Government, mounted police can now be seen in Mandurah. That is very important. There are a large number of festival activities in the region, and the population swells in many of the towns in the southern corridor and into the south west. During those big festivals, when lots of people are in the region, mounted police can be seen. That is very important for community policing and making sure that the community understands the importance of police being seen on the beat.

Let us go further. Let us even go to comments by our local police superintendent. He said in July, as reported in the *Mandurah Mail* -

"That's 34 new officers in just over two years," ...

"The most recent nine equates to about a 25 percent increase and will bring the total to 121 in the next three months."

There has been a 25 per cent increase. It continues -

Supt. Napier said there was also the potential for two further officers -

We already know that, now that they have been announced through the Gordon inquiry -
in the areas of domestic violence and forensic.

This demonstrates very clearly the situation in the Peel police district. I mention the Peel police district, not just Mandurah. I acknowledge that after the election in 2001, the member for Dawesville, the council, business, all sorts of organisations and individuals from the city and I said that we needed more police. The population of that community has grown rapidly. A number of issues underpin the need for more police. There are some social concerns.

Point of Order

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I raise a point of order, if for no other reason than to give us a moment's reprieve from that speech! Seriously, I draw your attention to the wording of the motion, Mr Speaker. It deals specifically with matters to do with the accountability of ministers of the Crown and the fact that they have been consistently and deliberately refusing to answer official parliamentary questions. What the member is talking about now has no bearing whatsoever on that.

The SPEAKER: I think the member has just expressed an opinion, and it does not happen to be my opinion.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I know the member for Eyre is very keen to speak. Therefore, I will conclude by reminding the House that although the number of police is being increased, there is no doubt that communities such as the city of Mandurah and the Peel police district in general will require more police in the future. Because of the waterways and canal developments, I believe that a water police presence should be considered at some stage in the future.

The member for Kalgoorlie has made a pathetic, limp-wristed attempt tonight to move this motion. He has been to the district of Mandurah but does not know the facts. It is quite clear that the love bus was off the road while the visitors were down there. This motion needs to be rejected in total. It is one of the most pathetic motions I have heard delivered by a person of similar nature.

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

MR M.J. BIRNEY (Kalgoorlie) [6.51 pm]: We have heard the old saying about drinking from the fountain of knowledge. I suspect that the member for Mandurah has been gargling.

The SPEAKER: I presume the member is moving an amendment. There are other members in the House who wish to speak. Does the member intend to sum up?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I am summing up on behalf of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Member for Eyre.

Point of Order

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Please clarify the situation, Mr Speaker. I thought the member for Kalgoorlie sought the call, got the call and was well and truly into his speech when you seemed to give the call to another member over the top of him. I just seek clarification.

The SPEAKER: The clarification is that I thought the member for Kalgoorlie was trying to move an amendment. There are clearly other members in this place who wish to contribute to the debate.

Debate Resumed

MR J.J.M. BOWLER (Eyre) [6.52 pm]: I will be even more brief after that interjection.

I want to talk about what the member for Kalgoorlie did not say, as much as what he did say. He cast a very wide net when he spoke; in fact, his net casting started yesterday when he spoke of Fremantle, and it continued today when he spoke of all parts of the State except for one area, which is his seat of Kalgoorlie, and the neighbouring seat of Eyre, which is my seat and takes in the towns of Coolgardie and Kambalda. The member for Kalgoorlie did not talk about Kalgoorlie Police Station. Since the Gallop Government came to power, the number of police officers has effectively increased from 90 to 110, with the addition of \$2 million every year for four years. The Government has also increased the number of police in Coolgardie and Kambalda.

Until country incentives were extended to those police stations, it was always difficult to get police in those areas. There are now waiting lists of police who wish to go there. At Coolgardie, Sergeant Craig Parkin does an absolutely fantastic job liaising with the school and the youth drop-in centre. Crime in the town is now on the way down. The same happens in Kambalda where there is now a very stable police presence. Until country incentives were introduced, there was a big turnover in police officers every year. Under the management of Sergeant Stuart Bartels it now has a very stable work force which is doing a good job. I remember during the term of the previous Government, when there were no country incentives, that Kalgoorlie Police Station was always 10 to 12 police officers down on full strength. It is now up on full strength, which has been reflected in the crime statistics.

