

SUPPLY BILL 2013

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 June.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.40 pm]: Thank you, Madam Deputy President (Hon Adele Farina). I was not sure whether I needed to deal with another matter before I spoke.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity tonight to make some comments on the Supply Bill 2013 given, as I understand it, that it has been an extended period, since 2001, since this type of bill has been debated in this chamber. This bill seeks \$7.942 billion, a significant amount of money, from the consolidated account, which is broken into two amounts to deal with both recurrent services and capital works. I understand that part of the reason for this is that the government said, given that the election was held in March, it would not present the budget in May, as it would traditionally; it has deferred it until August. This Supply Bill has been introduced to tide the government over, if we like, until the budget is resolved and the appropriation bills pass through both chambers, which may not happen now until sometime in September, or possibly even later, depending on how long that takes. It is a little unusual.

Since the government was re-elected in March, Premier Barnett has talked repeatedly about how it is a fresh, new government, as though it has just come out of the starting blocks and is at square one. We know in reality that it is the Barnett government mark 2. There may have been a couple of changes of the deck chairs, but it is really a continuation of the previous Barnett government. We would have expected that it would be prepared to better manage the state and not put the community in this position, because it is extending its time for dealing with significant matters such as the budget and the state's finances. It is very unusual to be dealing with a bill of this nature.

Just after nine o'clock this morning I was listening to 6PR as I was driving to Parliament from my office when I heard the Premier as part of his weekly stint on radio. One of the listeners phoned in—he did not call him, Mr Premier; he called him Colin—and said, “Colin, I want to know what you're doing about the stadium. You made an announcement that you would build the stadium, and suddenly things seem to have stopped, and we haven't heard much more about it.” The Premier's response was interesting. He said, “When we first came into government, things were pretty dire financially, so we put it on hold. But now we've made the announcement and talked about the tendering processes; now we have to make some decisions and move on.” I thought it was interesting that he talked about that because when the Liberal Party won government in 2008, sure there may have been a debt problem of, I think, more than \$3 billion. But look what has happened since 2008. That debt has increased substantially. I think it is currently \$18 billion and there has been some talk that over a short period it will bump its way up to \$25 billion. I do not think this government has a lot to be proud of for how it has managed the state's finances.

While I have this opportunity I want to talk about some of the problems we are now dealing with after the first round of the Barnett Liberal government. Even since the 9 March election, we have seen an unravelling of how the Premier and his Treasurer, Troy Buswell, have been managing the state's finances. Over the past few weeks since we have been back in this place we have heard almost daily and weekly announcements about cutbacks and changes and deferments of decisions and of benefits to various community players or businesses. They have had quite significant impacts. There have been numerous broken promises. I think I mentioned in another speech, maybe even during the Address-in-Reply, that when we are dealing with this government, how do we know whether it is a real promise or a real commitment or whether it is, as the Premier indicated during the election campaign, an “FM radio” promise? I think during the election campaign the Premier may have, indeed, made a vast list of FM radio promises because he seems quite adept at breaking those commitments to the Western Australian community. Those of us who talk to people in the community and listen to commentary on talk-back radio in our offices or in our cars are finding that people are becoming quite frustrated and upset with the way the government is managing the state's finances.

When we look at the matters the government has changed its mind about and changed direction on, we can certainly understand that level of frustration and growing anger. We are starting to see a pattern of behaviour from this government. Even though we are at the very beginning of the Barnett Liberal government mark 2, and there are many days before our next state election in 2017, I think we will see a rapid deterioration of government over that time and a continuation of broken promises. I think it comes down to the fact that the government has never really had a vision for where it wants to take the state in the future—not just a short-term plan, but a long-term plan. It has never really been able to say what are our core priorities for the state. What do we really want to do to benefit the community? How can we gain the best we possibly can out of the resources sector boom, if we like, and parlay that back into benefit for the community? Now we are seeing the top of the

resources boom start to fall away and people becoming more concerned about how they will sustain employment or pay their bills or their mortgage and look after their families, but the government has still not provided a plan or vision for how these things will be managed into the future. I will talk in more detail about that type of issue because I have a specific area of concern that I do not believe is being addressed appropriately in terms of priorities.

As we saw during the last term, this government is very keen on the big-ticket items. The Premier had grandiose plans and, as I indicated earlier, there is the stadium project and the foreshore project, which I like to call, “Betty’s jetty”. Enormous amounts of public funding are going into those projects. I think more than \$400 million is going into Betty’s jetty and another \$300 million of taxpayers’ money into a football stadium. We have seen taxpayers’ money going into the Oakajee project, which, in the last few days, seems to have become another one of the Premier’s personal failures. We have seen significant amounts of money being committed. We have to ask: what are the real benefits of those projects to the whole of the state? As we come into more difficult times for members of our community, could that allocation of funding be better used to assist members of our community who are finding it tough? At the same time as the government is seeking this substantial amount of almost \$8 billion from consolidated revenue to sort of help tide it over until the budget is dealt with, families in our communities are struggling to pay ever-increasing power, gas and water bills. Some families are struggling to pay their mortgages, and other families are struggling to pay rent. There really needs to be more balanced thought when considering the government’s priorities versus the community’s needs and priorities. I think the vision of the government of grandiose stadiums and foreshore plans may be vastly different from what members of the general community would like to happen in their state in the future. I think most people have grassroots issues they would like to see tackled to make their lifestyles and communities better. That is something we are starting to see fall away.

Since this government retained office on 9 March, there has been a raft of broken promises, some of which my colleagues have referred to. One of the most recent was the announcement late last week of public sector job cuts. In about September last year, the Premier said there would not be any job cuts in the public sector, but if we fast-forward to now, the Premier, for a range of reasons, has changed his mind and is talking about voluntary redundancies and, if you like, some compulsory redundancies. Last week, public sector workers would have been quite concerned about whether they would have a job in the near future. I received a text last week from my daughter who works on contract in a government department. She said that they had just heard the news—this was literally as the news was coming out—and that there were a lot of very nervous people who did not know what was going to happen about their jobs. I spoke to some other public servants who said they spent that day calming staff down, saying, “Don’t stress; we can work through this.” For a lot of people in the public sector, the Premier has now changed his mind and said it is all about necessary public sector reform. I think the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia also said it was a good way forward and that it was good to have reform. This is another example of this government not addressing reform intelligently.

Public sector reform is not just about cutting jobs; it should not just be about cutting work for individuals. Productivity outcomes reform can be achieved in a variety of ways. Some of those ways may simply be ensuring that the gaps in the public sector, such as people performing acting duties for extended periods of time, are addressed—those types of issues; or it could simply be improving communication between agencies so they work better across the sector. I think reference was made to this earlier today during a question about changes in certain agencies so that they could talk to each other. I have an example I will come to later on in my contribution of where that is still not happening. Reforms can be introduced in a variety of ways that do not necessarily require people to lose their jobs. It would have been a much more interesting announcement from the government if it had explored alternative ways of reform, rather than just saying it is going to make people redundant on either a voluntary or compulsory basis.

Now that this announcement has been made, there are obviously a lot of very nervous people wondering whether they will or will not have a job, whether they will be able to pay their mortgages, their rent, their power bills or water bills—whatever. It has been found that when redundancies are offered this way, sometimes the really good people are lost. The really good people may say, “Hey, this is an opportunity; I might seek other pastures. I’ll take this offer,” and they are off. People who have been trained up and reached a certain level of expertise in the public sector may very well decide that this is their opportunity to try something different. I am always surprised when these types of announcements are made, because, let us face it, when a person is being skilled up in a job, regardless of whether it is a public servant, a boilermaker or a shop assistant, an employer spends an enormous amount of time and money at various stages of that person’s employment to train them up to an appropriate level. Saying to people, “We’re going to make you redundant; we are either going to offer you a voluntary arrangement or we are just going to pack you off,” is lost investment for the state government. I would have thought it would have been smarter in its management of that. That is a significant broken promise that we will review. It is also interesting that the government has stated that it will introduce legislation that will give it the

capacity to, in certain circumstances, remove public servants. Reform can be a good thing, but there has to be a lot smarter approach than that taken by the government in this instance. When the government goes down the path of bringing into the Parliament the legislation attached to last week's announcement there will be an interesting challenge, and there will certainly be a challenge for those public servants who do not know whether they will have a job by the end of the year.

The government has also announced changes to the Insurance Commission of Western Australia and the provision of a dividend to the state government. I was listening to the Premier on the radio today when a question was put to him about whether he could guarantee that consumers will not have to pay an increase in third party insurance; the Premier said he could not give that guarantee. The decisions this government is making are constantly putting more and more pressure on households and adding to the stress and burden of families, pensioners and singles who are trying to manage their household budgets and sustain a decent standard of living. They are probably saying to themselves, "The Premier promised a whole range of things before he got into government again, and we believed and trusted him." Here we are, a couple of months out from the election, and already we are seeing a tranche of election commitments being broken quite significantly and quite early, and without any sort of great apology for the breach of those commitments. It is of great concern.

We have already mentioned the ongoing price hikes in electricity—I am sure there are more to come—and the gas and water price increases. Small business people are complaining about the 10 per cent price hike in electricity they will have to deal with. In due course, local governments will have additional price hikes in their power bills for street lighting, which is another cost that will be put back onto households at some point in time in the form of increased rates. We have four years of this ahead of us, and we have a government that is breaking promises and has all of a sudden realised that it is not managing its finances well, so it is saying, "We're not managing these things. We're losing projects; we're having to sack people," because that is what it is. If somebody is being made redundant, I have always thought it is just a polite way of saying, "We're going to sack you." In fact, my daughter said to me, "If Mr Barnett is using the words "involuntary redundancy", is that just because he doesn't want to say he's going to sack people?" I thought: She gets it. Most people get that. That is what is happening. These people will be sacked; either they will go freely or they will be pushed out the door. It is just a polite way of saying, "We're going to sack you. We're either going to do it nicely or not so pleasantly." People have that ahead of them.

This government will face some serious challenges over the next couple of years in the management of its finances. The fact that we have the Supply Bill in front of us seeking this additional funding to get it through that period is of concern. In due course we will probably be looking at additional sources of funding the government will seek if it puts up a Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill at a later stage. We will address those challenges. I am not too sure how this works when there is a request for a significant amount of money, but with the Treasurer's advance we used to be provided with a document that articulated where this funding was going.

