

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2002
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 2) 2002

Second Reading - Cognate Debate

Resumed from 22 May.

MR AINSWORTH (Roe) [10.00 am]: I was very interested in the closing remarks of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in response to a grievance because it leads me into my budget speech. I was very pleased to hear that this Government will focus on regional centres. That focus will discover what is needed to tip the balance in their favour to make them better environments in which people can live. It will also enable the Government to find out what is needed to add a degree of diversity to their economies. All country members have talked over the years about measures that are necessary to improve not only the lifestyle but also the economy of regional centres so that their future security can be guaranteed. The minister referred to a couple of regional centres that have had this attention from the Government. She addressed the issues of putting money into the communities and implementing strategic projects. I hope that Esperance will receive similar treatment in the future.

There are some positive initiatives in the state budget this year, which I am happy to acknowledge. One that interested me was the extra funding in the education budget to provide more teachers to reduce class sizes in junior primary. For a long time I have argued that primary school education is the foundation of children's education. A house built on a solid foundation has good prospects for the future, whereas a house built on a weak foundation is destined to fail. Those additional funds are important, and I acknowledge and thank the Government for that.

However, all budgets have pluses and minuses. I will touch on the negative aspects of this budget. I am particularly disappointed with the Treasurer's comments in the local media about how wonderful the budget was for the goldfields-Esperance region. The Esperance region covers about half of my electorate and it adjoins the goldfields to create an important region. The regional development commission reflects the traditional connection between Esperance and the eastern goldfields. We have a very good working relationship with our counterparts in the goldfields. The port in Esperance is used by the goldfields. The Treasurer's statements in the media release, which the media faithfully reported, referred to the huge amount of funding going into the region. Certainly major amounts were allocated to the goldfields; however, apart from the Esperance Port Authority and some of the other semi-government instrumentalities, which have separate budgets anyway that do not come from the consolidated fund, not much funding is left over for my region.

I was particularly surprised at the enthusiasm with which the Treasurer announced the road funding measures for the area. He talked about the benefits the region would get from a massive investment in transport infrastructure, recreation and tourism. That sounds wonderful. Certainly a major amount of funds was given to the goldfields. However, Esperance will get \$240 000 to upgrade visitor facilities and roads to parks, and a further \$29 500 to implement the goldfields-Esperance regional planning and regional transport strategies. That is it.

Only \$113 000 will be provided for the whole region for new services for parents of young children. I do not argue that that is not a good initiative, but it is not a lot of money for the entire region let alone just my part of it. Similarly, an additional \$2 million will be provided for the construction of 15 new public housing dwellings in Kalgoorlie and Esperance. I suspect that the bulk of those will be built in Kalgoorlie. Although I do not deny that they are needed there, it does not leave a lot for the rest of the region. The budget also provides \$118 000 for a regional recreation fishing creel survey, whatever that is. That is not a lot of money and I do not think it will materially affect the lifestyle or the economy of the region. The Treasurer has allocated \$214 000 for Department of Fisheries compliance, including maintenance of an office at Esperance. That is just ongoing funding to provide a fisheries officer in an area that has a fishing industry. Likewise, \$135 922 has been allocated to the Esperance region tourism association, which I welcome, and an identical amount has been allocated to the Goldfields Tourism Association. However, again, those amounts would normally be expected to be in a budget. Regional tourism has been supported by a succession of Governments. That is something one would take as read, rather than something to be part of a major announcement. Again \$113 000 has been allocated for two projects in the goldfields-Esperance region under the small business smart business initiative. That is just small change.

The lower half of the goldfields-Esperance region, which I represent, is a major part of the State and is very important for the State's economy. It has a vibrant economy, despite the lack of input from the current budget. Earlier, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure outlined the regional centres that would receive additional amounts of money. However, we appear to have missed out badly this time around. I hope that is a short-term effect and will not occur in the next couple of Labor budgets. If it does, it will show that the Labor Party has not taken an interest in making an effort in my region. Some of the projects provided for in the budget would have

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happened anyway, including the port developments and the projects Western Power has undertaken. The budget shows the Government's lack of investment and direct involvement in the decision-making processes in the region.

A couple of other areas concern me. In the past day or two we have heard members talk about the major cuts in the budget to the Department of Agriculture. The cuts are not just two or three per cent; its budget has been cut by 7.6 per cent in real terms. That is about a \$40 million reduction for agriculture since the last coalition budget. Worse than that, the forward estimates for the next three years show either a further reduction or at least a plateau of funding for the agriculture budget, which does not take into account the inflationary effect in those three years. In real dollar terms, there will be a significant continuing downturn in the budget for the Department of Agriculture.

Although agriculture is perhaps not held in the same regard in some people's mind as the mining industry, which is an extremely large and important industry that is sometimes considered to be glamorous, agriculture has been with us ever since the State was settled by Europeans. Agriculture has been and will continue to be a major part of the economy. We are facing very strong and unfair competition from our world competitors. Unlike Australian farmers, farmers in the United States and Europe receive massive subsidies. I do not advocate giving farmers subsidies. We are facing unfair competition that places pressure on our agricultural industries, and our farmers must try to maintain their competitiveness in that type of environment. The huge budget cuts to the Department of Agriculture reduce its ability to help farmers increase their productivity and implement other major changes in order for us to keep up. It is a sad day for the future of this State's agriculture industry. It suggests that this Government does not understand the value of the industry and the value of the Department of Agriculture to the industry or, even worse, does understand but does not care about it. It is regrettable, to say the least.

I would have liked this budget to contain funds for the upgrade of the South Coast Highway in my electorate. Unfortunately, none of the major road funding has been directed towards that. I have mentioned this in the House before. South Coast Highway is part of Highway 1, the national highway system. Sections of the road are in a very poor state. Like many roads, it has good parts that have been improved. Quite a lot of work has been undertaken, and some has only just been completed. The roads program put in place by the previous Government resulted in the upgrade of a significant portion of South Coast Highway and the Kalgoorlie-Esperance highway, which also is part of Highway 1. The section of South Coast Highway between Ravensthorpe and Munglinup is in a poor state. It is too narrow and winding and is broken in many places. The road carries a high volume of traffic, including heavy transport, tourist vehicles and local traffic. A number of accidents have occurred, and some have been fatal. It is likely that that will continue if that section of road is not upgraded. Such work will become even more imperative when - not if - Ravensthorpe Nickel Operations Pty Ltd starts work at its nickel mine in the next couple of years. That operation will place a significant additional traffic burden on that section of road. Further, we have seen an increase in domestic tourism since 11 September. Many people who would normally have travelled overseas are now not doing that. The tourism season in Esperance has been extended. More people are in the town and many more vehicles such as caravans are on the highway. Tourist traffic has already increased, and industrial traffic will soon increase. The Government cannot react to that after the event. It must do the forward planning and put money into the budget so that the road can be upgraded over the next couple of years. Regrettably, that has not been done yet.

I will concentrate on the Esperance end of my electorate for a moment, and talk about education funding for both the senior high school and the vocational education and training sector. Esperance Senior High School is growing every year. I think it has around 900 students at the moment, and the trend is continuing upwards. The nearest senior high schools are in Kalgoorlie and Albany. Unlike in other parts of the State, particularly the metropolitan area, people in Esperance do not have any alternative high schools just up the road. The previous Government earmarked \$1.5 million from the sale of AlintaGas for a junior campus at Esperance. That money has not been provided. A junior campus could not be built for \$1.5 million - more funds would be required. Funding is urgently needed so that the project can go ahead. Funding for the adjoining technical and further education college is, in a sense, even more important. It is an appalling, poorly provided-for facility. As I have outlined to this House on more than one occasion, the Esperance community, concerned at the very poor facilities and resulting lack of decent courses at the college, approached the then independent Kalgoorlie college of TAFE to become a partner with the Esperance college. The Esperance college became an independent TAFE college and arm of the Kalgoorlie college. That was undertaken with the support of the government TAFE administration, because it was glad to give the responsibility for the Esperance college, which it had not met, to somebody else. The Western Australian School of Mines, Curtin University and the Kalgoorlie college have since amalgamated, which I think is a very good initiative. That means that there is now a Curtin University presence in Esperance. As part of that amalgamation, the university has helped to build the first stages of the

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Esperance community college. That fantastic library and high-tech communications facility is shared by all levels of education in the town as well as the community. However, even though Curtin has done its best to put extra resources into constructing the necessary buildings, the standard of the balance of the college is still so far behind that of any comparable centre in Western Australia that it is not just a second-rate facility, it is a fifth-rate facility. It is extremely poor. The minister has looked at the facility. He agrees that it is in poor condition; however, I cannot find anything in this state budget to overcome that serious shortcoming. I know that money for the Kalgoorlie campus has been provided to the university. I am not sure how much of that money will filter through to Esperance. The college needs a separate, clearly specified allocation to bring it up to a reasonable standard so that it can operate on the proverbial level playing field. Any subsequent increases in funding could be allocated on a pro-rata basis with that given to the Kalgoorlie college. It is not sufficient for the Government to provide the university with a global budget for Kalgoorlie and Esperance and expect it to be able to pick up the shortfall and bring the Esperance buildings up to the required standard. We need a one-off capital injection that is targeted to the Esperance college. Once those facilities have been brought up to an acceptable standard that is comparable with other places, we can return to normal funding allocations. However, we first need that one-off allocation, and it is not in the budget.

I imagine that the budget contains minor unspecified amounts of funding for my electorate. However, much of my electorate is missing out. The budget contains funding for the hospital at Ravensthorpe, which has already been deferred for two years. The previous Government had drawn up the plans and was about to go to tender. The tender process was put on hold at the start of the last election campaign, as is correct. After the change of government, it seemed that the process had been put on hold permanently. Discussions with the minister, the local health board and shire representatives were needed to get it cranked up again. The minister has been responsive and there is an allocation in this year's budget. We have waited two years to get to that point; however, I am pleased that it is there now. That and funding for Kulin's water treatment problems are the only two major investment items for the Roe electorate in the budget. That is not a very good result considering the size of the electorate and the number of towns that need money spent on them to, as the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure said earlier, improve the quality of life and the diversity of the economic base so that they can not only survive, but also prosper.

A major issue for not only my electorate but also the whole of the country area is the poor state of the electricity distribution network. This situation is similar to that of the Vocational Training and Education Centre facilities at Esperance. The state of the electricity distribution system is so bad that Western Power is not prepared to provide energy to new businesses that start up in major country centres, let alone small towns. The reason is twofold: in some cases it is not economical for Western Power to put the infrastructure in place, and in other cases the existing infrastructure is being used to capacity and Western Power cannot provide any extra power. They are probably the same thing. We need major capital investment in the infrastructure to build the distribution system up to a level at which Western Power can operate without it needing to find a major amount of money from other sources. The Government needs to make a one-off injection to allow Western Power to catch up. The distribution network has been in decline for many years, including during the term of our Government. I am not saying that it is the fault of only this Government. The problem did not start last week. It has been occurring over many years. A succession of Governments has failed to provide sufficient money to make sure that the distribution system keeps pace with the increased quality and quantity of power that is required in the regions.