I will read, first, the bad results from the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. The number of assaults has increased. However, the number of burglaries over the past 12 months has gone from 198 to 109, which represents a huge decrease, and the number of motor vehicle thefts has gone from 40 a couple of years ago to 15. This is as a result of increased police numbers in the goldfields and increased efforts, both due to the country incentives introduced by the Gallop Government. I have nothing but praise for the Minister for Police. One would have thought that the member for Kalgoorlie would have started his speech by talking about his own electorate, but he did not do so.

Mr M.J. Birney: I have already put out a statement on that.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I would love to talk to the member about policing in the goldfields. The member should know more about the goldfields than anywhere else, but he chose not to talk about it.

Mr M.J. Birney: I have, but you did not read the statement.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I have been in the House all through the member's speech. I have given the figures for the goldfields. These figures can be tested outside the House.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I pointed out that in your region there were 12 more officers at 30 June 2003 than there were at 30 June 2000. I also pointed out that the 44-hour week that we put in place means that the region is about 20 officers up.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Exactly. Until country incentives were introduced, the region was always short of officers, and the sergeants in charge of Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and Kambalda Police Stations had to take whoever they could get. They had to accept any officer who was sent there. There is now a waiting list of officers wanting to come to my area. The same situation exists in Norseman and Leonora. That is effective.

Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker;
Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John
Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

Our Government will build a police station in the neighbouring electorate of Warburton. Construction on that will start next year.

Point of Order

Ms S.E. WALKER: I raise the question of relevance. The member for Eyre has waxed on about the number of police officers etc in his and the member for Kalgoorlie's electorates. The member for Kalgoorlie's motion is about the way the Minister for Police and Emergency Services does not tell the truth, misleads the Parliament and simply does not answer questions. I do not know that it is relevant to stand and pontificate about numbers.

Mr A.J. DEAN: Part of the item refers to the House no longer having confidence in the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The member for Eyre is expressing confidence.

Withdrawal of Remark

The SPEAKER: Before we move on, I should not have given the member for Bunbury the call. It was unparliamentary of the member for Nedlands to say that the minister does not tell the truth, and I direct her to withdraw those comments.

Ms S.E. WALKER: What was it that you said that I said?

The SPEAKER: The member should know what she said. She said that the minister did not tell the truth. I direct the member to withdraw that statement.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I do. The motion refers to false, misleading and deceptive statements.

Point of Order Resumed

The SPEAKER: In relation to the point of order, as I said earlier in this debate, quite often members on both sides do not agree with what is said and object to the way in which a member's point of view is expressed; however, it is not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I conclude by saying that the effect of policing initiatives in the goldfields - in my electorate and in the electorate of the opposition spokesman for police - has been dramatic. There has been a decrease in crime in the towns of the region. Police numbers have increased and, as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services interjected a short while ago, the result of police officers now working an extra four hours a week is a 10 per cent increase in effective policing in the region. In fact, the effect is even better, as that 10 per cent of time is spent on the road and the beat and there is no increase on the base load of those stations. Very good police sergeants are in charge of those three stations. There will be a new regional superintendent. The goldfields is now a very stable police region. As I said, new police stations are being built at Laverton and Warburton. The reality is in stark contrast to the picture painted by my good friend the member for Kalgoorlie, who intimated that police matters are in disarray. In my patch, things are 100 per cent. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services should be congratulated.

MR A.J. DEAN (Bunbury) [6.58 pm]: In the two minutes left, I would like to express my confidence in the police minister and, like the member for Eyre, highlight some things that are happening in the south west police district. I want to show that what is happening there is all good.

Point of Order

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I was led to believe that there was opportunity for the lead speaker from the Opposition to sum up during the time for private members' business. A succession of three Labor members have spoken to this motion to the exclusion of the shadow Minister for Police - who of course is me - as the lead speaker for the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! By way of explanation, private members' business finishes at 7.00 pm, as everyone is aware. If the business is incomplete, the Opposition can bring the matter back on for completion the next time we deal with private members' business.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kalgoorlie perhaps does not notice that he is talking while I am on my feet. That is highly disorderly, and I call him to order I think for the third time. It is unfortunate that the member has not been able to sum up. However, when members in this House wish to contribute to a debate, the member

Extract from *Hansard*

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Mr Matt Birney; Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Acting Speaker; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Speaker;
Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bob Kucera; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John
Bowler; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Tony Dean

for Kalgoorlie does not have the right to make sure that they do not contribute. We must now interrupt private members' business, because it is 7.00 pm.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.