Do you want me to keep going after dinner?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Yes.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon KATE DOUST: Madam Deputy President, before we broke for dinner I had been saying that when we have dealt with Treasurer's advance authorisation bills in the past, we have been provided with documents that outline what the expenditure will be for. I do not know whether this question was posed during the earlier debate. But I was wondering whether members could be provided with a breakdown of what this allocation will be utilised for so that we can see what the government is planning to do with this substantial amount of money that it needs in order to tide itself over until the budget bills are passed.

I had also started to work my way through a number of the government's broken promises. I had talked about that very significant and fresh broken promise about the redundancies that the government has now put on the table for the public sector. I had touched upon the dividend return that the government will now take from the Insurance Commission of Western Australia and the potential increase in third party insurance costs. I had noted again the increase in utility costs. We also know that there will now be no tax cuts for small business. There are a number of other projects that I talked about in the Address-in-Reply debate. There will now be no MAX light rail. The opening of Fiona Stanley Hospital will be delayed.

One interesting thing that we can put up against the redundancies that are proposed for the public sector—I am sure some of my colleagues have already referred to this—is the beautiful piece of media that we had a few weeks ago about how the Premier had signed off on significant pay rises for selected staff in his office. It would be interesting to know how the Premier can justify those types of increases in terms of traditional productivity arrangements and negotiations. I imagine that those public servants who are looking down the barrel of losing their jobs would ask themselves why they are being treated differently from the Premier's spin doctors and

officers, and they would look at the unfairness and imbalance that is applied to people who work in different areas of the public sector. I do not intend to spend a lot of time on that issue tonight, because I am sure we will come back time and again to the unfairness, the imbalance and the inappropriateness of these types of pay rises, because that is a classic example of the arrogant way in which this government conducts its business.

We can line up that example against the other examples of how this government is mismanaging the financial situation in this state. Over the last couple of weeks there has been an outcry about the standards and facilities at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and the difficulties that are faced by parents who need to stay at that hospital with their ill children. Again, it comes back to the question of priorities. I know that there is a mixed view in the community and that a lot of people like the idea of having a new football stadium and “Betty’s Jetty” and all these sorts of lovely iconic things. If the government has only X amount of money to spend, what are the priorities that should stand out for the community? If the government is unable to provide essential services in the health system, the housing system and the public transport system, it needs to have a rethink about what is important to the community at this time. My personal view is that the government needs to apply greater focus to better resourcing the services that the community needs. I have been to Princess Margaret Hospital numerous times in the last 20-odd years, and I am a frequent visitor to that hospital these days with my son. The staff and the doctors at that hospital are brilliant. We cannot fault the personalised service that we get from those people. It is a nightmare for parents to physically get into that hospital, and if they have to stay overnight to make sure that their child is okay, it is not easy thing to do. We had to do it on only a couple of occasions. I do not know how parents cope when they need to be in that hospital day in and day out for their child, and I can only imagine how it must wear them down. A number of the families who have been involved in this situation have articulated their concerns and their difficulties very well in the media over the past few weeks. This is an area in which the government needs to say, “What is more important? Should we look after and provide better services for these people, or should we do these other things that may be important in building a monument for the future but do not necessarily provide the services that people need now?”

There are numerous examples of how this government is doing things in the wrong way and is not prioritising. I came across one of those examples in my office this week. One issue that many members have to deal with from time to time, be it during the summer months or during winter—sometimes I think winter is much harder to manage—is people who require emergency housing. This is an area that needs to be better resourced by government. I will acknowledge that money has been set aside by the government to support not just public housing, but crisis accommodation. But that is obviously not enough. My office was approached earlier this week by a fellow with a wife and three children who had unfortunately been evicted from their private rental in March, and since March they have essentially been sofa-surfing at the houses of friends or wherever they could get a place to stay. I am not sure whether they have had to spend time sleeping in a car. These children are aged six, 11 and 12. They have been given crisis accommodation for two nights, but since then they have had to keep moving around. I have written to the minister, and I am sure that in due course she will get to see that letter. On Monday when this fellow approached me, it was very cold. We all know how cold it has been in the past few days. Certainly yesterday a lot of members were walking around this place complaining about the cold. But for this family, it has been extremely difficult. They had spent the previous night in a friend’s one-bedroom flat, so there were seven people in this one-bedroom flat, and I am told that they could no longer stay there, because obviously it was very crowded. So they were pretty desperate. They could not get any private accommodation, and they do not have much in the way of money. They are on the priority waiting list for public housing and they are also on the waiting list for community housing. Given that more than 50 000 people—men, women and children—are on the waiting list, we all know that there is an extended wait period. That waiting period can be several years for a number of people. A woman in her eighties who has lived in Brownlie Towers for 33 years has now decided that it is not the most appropriate place for her. She has been told that she can go on the priority list but it might take eight years before she gets a transfer. As I said to the department, sadly, she may not be with us in eight years so can we please get a move on? That is another example.

Coming back to this family, my office spent the afternoon and early evening trying to find this family a place to stay. We made numerous phone calls to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support in Cannington. I have dealt with the department on a number of occasions, not just when Liberal governments have been in place. I have been equally frustrated in the past, even when we were in government. It was really frustrating not to get a phone call back. We kept phoning to try to get some response about what could be done to help that family that night. In the end, we resorted to helping them out with some accommodation. After I wrote to the minister, that family was offered a week’s alternative accommodation somewhere else. At the end of the day, it is only a week; it will not sort out the problem. I am hoping that when the minister works her way through my letter, hopefully she will be able to come up with an alternative solution. Another option was provided to the family but that was taken off the table today. They were told they would be able to move into a two-bedroom caravan at a caravan park in Gwelup. I think they would have to pay about \$420 or \$460 a week. I said to my staff that there must be a house available for a lower amount of rent than someone would pay for a caravan. We

did a search and found a number of private rental properties that cost \$320 or \$360 a week. The difficulty is getting these people through the door into those private arrangements.

Because this family had already spent two nights in crisis care accommodation, the department contacted them today and said that the department would not be able to put the family into the caravan park because they would have exceeded the one extra day that they would be entitled to crisis care accommodation. I am glad we got the family a week somewhere—I am glad the department has provided that—but it is really dreadful for a family to deal with if they have exhausted their options and been told that they can be given one more night but after that, they cannot be provided with anything else. That adds to the stress of the parents involved in this situation, trying to provide a home for their children.

I turn to the other thing that I thought was very interesting. Whilst we were dealing with this problem on Monday, on the Tuesday the father of the family received a phone call from police in Rockingham wanting to know how the children were faring. I do not know why the police would have phoned this fellow or who would have told the police of this family's situation but I found that quite concerning and again felt that that would have added to the stress and the burden placed on this family. It is one thing to be looking for a house for one's family but it is another thing to have that added concern that perhaps the children may be removed from their parents because they cannot provide a home for them. That is just one example.

As I said, in summertime other options can be found to help people who get caught up in this situation. I spoke to Peter Stewart at the Christian Centre for Social Action in Victoria Park. Peter has done a fantastic job over the years trying to find short-term crisis accommodation for people. We have worked together on a number of occasions. I asked him on Monday what I could do and whether he had any suggestions. The father had already phoned all the organisations that we were told to contact to get emergency accommodation. Peter said that if it was just the father who needed accommodation, he could probably send him to the back of the IGA where there is a bunch of boxes, and that is where a lot of the blokes sleep at night if they cannot find anywhere else to stay. He said there was another place in Fremantle, which is not well-known, that might take the mother and the children. Again, that would break up the family. There are complications there. In Western Australia we apparently have been doing so well in our mining and resource sector and this state should be seeing those benefits flow back into our community, yet we are struggling to put a roof over the heads of a family in Perth in 2013. That is an absolute tragedy. I know that is not new. This issue of homelessness has been around for a long time. Sadly—I am sure other members have noticed this—for a range of reasons more and more people are not able to access public housing and they are having difficulties getting into the private housing sector. That is a real tragedy. I hope that the government reviews its priorities and says that even though it has put some effort into this, it needs to do more. I do not understand why in this day and age any family should have to park themselves in a car or in somebody's garage or sofa surf. That creates other types of instability, particularly for those children who do not know whether they are coming or going. I would imagine other types of issues are created in the long term.

I wanted to talk about homelessness and use that family as an example. I say to the minister that I hope we are able to work to get a really good outcome for this family because I think they deserve it. One of the reasons I raised this matter relates to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs tabling a report on petition 137. It dealt with emergency accommodation for the homeless. The principal petitioner was a former member, Hon Hilda Turnbull, whom I hope is known to a number of people in this place. She is pretty passionate about this issue. This report was tabled in November. We probably did not get the opportunity to have this discussion. I know that the committee was very keen to get this report back into the chamber very quickly. It made a number of recommendations. A couple of them are significant. When I look at what happened with this family and the fact that they had to go through the difficult process of trying to find crisis accommodation and make phone call after phone call to all these different organisations, only to be told there was nothing available, one of the recommendations in this report was based upon evidence provided. There was unanimous agreement from the committee about the issues canvassed and the recommendations. There was no dissenting report from the committee on this occasion. Recommendation 2, on page 21 of the report, states —

The Committee recommends that the Government, as a matter of urgency, establish a centralised referral service for people presenting with homelessness issues. This service should feature real-time updating and be accessible by all members of the public, including people seeking homelessness accommodation and services, specialist homelessness accommodation and service providers, relevant government departments and hospitals.

When we were dealing with this family earlier this week, I was reminded that we did not have the opportunity to talk about this report. Given that the report was tabled in November and probably effectively fell off the list, there has not been an opportunity to hear back from the government as to how and if it will respond to the recommendations in this report. That particular one is significant because for someone desperately seeking a roof over their head for the night, either for themselves or their family, it must be soul-destroying to have to go

through the process day after day of phoning numerous organisations to ask whether there is any chance they can get a bed for the night. Surely it would make sense for there to be one centralised place, one point of entry, so that people can contact either by going online or by phone to find out what is available. I would have thought that would make sense. Rather than having to contact each organisation separately and get that snapshot, there should be one place where all the information is available. It would make life so much easier for not only the people seeking this accommodation, but also all those other organisations trying to source these places and, I imagine, the government department.

I imagine that working in this area in the Department for Child Protection and Family Support would be a really tough job, a really tough gig, because they are in the position of having to say no to people and that is really hard. I am not saying it is the fault of the public servants at all, because I think that would be a dreadfully grinding situation to be in. I imagine their hearts break on a regular basis because they cannot provide that necessary accommodation. I just think government needs to find better ways to provide this service for people.