The budget and the Minister for Police, prior to the budget, have both highlighted the increased number of police officers that the Government is aiming to place in the system. I am interested to know how many of these officers will be directed to country stations and, in particular, the one-man stations, which are of great concern to me. There is an urgent need to ensure that a fair percentage of the additional police officers that were promised are directed to country areas. Without extra officers in those areas, the existing police officers have a huge workload. When those police officers are not on duty in those communities, the communities are in fear, because if problems arise they are not reacted to quickly. When the after-hours police number is called, the call is redirected to a station 400 kilometres away, and that is what happens at present.

Another matter that is dear to my heart is the rural surgical service. I raised this matter with the Minister for Health, by way of a grievance, when the State Government indicated it was going to cut funding for this service, which meant it would cease to function. The minister undertook to review the rural surgical service again and he came back with the answer that he had agreed to continue funding the service, and I gave him credit for that. However, I recently received a report from Professor House, a Professor of Surgery at the University of Western Australia, who has been leading the rural surgical service in country areas. The report is on the rural surgical service in which specialists go to a country centre and provide on-the-spot surgical services that, in most cases,

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would otherwise be accessed in the metropolitan area. A couple of interesting points arise from this document. First, the rationale behind this service is interesting. The background comments in the report state -

Australians have long regarded country life with its clean air, reduced traffic and open space, as a healthy alternative to city living. A report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare however, concluded that people living in rural and remote Australia have many health disadvantages compared with their urban counterparts. The poorer health of rural residents is evident in higher mortality rates, lower life expectancy and higher hospitalisation rates for some illnesses. The report lists several contributing factors:

- Geographical isolation and problems of access to care;
- Shortage of health care providers and health services;
- Small, sparsely distributed populations;
- Socioeconomic disparities;

The list goes on. The report also refers to another factor regarding the provision of specialists and states -

Specialist physicians comprise 35% of the Australian medical workforce with approximately 12% residing in rural and remote areas.

A review of this matter reported that -

... a population of 10 000 is required to sustain resident specialist services. This fact in combination with recommendations by King -

That is a report from Queensland -

that there should never be less than two resident specialists of one type in a particular locality, means that rural and remote towns need a catchment population of at least 20 000 to attract resident specialist services.

This fly in, fly out service was established in 1996 and the report goes on to state that -

It comprises a group of general surgeons with interests in gastrointestinal and vascular surgery and endoscopy. The RSS is committed to providing surgical consultations and day surgery procedures to small rural communities . . .

The concept is to provide equity of access for equivalent needs compared to city counterparts. It has been a highly successful service that I hope the Government will continue to fund in perpetuity. It provides a better service for those people, but, more importantly, it is cheaper. The waiting times for country patients who use this service are significantly less than those for city people, which surprised me. For example, the waiting time for a common procedure like an endoscopy is about 15 days in the rural surgical service and 84 days in the metropolitan service. The waiting period for varicose vein treatment is 28 days in the rural surgical service and 365 days, or one year, in the metropolitan service. There are similar examples for carpal tunnel procedures and vasectomies. Once the specialists are in the rural areas, the service provided is not only very timely in comparison with the metropolitan service, but it is also cheaper. That is a real achievement when considering the cost to the people in those country communities to access specialist services using the other system of driving or flying to a metropolitan area or a major regional centre. The report of the rural surgical service states that -

Rural patients accessing the visiting specialist surgical service saved on average \$242 if accompanied -

In many cases people take someone along with them when these specialist services are provided -

for an initial consultation, \$252 if accompanied for a surgical procedure and \$137 unaccompanied for a follow up consultation compared to those who accessed metropolitan services.

These are just the savings to the patients. However, there are also savings to the health system of over \$100 per patient, if my recollection is correct, as that figure is not mentioned in this report. When the savings to the individual and the state system are combined, it is evident that the retention of this service is not only desirable, but also imperative, because it provides a better service at a lower price. If Governments found other programs that provided better services at lower prices in different areas of government services, they would be scrambling over each other to introduce them. This program is a major success. I commend the Minister for Health for reviewing the decision to cut funding and deciding to continue it for now. I hope that the funding continues for the life of this Government and beyond.

Something has just occurred in Esperance, which I am very pleased about. It does not deal directly with the budget but has future implications for the development of aquaculture and other marine-based industries in the

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Esperance region and the preservation of the unique marine environment in the Recherche Archipelago of Esperance. Members who have been in this place for a while will recall that the previous Minister for Fisheries was party to a proposal by Fisheries WA to have cage tuna introduced in Esperance on a trial basis. This was done in order to see if an industry could be started similar to that at Port Lincoln, South Australia, which has brought hundreds of millions of dollars into that community. At the time that proposal was put forward very little was known about the marine environment at Esperance. Although a fishing industry has been there for as long as there have been fishermen and many other people have privately dived and studied the various species and habitats there, none of the area has been scientifically researched and documented to the point that a marine activity, such as a caged tuna farm, could be actively undertaken. No-one could be sufficiently confident of the environmental conditions to guarantee that the cages would be placed in appropriate places where no environmental damage would occur. There is a lack of available scientific knowledge on this issue. The worst possible choice was made for the site of those tuna cages. They basically surrounded Woody Island, which is a major tourist icon in our area. The decision to place the cages there was like the current Government, without first consulting the people of the metropolitan area, announcing that it would put tuna cages 100 metres off the beach at Rottnest Island. A decision like that would have received the same response that was given by the people of Esperance to this proposal. As a result of that proposal, which was announced four or five years ago, I took a cross-section of the Esperance community on a trip to Port Lincoln to get better information about the operations of existing tuna farms and the environmental issues that surround those operations. Although we initially came from very different points of view, there was unanimous support for the view that there was an urgent need for better scientific knowledge about the marine environment at Esperance. We agreed that scientific knowledge was needed to provide a starting point before a proper management plan could be developed to ensure the safety of the marine environment when aquaculture activities were developed in the future. For it to be a sustainable industry, scientific knowledge is necessary.

We formed a group, currently known as the Research Advisory Group, and two years ago joined forces with two scientists from the University of Western Australia who happened to be in Esperance for other reasons. They were keen, with our support, to apply for funding for a marine science project to do a baseline study of the Esperance marine environment. Our second application to the federal Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, which receives funds from all licensed fishermen and then reinvests those funds in research, was successful. The community group has also received backing for this project from commercial organisations that it approached. Those funding sources, together with university funding of the scientists and some strong in-kind support from local boat owners, dive operators and a range of other people, enabled us to launch a two and a half year, \$2 million research project for the Recherche Archipelago. That will be an absolute winner for the whole region. Not only that, but also we will gain very detailed scientific knowledge of the marine environment on which to base soundly researched and, therefore, sustainable aquaculture projects into the future. I do not know what those projects might be. The range of those projects is probably far greater than we can currently imagine, because as world fish stocks decline and wild stock fishing becomes less profitable or sustainable as the industry tries to meet the demand for various fish products, aquaculture in all its forms will be the way of the future. However, those projects must be sustainable. Now that this research project is up and running, we can build a program that will provide proper management of the Recherche Archipelago and its environment, at the same time as allowing projects to go ahead in a sustainable way, which will enable those projects to continue in perpetuity without damaging our environment. It is one of those situations in which everybody wins. The State will win because there will be an increase in economic activity and diversification of the economy of our region. I look forward to a positive response from the Government to future requests to help with some of the projects that will result from the work that is now being done.

MR JOHNSON (Hillarys) [10.34 am]: Members opposite will find my contribution to the budget debate today quite interesting, because I will outline the inadequacies of their Government and Treasurer in bringing down a budget that quite frankly shows no innovation whatsoever. The budget provides a double whammy. On the one side the Government will increase taxes and charges, and on the other side it will whack the people who need the most help. This is a slash and burn budget. I informed the House yesterday about the way in which people outside were referring to the Treasurer on those two areas. The overwhelming majority of Western Australians will be adversely affected by the increased taxes and charges and the new tax on third party insurance. That is added to the increase in stamp duty on all motor vehicle transfers or purchases and house transfers. As such, the budget will mean that the majority of people will face enormous costs. Most people in Western Australia have cars and the majority of this State's citizens are also proud home owners. First time home buyers will face enormous problems trying to achieve the goal that all young married and single people aim to fulfil; that is, owning their own home. This Government is putting that out of their reach. The budget provides a double whammy. I believe that it will cause a decline in the housing industry, which will have detrimental flow-on effects over the next two or three years.

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The budget will have another adverse affect on people who desperately need Government help. I outlined in this House yesterday where this Government is cutting services under the community development portfolio and in particular to the parenting information centres in shopping centres. The minister tried to say that the Government was not cutting costs or discontinuing that service. I accept that the service will not be discontinued, but fewer people will be able to access that service because it will not be located in shopping centres. The placement of that service in shopping centres meant that it was visible, which was an encouragement for people who were having difficulties in parenting to access those centres. It is a big negative to move those centres. I will look at other areas, and certainly those in my shadow portfolio, very closely during the estimates committee next week. I am sure that my colleagues will carefully scrutinise all portfolio areas and the cuts that the Government has made.

The budget shows no innovation. Even a monkey could create a budget like this. All the Treasurer has done is to increase taxes and charges and cut government spending and necessary facilities for people in Western Australia. Anybody could do that. The Treasurer could have come in here and said that he had cut out a lot of government and ministerial waste and that he would not allow anybody to make purchases such as the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure's authorisation of the purchase of \$48 000 worth of promotional cups and hats. If the Government wants to save some money, I would be very happy to suggest where it could save some money. It could save \$15 million in my electorate tomorrow. That money could be better used. The Government will spend \$15 million on the Department of Fisheries building that it has approved. I will go into that in more detail during this speech. I will cover a variety of matters.

Mr Whitely interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: If the member for Roleystone listens, he will hear what I have to say.

Mr Whitely: I always listen to you.

Mr JOHNSON: I know that the member for Roleystone does, because he always wants to hear my pearls of wisdom.

In my budget speech I will cover areas in my electorate that have budget implications. Not much is happening in my electorate, other than the fisheries building.

A government member: It is a sleepy old town!

Mr JOHNSON: No, it is not. It is one of the busiest tourist attractions in Western Australia, so what will the minister do?

Mr McRae: What are the latest figures?

Mr JOHNSON: There are nearly four million visitors a year.

Ms MacTiernan: There are three and a half million.

Mr JOHNSON: I said nearly four million.

Ms MacTiernan: You have the inflation disease.

Mr JOHNSON: No, the trouble is that the Government commissioned its analysis report out of season when fewer people visit. It is crazy to commission an analysis report when it is not peak season.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I have many things to say about the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Ms MacTiernan: Will you take an interjection?

Mr JOHNSON: Of course I will; I always take interjections from the minister.

Ms MacTiernan: What absolutely fascinates me about the debate is that you were the local member and a cabinet minister when the decision was made to relocate the fisheries. Now he has been converted on the road to Damascus.

Mr JOHNSON: I thought the member was directing her interjection to me.

Ms MacTiernan: It is only in opposition that his brain starts working.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister has made her point. I have allowed the minister to interject. Indeed, I always allow the minister to make an interjection because she always allows the same from me.

Yes, I was a cabinet minister when the previous Government made the decision to locate the fisheries building at Hillarys. I made it quite clear -

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Mr McRae: Were you sitting in the room?

Mr JOHNSON: If the member would be quiet, he will hear what I have to say.