If the minister has not had the opportunity to read this report, I encourage her to do so. It acknowledges the positive work that the government has done in this area; it is not a report that is kicking government. It states that certain things have been done. St Bartholomew's House Lime Street building has opened, which is fantastic. Money is going into short-term and long-term accommodation. However, a lot of this accommodation focuses on singles or maybe even couples, but it is really hard to get accommodation, be it short term or permanent, for families. It is really, really difficult for large families in particular. That matter is canvassed in this report as an area of need. Another significant area of need is Indigenous accommodation. The figures taken from the census in 2006 stated that 11 per cent of the homeless people on that snapshot at the time were Indigenous. The report describes the different categories of need. If government is to talk about its priorities into the future and how it delivers the benefits of our resources boom to the community for the long term, the issue of providing more public housing and appropriate public housing for the different categories of people who need it is very important. Providing better access to and increased availability of crisis accommodation is of significant priority. Given that one example that I talked about tonight—there are many, many others that I could talk about that I have dealt with and I am sure other members have also dealt with many—it is really heartbreaking to not be able to say to someone, "Look, there's a house for you. I hope you're happy and your kids can get on with life." I think that, sadly, if that does not happen, these people get on the treadmill and tend to aggravate other problems.

I encourage the minister to read that report. The committee took a very practical and commonsense approach to the recommendations. It was unanimous in the direction it wanted to take and it regarded the report as being urgent. The committee wants the government to take action on the recommendations. We know this issue will never be eradicated, unfortunately, but I think more emphasis and a greater priority from government in terms of the funds allocated is required.

In my last few seconds I want to say that it is curious that this government seeks such an additional amount of funds when over the past four years it has demonstrated its incapacity to manage the state budget. We have seen failure after failure from this government in utility prices, Oakajee and Muja, which has had a \$250 million blowout at a cost to the taxpayer. Here we are again; the government is putting out its hand for more money and we can look forward to further failure in the future.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [7.56 pm]: Again, I thank the house for giving me the opportunity to continue my remarks today on the Supply Bill 2013. I predicted when I was last on my feet that there would be another financial scandal and example of mismanagement by the Barnett government over the way in which it runs the state. Sure enough, today we learned about another one that goes right home to this house, because the minister who oversaw that scandal was a minister from this place. That is the situation with Muja and the \$250 million cost blowout, which I think brings the losses under Hon Peter Collier's leadership of the energy portfolio to over a billion dollars.

Hon Peter Collier: I do not think so.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What is the figure if it is not over a billion?

Hon Peter Collier: I do not keep a record of those things. I look at our achievements over the past four years, which were extraordinary.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The minister should go on the radio and tell everyone his achievements and explain the mishaps to everyone.

Hon Peter Collier: I never said no to an interview.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Liz Behjat): Members! Could you address your remarks through the Chair, please.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is interesting because the media was certainly saying that the minister was unavailable for comment today, so that was the —

Hon Peter Collier: That was only appropriate. The Minister for Energy was speaking.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hang on! It is appropriate for him to tell us how the government will try to clean up the mess Hon Peter Collier left, but only one person can go out, take responsibility and explain to the people of Western Australia how that mess occurred, and that is the minister at the time.

Hon Peter Collier: When I was Minister for Energy I did a number of interviews on this issue, so to suggest that I avoided it is blatantly wrong.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It continues to roll out. I do not know whether the then minister gave full disclosures over that time. People again learned today through the very good work of the Labor spokesperson on energy, the honourable Bill Johnston —

Hon Kate Doust: Very good spokesperson!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: He is an excellent spokesperson, almost as good as our previous spokesperson on energy!

Hon Kate Doust: You're very sweet, aren't you?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: A dose of sickness always brings out the good in me.

Hon Simon O'Brien: The dose of sickness is becoming contagious, too.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: One of the good things about taking off some time is that I get to listen to talkback radio. I listened to Akram Azimi today; what an inspiring young gentleman he is. That put me into a very good mood listening to someone such as that who kept telling everyone how he thought he had won the lottery coming to Australia. My view is that Australia won the lottery when we secured him and his family—excellent. He talked about how his mother is a nurse and his brother is training to be a doctor. We are the lucky ones in that circumstance.

I digressed for a moment. I return to the Muja situation. Minister, one of the things I have a habit of doing is keeping things, such as the Financial Management Act, in my drawer. I realise now that one of the documents I keep in my top drawer has to be the excellent speech Hon Peter Collier gave on ministerial responsibility when he was in opposition; if he went back and read that, he would realise that he would fall on his sword tonight as the honourable thing to do. I do not know whether the minister recalls that speech. I listened intently to it and I think it is an excellent speech on how a minister ultimately has to accept responsibility and that the buck stops with a minister. One thing that has been really interesting—I think I made brief mention of it in some of my introductory remarks over the past couple of weeks—is that ministers of the Crown in Western Australia now somehow try to see themselves just as commentators on the affairs of state and not as the people who ultimately take responsibility for the decisions of their agencies when somehow it all goes wrong. If that was truly the case, at the very least there should be something happening in their agencies, but it does not seem to happen. Another point I make is that one of the jobs of a minister is to recognise that there are those things that a minister knows and there are those things that they ought to know. It is clear that ministers now have the Sergeant Schultz approach to politics of making sure that they never know what is going on so that they can always claim, "I didn't see it; I didn't know; I saw nothing."

I am not saying I do this often, but I was looking at a quote in the Bible the other day—Luke 14: 28–30. I suggest that the minister should read it. I think it is very appropriate given the way in which the minister has operated with the Muja power station.

Hon Sue Ellery: I think you should share.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No, I will leave it as a bit of homework for people to look at Luke 14: 28–30. Members will find it if they google it.

Another point that flows into it, which I thought was fascinating, was that the Treasurer was quoted on ABC as saying that despite the \$250 million loss, it would not have any impact on power bills. This followed from last week when the Treasurer put his hand into the Insurance Commission of Western Australia's kitty to take money that will ultimately need to be replaced with an increase in the motor vehicle third party insurance that forms part of our motor vehicle registration fees. Again, the Treasurer claimed that that would not have an impact on costs. This is voodoo economics. I suspect that the Supply Bill asks for more than the 20 per cent that the government could have had under the Financial Management Act because the government's costs are going through the roof. There is no way that the government can have a \$250 million blowout and not have that passed on in either higher energy costs or, the only other way, higher taxation with a subsidy to the cost of energy, which we know is abhorrent to the Liberal Party. Liberal Party members do not believe in subsidising electricity. Equally, if the government takes money from ICWA's profits, ICWA will have to increase the amount of profit it makes to continue to operate in the way in which it previously operated. One of the things, as I mentioned last week, that

would happen is that ICWA's retained profits would become part of its cash reserves that it is required, under the prudential requirements, to hold. If the government takes some of that out as profits, ICWA then has to increase its profits. If the government is taking 65 per cent of ICWA's profits, which previously would have been kept as retained earnings, ICWA has to triple its profits to ensure that the 35 per cent left as retained earnings is the same as what was retained when it kept 100 per cent of its profits. That is the real economics, not this government's voodoo economics.

I will touch a little on the Liberal Party's transport announcements and their impact since the election. We already had a bit of a debate about the Perth–Darwin highway. If members read the press release, they will see that the Liberal Party clearly made a commitment to the people of the northern suburbs to build the Perth–Darwin highway from the end of Tonkin Highway all the way through to Muchea. It is interesting that when I met with some people from out that way the other week, they were very quick to point out to me that just building the highway from Gnangara Road to Muchea would be an absolute nonsense. That was predicated on getting federal government money, which we later found out—we were not told at the time—was what the Liberal Party was hoping for. Labor was always very supportive of this road; in fact, I think it would be fair to say that people like Rita Saffioti have probably led the charge on getting that road built. The interesting issue is that the Liberal Party made a commitment without having a fully funded, fully costed plan because it did not know when the funds were coming. Interestingly, the federal government came to the Liberal Party's rescue; the federal government provided 50 per cent of the cost of that road. Yet what did we then see? The Liberal Party ran for cover. The Premier was trying to find every excuse. He almost went back to his days of Ellenbrook rail when he almost was denying—in fact, he did deny that he had ever promised to build it all the way. Suddenly, apparently we were supposed to pour lemon juice on the press release, which did not mention that, and see that written in secret at the bottom was, “We're only going to do it from Gnangara Road north.” What a nonsense! It is just deceitful.

I will make a couple of points about the airport rail line, because Labor also committed to an airport rail line. However, there are a number of differences between our airport rail line proposal and the government's proposal.

Hon Peter Katsambanis: Yours wasn't going to the airport!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When Hon Peter Katsambanis makes comments like that in the chamber, he is starting to mislead the house. The member wants to be careful. The government can sit there and run television adverts like that and it can mislead the people by spending millions of dollars to mislead the people, but when government members come into this house, they need to be careful what they say. I am going to make this point about the airport rail.

There were a number of issues about the airport rail. The first thing that I want to make clear is that two elements of Labor's proposal for the airport rail made it more likely to get federal government funding than would be available for the Liberals' proposal. The first element relates to the proposed Airport West station. The Airport West station that the Liberal Party proposed will be—for those who want rail lines going to the terminals—located some 400-odd metres minimum, probably 450 metres, away from the current domestic terminal. I had to pick up my step-grandson from the airport with his mother and the bags and the car seat and all the rest of it. I do not think for a moment that a mother in those circumstances would have walked to the railway station, but they may have caught a shuttle bus across to it, so I accept that. So, the first problem when we want to talk about whether railway stations are located near terminals is that under the Liberal proposal, the Airport West station is not near the domestic terminal; it would require a shuttle service to get to it. The second problem with the Liberal Party's proposal is that the domestic terminal will close, so it will build a station that would not be servicing the domestic terminal. So, what is the point? The argument is that somehow the Liberal Party's proposed station will service a business park. That is great, but we have seen that we need more than that. If people have to get on a bus to go to most of the business park anyway, it strikes me that the best thing to do is to build a transit-oriented development just off airport land to increase the density of housing around the railway station. We could do some really good urban renewal in the Belmont area that would stimulate the growth in the airport and provide affordable housing in a good location with good public transport. That could not happen under the Liberal Party's proposal. As a result of that, the government's benefits of the rail will be significantly lower than what would have been available under the Labor proposal, because the commercial aspects can easily be matched with a central area transit bus, as we have through Perth, Joondalup and Fremantle, with a regular and common service to distribute people going to work. The airport is slightly different but, in the main, the people who work in that area will have an arrival time and a departure time that is fairly compact, so it could run over those times into and out of the airport. That is the first difference.

The second difference between the Labor and Liberal proposal is that our rail line would have eventually become part of a network that would connect across the south of the city—a south circle line. The benefit of a south circle line is that it would have taken significant pressure off the Perth CBD stations. People would no longer

need to catch trains all the way into Perth to then travel out again. If travelling from south of Murdoch, passengers would be able to get off, change trains and travel on the south circle line to the airport. One of the big growth areas of Perth going forward will be that southern corridor particularly because of the fantastic rail that Labor built back in the first decade of this century. That would relieve pressure as people travel further into the city and it would create some extra capacity going in. It would therefore extend the life of the Perth underground station; again, a significant benefit that is not available under the Liberal Party's proposal.

My next comment relates to that earlier unruly interjection. Let us be very clear about what Labor proposed. Mark my words, people will one day sit and laugh at the Liberal Party for its location of the station. People will ask why it was built at the northern end of the terminal complex and why it was not at a more central location to future terminal complexes. Perth Airport currently has about 13 million passengers annually, from memory. It is expected to grow to 20 million shortly. Within most members' lifetimes I expect over 40 million people will go through a consolidated terminal at Perth Airport. When that occurs, we will start to see terminals 1.5 kilometres down Horrie Miller Drive. During the election campaign the Liberal Party said the terminals ran that full 1.5 kilometres, but dishonestly said that Labor proposed to build its station at the southern end. Because the Liberal Party proposed to build at the northern end, it assumed we must be planning to build ours at the southern end. No, we were not. We were going to build it in a central location that would connect to the next generation of terminal expansions to occur as part of the expansion of Perth Airport. As it then continues further south, it would be centrally located. One thing people learn is that if a political party wants to be dishonest and is prepared to spend the money, it can go out and try to change the debate in that way. But in the longer term, people will ultimately see what is happening at Perth Airport. People will wonder why the current government did it the way that it did.

To give members an idea of the Perth Airport plan, I would encourage them to visit the international terminal. There are two big light towers in the current car park. They should stand at either end of one of those light towers and look across at the new terminal 2. Members can tell me whether they would walk across there or whether, if the airport had its own internal shuttle service, they would use that internal shuttle service. Mark my words, Perth Airport will start off the shuttle service process this year by talking to the people of Western Australia about what that will be. I expect it will be like most of the shuttle services at large international terminals that have up to 40 million people going through them. I can provide a long list of airports including Miami, and Dulles International Airport at Washington. Lots of airports have an internal shuttle service that is often a rubber-wheeled light rail service; in some cases driverless. New terminal 4 at Heathrow has little personal pods that passengers get into to take their families, along with their bags, between car parks and the like. That will have to happen. One of the huge growth areas for Perth Airport will be in parking, and that parking will be outside of it. I must say that probably one of the most dishonest things I have ever seen in my political life was the adverts run by the Liberal Party that completely misled the people of Western Australia and completely misrepresented Labor's position. It is interesting that if it had been a television advert, I have absolutely no doubt it would have been required to be taken off air, but there are not the same rules for radio adverts. That is an interesting situation in itself.

This is the bit that I find even more fascinating, and I would love the minister to tell me whether the rumour I have heard is correct. I asked the Premier to table the government's August 2012 submission to Infrastructure Australia. The government was required to submit to Infrastructure Australia a document that outlined what Western Australia wanted funded that was over \$100 million. Hon Peter Katsambanis seems keen to take part in this debate. Tell me whether I am wrong: in the submission that the WA government put forward to Infrastructure Australia, it actually asked for funding for a railway station at Perth Airport—not a railway but a railway station—to be built by 2018. It asked for funding for only the station. That would have gone well with its power plant that does not produce power and its hospital that does not provide services—a railway station without a railway line! That is what this government's submission to Infrastructure Australia was for. I find it extraordinary. I suspect that when the Liberal Party saw Labor's absolutely enlightened Metronet plan, a fully integrated plan to deal with transport, it knew it was caught short and would be the laughing stock of Western Australian politics. I do not know if the Liberal Party was going to announce its proposal during the election or if it was one part of the plan it did not want to announce during the election. We keep seeing plenty of those roll out. It has even changed its tune on plans it promised. The Liberal Party realised it would be the laughing stock and therefore withdrew that proposal. It quickly cobbled together a proposal for an airport line for which it did not have the money. At the announcement during the election campaign, when the Minister for Transport was asked whether this required federal money—I spoke to many journalists at the time and they all told me the same thing—he responded that the government would be seeking funding but it was not contingent upon it. Therefore, we expect this airport rail line to be funded and construction to commence as promised during the election campaign with or without commonwealth money. As the Minister for Transport said, it was not contingent upon it.

The third big transport plan that the government announced was its Metro Area Express light rail. Members should remember that it cost us a lot of money to find the name of the Portland light rail system and bring it over here! I wonder when the government will change the name to TriMet's MAX because that is the name of Portland's light rail system. The government has its MAX proposal. Interestingly, the public transport plan released in July 2011 seems to have fallen into disrepair. It is a shame that Hon Simon O'Brien is away on urgent parliamentary business because he must cry himself to sleep! Hon Simon O'Brien never got to release the work he had done on transport planning. It was released by the new incoming Minister for Transport when Hon Simon O'Brien, we later realised, unfairly had the transport portfolio taken off him. The bloke who followed him was actually worse than he was as a transport minister. The public transport plan that Hon Simon O'Brien had worked so hard on proposed light rail from Curtin University through to UWA and out to Mirrabooka. That was all expected to be completed by 2020. That is what we were told. That was based on a Perth population of 2.2 million by 2031. Everyone said at the time that the population figures were wrong, that there will be a lot more than 2.2 million people by 2031. In fact, in February last year, the government finally acknowledged that the population would be about 2.2 million by 2025, and probably about 2.5 million by 2031. It had this plan based on flawed numbers. In that plan, it was said that we would need it by 2020. Then we found out that what the government was proposing to do is only a part of that plan. It has dropped the bit off from Victoria Park through to Curtin University of Technology, and the other bit down to the University of Western Australia from Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre. I found that extraordinary, because UWA and Curtin University are major attractors; they are major destinations for people who use public transport on a regular basis. If the government wanted to get people onto and to enhance public transport, taking the light rail to final destinations such as UWA and Curtin would be quite important. But, even more importantly, light rail is as much about encouraging and stimulating land use management outcomes as it is about developing a transport option. It certainly is a transport option, but it is so much more in terms of, hopefully, stimulating good public transport outcomes. Yet the area that everyone we talk to in the planning industry says would get the most benefit, the greatest uplift and the greatest changes to land use management is a section between Perth and Curtin University.

It is interesting that that is the section that has been dropped. The Australian Council for New Urbanism, along with the Planning Institute of Australia, brought together a range of eminent people in this area, and they spent a weekend looking at the three routes. I think the state government had provided some assistance to them, so they were not allowed to look at alternative routes, although they did in a couple of cases, but they looked at the options. When we look at the document that they produced from that, it is very clear that there was an area that would create the most new housing and the most commercial retail land to stimulate urban renewal and to stimulate that infill that we now know is so important. I note that today the Minister for Planning was out there directing the City of Subiaco to change its town planning scheme to allow high-rise developments there. So that is the left hand saying, "We've got to do that because we want to stimulate urban development", and then the government does not build the light rail along the section that every town planner will tell us will stimulate urban development. But the government did commit to a light rail going north.

Again, Edith Cowan University at Mt Lawley is a great attractor, and it has produced some fine graduates, as I recall from reading Hon Stephen Dawson's inaugural speech. In fact, he might be one of that university's first members in this place, is he?

Hon Stephen Dawson: No. In fact, there are a few students here from Edith Cowan.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Are there? I guess Hon Norman Moore was a student of Edith Cowan University in its various previous incarnations.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I think he was a WACAE person.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: He goes back even before the WA College of Advanced Education. I think it was after he was there that it became WACAE.

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes.

The interesting thing about the light rail heading north is that because the government is trying to do a transport task on the cheap—potentially, if it ever succeeds—it has one of two options. It will either fail or run out of capacity before its time, which in another way will be a failure in itself. The proposal is that in the inner urban areas close to the city, the number of stops will be limited, and that will be done because we want the speed of the train coming from Mirrabooka to be competitive time-wise with alternative forms of public transport. I might add that it will not be as fast as a heavy-rail train coming in on a circle route would be. People would get in five minutes quicker than they would under the government's best plans and modelling for its light rail. The government was proposing to restrict the number of stations in that inner urban area, where we would be most likely to stimulate urban renewal and infill housing and create an urban environment in which people would

want to live, play, recreate and work—that urban environment that people look to when they go to Europe and say, “Isn’t that fantastic!” That opportunity will be restricted, because the government is going to restrict the number of stops. As I said, there will be interesting issues about the impact that giving the light rail priority along a major urban corridor will have on the other users of that corridor. It is made even more bizarre when we think about the fact that there is an alternative.

Basically, the people who will use the proposed light rail will be either south of ECU, Mt Lawley, or north of Mirrabooka. Very few will be in the section between ECU, Mt Lawley and Mirrabooka. I think that something like almost half the projected passengers are expected to come from north of Mirrabooka. Again, I do not know how the government will manage where the Park ‘n’ Ride stations will be. There will be an awful lot of buses trying to aggregate into that point. A circle route would allow the government to have up to three or four stops across that northern arc as points with Park ‘n’ Ride stations and bus feeder services coming into them—something that is not available under the light rail proposal. A proposal to take the light rail out to ECU, Mt Lawley, with lots of stops along the way, makes sense. When we try to go north of ECU, Mt Lawley, there are, I believe, numerous options. Even if the government does not want to build the north circle route, there are alternative options for getting people into the city quicker and more effectively than is the case under the proposal for the light rail.