During the discussions that were held about the location of the fisheries building, I made it clear that I was concerned about locating it at Hillarys. I suggested that Geraldton would be a better location.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I said Geraldton. I ask the minister to not mislead the House. I am really glad the minister is in the Chamber. It is lovely to see her here because I enjoy discussing matters with her. Indeed, the minister is one of my favourite people because she has a great big bullseye on her forehead; she is such an easy target for members on this side of the House. Whenever the minister is in the House, we cannot miss!

Yes, I was a cabinet minister. I made it clear -

Ms MacTiernan: They decided to ignore you.

Mr JOHNSON: No, the previous Government did not ignore me.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The minister has made her interjection. I ask her not to be rude; she must give me the opportunity to respond.

Cabinet decided to locate the fisheries building at Hillarys. I was not happy with the location, and I made my position quite clear. I felt that many issues had to be addressed before such a move would be successful for the people of Western Australia. My friend, I was not worried about the Department of Fisheries because bureaucrats do not worry me. However, they do worry the minister's Government. It was the bureaucrats and not the ministers who wanted it located at Hillarys.

Mr Logan: Did you oppose it?

Mr JOHNSON: I have just told members that! My friend, the previous Government did things differently to this Government. We did not take votes in Cabinet; decisions were made by consensus. I made it quite clear -

Ms Radisich: And then you had a group hug!

Mr JOHNSON: We on this side of the House are loving people, so we have lots of group hugs.

Several government members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Hodson-Thomas): Order, members!

Mr JOHNSON: I am trying to respond to the minister's interjection.

I made it clear to my colleagues in Cabinet that, before I would agree to the location, I wanted many issues addressed. As I mentioned earlier, I also had two meetings with the then transport minister at the Hillarys marina. He agreed that many things had to happen -

Ms MacTiernan: Like what?

Mr JOHNSON: Such as moving the ferry from one side of the marina to the other. That issue has not been addressed in the minister's submission.

Certainly, the decision to locate the fisheries building at Hillarys was not a good decision, and I am big enough to admit that. Hillarys Boat Harbour is one of Western Australia's premium tourism attractions. It is a wonderful facility that attracts local, interstate and international visitors, 365 days of the year.

My friend the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure is now leaving the Chamber. That is a shame because I have a lot to say about this issue and it comes under her portfolio. She would have been interested to hear some of the quotes I want to read to the House.

Mr McRae: Have a look behind you - there is one soul on your side of the House.

[Quorum formed]

Mr JOHNSON: I called the quorum because what I have to say is so important that I want members of the Government in the Chamber, particularly the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. I am talking about not only my electorate but also the people who visit my electorate. I am talking about the Hillarys marina, which is the pearl of the northern suburbs.

Mr McRae: He is boring.

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Mr JOHNSON: The member has made that interjection too often; it has become boring, so I suggest he keep quiet.

Mr McRae interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: If the member did not hear what I said, I suggest he visit the doctor.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr JOHNSON: I was interested to read the headline on the front page of the latest edition of the *Wanneroo Times Community*. It reads -

State pushes on with \$15m centre.

The article reads -

The State Government will push ahead with its planned \$15 million Department of Fisheries research centre on the southern side of Hillarys Boat Harbour.

On the southern side? This has come from a spokesperson from the minister's office. Will they put it on the car park on the southern side? The minister is silent. She is embarrassed. Obviously her department got it wrong, like it has got so many things wrong.

Ms MacTiernan: How do you know that?

Mr JOHNSON: Because it came from the minister's department.

Ms MacTiernan: Is that our media release?

Mr JOHNSON: It is accredited to the minister's spokesperson. It does not state who, because the releases normally remain anonymous.

Ms MacTiernan: Will you table the document?

Mr JOHNSON: It is community news. I am sure the member can get a copy. The article reads -

A spokesman for Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan said all-day parking ferry users would be encouraged to use the northern car park.

That is fine, but there is not much of a car park there at the moment, other than a boat and trailer park. Up until recently, I thought the boat and trailer park was normally only half full. However, after talking to some of the business people at Hillarys on Monday, I found out that on busy summer days the car and trailer park is completely full.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It is the Government's broken promise, which the minister has tried to squirm out of. The Premier made the big announcement that it would go ahead. The Government realised that the bloke from Hillarys had sussed that it would not carry out a full review before it went ahead. The Premier promised a full review when he was Leader of the Opposition.

Ms MacTiernan: We went out to tender in November.

Mr JOHNSON: The Government went out to tender in November, before it had carried out the analysis that had been promised.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The member can interject in a moment.

The Government went out to tender, the job was a done deal, and the minister's colleague in the upper House, the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, stated that it would go ahead - boom, boom, boom! The bureaucrats probably did it while the minister was asleep at the wheel and did not understand what was going on, even though it was land controlled by the minister. She did not understand until I brought it to her attention.

Ms MacTiernan: The Government went out to tender for the parking review in November 2001.

Mr JOHNSON: No; the minister should not deceive Parliament. The Government advertised for tenders for the overall project management. The minister should not get deeper into trouble; I am trying to look after her interests. The Government also went out to tender, before the parking review was finished, for the overall project management. The people in the Department of Fisheries said they would have the bulldozers on the site -

Ms MacTiernan: I am not the Minister for Fisheries.

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Mr JOHNSON: The minister is a member of the Cabinet. What happens in Cabinet? Does it not discuss these things?

Ms MacTiernan: We went out to tender for the parking review -

Mr JOHNSON: The Government went out to tender for the overall project management. It was a done deal. Then the minister tries to retrieve a bit of credibility by starting an analysis. However, the analysis is done out of season, rather than in the summer, between October and February, when the bulk of people visit the area.

Ms MacTiernan: You are not interested in the truth. The Government started going out to tender in November.

Mr JOHNSON: I am interested in the truth. I will come back to the minister. Now she is leaving the Chamber. I love it when she is in the Chamber. She will come back, because I will say something that will make her come back.

This study was done out of season. The newspaper report goes on to say -

Ms MacTiernan said a review had found the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on the operations of the marina.

The review may just as well have been done at 12 o'clock at night, when hardly anyone was there. It was not done in the busiest five months of the year, when all those visitors go there. They are not just international and interstate tourists; they are Western Australians, who want to take their families down to access what is probably the safest beach in Western Australia. The beach is safe because the waves do not come in and knock over the little toddlers. It is known as the family beach. So now the minister will put three-hour time limits on the parking. People will only be able to take their families down and enjoy the beach for three hours. Worse still, if they want to go and have a meal or a cup of coffee after going to the beach, they will be slapped with fines. The three-hour limit is the Government's answer to the congestion problems. We are going back to Cottesloe and Leighton beaches all over again. This situation is very serious, and members opposite do not realise.

Mr Logan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: My good friend from Croyden, the member for Cockburn, realises it. It will have a very adverse effect.

I return to the issue of the car and trailer park. I did not think it was always full, but I am not there all the time; frequently I use the freeway rather than West Coast Highway, so I would not see it. I do not normally go down there at peak times at the height of the season. I normally go later in the day, not in the mornings. In the mornings, people with boats completely fill up the car and trailer park. This new building will take up about a third of that car and trailer park. Where else in the world would a government allow an office development on a site like that? About 160 bureaucrats will fill that building. It may be a research facility, but it is still an office building. I am happy to admit that the previous Government was wrong to locate the building there. It should be in Geraldton. I know the member for Geraldton would like that. That is where it should go.

Mr Logan: Or Cockburn.

Mr JOHNSON: I am told that Geraldton has good, unpolluted waters. If Cockburn has that, it would be fine. A facility like this should not be located in an area designated as a recreational area. It could be at Ocean Reef or Mindarie, further up the coast, but not at one of the leading tourist attractions. I really feel sorry for the people of Western Australia. Over 5 000 people signed a petition.

Mr Dean: When you go down to the beach, do you wear your sandals and socks?

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Bunbury should ask the same question of the member for Cockburn, because he is the same as me. If I were a really sensitive person, I would say that that remark is a little bit racist, but I will not.

Mr Logan: Have you ever used the water slide?

Mr JOHNSON: I might have done, when it was first opened, but my grandchildren love the water slides, and the beach.

Mr Logan: My understanding is that the Acting Speaker (Ms Hodson-Thomas) has used the water slide.

Mr JOHNSON: She is a little bit younger than me, and looks better in a swimming costume than I do, so I am not surprised. The member for Carine and I have been down there together on occasions, although not down the water slide. We have spent some time down at the Hillarys Boat Harbour looking at the problems there. We were also there when we sponsored the local drug action group, which has used the water slides to raise money for drug awareness. There has been a lot of community use of the marina for genuine purposes. It is a great facility.

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I will say a bit more about the lack of planning sense in putting a government building with about 160 workers on a prime site like this, when there is already a drastic lack of car parking spaces. The car parking area cannot spread anywhere else, unless multistorey car parking buildings are constructed, and nobody wants that. The member for Riverton thinks it is a good idea, but I do not think it is. The people in my area would not want it.

Mr Hyde: What about using public transport, such as a spur line from the railway?

Mr JOHNSON: That is fine, the Opposition looked at that when in government, and I will come to it in a moment. I suggested the ferry be moved from one side to the other, because it was causing a problem. People were parking in the southern car park, which is where the minister's spokesman seems to think the building will go. That shows a total lack of knowledge of this area.

Mr Hyde: The journalist may have got it wrong.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not think so, because this almost certainly came from a press release. That is the way government ministers work. It all comes out in press releases from the spin doctors. Let us not dive into that, because who sent out the press release is irrelevant. My point is the massive lack of car parking, which I have been attempting to address for the past two years. The marina was built for one million visitors a year, and it now gets three and a half to four million. The bubble must burst somewhere. The problem is that there is nowhere for the marina to expand into, unless more of the ocean is reclaimed, which is very costly. I would not mind that. I would support that. The only other option currently being looked at is to encroach into the Whitford nodes. The Whitford nodes are quite well known in my area, and are preserved. My predecessor, Pam Beggs, did a lot of work in protecting the Whitford nodes, and I have always acknowledged that work.

What are we going to do? The Government is encroaching into it already. Part of the additional car parking area is going into that area. I am told it will not encroach on any good bushland and the planned area to be used is not part of the Whitfords nodes; it is bordering on the northern end of the car and trailer car park. The number of cars that it can accommodate will be limited. I want to know where all the people who use their boats in summer will park their cars and trailers. There will be a shortage of car and trailer parking. Not only will there be building on a third of the land, some of the land may be given over to ordinary car parking on weekends. I am right in saying that if a person has a boat and trailer, he is more likely to use them on a weekend rather than during the week, unless he is retired. The weekends are the busy times. It will be an absolute disaster.

Mr O'Gorman: People can launch their boats at Ocean Reef - there is plenty of parking.

Ms Guise: My electorate has plenty of coastline; we can conduct a bidding war.

Mr JOHNSON: My colleague the member for Wanneroo said she would be happy to have the facility in her electorate. I would be happy to see it go to the northern coastline of that electorate. It has to go somewhere that is not already in high demand. That is the reverse of what the Government is doing. The Government is putting it in a high demand area. I have already said that my Government made a mistake; it was pushed by the bureaucrats.

Mr Whitely: Not the bureaucrats again!

Mr JOHNSON: Let me tell the member -

Ms Hodson-Thomas: It was driven by the Department of Fisheries; we all know that.