Let us remember too that this light rail is not a cheap option. I think there is a perception that somehow light rail is massively cheaper than heavy rail. In fact, heavy rail is probably cheaper; in most circumstances heavy rail will be cheaper than light rail, particularly where there is already a reserve corridor. One of the other benefits that heavy rail would have had, and one of its costs, was the building of overpasses on Tonkin and Reid Highways. Those overpasses would also improve the traffic flow. I again note that the commonwealth government has committed funding for three of the overpasses that it would have been necessary to build as part of the north circle route. Therefore, we would not be building just a rail system; we would also be enhancing the urban environment, and we would have ultimately created a circle freeway, which would have been of great assistance to those people who are not able to use public transport because they are a truck driver or a tradesperson who needs to take their ute or their equipment with them.

The government has put forward a very interesting proposal. Again, I am happy to put on the record today that I suspect that it will never get commonwealth funding for two reasons. Firstly, if a Labor government is elected in September this year, the government’s proposal will never get a high enough benefit-to-cost ratio to be able to get funding from the commonwealth government. Infrastructure Australia is very rigorous about assessing projects for funding based on their benefit-to-cost ratio. I think that is a very good thing. In fact, it is a shame that not more of it is done by the WA state government before it makes decisions on what it will or will not fund, because if the government funds something that has a low benefit-to-cost ratio and it does not fund something that has a high benefit-to-cost ratio, it is damaging the economy of Western Australia. I know that when I asked Hon Jim Chown the other day what the BCR for Ord stage 2 was, his response was, “Let’s not go there”, or something to that effect, which makes me think that the government knows that the benefit-to-cost ratio for the Ord is very low. I think anyone who looks at what is panning out up there now would understand that that is probably the case. The problem is that that \$300 million should have, could have and would have had a greater benefit-to-cost ratio if it had been spent on other projects in regional Western Australia. There are plenty of projects that money could have been spent on to help stimulate the Kimberley. If a federal Labor government is elected in September—I hope it is—the project will not be funded because the BCR will never be high. In fact, I suspect a BCR above one will never be attained, which means that the cost benefit of the project is lower than the cost of the project. The other outcome in September is the election of a federal Liberal government, and the project will never be funded if a Liberal government is elected because Liberal governments do not do that.

Hon Sue Ellery: It is not in their knitting.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is not in the Liberal Party’s knitting. Not only that; it is not in its DNA. It is not in its DNA at a state level to build public transport, and it is not in Mr Abbott’s DNA to fund public transport at a federal level.

So, whichever way we look at it, the proposal for light rail under a Liberal government will struggle. As I say, it is a very poor option anyway in terms of the benefits for Western Australia. I still do not understand why light rail is being put out to Mirrabooka. As I understand, part of the plan is to take over part of the car park of the Polytechnic West Balga campus. I would have thought that all of the car park of Polytechnic West Balga campus would be taken over because the depot must be built there. The argument is that it has to go out to Mirrabooka because that is where the depot can be built. Apart from the impact on Polytechnic West Balga campus, there is still no public park ‘n’ ride there, so I do not know how that will work for the public and I do not know where the students will then park. That is the government’s argument.

At the same time, the government refuses to acknowledge the offer by Curtin University to make room on that campus for the car barn for light rail cars. There is an alternative argument. Again, this government is not good at being open and accountable. When it does its internal decision making and when we ask what sites or options were looked at, it goes to ground and refuses to divulge. There was a bit of that in question time today. I learned from a tweet of one of the members that a minister refused to even provide the details of the alternatives considered. There was a clear alternative at Curtin University, and it would have provided a better outcome. I am sure that over the next four years I will come to this place to give more detail on reports of the Planning Institute of Australia and the Australian Council for New Urbanism on the benefits of a new light rail out to Curtin University. They pointed out the problems of restricting the number of stops close to the city on the light rail north to Mirrabooka.

Another matter I want to touch on tonight is the government's suggestion that this infrastructure can be built by a public-private partnership. PPP is just a fancy name for privatisation. Members have seen the problems at Fiona Stanley Hospital. It is a hospital without patients because of the deal the government has done with Serco. That privatisation is for only the operation of the hospital and not the capital side of the hospital. It is important that I get on the record that funding capital infrastructure via a PPP does not miraculously take away the debt a government has to repay. Whether the government borrows money and builds the infrastructure or whether the private sector borrows the money to build the infrastructure, unless the asset generates its own income, someone has to ultimately pay that debt off. That someone is generally the taxpayer.

If light rail is built, unless the intention is to charge full cost recovery, which would be a first for public transport in Western Australia, with the exception, interestingly, of the ferries to South Perth—they are the only piece of public transport infrastructure that breaks even; although other pieces break even in their operating costs at peak time, the total of the infrastructure never breaks even—the government will still have to pay that money back. But it is suggested that if it is done as a PPP, we do not have to pay it back. It is a miraculous way of doing it. However, if we follow the voodoo economics referred to by members earlier tonight, in which \$250 million can be spent on a power station that does not produce power but the cost of power bills will not increase, or money is taken out of the Insurance Commission of Western Australia but third party insurance costs will not increase, members might believe that somehow a PPP removes debt. I would be surprised if any private sector developer would be able to get a cheaper interest rate than the state can. I suspect that a developer would always be paying a premium, unless of course the risk is completely taken by the state, in which case, what is the point of the exercise if the transfer of risk is not at least one of the items? The only other argument that a PPP would be useful would be if the private sector could run that asset more efficiently than the state government. The discussion becomes interesting.

Previously I have tried to get copies of documents of the Public Transport Authority and have been told that I cannot because they are confidential. I understand that the PTA is part of a group that benchmarks nationally all rail systems in Australia. I am happy to be corrected, but I understand that WA urban rail operations consistently come out as one of the most efficient and well-run operations in Australia when compared with other states. One must remember that other states have privatised public transport. New South Wales built a light rail under a PPP and the state government bought it back. One of the reasons it bought back the public-private partnership of the light rail in New South Wales is that it would be difficult to expand that light rail under the PPP that had been issued. When the Gold Coast light rail was first proposed, there was a lot of talk about a massive PPP. There is still some PPP involved in the Gold Coast light rail, but it has been significantly bought back. I suspect that, by the time the PPP is concluded, the Gold Coast light rail will end up going the same way as the Sydney light rail, and it will be completely taken back.

I now make a couple of final comments. These are my introductory remarks but I will continue to enhance upon these comments in the coming four years. I thank the government for finally doing the right thing and tabling a copy of the "Public Transport Authority, Investigation Report, Final Report. Dewatering of overhead line: Between Warwick and Stirling stations at 12.313 km point". It is good that is finally tabled, as it should be, and I hope we do not have to continually go through the same process throughout the years. But if we do, I am ready for it, and I will continue to pursue that to ensure the government is held accountable.

To finish, I will re-cover one of the points I discussed earlier in my comments on the Supply Bill. One of the problems the opposition has with this government is its poor financial management. We are expected tonight, or over the next couple of days and weeks, to give the government supply by supporting this bill. I am looking forward to hearing the explanation for the government not getting the budget into Parliament on time; although it appears to have more problems than it knows how to deal with because it lived in *Alice in Wonderland* leading up the state election.

I want to re-emphasise the issue of what has happened to state debt under this government. According to the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement*, debt in the general government sector will have grown by almost \$12 billion over the two terms of the Barnett government. That is predominantly bad debt. It is debt that will

need to be repaid by future generations out of the consolidated account and it will restrict the ability of future generations to fund health services, schools and police. At the same time, the non-financial public sector, which has traditionally good debt, as long as sound business cases are done and the government does not invest in power stations that do not produce power, will have gone up by about \$8 billion. That is still fairly hefty growth. However, it highlights the real problem under the Barnett government. If the government has sound business cases, given the increase in population in WA, we would hope that debt would have an income stream to pay it back and that it would not be a burden on future generations, other than paying for electricity infrastructure or for ports in Western Australia to import goods. Not much of it has gone into ports at this stage, of course. Although this government has talked a lot about ports, it has not done much about expanding them. That is a real problem for the state of Western Australia. When the ratings agencies look at Western Australia and at the total increase in debt under the Barnett government, about \$19 billion, I think they will focus on the \$12 billion of general government debt coming forward. I look forward to seeing the new figure when the budget finally comes into this house. I cannot see how the government can do everything it promised at the last state election and not further increase debt in the general government sector. One issue over which we need to deconstruct the budget is, of course, the transfer of the Public Transport Authority out of the general government sector into the non-financial public sector. That will have reduced the government debt a little and increased the non-financial public sector debt. I think one of the reasons the PTA was in the general government sector in the past is that, although it is a government trading enterprise in name, the minister is effectively the board of the PTA. It does not have a board and although it is operating as a department, it relies on funding from the consolidated account and any debt incurred needs to be repaid from the consolidated account. It therefore has all the hallmarks of an agency of the general government sector. If we can also look at the budget for the coming couple of years, I suspect some of that \$16 billion debt will be PTA debt. It probably is not PTA debt at the moment but it probably will be in the future. If the government continues to build the infrastructure it has promised, the real impact on the general government sector will be higher.

I conclude by reminding members that the Mandurah railway line was built by the Labor government completely debt-free. It did not leave a burden on future generations; it left an asset for future generations. Fiona Stanley Hospital is able to be built debt-free because money was left in the bank for this government to build it. These are two major items —

Hon Sally Talbot: Two great legacies.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, they are two great legacies. They are assets left not just for future generations but also without a debt. I ask members on the other side to tell me which great asset this Liberal government will leave to future generations of Western Australians without a debt. All the government has done is build assets. In fact in some cases it has restricted the capacity of Western Australians to make a choice about what they want in the future because the government has built assets with debt. Despite having some very good boom times, the government will not have left the future generations the legacy that the Carpenter and Gallop governments left—a railway line and a hospital completely debt-free.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [8.45 pm]: It is interesting that Hon Ken Travers finishes his remarks by talking about the unfair burden that has been placed on the whole community of Western Australia because of the way in which this government is mismanaging the budget.

I am sure that some of my colleagues who represent other parts of the state will take up this matter later in their contributions to this debate. I think it was only this morning that we saw a report from the Town of Port Hedland about how royalties for regions is pumping so much capital into that town that the rate base of the town cannot now support the recurrent costs associated with that infrastructure. What a basic piece of mismanagement that is! If it was not today we saw that report, it was yesterday or within the past 48 hours.

Hon Ken Travers: Everyone predicted it, too.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Everybody predicted it. We have been saying it in this place for the last three or four years. Every time we raise it, the government runs for cover and retreats to its standard stumps on royalties for regions and now the chickens are coming home to roost. It is interesting that nobody from the government is prepared to address those issues.