Mr JOHNSON: Of course it was.

Ms Hodson-Thomas: The fisheries research laboratory is in my electorate at North Beach. It is an appropriate site.

Mr JOHNSON: That facility has been working well for many years. The samples taken show good quality water. The only problem is the restricted car parking. The facility is getting a bit old.

Mr Whitely interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: If the member were running or working at that establishment where would he rather be? Would he rather work in a stand-alone facility south of Hillarys marina where the only opportunity to eat is at a local lunch bar or would he rather be at Sorrento Quay with a choice of 20 restaurants? Sorrento Quay has a beautiful walkway and many facilities. I know where I would rather be.

Mr Whitely: I am sure the businesses would rather have the facility there as well.

Mr JOHNSON: Of course they would provided there is not a detrimental effect on car parking, which would impact on visitors and other people using the facilities. Businesspeople want as many customers in the

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restaurants and shops as possible. Of course they do. They do not want to lose one-third of the boat and trailer parking area, which will diminish the overall number of parking spaces.

Mr Hyde: The member's Government put the Department of Fisheries on a profit-making basis.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not know all the details of that. I will be honest about that. I know that it looked at having a small cafe. Why would it want that? Hillarys marina has about 20 or 30 of them already.

Mr Hyde: The member said visitors took about three hours to walk around to the other side of the marina for a coffee.

Mr JOHNSON: I did not say that. Do not put words in my mouth. I was answering the member's interjection when he said that fisheries had wanted to make some money out of its activities.

Mr Hyde: Profit making.

Mr JOHNSON: Maybe it did. It would have some income if it ran a cafe. Should fisheries be competing with private enterprise in the restaurant business? Do members opposite see that as core government business? I certainly do not.

Mr Hyde: The member's Government put profit making -

Mr JOHNSON: No. The member is drawing a very long bow. He is trying to sidetrack me.

Mr Hyde: What else happens in the member's electorate?

Mr JOHNSON: Lots of things.

Mr Hyde: Tell us.

Mr JOHNSON: I am talking about something that is worth \$15 million.

Mr Dean: That is chickenfeed in Bunbury.

Mr JOHNSON: Chickenfeed in Bunbury! That is because he is a government member and the Government is trying to shore up his vote for the next election. The Government will pour money into that electorate, as Labor Governments always do. It will shore up all the marginal seats. The Government is getting the bad news over and done with in the budget. It is three years from an election. Next year the budget will be mediocre. What will happen in the last year? The Government will give money away like Father Christmas. I assure members of that. The Government will be desperate to hang on to the marginal seats.

I have almost finished speaking about the Department of Fisheries at Hillarys. There are a few other things that I want the House to be aware of. The Government is trying to pacify businesspeople in the area. The newspaper article states -

"Businesses at the boat harbour will benefit from having 160 Fisheries staff using the facility and additional parking spaces during the weekend," she said.

There will be no additional parking space at weekends. There will be a net overall loss of parking space when boats and trailers are taken into account. The three-hour time limit will also have a detrimental effect. Sorrento Quay is often so busy that a person will spend more than three hours just visiting a restaurant. Many of the restaurants are booked out, especially in summer. It is easy to spend more than three hours there. Those people will be clobbered with parking fines because they will go over the time limit.

Mr Hyde: Businesses often approach councils requesting three-hour time limits because they need the turnover in parking spaces. They do not want people parking for 12 hours at a time.

Mr JOHNSON: This is a unique situation. It is not like a normal shopping centre. Businesses want to see the ferry terminal moved from one side of the marina to the other. They also want more public transport. It is something I have promoted for a long time. The analysis was conducted outside normal peak periods. As such, there were not as many ferry users. The anonymous spokesman from the Department for Planning and Infrastructure said -

... a parking study had shown few people parked their cars for the day when using the ferry to Rottnest. Most people were dropped off at the terminal.

When was the analysis conducted? It was done outside the peak period. People visit Rottnest much more during summer than they do in winter. That is the busy period. It does not take a lot of common sense to realise that.

Mr McRae interjected.

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Mr JOHNSON: The member for Riverton has great problems in understanding simple business techniques, including the flow of people to Rottnest. He has a lot of trouble in a lot of areas. Normally, I would have to draw pictures to get the message through to him.

Mr Watson: Is the member able to back up his claims?

Mr JOHNSON: It is my electorate. I would not question the member about things in his electorate. That is a silly thing to say. I have a lot of time for the member for Albany; he is sensible compared with the members sitting near him. The dynamic duo is sitting together again!

Mr Hyde: Does your entry in *Who's Who* include ferry spotting in your list of hobbies?

Mr JOHNSON: That is silly. Commonsense dictates that more people go on holiday from December to February. I know people who park their cars there for the entire day. I do not oppose some parking limits, but three-hour limits will have a detrimental effect on the families who want to use the nearby beaches. I know that some of the member for Perth's constituents use the area, because I have seen the names on the petitions.

Mr Hyde: I have been there myself.

Mr JOHNSON: The member does not have children or grandchildren. People take their children and grandchildren there because it is safe. The member probably goes there to enjoy the restaurants, as I do when I am not with my family. That is great.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The member should try the dark slide - it is very scary. The kids love it. At the moment they can get a day pass, but they will have a problem in future. It is a fantastic facility. Families love it because they can have fun all day. What will they do if a three-hour parking limit is introduced?

Mr McRae: Are you talking about the safe beach or the one outside?

Mr JOHNSON: I am talking about the safe beach. It is adjacent to the slides. It is known as the family beach because it is the safest beach in Western Australia.

Mr Hyde: The slide is run as a private business.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not care who owns it. I am thinking of the families that go there and the inconvenience that a three-hour parking limit will cause.

Mr Hyde: Businesses are responsible for providing parking.

Mr JOHNSON: They pay for those parking spaces. Any new business is required to provide parking spaces or to pay for them. The Labor Party was in government when that facility was established. It is a great development; I take my hat off to it. My only criticism of it is that allowances were not made for growth. The operators should have predicted that it would get bigger and bigger. It did not attract one million visitors during its first year of operation; it took three or four years to reach that figure. It now attracts three or four million people a year. One way to address that situation is not to build the Department of Fisheries facility at that site.

Mr McRae: It does not attract four million patrons yet.

Mr JOHNSON: The figure is three and a half million a year, and by next summer it will be four million. The problem is the time it takes to move in and out of the car park. It can take an hour and a half to get out of that facility on a summer's evening because of the crowds of people. It can also be difficult to find a seat in a restaurant at the marina.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It is fantastic, but we need to cater for that. The Government has not done that; it has caused a bigger blight -

Mr McRae: Didn't you do that?

Mr JOHNSON: No, this Government did it. The Labor Party promised during the election campaign that it would not go ahead if an analysis proved it would not work.

Mr McRae: Didn't your Government do it?

Mr JOHNSON: I wish the member would not be silly, because he demeans himself.

I will now refer to the brief statement delivered by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure last week. She said that an analysis had been completed and that the building would go ahead. The funding for it is in the budget papers, which were finalised on 15 April. She was paying lip service to those 5 000 people.

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This project obviously needs much more thought. If the Government delays it, it will have \$15 million extra to spend next financial year on other major items. It should defer the decision for a couple of years. That would not have an adverse effect on the Department of Fisheries and its activities. We should closely examine the options and come up with a real solution. It might be decided that it is the wrong location. I have said in this House previously that I would welcome it at Joondalup. We need this as a stand-alone facility. We should not be relocating the facility simply to please the staff and at the expense of the general public. Why not defer it? There is no downside to deferring it for two years.

Mr Hyde: What about using the money to put a waterslide in the belltower? It has a problem with attendances.

Mr JOHNSON: Only if the member for Perth goes down it head first.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It was the Department of Fisheries' rationale.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: We have been through that. I have only four minutes left in which to speak. I have been very generous to members opposite. I have taken their inane interjections, as I normally do.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I want to refer to the Government's dreadful industrial relations legislation and the impact it will have on the public and businesspeople of Western Australia. Members opposite go along to caucus meetings and behave like lemmings. They are told what to do and they cannot cross the floor.

Mr O'Gorman: When have you ever crossed the floor?

Mr JOHNSON: Even if they do not agree, they cannot cross the floor. If they do, it is bye, bye. The union movement, which controls 60 per cent of the preselection votes, will send them on their way. Some of them may be packing their bags anyway, because the unions are not happy with them.

When it is eventually passed in the other place, this Government's industrial relations legislation will cause mayhem for small businesses. It will lead to bankruptcies and rampant unemployment, particularly for young people and those who work at weekends. Many women want to look after their children during the week while their husbands go to work. However, they also want to work on the weekends for extra money. Some restaurant operators have said that they will impose a 10 per cent surcharge on meals served at weekends.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It will be an extra 10 per cent to pay the increased wages that will result from this legislation.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It will be more than 10 per cent. They will add 10 per cent, which will be also be subject to the goods and services tax. If members opposite are happy to pay more than 10 per cent extra for meals in restaurants, that is fine. They are obviously prepared to do that. Constituents will condemn members opposite for their short-sighted views. They slide up to the union movement and let it have its way. This Government has set the State back 20 or 30 years and it is going backwards all the time. The Government has given power to the union movement. The unions run this Government, not the government members. Backbenchers are just voting fodder in the caucus room and they will stay like that until the next election, when this State will get a good Government back again.

DR WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [11.20 am]: I draw members' attention to some concerns I have with the Government's mode of operation. The Government does not seem to base its planning decisions on a full needs assessment in different areas. Instead, it appears to be setting short-term objectives rather than considering the long-term goals for Western Australia.

[Quorum formed.]

Dr WOOLLARD: The Government has planned a program that will limit future government spending. From reading the newspapers this week, we know that big businesses are very pleased with that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Edwards): I am having great difficulty hearing the member for Alfred Cove and I am sure the Hansard reporter is too. I request that members take their conversations outside.

Dr WOOLLARD: The Government is planning to make ends meet. However, it is more important that the Government spend taxpayers' money with integrity than that it balance the budget. It should ensure that the money is spent wisely by investing it in our future. The money should not be spent for short-term objectives, including icons that will last after ministers have left office. The money should be spent for the benefit of all

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Western Australians. As an Independent, I must ask whether the money is being spent wisely. The community would not be too concerned if the Government overspent but invested its money wisely for the future. However, the community would be concerned if the Government overspent on areas that did not benefit the whole community; for example, on icons. The railway line might prove to be an icon for this Government. The community would not forget or forgive the Government if it wasted money in that way.

Mr McRae: What are you talking about?

Dr WOOLLARD: I am talking about the way the Government spends taxpayers' money. The Government wants to build a railway line down the freeway. How many people want it? I know that the member for Riverton would like to see a loop across the east-west corridor. Most people who live down south would prefer a loop across the east-west corridor. Why not extend the railway line, which currently goes from Fremantle to Ennis Road, to Rockingham? Why not go from west to east and link Fremantle with Murdoch and Curtin Universities and then go to the line that will connect to the city, or travel down to Armadale? Why is the loop not being built east to west? The railway line must be built where people live, not on the side of the river.