The last budget from this government was a pretty sad affair. It is not really surprising therefore that we come into a new period of office for this government and find it not ready to present us with any sort of coherent financial management plan for the state for the next four years. We already know that the Premier has adopted the most extraordinarily cavalier approach to presenting budget papers in the traditional and time-honoured way of imparting some integrity to the out years. We already have the Premier on record making the most extraordinarily irresponsible statements that the out years do not really count. It is as though the government has been playing some kind of imaginative mind game for the last four and a half years with the finances of this state. We have all learnt now on this side of the house that there is only one column that we pay any attention to,

and that is the column for the current year's budget. Out years—who knows? I do not know whether they are core promises or non-core promises. We are inventing new financial terms as we go along to deal with all that. However, we have lost the ability now to do any serious predictive planning from the government's budget papers.

Honourable members will also have noticed that the budget papers get shorter and shorter every year. They have almost got to a kind of Twitter format. I imagine the government is working towards a stage when it can just tweet its budget in coming years because the amount of detail we get in the budget —

Hon Sue Ellery: As long as it doesn't Facebook it!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That would be a particular challenge for certain members opposite.

That sounds like a frivolous comment to make, but I am very serious about the lack of detail provided in the budget. If members go back to the final budget during Labor's years in government, they will see that the documents were substantially more detailed and gave the community a lot more idea about what the government was hoping to achieve. We do not get that anymore; we get dot points.

The thing I will never forget about last year's budget is how that efficiency dividend—or whatever the current phrase is that the government has thought of for talking about the activities of its razor gang—across all the departments was to be implemented. I have made reference to this several times already in this place, but I will do it once more. On the night of the budget, when we heard references to efficiency dividends and cuts over three years, and when we asked where those cuts would be coming from, we were told by minister after minister in their press releases on budget night that they did not know. I think some of those ministers were just trying to score a few points over their directors general, who had clearly won the day because they had got these budget cuts into the budget papers, but they had not bothered to sit down with the minister and work out where those cuts would be made. Several ministers were happy to stand up on that night and say, "We have no idea; come back later and we might have decided."

A few weeks after the budget was brought down in May, we had the estimates debate in the other place, and most of us assiduously traipsed down to the other place to listen to our particular areas of interest, and, to our surprise, we heard the same responses given in the estimates. This is unprecedented. We were presented with a budget that was supposed to set the financial parameters for the state over the following 12 months, and we were told into that financial year that budget cuts that had to take effect in that financial year still had not been finalised.

A few weeks after that, we came to the budget process in this place. We had our four or five days of sitting in this chamber and lining up ministers and their senior advisers and trying to get out of them what they were doing, and the only thing that we could get from the government was the same lack of information. Several weeks into the new financial year, we were not being told where those cuts would be made.

It is my clear recollection that we had got to a point past the end of the sitting for the 2012 year, and past the stage at which the Parliament could be recalled—because by then we were into what was effectively an election campaign—when we started to find out in dribs and drabs where those cuts were being made. In my own shadow portfolios at that time, I found that science and research funding had been pulled out for the Perth Observatory. We found that a number of programs had suddenly disappeared. When we started asking questions through the media and we started ringing ministers' offices and writing to ministers trying to get answers, we were told that this was the effect of the three per cent efficiency dividend. The government told the people of Western Australia only in retrospect—effectively six, seven or eight months after it had presented the budget papers—where those cuts had been made. What a cruel trick to play on the community of Western Australia.

I would imagine that to be a government member during that time would have been pretty stressful, because no matter where members opposite would have gone in their communities and electorates they would have been asked what on earth they were playing at. So I do not know why members opposite have been sitting in this Parliament for all these past weeks. The new members in this place must be completely puzzled by the fact that we have come into this place and we have been presented with virtually nothing on the notice paper, week after week after week. Why the government bothered to recall the Parliament, I do not know. Why did the government not spend that time to get its budget together? The government must have had some idea what it was going to do with the budget. The government has not sat in the Parliament since the middle of November. I cannot remember the exact date when we finished, but it was around the middle of November. The government sat in the upper house—let us not worry too much about the other place for the moment—in May this year. But the government still has not got its budget together. It defies belief that anything is going on over the road. I think we are getting a feeling for what is going on over the road, and that is blind panic as the government tries to sort out its budget. I do not know how the government works, but members opposite made a series of commitments during the election campaign and for months after the election campaign. I imagine that what is going on over the road is

blind panic by the government in an attempt to salvage some kind of credibility out of the mess that it has made of it all.

I have been involved in politics for a long time and I have never seen a government behave in the way this government has behaved in its first three months in office. This government had four and a half years in office—one of the longest terms in office that a government in Western Australia has ever had—and it has run from that period in office, claiming that was another government. The government has claimed that what it said then, it cannot be held to now. If aliens were to drop into this place and read *Hansard* and the media statements, they would think that there had been a change of government! I do not know what we can call this government—perhaps Barnett mark 2—or whether this government is a coalition or an alliance or something else, because the government makes it up as it goes along. The government might be perceived by an outsider as being a completely different government, but of course it is not. The government's election promises have come out of its management of this state for the past four and a half years. But the government has now had to run away at a million miles an hour from the majority of those election promises.

In 12 weeks the government has broken 12 promises. That is pretty good going. The government must have broken some kind of record to retreat at that pace. Of course this government is no stranger to breaking promises. In 2008, we had promises about train lines, and all sorts of promises about roads and ports and major infrastructure projects. None of that happened. That is when we found out that the Premier draws these weird distinctions between the things that local candidates say and things that he says he would like to do at some stage in the future. As I say, the Premier is basically making it up as he goes along. Twelve promises have been broken in 12 weeks. Imagine what it will be like at the end of two years!

What is even more troubling is the fact that the promises that the government did make were clearly not reflective of the priorities that the government now has to revisit. The community of Western Australia is saying to the government loudly and clearly that it does not want this. During the election campaign, the government poured money into things like the waterfront, the stadium and Elizabeth Quay. It committed to build these big infrastructure projects in the middle of the city. But the government forgot that it would have to deliver in other areas of the state on issues that the community has set as its priorities. The government forgot that it would have to deliver on education and on health, and in the areas that I have taken on since the election, such as child protection, mental health and disability services. The government has not left itself enough money to do that. I do not know how government members can go into their electorates and talk to their community groups and their constituents, who presumably are coming into their offices. Do let us know if this is not the case, because this would be extremely interesting. Perhaps government backbenchers genuinely do not hear the kinds of issues that have been related to the house tonight by people like Hon Kate Doust, who talked about the issues of homelessness that come to her office. Perhaps people just do not talk to members opposite about these things. One of the things that I used to bring into my local campaign structures when I was working as assistant state secretary for the Labor Party was helping people understand that if they are not hearing about an issue in their electorate offices or campaign offices, it might not mean that the community does not care about those issues; it might mean that the community has given up on getting any kind of real action from them. Members need to be just as vigilant about the issues that are not being brought to them and that are not walking through their electorate office doors every day as they are about the issues that are coming in.

Maybe that is the case. Maybe people in Western Australia have given up talking to members of the Liberal Party and members of the National Party about things such as waiting lists for medical services for children. Let us just think about what it must be like—many of us have been in this situation ourselves so we do not need much imagination to conjure this up—if we have a child and we need help for that child. Most of us would agonise over that initial move for some time. We would think that it is just a phase or that maybe things will change when we move house or when the next child is born or when we get a dog. It is human nature to think that maybe things will resolve themselves before we have to ask for help. After a period of time, many people find that they need to get help. Maybe they go to a GP, a teacher at school or somebody else in the community—somebody at church or at the social club—and say, “I have a problem with my child. This is what is happening.” Maybe the child is not speaking and they remember their other child. They are sure that little Jimmy was speaking well by this stage. Maybe there are some kind of behavioural difficulties. Maybe there is difficulty with sleeping or toilet training. Enough members in this place are parents to know that children have an almost infinite number of ways of scaring the pants off their parents.

Eventually people go and ask for help and then they have to go through a whole series of assessments. They are referred here and there. I have spoken many times in this place about people in the Peel region and even in Mandurah. I know that some people have the view that Mandurah is now part of the metropolitan area because we are connected by the rail system. As I have pointed out on many occasions, if a child needs particular help and assistance in Mandurah, often that child has to be taken out of school for the whole day to access a service when the actual treatment or the program that the child is involved in might take only an hour. The parents have

to travel all the way up to Perth, get public transport once they get here and that sort of thing. They go through that assessment process and then maybe get a referral to a specialist.

In this place the other day we asked what the waiting list times were for access to various services. We were talking about specialists such as psychologists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists. Imagine a child going through an assessment that may take months and getting to a stage where the doctor or whoever it is tells the parents that they will have to access these specialist services. Their child may have been referred to a psychologist or a physio, speech therapist, occupational therapist, social worker or paediatrician. They may have to access a range of services. The key here is that they have reached a kind of milestone in solving this problem. It is commonly said that the hardest step we take when we go looking for help of this type—I think it applies to parents looking for help for their children as well as for themselves—is the first one. That is when we admit there is a problem. We go through weeks or months and we finally get a referral. We then find out in Western Australia in 2013 that we may have to wait for nearly nine months to access that service. What does that do to a person? What does it do to their relationship with their child, the relationship with the rest of the family and the child's relationship with the rest of the family? Imagine waiting all those months for something like a referral to a specialist paediatrician. Imagine fronting up in June 2013 and finding that they cannot see a clinical psychologist until next year. What a terrible thing to have to admit in 2013 in Western Australia, in a state where the majority of people are rolling in affluence and where we have had some of the most buoyant economic times that any state in Australia has ever experienced, that we are telling the parent of a child who needs specialist medical support services in 2013 that they cannot access those services in 2013; they have to wait until 2014. That is simply not acceptable.