Mr McRae: The member has made a good point. From the discussions held in the south metropolitan region, she would know that the member for Southern River and I and, to a lesser extent, the member for Roleystone, because he is a member of the east metropolitan region, have argued that the southern railway spine is not the final answer to the transport needs of the people in the south metropolitan region. However, we cannot solve the south metropolitan transport needs without that southern urban railway spine. The railway spine offers the chance to build an integrated network of public transport. Without that spine running in a north-south line, we will never be able to get the east-west integration links that we want.

Ms MacTiernan: Is the member for Alfred Cove aware of where the development is occurring? Is she aware of the new suburbs that are developing around the freeway?

Dr WOOLLARD: I am aware of the suburbs around the southern freeway, but I have also considered what has happened in other States and other countries. They are not turning back the clock 30 or 40 years and using heavy rail; they are using light rail and hybrid trains -

Ms MacTiernan: Can the member name one place that has a light rail that services a distance of 70 kilometres?

Dr WOOLLARD: Melbourne and New South Wales are moving to light rail now. They agree that heavy rail is a thing of the past. Rather than listening to transport engineers who are considering the needs of the future, the minister is listening to bureaucrats who have been in the department for however many years. Hybrid trains can travel on normal roads and they do not take such long distances to travel around corners.

Ms MacTiernan: I was involved with the light rail action group in the 1980s; I understand those issues. We must have a rail system that can compete with the motor vehicle. People cannot be moved for 70 kilometres on a light rail system. The trains would not run at 100 kilometres an hour. The member should consider what is happening in Singapore and Hong Kong. There is a difference between the roles of mass transit and light rail. Light rail, rather than the mass transit system, is used for local and short-distance travel. As the member for Riverton said, heavy rail is needed for the transport spine, and a light rail or hybrid system can be incorporated into it.

Dr WOOLLARD: I congratulate the Government on what it has done to preserve our old-growth forests as defined under the Regional Forest Agreement. How can the Government be so visionary on environment and heritage matters down south yet plan to add to the terrible decision that was made 20 or 30 years ago to put the freeway alongside the river? It does not make sense to further destroy the river foreshore.

Mr McRae interjected.

Dr WOOLLARD: It can. The Government will put a railway line down the freeway. The freeway area will get bigger. The Government should have spoken with the Liberal Party. It should have realised that it should not destroy the river foreshore, and decided to take the line underground.

Mr Whitely: Are you talking about the bit between the southbound and the northbound freeways?

Dr WOOLLARD: The Government is wasting money putting the line down the freeway when it should be developing our regional centres. How many people want to come to Perth? People in Rockingham utilise Fremantle. The minister's area of Armadale should be developed and provided with all the resources to become a regional centre. People do not want to come to town. The Government will force everyone to use central Perth.

Mr McRae: I make one more point about the South Perth problem. I agree that in the long term there may need to be some sort of penalty or disincentive for private car transport into the central business district. If you accept

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that that is a long-term proposition, and that in the absence of any alternatives the volume of traffic on the freeway to the south will only get heavier, you must also accept that the only way to alleviate those pressures is to put in place a heavy-rail, high-volume, high-speed transit system. It is not a matter of destroying the South Perth foreshore.

Dr WOOLLARD: It will destroy the foreshore.

Mr McRae: It has been destroyed already. The only way that we could alleviate further destruction -

Dr WOOLLARD: There was nothing wrong with the Kenwick loop.

Mr McRae: It would not work.

Dr WOOLLARD: If the Government wants to improve transport, it should think about light rail. It should not use heavy rail. I will come back to transport later. I also want to discuss some environmental issues and concerns. I congratulate the Government for saving some of the old-growth forests. However, it has saved only that which was defined in the Regional Forest Agreement. At the last election, people thought that the Labor Party intended to save all the old-growth forests. Trees that are hundreds of years old are being logged and taken out of the old-growth forests every day. Until those high-conservation areas are protected, this Government will have not kept its promise. Obviously, I would not be standing here today if the Liberal Government had not failed to listen. I again congratulate the Labor Party for its stance on the forests, but ask the Government to fulfil the promise it made at the last election; that is, to also preserve the high-conservation value forests.

Another environmental concern relates to the Forest Products Commission. I believe that the Forest Products Commission is incompetent and that the pine plantations in the south are being mismanaged. It is questionable whether the forestry workers are replacing all that is being harvested. It is not a new problem. It is the result of a state agreement Act that was signed before this Government came to power and was renewed just prior to the Liberal Party losing government. A schedule of that agreement between the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Wespine Industries Pty Ltd and Sotico Pty Ltd contains a formula that suggests that there has been a significant underpricing of the logs, which is in turn causing considerable financial losses to the State. I believe that the minister and the Government should be accountable for those losses because part of their promise was to create new jobs in the plantation timber industry. They said that last year something like 1 000 new jobs would be created. I will be interested to hear next week in the estimates committee how many of those jobs have been created. An independent contractor, Pempine Pty Ltd, last week had to close because it was being given only low-grade sawlogs. More people are now out of work. I believe that because the Government made election commitments to create more jobs in the plantation timber industry, it must look at what is happening in the south west.

The Government promised to create more jobs through ecotourism. The newspaper this week contained a report about a forum advocating cultural ecotourism. Associate Professor Ross Dowling told the conference that it will be very difficult to improve ecotourism opportunities because CALM is insufficiently resourced to cope in this area. The forests and the pine plantations are being mismanaged, and it will be a long while before ecotourism increases. The Conservation Council this week said that most, if not all, of the environmental agencies have had funding cuts.

Mr Dean: The logs Pempine was cutting were from private plantations, not state plantations.

Dr WOOLLARD: The contractors working in the state plantations are not replanting the same number they are harvesting. They are not thinning the plantations. They are mismanaging them. Magnificent old-growth trees are still being chopped down. Small mills are being forced to close. Not enough pine plantations are being developed, and there are few opportunities to create jobs in the plantation industry. The dream of old-growth forests that are not logged and a thriving ecotourism industry is starting to become something of a pipedream.

I was going to address the issues of transport separately; however, I believe that we have discussed most of the points I wanted to raise. However, when the minister was here, I did not mention that she often says in this place that she is defending the battlers. I think that the cross loop from the west coast towards Armadale and the railway line from Perth to Armadale would do more to support the battlers than the archaic proposal for heavy rail down the freeway. I wonder if the bureaucrats who advise the Government have told it how many people living in South Perth, Como, Applecross and Mt Pleasant will leave their cars and catch this train into Perth.

I have some concerns about health care. I am pleased that this budget has increased funding for that area. However, in the last year the community has not seen any improvement in the standard of care. The Minister for Health and the Government have spoken about training extra nurses, just as they spoke last year in their election commitments about bringing on board more police. However, what good is there in training people? I brought this matter to the minister's attention when he referred to "training" people, because with nurses now going to

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university, we are no longer training people, but rather we are educating them. What good is it to encourage more people to take up nursing as a career when they are entering a work force in which salaries and conditions are still poor? Rather than encourage more people to take up nursing as a profession, the Government must do a needs assessment to find out what is wrong with the system. Why are nurses constantly leaving? There are problems with the system. The Government should be considering this rather than the short-term objective of bringing on board more nurses.

Mr O'Gorman: You continue to talk about the shortage of nurses. We must keep bringing them in and educating them. They must be promoted to do that -

Dr WOOLLARD: But that does not encourage more nurses to stay in nursing, and it is the same with the police. The Government must encourage the nurses once in the profession to stay in it by ensuring that their working conditions are suitable. This Government is not doing that.

Mr O'Gorman: This Government has taken action in the two years that it has been in office. The nurses have come to an agreement with the Government and are working away on that agreement.

Dr WOOLLARD: They may be working away on it, but it is not doing the job. The nurses are trying to bring themselves up to par. There is a worldwide shortage of nurses. What Western Australia must do to counter this is improve conditions for nurses in Western Australia and make those conditions better than those elsewhere so that rather than lose nurses to the eastern States, America or wherever, we attract them.

Mr Watson: From what other part of the health budget would you take the money to fund this?

Dr WOOLLARD: I will tell the member where that money could come from. I am pleased that the federal Government has put more money into aged care and has increased the salaries of aged care nurses. What can the State Government do to balance that contribution to aged care? Many patients who require nursing in the area of aged care develop medical and sometimes surgical conditions that require not just basic nursing skills, but advanced nursing skills -

Mr Watson: Aged care nurses are still poorly paid.

Dr WOOLLARD: The member asked about saving money so he should listen to the answer and then ask more questions.

The aged care patients who are transferred to public hospitals become more confused and suffer more because they are in hospital. When a nursing home seeks to transfer a patient to a public hospital bed, the Government could use an agency, such as Silver Chain, to send out the equivalent of a nurse practitioner - a nurse with extra clinical skills - to that nursing home to run through the nursing procedures that are required to keep that elderly person in the nursing home. That would save the Government a lot of money in the public health system. It is not the case that things cannot be done, but an assessment should be carried out to see where savings can be made so that that money can be put into other areas.

Mr Watson: Even though aged care nurses are on the federal award, it is still not enough. We cannot get people in Albany to work under those conditions because there is not enough money there for them. The solution is not to give them a couple of extra dollars. These people probably work harder than the nurses in the hospital. The mere pittance they get is nothing and it will not do anything to encourage them to stay in the profession.

Dr WOOLLARD: The Government could review the education of nurses. Whatever the award rates might be, we should be making these nurses proud. We should make them gerontology nurses and put on special courses for them to give them extra skills. We should consider how we can give them job satisfaction.

I will now briefly talk about disability services. Many families in my electorate are desperately seeking accommodation for their disabled sons, daughters or parents. There are not enough places available for these people. I have asked the Government to consider converting Duncraig House into a centre of excellence for the disabled. The former nurses quarters would be an excellent site. Many people who have family members with disabilities have said that they would like to see that idea progressed to fruition. I have discussed this with the Government, which indicated it would cost something like \$700 000 for six respite beds. The Government is not keen on converting Duncraig House. However, if I can obtain funding assistance from the private sector and the Government can provide funds to people with disabilities, the disabled in the community will then have a choice of where they receive care. I am hopeful that we will be able to progress this idea and help people with disabilities.

Mr O'Gorman: Do you support current revenue measures that the Government is introducing in this budget?

Dr WOOLLARD: I do not support this budget and will not do so until my questions on various matters have been answered next week.

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Mr O'Gorman interjected.

Dr WOOLLARD: I have concerns about the education sector. Every parent in Western Australia would have looked forward to the Government's promise to ensure that all government schools are properly maintained and provided with the best facilities. One might ask how the Government implemented that plan? In my electorate it cut \$450 000 from the Fremantle Education District Office budget. This year a high school in my area with 1 400 students has submitted maintenance requirements that come to more than the \$450 000 that was cut in last year's budget. Some children refuse to go into the toilets at schools in my electorate because the toilets are smelly and leak. Children will hold on all day for various reasons, rather than use the school toilets. Another school in my electorate was promised a covered assembly area last August. It was a priority 1 project. In September, that work was downgraded to priority 2. In the winter months the children sit out in the rain to eat their lunch or morning tea and in the summer months they sit out in the sun. The Government's promises for education were very good. Although the schools in my area are older schools, they should not be disadvantaged because of that. Those children are just as important as children in other schools.