We come to this place and make representations on behalf of people who may be our constituents or who have contacted us from other parts of the state because we hold certain portfolios. We come into this place to try to get some answers from the government. What are we told? I think this is our third or fourth week of sitting since the election and we are still being told that we will have to wait for the budget to find out what finances will be allocated to any number of areas that involve these essential programs, not just for people's economic wellbeing but for their actual day-to-day life and the stability of their existence with their family as workers in their communities. They have to wait until the budget. Then we find out that we will not get a budget until the second half of the year. In June 2013 ministers are still telling us that they do not know what position they will be presenting to us in August when they plan to bring down the budget. Now the government comes to us and says, "We don't have enough money to run the state so this is what we need to do." We are used to this. Every year we consider the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill, the mechanism that the government uses on an annual basis to top up the areas where it has overspent its budgets. Our budget cycle in this state is that under normal circumstances we get the budget in May and by about September or October the government has blown the budget so that it has to come back in here and pass a special bill to get extra money. There are limits on the amount of money the government can ask for. There are no limits on this bill that we are considering today because the government has got itself into such a mess that it has had to come back to us and effectively ask for a temporary budget to be put in place.

As I have said, the key question is not just about where the money is coming from; it is about what sort of communities we want to live in. We do not know the answer to that. Maybe members of the government hear the questions differently. Maybe they see the question in the narrowest possible way. We ask ministers questions about waiting lists for access to paediatric health services and they think we want to know how long we have to wait to get an appointment for a child to see a speech pathologist. Maybe our neighbours asked us to find out this information and we want to go home and say that we found this information for them today. That is not what we are asking. When we ask these questions, we are asking what sort of state we are living in. What sort of community do we want to live in? What sort of vision do those sitting on the government benches have for our community? It matters very much. It matters because it goes to the heart of the issues that I raised in my speech earlier this month on the Address-in-Reply. It matters because we know that we have a growing sense of insecurity amongst ordinary working families in this state—not just a sense of inequality but a growing real, practical inequality in the way that society is structured economically. It does matter terribly.

I shared a statistic with honourable members last week when I was speaking on the Address-in-Reply. I was running out of time when I got to this point that I wanted to make so I will just go over it now in a little more detail. Some honourable members who were paying attention at the time might remember that I said income inequality in Australia is growing. It is growing in this state and in every other state. Some honourable members will know about the Gini coefficient. I refer now to a document that every member ought to have at their fingertips, which is the Western Australian Council of Social Service's "Cost of Living Report 2012". This is an annual publication that gives us some great data to give us a real feel—if members care about things such as income equality and job security for ordinary working people—for whether we are making progress towards those objectives. The Gini coefficient is used all over the world as a measure of income inequality. I will not go through all the details, but I will tell honourable members that zero equals total equality and one indicates

maximum inequality and WA had the highest Gini coefficient in any Australian state or territory in 2009–10 with a score of 0.367. That increased from 0.329 in 2007–08. On that basic level of inequality we can see that Western Australia is the least equal in income distribution. This is the point that I think is terribly important.

If we go back to the 2009–10 Australian Bureau of Statistics income distribution survey, we find that the 20 per cent of households with the lowest net worth accounted for only one per cent of total household net worth, while the 20 per cent of households with the highest net worth account for 62 per cent of total household net worth. Let me put that into a better narrative form. It means that 20 per cent of the poorest households, the households with the least amount of disposable income, the lowest net worth, account for only one per cent of total household net worth—20 per cent of households, one per cent of net worth. If we go to the other end of the spectrum, we find the wealthiest 20 per cent. It is a pretty easy diagram to get in our heads once we have mastered the basics. The amount of total wealth is one per cent to the poorest 20 per cent of households and 62 per cent to the wealthiest 20 per cent of households. Those are the numbers that flesh out that basic Gini coefficient that shows that Western Australia is leading Australia in income inequality.

I keep saying it matters. Why does it matter? Let us look at the work that has been done to collect empirical evidence. My academic background has absolutely nothing to do with the collection of empirical evidence. It is a standard joke in academia; it is where philosophers part company with everybody else who styles themselves as academics, because philosophers never deal with empirical examples. They try every now and then when they talk about, for example, the number of angels who can dance on the head of a pin, but that always falls a bit short because it is not quite an empirical example. Many fine academics out there have done the empirical data collection on why it matters if a society has this basic inequality in income distribution. These are just a few of the points that can be empirically demonstrated. The greater the level of income inequality, the less interest there is in the common good—in other words, the harder it is to muster any sort of community interest or enthusiasm in what might be good for that society. I can see the eyes of honourable members on the government benches glazing over. That is because they have no idea what I am talking about when I say “the less interest there is in the common good”. Perhaps they will find it easier to understand if I reverse that and talk about the other side of the coin.

On one side of the coin we get less interest in the common good; on the other side of the coin is more interest in the view that, “I’m all right, Jack. As long as I’m okay, I can rush home at the end of every day, bring up my drawbridge, close all my fortifications and I’m okay. I don’t have the brain space or the energy, emotional or physical, to worry about anybody else because I am so busy worrying about myself. What happens to society is something that someone else has to worry about because I have only to worry about me and my immediate family.” We get more of that and less interest in the common good the greater the inequality in income. We get increased unhappiness. There are all kinds of measures for quantifying happiness. We can look at things such as suicide rates, depression, anxiety and all sorts of mental illnesses that equate with unhappiness, or we can look at how people spend their leisure time and indeed if they even have leisure time. All those things are empirically equated with happiness. The interesting thing about that happiness measure is that the average level of wealth does not matter. How interesting is that? It means that a society can be very wealthy in means and average incomes and everybody could be clustered at the high side, but as long as there is the inequality of incomes, there is still that increased level of unhappiness. We get a range of social problems, including mental illness, as I have just mentioned.

Obviously, one of those social problems is increased rates of incarceration. Even the government has had to sit up and pay attention to the fact that we have very, very serious problems with our incarceration rate. When we start looking at the people who are imprisoned, we realise just how dramatic that problem is and how obviously that problem fits into this classification that I am putting forward, which is about inequality of incomes. The people we lock up in this state primarily are poor people. It is primarily people on the wrong end of the economic equation in this state.

This might be of more interest to government members: more inequality of income also goes along with reduced life expectancy, lower levels of child wellbeing and less likelihood of volunteering. I guess the latter goes along with the less interest in the common good. If we close the gap, we will get more people volunteering to contribute their efforts and energies. That all equates to a kind of lower social capital. I know that Liberal Party members will not be interested in that, as social capital is something they probably wrote off years ago. But I think members of the National Party understand that if we increase social capital in the community, we increase levels of wellbeing and get a better place. I hope that what I am saying is not falling on totally deaf ears, at least as far as the National Party goes.

The other element I referred to along with inequality was insecurity. The Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia released its final report in May 2012. It was commissioned by the Australian Council of Trade Unions and chaired by Brian Howe. The interesting thing was that in the final report the panel found it was not only blue-collar workers, low-paid workers, who were suffering the effects of insecure work, but it was also

white-collar workers. I will just give honourable members a flavour of what we are talking about. The final report found —

... since the 1980s, a dramatic decline in full-time employment and a corresponding jump in casual and fixed-term work has left up to 40 per cent of the nation—both blue-collar workers and white alike—in insecure work.

Of course, the people on the other side of the equation, the employers, came out and said, “Well, that’s just nonsense.” They tried to revert to the sorts of arguments that I have just presented about the inequality of incomes. Employers tried to argue, “Sure, you might have a lot of people in insecure work, but they’re earning a hell of a lot of money when they are working. So what are we worried about?” The employers came back and said that a large proportion of these people are in high-paying jobs and choose not to work for a full-time employer. That is not what this report is about. I recommend that honourable members read this report. I think it is one of the most significant documents that we have seen in the past decade, as far as pointing out some of the new stress points amongst workers in Australia. Many people would agree with me that those stress points are just as pressing and in just as urgent need of addressing as the stress points of 100 years ago, which were to do with low incomes and the lack of entitlements in those days before we had limited working hours and all sorts of allowances—holiday pay, sick leave and that sort of thing. The stresses that this report points to are just as serious and just as pressing as those.

Some time later there was another report, again from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, dated 13 March 2013. It is titled “New research shows Australia has second highest rate of temporary workers in the OECD” and states —

New research ... released at ... National Community Summit: Creating Secure Jobs and a Better Society shows Australia has the second highest rate of temporary workers in the OECD, people are worried about their children’s future ...

The report states that the summit was —

... presented with new data showing that Australia had overtaken Spain and now lagged behind only Chile for the highest rate of temporary work in the OECD at 27.9% of the workforce.

Depending on the criteria used, somewhere in the vicinity of between 28 per cent and 40 per cent of our workforce is in jobs that are either insecure or temporary. In other words, all those people—up to 40 per cent of our workforce—have no leave entitlements, no sick leave and, essentially, no job security. This is the great divide in our community in Western Australia in 2013. It is a fact that people have been earning the really massive incomes and that we have so many Western Australians in the top dozen of *Business Review Weekly*’s richest people list largely because of the mining boom. The mining boom has created very real wealth. The mining boom has created very real security for a very small number of people. Gina Rinehart and Andrew Forrest do not have to worry about what their financial position will be in five years’ time because they have a fallback plan, and they have a fallback plan from that fallback plan. Many, many Western Australians’ fallback plan is to win lotto. That is not such a bad thing —

Hon Col Holt: My apologies.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is okay; the member was looking very much like a person who wanted to say something.

Hon Stephen Dawson: He wants to win lotto too!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It was the mention of lotto—I might have guessed!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Simon O’Brien): Order, members! The honourable member is trying to draw her remarks to a conclusion and your unruly interjections discourage that.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you very much for your kind insight into what was happening there, Mr Deputy President.

My point is that Gina Rinehart and Twiggy Forrest do not need a fallback plan because they have so much money that they know where they will be in five, 10 or 15 years’ time. They might dispute that hotly because for them, of course, there is an enormous difference between being a multimillionaire and being a millionaire. But I can tell members that for 99.9 per cent of people in this state, it is not a difference that they will ever have to worry about. What I saw when I was doorknocking all around the communities of the south west for the first two and a half months of this year was people who are living quite a nice life at the moment, but very, very few of them knew where they would be in five years’ time. We would meet very few workers in this state who can with any kind of confidence predict where they will be working in five years’ time. That might not be such a bad

thing if we had a system in this state in which people could retrain and if we could be confident of job security for ourselves, our kids and our grandchildren because we had a decent training system and had put into place genuine systems to do what everybody who takes the remotest interest in the modern economy would tell us we have to do—namely, have a flexible workforce that is capable of picking up a wide range of skills, adapting those skills, picking up new trades, learning about new technology and meeting employers' demands for improved productivity and all the technicalities that go along with that. If we lived in that sort of economy, we might be able to go to households in places such as Dalyellup, Eaton, Capel, Albany, Collie and Mandurah and meet a workforce that is happy and confident about its future. But that is not the case. Twiggy Forrest knows that in five years' time he will still be a millionaire. He might have only \$1 million or \$2 million, but he is still going to be a millionaire. Someone who is a fly in, fly out worker in one of those communities in the south west does not know not only where they will be working but also whether they will have work in the next five years, let alone the next 10 years.