I also raise the issue of stamp duty. Last year the Government wisely decided not to introduce the premium property tax, but it has now decided to slug home buyers with an increase in stamp duty. The housing industry has really helped Western Australia over the past 12 months. Why has the Government decided to introduce a duty that will hurt the average working-class person who must scrape together money to put a deposit on a home? If the Government is going to introduce this stamp duty, it might have been better planning and a more sensible decision to perhaps exempt home buyers who are purchasing homes worth up to \$200 000 or \$250 000.

Finally, I refer to the Government's Planning Appeals Amendment Bill 2001, which went through this House last year and is now before the Council. If this legislation is passed in its present form, every man, woman, child and community group in Western Australia will be outraged. This is a good example of a Government that set out with good intentions but has failed to implement its promises.

Mr D'Orazio: Is there anything that we have done well?

Dr WOOLLARD: Yes. I have congratulated the Government on a number of things.

This legislation does not allow a third party the right of appeal in the planning process. It restricts those privileges to councils and developers, which have the resources to argue their cases strongly.

Mr McRae: Do you know why that is?

Dr WOOLLARD: I ask the member for Riverton to explain to me the rationale behind excluding third parties.

Mr McRae: It is not a matter of excluding them.

Dr WOOLLARD: It is. Third parties are being excluded. This Bill went to a special committee of the Council, whose role was to consider the right of third party appeals. The members of that committee were told that this Bill was important and that the Government did not have time for it to look at third party appeals, even though most of the submissions on this Bill discussed the pros or cons of third party appeals. That committee did not look at those submissions. The committee produced a report, but Hon Dee Margetts and Hon John Fischer also produced a minority report to point out that it had been a waste of time sending the Bill to that committee. The Bill went to the committee following a motion by Hon Jim Scott to have the right of third party appeals assessed. That assessment was not made by the committee. That was a waste of taxpayers' money.

Mr McRae: That is nonsense. Do you understand that the Planning Appeals Amendment Bill, as it was presented to the Legislative Assembly, was a package that had been agreed between ratepayer groups, local government and the State Government? Do you understand that it was an agreed package?

Dr WOOLLARD: How many ratepayer groups were involved? Currently, councils and developers have their say. Community groups that might not want to see development along the foreshore, or parks sold off or mobile towers erected have no say. This Government said that it would govern for all. This is not governing for all or being democratic.

Mr McRae: I understand the argument the member is putting. I am asking her to recognise that the Planning Appeals Amendment Bill was introduced because that package of reforms was agreed. There was one very important omission, which was acknowledged in this House when I raised a grievance with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure two months ago. I know that the member for Alfred Cove is here most of the time, but I do not think she was in the House on that occasion. The third party appeal right is a matter of such high contention and such bad law-making in States in which it has been introduced, where it has become a lawyers feast, that many parts of the community were concerned that the introduction of a third party appeal right in the planning appeal package that was being put to this Parliament would cause the whole package to fall apart. The

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minister said at the time of my grievance that this Government needed to move forward with planning appeals reform and that the reform process should not be held up while we resolved the disparate and competing interests around third party appeal rights. I think that is good law-making. You need to acknowledge that.

Dr WOOLLARD: I ask the minister to give a commitment that this Government will look at third party appeal rights and give the community an avenue to appeal.

Ms MacTiernan: I do not know where you were when these statements were made, but I have made it very clear, on many occasions, that I will do precisely that. If opposition members in the upper House had not, in an absurdly obstructive way, held up that planning appeals legislation, it is likely that such an inquiry would have been under way already. I have made it very clear at a number of local government and planning forums that once the new legislation and revised tribunal have been up and running for six months, which would give us time to see how they operate and how the right to be heard impacts, we will look at this issue. I do not know whether the member for Riverton explained this point, but one problem that has been found with third party appeal rights is that rival developers will fund bogus action groups to thwart their commercial rivals. That has been a very real problem. I understand that there is an issue here. I have indicated to my agencies that I want them to research this matter and assess the frequency of third party appeals in the different models that are in place in other States. It might not open the floodgates; however, we need the data. That is what the Government has said that it will do. It will be the same as was done with ministerial appeals. A forum will be held with the development industry, lawyers, regulators, community groups and environmental groups. They will come together, as they did with the ministerial appeals issue. We will deliberate on the issue and find out whether we can work our way through to a consensus. If we can do that, I will of course be happy to proceed with third party appeals. It is a complex issue and we cannot proceed down that path without having first gone into proper interactive consultation with the various players.

Dr WOOLLARD: Once again, I am pleased to hear that the Government intends to move on third party appeals. I assure the minister that I will give the Government as much support as I can. I am sure that many conservation and local community groups will also work with the Government, because they will be keen to have such rights introduced sooner rather than later.

Ms MacTiernan: The member will find much opposition, particularly in her electorate, because many people are subdividing their blocks and building enormous federation mansions. They will now be subject to the lodging of third party appeals by discontented neighbours. The member must be aware that within her community many ordinary punters of the blue persuasion will not be terribly happy with such a development.

Dr WOOLLARD: I am aware of such people. However, I will happily work with the minister to introduce the measures.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Edwards): The member for Alfred Cove has been taking interjections, and, in doing so, she is well within her rights. However, I ask that she address her comments through the Chair as there have been too many conversations across the Chamber, making it difficult for the Hansard reporter.

Dr WOOLLARD: I will attend the budget sessions next week. I believe that the appropriation Bill must be good for our community, but I will be asking questions to ensure that that is the case. The community needs to know that its taxes are being wisely spent and whether a proper needs assessment has been or will be performed prior to the planning and implementation of any of the Government's initiatives.

MR D'ORAZIO (Ballajura) [12.04 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution to the budget second reading debate. I am especially pleased to be making my contribution today because it is public education day. The Ballajura Community College celebrated this by holding a public education day function, which I attended this morning, where I highlighted the fact that the Government is allocating an extra \$442 to each child in the public education system. This is a fantastic indication of the Government's commitment to public education. If members ever need an example of the effectiveness of public education, Ballajura Community College is a great example. Between 30 and 40 of the students' parents attended the function. They were interested to look at the college's facilities and to see their children's output. They were all impressed with Ballajura Community College. They were also impressed with public education in general, and its impact on the community. In the past few days, we have talked about capital and how it is necessary for investment and future wealth. The Government's extra \$442 for each child in the public education system is a great contribution towards the community's infrastructure. The kids will reap the benefits from this move, and, as a result, so too will the State, when today's children make their contributions to the community in later life.

Funding for education has increased by 5.7 per cent, and that is fantastic. The new programs - such as the introduction of 347 primary teachers to reduce class sizes and the additional numeracy and literacy classes - form a package that will help improve the education process. I am sure that the Minister for Education's proposed

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reforms will ensure that public education has pride of place in Western Australia, and that it will produce a high calibre of community member for the future. Education is not just about the ability to read and write; our public education process also helps to create a total human being.

I will now talk about an aspect of the budget to which I also referred in my maiden speech. As has been pointed out by some members of the bureaucracy, it is not often that a member is able to say that a program to which he referred in his maiden speech has come to fruition. Last Friday, the Government launched restart. Restart is a program that will assist families who, through no fault of their own, for reasons such as changing employment circumstances, face enormous pressures in meeting their mortgage repayments. When I made my maiden speech, I spoke about the circumstances of one of my constituents. He had been working for a number of years but had lost his job, and had been unemployed for six months. He was facing the possibility of losing his home because he had a \$50 000 mortgage, and there was no way he could meet his mortgage repayments. The restart program is a great initiative. I thank the Minister for Housing and Works, Hon Tom Stephens. I also thank Homeswest, particularly Greg Joyce and John Coles. In conjunction with my office, they assisted in formulating the restart proposal. I also thank the financial advisers who provided us with the necessary statistics and support to launch the restart package. The statistics they provided revealed that about 3 000 families would benefit from the restart program. Moreover, there will be a flow-on effect from the program, because losing a home obviously means changes for a family. For example, a child might have to change schools if the family has to move to another area, and the family might need rental assistance, thereby becoming a burden on the State. Restart is a great initiative and another plank in the Government's platform of keeping people in their own homes. Restart is about using the equity in the homes of people who are unemployed and who are having difficulty meeting their mortgage repayments. Through Keystart, the program allows Homeswest to take over people's mortgages after they have met certain criteria. The program is especially targeted towards people whose properties have a value of between \$150 000 and \$190 000. Also, the home owners must have at least 20 per cent equity in their properties. To be eligible, people must show that they have been employed for the past three years, and that their employment was terminated through no fault of their own. Having met such criteria, they are in a position to ask Keystart to take over their mortgage loan repayments. The repayments are then targeted to 25 per cent of their income. The 25 per cent can include their unemployment benefits, and this will remove a huge amount of financial pressure from families in this situation. Twenty-five per cent of their income is probably less than what they would pay in rent. Restart is a pilot scheme. Initially, relief will be provided for 12 months. At the end of the 12 months, the home owners may be able to start paying greater amounts because they have found work -

Ms Radisich: Member for Ballajura, I wonder where the Opposition is?

Mr D'ORAZIO: I thank the member for Swan Hills.

The mortgage support scheme is proposed to last for 12 months. The research showed that most people who become unemployed are able to find employment within nine months. The period of 12 months was chosen because it seemed to fit the situation of the bulk of the people who are affected. At the end of twelve months, if they have not found work, the hard decision to sell the property must be faced. That may seem harsh, but the reality is that if the scheme had not been in place, the property would have had to be sold much earlier. The good part of the scheme is that, if the unemployed person obtains a job, he or she is then eligible for the Keystart program, which provides a better package for paying off the mortgage. It is a refinancing scheme. The equity in the house is used to get the person over that initial period, but the scheme has a social benefit for the whole community in taking pressure of those families. Because it is Keystart, there is flexibility, and at some later date, if the scheme is successful, the support period may be extended for two years.

In the final possible scenario, which is not currently envisaged as part of the scheme but which the community should consider, Keystart could buy the property and allow the person to retain some equity in it. It is a shared equity arrangement, so that the family stays in its own home, pays some rent and retains its equity. It is a bit like the scheme floated in the federal Parliament as part of the Labor Party platform - a different form of shared equity housing. This is a precursor of something quite exciting. Some families in the community will never be able to afford to own their own properties, irrespective of the size of their mortgage. There may be a possibility of a shared equity between the State and individuals. This would give people the incentive and the support to take ownership of their asset. This has a number of benefits. It is more cost effective for the State to keep a person in his or her own home than to spend money on rent assistance. Rent assistance is money that the Government is giving to a developer or landlord. The money then disappears out of the system. Why cannot some of the money being used as rent assistance be used to move more people into home ownership, albeit not total ownership? Some people will never be in a position to own the property outright, because they do not earn enough money, but they can have shared equity. That is a type of saving, because property and land values have escalated dramatically. Western Australia is in a prime position to help provide for the retirement of some of

these people. Currently, the mean price of a house and land package is \$150 000. Let us compare this with the situation in Sydney. In 10 to 15 years time, when the land values of Perth catch up with those of Sydney, the mean value in Perth will be \$300 000 or \$400 000. If people can have this shared equity, they will benefit from the increased property value, which can be used for their retirement, their families, or as a legacy to their children when they pass away.

It is important that the Government look at this proposal, and I am thankful that Homeswest has provided the restart safety net. It is a start in providing a further level of assistance to those people in the community who really need it. It comes at a time when the pressure is really on the family. There is nothing worse than when a worker who has worked for a number of years becomes unemployed. There is a social stigma in being unemployed, and a stigma for the whole family when it must move to another suburb because it cannot afford the mortgage. I thank Homeswest and the minister for having the fortitude to accept this challenge. It is only a pilot program, but \$10 million has been allocated through Homeswest to support it. I would like to see it further expanded to take in shared equity between Homeswest and people who cannot afford their own home. They may be able to afford 20 to 50 per cent of the ownership of their property, sharing the equity with Homeswest.

It is fantastic that the Government is contributing a lot more money to health. As Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, along with other members who have spoken to this Chamber, I have seen many possible ways of improving the health service. I will not talk about those things today, because they are part of the committee process, and the committee will report to the House in due course. I would like to draw attention to a matter that arose this week, which should be of great concern to everyone, although no-one has yet picked it up. The federal Government has announced a decline of 0.6 per cent in the amount of bulk-billing under Medicare in the last quarter. That represents 2.5 million claims in that quarter, which means that in a year there have been 10 million fewer bulk-billing claims. Some would say that people are now having to make a co-payment. That is true in some degree, but the people in the community who can least afford to pay are facing a dilemma. If they cannot afford to see a general practitioner, they will go to the emergency department at a state hospital.

The federal Government has been paranoid about the States cost-shifting to the federal Government, but this is cost-shifting by stealth to the State Government. Even if only 10 per cent of that bulk-billing reduction were shifted into the state health system, that represents one million claims. We must take into account not only the \$26 that the doctor actually charges to Medicare, but also the cost of a prescription. We do not know the number of patients who have transferred to one of the state emergency departments, but we are trying to find out. I will take the example of a single cholesterol-reducing drug. A prescription might be written by a general practitioner as part of the \$26 consultation. The drug costs \$90, but for the people on a concession, the cost of filling the prescription will be only \$4. Patients at emergency departments are given drugs under the state health system.

Mr Johnson: Are you saying that a drug like fluvastatin, for reducing cholesterol, would cost \$90?

Mr D'ORAZIO: It would depend on the strength. For example, one month's supply of 80-milligram Zocor costs about \$220. That is available through the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. The decline in bulk-billing of 0.6 per cent may seem innocuous, and even if one million of those patients went to emergency departments, at the cost of \$26 per service that would be only \$26 million. Spread across Australia, that may not seem much, even though Western Australia's share would be \$2 million. When the cost of drugs, which also comes out of the state system, is taken into account, that cost may increase by three or four times. Adding ancillary services such as pathology, radiology and other services in the emergency department shows a cost-shifting arrangement which could be anything up to \$50 million to Western Australia in year.

What is really annoying from my point of view is that the federal authorities are saying that they do not want the costs shifted back to them. They do not want emergency departments managed by general practitioners as outpatient clinics because that is cost shifting to the federal Government. The Medicare reduction is cost shifting back to the States. It has been going on for a number of years but no-one has highlighted the practice. It is time we stood up and said that this is nothing short of cost shifting to the States. It is cost shifting by stealth because doctors are being forced to stop bulk-billing as the money is not enough; \$26 a visit is not enough. Doctors say they must charge a co-payment. People who cannot afford a co-payment will use the state system because it is free. It is important that we understand this and throw it back in the face of the federal authorities. We should not do that necessarily to make a political point because no-one will win from that. They must be made to understand that when the States try to shift costs back by subsidising general practitioners running outpatient emergency departments, it is re-establishing the balance. It is something that the States must look at in opposition to the federal authorities.

Public pressure is already there. The number and cost of procedures is escalating faster than inflation. That will always be the case with health because there are always new discoveries but they are very expensive. A range of fantastic drugs are now on the national health system. When they were available only through private

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prescriptions, the drugs cost three or four times as much. When a new drug is released it is not covered by the national health system. It is available only with a private prescription. New drugs are initially more expensive because the volume of turnover is much lower. If a drug costs \$200 or \$300, fewer people will buy it than if it costs \$20. The national health system is a great scheme and its subsidisation of the cost of drugs is of great benefit to many people.

Mr McNee: Does the cost have something to do with drug companies trying to recover their research and development costs?

Mr D'ORAZIO: To some degree. However, the volume is not there. If a person has to pay \$200 for cholesterol tablets, he will think twice about it. Not many people can afford \$200 a month for a drug just because it is the latest and the best. Many more people will buy it if it costs only \$20. Once a drug is registered on the national health system its rate of use is exponential. Even on the national health system, the volume of sales of a drug will help recover the research and development costs. That is a very interesting exercise in itself. Most patents for drugs last about 50 years. It is a long return time for drug companies.

Mr Johnson: The drug companies need that return to fund further research.

Mr D'ORAZIO: That is right. No-one is arguing about the benefits of the national health system. It is a great system, even with its limitations under the current budget. If people knew the real cost of what they get, they would understand that it is a great scheme.

Mr Johnson: Which budget is the member talking about?

Mr D'ORAZIO: The federal budget.

Mr Johnson: I thought the member would expound the virtues of his Government's budget.

Mr D'ORAZIO: I am. I have just spoken about education. I am highlighting health issues. I have talked about the mortgage assistance scheme. I am making the point that in health, things are happening that will have a huge impact in dollar terms on the state budget if we are not careful. Things have to be monitored but no-one has talked about the issues. Today, there has been little or no condemnation of the cost shifting from the federal arena to the States. I am talking about the Medicare rebate.

Another issue, which may seem small to some members, is the bus shelter subsidy. It is very important to the senior citizens in my electorate. I remind the member for Hillarys that his side of politics decided to cease funding for bus shelters. It was a very short-sighted decision. It was reinstated in last year's budget and it is in this year's budget. To the senior citizens in my electorate, bus shelters are one of the most important issues. In 1997, the 50-50 shared subsidy arrangement between councils and the State Government was cancelled by the previous Government. It was restored last year. This budget has allocated \$2 million for the project.

Mr Johnson: Bus shelters are a local government issue.

Mr D'ORAZIO: Public transport bus stops are a state responsibility. However, local governments also have some responsibility. The 50-50 arrangement is reasonable. I hope to get four new bus shelters in my electorate. The only thing that worries me is the cost of the shelters; it seems to have gone through the roof. When I was in local government, we could get a bus shelter for \$4 000. I have been told that they now cost as much as \$20 000. I hope the bus shelters are not gold plated! I prefer ordinary bus shelters that provide cover for people. The new shelters have to be designed to withstand graffiti. I hope someone looks at the costs involved. The cost of shelters varies from council to council as each has a different standard. It is another issue that has to be discussed.

Mr Johnson: It is something that could have been looked at by the old Department of Contract and Management Services.

Mr D'ORAZIO: We should not forget that the councils are putting in half the money. Most councils have their own standards. The City of Gosnells likes its bus shelters to have murals. The City of Perth likes to have more modern, fashionable shelters. My old council preferred standard bus shelters. It is something that has to be worked through.

Mr Johnson: The cost of the standard bus shelter cannot be \$20 000.

Mr D'ORAZIO: It is only about \$4 000. There is talk about using glass that cannot be scratched and materials that can be easily repainted. Maintenance problems have to be addressed. It is a great program and I would hate to see it ever stop. Members of this House must realise that the community regards it as an important initiative.

Mr Johnson: In three years we will continue with it.

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Mr D'ORAZIO: The member will be waiting much longer than three years. He may have the opportunity in nine years to reconsider the scheme!

Mr Johnson: We will make sure that the member's area is looked after!

Mr D'ORAZIO: I was excited by a news item I heard today about hydrogen-powered buses. I hope that development of the technology is progressed quickly so that it can be applied to cars. We will then have no pollution problems or problems trying to develop cleaner fuels. It is great technology.

Mr Logan: At the recent Detroit motor show, General Motors unveiled a hydrogen-powered car.

Mr D'ORAZIO: Fantastic! I will buy one as quickly as possible. It is great that hydrogen-powered buses and cars are being trialled. It is the future of transport. It will help the environment to a great extent.

I refer to the cross-regional railway line I proposed in my maiden speech. My old council asked me what has happened to the proposal. Once the Mandurah railway line is put to bed I would like to think that the cross-regional railway line from Wanneroo to Armadale will be examined. It needs planning as it will go down the middle of Tonkin Highway. Members of my community are still talking about it. The City of Bayswater has plans. Some working groups have been discussing ways of promoting the proposal. It is a great initiative. It probably will not happen in my lifetime but if the planning is not done today it will not happen at all.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr D'ORAZIO: We have been talking about it for a number of years. My council has done some preliminary work. The Malaga businessmen's association asked me what happened to the proposal. I know that the Mandurah railway has priority but when that is out of the way I would like the cross-regional rail proposal back on the agenda. The councils along the proposed route have agreed to work together to promote it. Whoever is sitting in this place in 20 years - hopefully I will not be - will agree that it is a necessary rail link.

Mr Johnson: I definitely won't be.

Mr D'ORAZIO: The rail link between Armadale and Wanneroo is vital. As I said, those areas will be to Perth what Parramatta is to Sydney. We will need a rail link, and we must proceed with that before too much work is done on the connection between Tonkin Highway and Reid Highway. A natural reservation in that area will enable the rail link to be constructed.

I thank the Government for its support in having Lightening Swamp transferred to the care and control of the City of Bayswater. The swamp covers 75 hectares and includes natural bushland in the vicinity of Noranda. It is bounded by Malaga Drive, Tonkin Highway and Reid Highway. I put on the record my thanks to the president of the Friends of Lightening Swamp - Kim Grace - the City of Bayswater, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and various community groups. The swamp and the surrounding bushland have now been saved. More importantly, a working plan has been developed for the area that involves the construction of walkways and viewing sites. This is a great step forward. It will ensure that the bushland is protected for the future. It will provide a natural reserve for the enjoyment of local children - such as those at Noranda Primary School. They will be able to see the ecosystem working in its natural state. We must support and foster such initiatives. I hope the Department for Planning and Infrastructure will continue to provide financial support to the City of Bayswater, which has contributed a large amount of money to make this happen.

Mr Johnson: How is Bayswater's security patrol going? You were innovative as the mayor. Is that service still working well?

Mr D'ORAZIO: It is fantastic. The feedback has been great. The new contract just signed includes new cars that have video cameras. The operators will be able to take footage of what is happening as they drive around.

Mr Johnson: Will the cameras be demountable?

Mr D'ORAZIO: They will be a permanent fixture. The operator will be able to move the camera around in the car, but it will be attached to the car. They will photograph incidents or problem areas. The council has just contracted with the Department of Education to provide the first on-call security service for schools.

Mr Johnson: The Department of Education has its own security service throughout the State.

Mr D'ORAZIO: It does. We held a community forum at Noranda Primary School at which it was pointed out that the department might have a number of security patrol cars, but they could be at Kalamunda or Wanneroo when they are required in Noranda. The travelling time from Wanneroo to Noranda could be between 20 and 40 minutes. The City of Bayswater security patrol cars could be there in three or four minutes.

Mr Johnson: What is the population of the City of Bayswater?

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Mr D'ORAZIO: It has 60 000 electors.

Mr Johnson: What area does it cover?

Mr D'ORAZIO: It is 27 square kilometres. It is a mid-range council; it is in the top 10.

Mr Johnson: It would not be hard to get from one end to the other.