I go back to what I was saying about the effects of insecurity and inequality on our community. Where we have that kind of insecurity, we inevitably have people falling back on their own resources; people who will say, "I'm going to live fast and hard now because I might not be able to do it in five years, let alone 10 years." Therefore, we get a breakdown of community spirit because we have eroded the foundations on which our community thrives—that is, the foundations based on an equal distribution of wealth and a secure sense of where that income will come from during our working life. We have seen that systematically dismantled in recent years.

We look forward to budget day, which I think will be 8 August, because in amongst the rubble of all this government's broken promises are still some things that we live in hope of seeing. A portfolio that I am interested in is mental health, and we are waiting to see what will happen with things such as the suicide prevention program. I understand that the minister very quietly allowed the Mental Health Commissioner to announce that the One Life program funding will be extended until the end of this calendar year. All the One Life programs, all those community action plans, that are now being rolled out in communities across the state have income until 31 December 2013. The funding was, of course, supposed to run out on 30 June this year. How can the government run a suicide prevention strategy when its service providers do not know where their funding will come from in six months' time? How can the government go into communities that are desperate for help—whether they are remote communities in the Kimberley, farming communities in the wheatbelt or the fly in, fly out communities down south with all the stresses and strains that that lifestyle brings—and start rolling out suicide prevention programs that have absolutely no security of funding? The minister knows that the services cannot work like that, yet that is exactly the situation we face.

Look at the area of disability services. We have the National Disability Insurance Scheme waiting; waiting for the government to decide whether it can bring itself to the table despite the fact that the minister herself has conceded that around 70 per cent of applications for funding for disability services are not met under the current structures rolled out by this government. Despite the fact that we have somewhere between 70 and 80 per cent of demand unmet under the current system, the government will not sign up to the NDIS. Instead of signing up to the NDIS, the government has been batting it around the table like a political football; happy to just string it out. I do not know what it is waiting for.

The government seems to think it will get a better deal from a Liberal federal government; yet when we ask for evidence of that—where are the statements and where have the negotiations got to—it cannot tell us because it is patently obvious that it is not true. Right across those portfolios that I now have responsibility for and a whole raft of other portfolios that affect the day-to-day existence of ordinary Western Australians, we are just being dangled like puppets from the thread of this autocratic and irresponsible Liberal–National government.

HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan) [9.30 pm]: Thank you, Mr Deputy President (Hon Simon O'Brien), and congratulations on your election to the important position of Deputy President.

As members know, the Supply Bill 2013 is actually the first piece of legislation that I have had the opportunity to speak on in this place, having only just made my inaugural speech. As a member of this place I am absolutely delighted to have this chance. When I got the opportunity to do it, off I went, with all the diligence and energy of a new member, to research this important piece of legislation. I looked into the nature and the purpose of the Supply Bill 2013. On paper, there really is not all that much to it. I looked into it. I listened to the second reading debates. I found that we are being asked by this government to approve a bill that will allow the government to access \$7.942 billion from consolidated revenue. From that sum, about \$1.193 billion is for capital purposes for the 2013 financial year. When I looked at that, I thought, "Gosh, that's a really big ask." In essence we are being asked to approve in good faith that amount of money—that is, to approve in good faith an advance of 40 per cent of last year's budget. I took a good look around. A few things strike me about this bill. Not only is it a big ask, but I thought to myself, "Isn't a Supply Bill a little unusual? Isn't a Supply Bill something we do not typically see on a regular basis?" We certainly do not see a Supply Bill outside the usual budget cycle of Australian

Parliaments. A Supply Bill has almost got a kind of mythology. Is it not uncommon for a Supply Bill to be introduced by a second-term government outside the budgetary cycle? That is right; of course the budget will not be brought down until early August, so that perplexed me a little bit more. It is my understanding that a Supply Bill presented outside the usual budgetary cycle is very rare. I found only a couple of reasons this would occur. I understand that the main reason a Supply Bill was sometimes required and presented by a new government when it took office—when a new government settled in, if you like—was while it set to work to reorder its priorities, introduce new government programs or to redirect spending based on new policies. New government, new policies, new directions—that is what I understood.

My colleague Rita Saffioti is quite knowledgeable about these things. The very energetic member for West Swan is also very committed. She pointed out in the other place that the last time a Supply Bill was required in Western Australia was in 2001. That was 12 years ago. It does not seem like that long ago to me, but it was in 2001. What did that make me think about? That made me think that in 2001 we had a new government; the new Gallop Labor government. That government came into office with a detailed plan of action and it set about implementing that plan. In 2001, the new Gallop Labor government introduced a Supply Bill to get that plan of action underway, but I do not think that is what is happening here. Here we have a second-term government—a government that went to the election with a supposed rolled gold plan, or at least that is probably the paper it was printed on! If this is not a new government, if it is a second-term government supposedly with a plan, why are we being asked to give the Treasurer permission to allocate in the vicinity of \$7.9 billion? I do not understand that.

The second reason we might be asked to pass a Supply Bill outside the regular budgetary cycle is if a government is in crisis. This reason is probably more often known to the general public. If a budget is so badly in need of attention and the governmental programs are being so poorly implemented, that might be a reason to require us to look at a Supply Bill. Of course I realised that for this reason to be accurate the government would have to actually have an implementation plan, but the government boldly stated in much of its election literature that its plans were fully costed, fully funded and fully budgeted for. I admit that there was an awful lot of election literature from the government. Even the television advertisements indicated that the government's plans were fully costed and fully budgeted. Surely this is a government in disarray. Is that a reason for a Supply Bill? Could it be that the government found its plans were not fully costed or fully budgeted? Could it be that there were a number of broken promises already so that it could not meet its budgetary commitments? Despite all that, we are being asked to agree to the allocation of \$7.9 billion or thereabouts in good faith.

What government programs, what government services and what capital developments are we being asked to commit to? Will it be the nearly 40 kilometres of bypass road in the Swan Valley in the East Metropolitan Region that I represent? Of course it will not be the bypass road that we know as the Perth–Darwin highway. Certainly, the Premier and the Treasurer promised \$196 million for that road during the election. That road will hopefully take about 3 000 heavy vehicles off the road, but I am not sure we will see that. Maybe this appropriation will not include this road, because, as we heard from Hon Ken Travers earlier, the federal government has already said it will contribute the lion's share of that. Maybe the state government will not meet its budget commitments. Maybe it will also not build this road either. Despite the member for Swan Hills saying in January this year that if re-elected the government would commence work on this road in 2014, the Premier and the Treasurer said in February this year that the work would not start until 2014–16. That is two years' difference to the start date. That is a long wait for the people of the Swan Valley. I hope that this bypass road will be part of the appropriation. I hope it starts before 2016, because the federal government will come to the party with the money, but, more importantly, there is the need; we need that. Perhaps it will not be.

I hope, too, that another commitment to the people of West Swan made during the election will also be honoured in this appropriation, and that is \$2 million that they were promised, or that some businesses on Toodyay Road were promised, to make the road entrances to their businesses safe. That is at the intersection of Lewis Jones Cross and Toodyay Road, which is notorious for traffic accidents. The people of that area were promised \$2 million to upgrade that intersection to make it safer for those people who live there, work there and visit there. I hope that that important intersection will be upgraded and that that may be part of this appropriation, and I hope that we see this work commence really soon.

Still in the Swan Hills area, during the election the people of Parkerville were also promised some funding to improve safety in that area. During the election they were promised \$330 000 to improve Carawatha Road—to ease some of the bends, to take out some of the bends to make them a little easier to negotiate and to do some work on the sight lines on that road, amongst other things. I really hope that this appropriation will contribute to the completion of that important work.

There are even more roadworks. The government committed \$14 million to complete the dual carriageway on Gngangara Road, from West Swan Road to Alexander Drive. Do members know I reversed that, because often it is talked about as Alexander Drive to West Swan Road, but for me it is from West Swan Road to Alexander

Drive. Hopefully, next year we will see the commencement of that and some work to put in traffic lights on Reid Highway near Lord Street. I say “hopefully”, because we are not really sure what this appropriation will include.

Of course, roads are only one part of the picture. As I pointed out earlier in this place, access to public transport in East Metropolitan Region is left severely wanting. In particular, in Swan Hills it is appalling. Of course, steps taken by the government, particularly in this area, kind of reminded me of *Keystone Cops*. Do members recall the old *Keystone Cops*—that silent movie in which everyone is chasing everyone else around? No-one knows what direction they are going in and they all collapse in a heap.

An opposition member interjected.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes—a couple of days before the election.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Let’s hear the music.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The music, yes. All I can think of is just all the collapsing in on the end, and no-one really knowing what is going on.

Hon Jim Chown: It sounds like the Labor Party. Just wait for a few weeks.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I do not know, because a couple of days before the state election *The West Australian* reported on the great debacle that is the rapid transit service to Ellenbrook. Do members remember that it was reported that the mayor of the City of Swan was told in January to go to an urgent meeting with the Department of Transport because an announcement was to be made very soon about the rapid transit bus service to Ellenbrook—from Bassendean to Ellenbrook too, of course? I do not understand the sense in that planning, particularly if people are coming from the city, because they have to catch the train to Bassendean. What are they going to do then? They will jump on this rapid transit system. If they need to go even further out, they will have to get another form of transport. In my estimation, it is not particularly good planning, but that was the plan. Lo and behold, the mayor was to be sorely disappointed, was he not, because the Premier did not commit to the plan during the election, even though about \$630 000 had already been laid out on a concept design study? But Mr Alban, the member for Swan Hills, had gone as far as to tell voters that the Perth–Darwin highway, the Lord Street and Reid Highway intersection and the Ellenbrook rapid transit system were underway. We know they were not. So, I am not sure what the people from Ellenbrook can expect from this appropriation.

Hon Adele Farina interjected.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I am hopeful. That is all we have: good faith and hope. Let us hope that something the people really need comes together from a long-term plan that is well costed and well funded, but I cannot be sure about that.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.