Mr D'ORAZIO: No. The service has nine patrol cars covering that area. The response time is immediate or three or four minutes.

Mr Johnson: It is different from Wanneroo and Joondalup. Before that local authority was divided, the council area was enormous; even now those local government areas are the size of Singapore. It takes a long time to get from one end to the other.

Mr D'ORAZIO: It might simply be a matter of managing the resources effectively. When the patrols were introduced, the city was divided into three areas with three cars patrolling each area.

Mr Johnson: That has been done in Joondalup and Wanneroo. The Department of Education's security service personnel must travel from the northern side of Wanneroo to the southern suburbs. The service is not large enough to cover the entire metropolitan area.

Mr D'ORAZIO: Under this arrangement with the council, schools will pay about \$300 a year and will enjoy the same level of service that ratepayers enjoy. It is a great initiative. The available resources are being used very effectively. The patrols are already in the area. A number of schools have taken up the opportunity to use these security patrols as their first port of call.

Mr Johnson: It is a good idea.

Mr D'ORAZIO: It has worked well. The feedback from the parents and citizens associations has been great. Unfortunately, one-third of my constituents do not have security patrols in their council area - in particular, those in the City of Swan. I am battling to change that. Even the businessmen of Malaga say that they need security patrols.

I am pleased to tell the House that the staff establishment at Ballajura Police Station has been increased from five to 12 officers.

Mr O'Gorman: Did that happen under the Labor Government?

Mr D'ORAZIO: Yes.

Mr Johnson: How many of those police officers work in the police station? I have a theory that it is sometimes counterproductive to open too many small police stations. Each police station must be staffed. The officers working in those stations are taken off the road. Unless the establishment is increased by a substantial number, it is not always productive to open small police stations.

Mr D'ORAZIO: This involved an increase in numbers because the boundaries were rejigged. The Malaga policing region was incorporated in the Ballajura policing region, which is where it should have been. That released the extra resources for the Ballajura Police Station. It runs two shifts, 24 hours a day. It is the result of good management by this Government. Of course, the local member did not lobby!

Mr Johnson: The Treasurer said that 100 officers have graduated from the academy. He would not say how many police officers have left the service during the same period.

Mr D'ORAZIO: The member for Hillarys should take up that issue with the Treasurer in his own time. I want to finish my contribution because other members on this side want to speak. I do not want to use all the time available to me. I have already spoken for 40 minutes.

Mr Johnson: Yours has been a very good speech.

Mr Whitely interjected.

Mr Johnson: It has been a very informative speech.

Ms Radisich: Are you a friend of his?

Mr Johnson: I like him; he is a good bloke.

Mr D'ORAZIO: It worries me when the member says that. What is next?

Several members interjected.

Mr D'ORAZIO: The budget has been very well received. The feedback at my office has been fantastic. The reaction of the community is great.

Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mr Rob Johnson; Dr Janet Woollard; Deputy Speaker; Mr John D'Orazio; Mr Martin Whitely

Mr Johnson: Have people phoned you and said that it is a great budget?

Mr D'ORAZIO: No, people have come into my office and said that it is great. I talk to my constituents and I have asked them what they think.

Mr Johnson: Are they happy to pay extra stamp duty on cars and homes?

Mr D'ORAZIO: Most people pay stamp duty on the transfer of a house once or twice in their life. An extra \$442 spent on each school student is tangible. People are happy to see the Government spend money on health, education and policing, and that is what this Government is doing.

Several members interjected.

Mr D'ORAZIO: No-one objects to paying taxes if the revenue is spent appropriately. The public is not happy to see Governments spend money on belltowers.

Mr Johnson: No-one likes paying taxes.

Mr D'ORAZIO: The community is saying that the Government is doing a good job. I congratulate the Treasurer, the Premier and the Government for a job well done.

MR WHITELY (Roleystone) [12.40 pm]: The member for Hillarys said that no-one enjoys paying taxes. I am proud to pay taxes. Paying taxes is part and parcel of living in a civilised society; taxes are the price of government services. It is regrettable that we live in a culture that lauds tax avoiders. The member for Hillarys has added to that culture, and that is disappointing. The Japanese authorities publish details of the top 100 taxpayers in the nation. They are lauded as heroes because they make such a valuable contribution. I applaud people who pay taxes. It is disgraceful that a member of this Parliament has denigrated the role of taxpayers and encouraged that culture of tax avoidance.

I congratulate the Treasurer and his 14 fellow cabinet members - a reduction from 17 ministers in the previous Government - for delivering a fair and financially responsible budget. It is a Labor budget because it helps those people who most need help and it is a financially responsible budget because it delivers a budget surplus.

I refer to the cornerstones of this budget. The Government has allocated an extra \$442 for every child in a government school. That reflects Labor's commitment to education, health and police. The health budget will receive an extra \$99 million, which is a 4.3 per cent increase, and an extra \$36 million will be spent on police, a 7.2 per cent increase. They are the priority areas on which we have delivered. We have included those measures in the budget and have kept expense growth at less than the rate of inflation. The expense growth rate will be 1.8 per cent, which is 0.4 per cent less than the rate of inflation. I applaud the Treasurer and his cabinet colleagues for delivering that type of budget.

I have held Labor values for a long time. I have voted in 17 federal and state elections. I have put the Labor Party ahead of the Liberal Party 16 times. In the 1993 state election, I put the Liberal Party ahead of the Labor Party because I did not think that the Burke Government had been financially responsible. I gave the other side a go because it trumpeted claims of financial responsibility. However, as a Liberal supporter in 1993, I was extremely disappointed by its record of financial management. I am a trained accountant and teacher. I am prepared to offer some remedial accounting and financial management lessons to members of the Opposition because they do not understand much about it. In 1993, I put the Liberal Party ninth and the Labor Party tenth on my ballot because I was so disappointed in both of them. That hurt me and I looked forward to the next chance I had to vote, which was at a federal election. I am proud to say that I have always voted for Labor at the federal elections. I gave the Liberal Party a chance because I thought it regarded financial responsibility as a high priority.

As I said, my background is as an accountant. I worked as an accountant in Perth during the 1980s. It was a very interesting time to be an accountant because it was a time of absolute optimism. Some very injudicious financial decisions were made in the public and private sectors. The culture in Western Australia was not good. As a consequence of that culture in the private and public sector, I decided that I would give the other side a go. Although I did not believe in its values, I gave the Liberal Party a go because it trumpeted claims of its financial responsibility.

I will refer to the Liberal Party's record in Government. The coalition Government delivered eight budgets, five of which went into deficit. I am prepared to forgive it for the first budget deficit. I accept the argument that it inherited a bad financial situation and had to deal with the legacy of the previous Government. I am prepared to concede that the coalition Government was not responsible for the previous Government's actions. However, that leaves seven other budgets. The Government that trumpeted claims of financial responsibility produced four deficit budgets out of the seven budgets it delivered. It is rubbish that the coalition Government was financially

Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mr Rob Johnson; Dr Janet Woollard; Deputy Speaker; Mr John D'Orazio; Mr Martin Whitely

responsible. Under Labor, expenditure will increase in the current year by 1.8 per cent. The record of the coalition Government over eight years shows that expense grew by an average of 5.6 per cent. The previous Government talked about financial responsibility but absolutely failed to deliver. That is the height of hypocrisy.

It is not as if coalition members can say that it took them time to get the budget into surplus. They ran into problems in the financial years from 1996 to 2000. They ran budget deficits in all of those years despite the fact that the economy was going well and a legacy of 13 years of competent financial management by the Hawke-Keating Governments. The economy had been going well. The other mob, which trumpeted claims of financial responsibility, ran budget deficits against that background. The Liberal Party trumpets the fact that it reduced debt when it was in Government. However, anybody could reduce debt the way it did! I guarantee that I could reduce my debt in a couple of months if I used its philosophy. Does anyone want to hazard a guess at how I could reduce my debt?

Mr Andrews: You could sell your house.

Mr WHITELY: Exactly. If I were the Western Australian Treasurer in the mid-1990s, what could I sell?

Mr Andrews: AlintaGas.

Mr WHITELY: Exactly, I could sell AlintaGas. That is the way to reduce debt. Members opposite trumpet their claim about being responsible financial managers, yet they do not have the intellect or the wit to understand just how incompetent they were.

I will read some aspects of the Opposition's report card. Responsible financial management comes from a level of cooperation between ministers who accept a collective responsibility to live within their means. We predicted a \$58 million budget surplus in our first year and we have delivered a \$118 million surplus. We delivered a surplus that was approximately twice what we predicted. I have talked about the former Government's record of budget surplus management. I will contrast our record with that of the federal Government. It was fitting that last week we delivered our budget at the same time as the federal Government delivered its budget. We cautiously predicted a small surplus and we delivered a surplus that was approximately twice the size we had predicted. On the other hand, against the background of rapid economic growth, the federal Government delivered a budget deficit despite having predicted a budget surplus. It delivered a deficit because it irresponsibly bought votes. It returned to Government by spending \$20 billion of Australian taxpayers' money. That is the record of the financial management of the modern Liberal Party. It has no credibility in this area whatsoever.

I refer to comments by the Under Treasurer about the previous Government and how it got into trouble. It is exactly the type of behaviour that this Government will not display. The Labor Party and Cabinet collectively accept that the Government has a responsibility to live within its means. The Under Treasurer stated that -

Individual Ministers and Cabinet Sub-Committees proposing and endorsing proposals which are not consistent with agreed and promulgated government policy . . .

Individual Ministers proposing, that Cabinet endorsing, expenditure proposals with no regard to the state of the overall budget and with no examination or consideration of existing budgetary capacity within a portfolio . . .

Individual Ministers attempting to capture the budget process by seeking in-principle approval for significant expenditure programs before the annual budget process begins and often before the current budget has passed through the Parliament . . .

Ministers, aided and abetted by their CEOs, to defy government policy on financial management . . .

The Under Treasurer further stated -

. . . budgetary forecasts since and inclusive of 1994/95 have not been adhered to. The end result is a budget which is displaying significant structural weakness. If this structural weakness is not dealt with, the Government will be unable to deliver on its publicly announced fiscal targets and regardless of these targets, will be required to further increase taxation or resort to borrowings or both within the next two years.

He did not mention the other option to flog off AlintaGas. Members opposite will not hear those comments about us but the Under Treasurer made those comments about the previous Government. As a consequence, from 1996 to 2000, the Government ran up massive budget deficits.

Mr McGowan: Does that memo refer to any specific minister in the last Government?

Mr WHITELY: It does, but I think I will leave that for other members to read into the *Hansard*. It mentions people like the previous Minister for Education. He cops quite a few mentions.

Mr Ross Ainsworth; Mr Rob Johnson; Dr Janet Woollard; Deputy Speaker; Mr John D'Orazio; Mr Martin Whitely

Mr McGowan: You are joking.

Mr WHITELY: What role does he now play?

Ms Radisich: He is the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr WHITELY: Is he the one who trumpets claims of financial responsibility? Is he the one who last year said that the State would experience a year of economic decline? What has been the economic growth in the past year?

Mr Ripper: It has been 4.5 per cent.

Mr WHITELY: That does not seem too bad to me.

Mr Watson: The world's best Treasurer!

Mr WHITELY: The Leader of the Opposition was not the only one who copped a mention.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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