

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Penda; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

TREASURER'S ADVANCE AUTHORISATION BILL 2003

Declaration as Urgent

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont - Treasurer) [4.38 pm]: In accordance with Standing Order No 168(2), I move -

That the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003 be considered an urgent Bill.

This is part of the usual package of Bills associated with the budget. It would be preferable, for proper financial management, if this Bill were to be dealt with by this House of Parliament before 30 June. I seek the cooperation of the House in allowing it to be debated before the usual three-week period has expired. I understand that this is a matter with which the Opposition is not uncomfortable. I thank it for its preparedness to allow this debate to come on somewhat earlier than would normally be expected under our standing orders.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [4.39 pm]: The Opposition will agree to this Bill being treated as urgent. I seek clarification. The Treasurer said that he needed to get the Bill through this House by 30 June. I thought he needed to get it through both Houses. As it is a Treasurer's Advance authorisation, the Treasurer will need it by 1 July.

Mr E.S. Ripper: It is preferable to have it through both Houses by 30 June.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Opposition will assist the passage of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Second Reading

Resumed from 4 June.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [4.40 pm]: I will be brief in my comments. Although this Bill does not allow for a general debate, it does allow for a fairly wide-ranging debate on Treasury matters. I will not do that, as I am conscious that this is the last week of the session and it is necessary that the Bill pass through the Parliament.

If the Treasurer will indulge me for a moment, I take this opportunity on behalf of the Parliamentary Liberal Party to express congratulations to Major General Philip Michael Jeffery, AO, MC on his appointment as Governor General designate. Michael Jeffery, following a very distinguished military career, including being a recipient of the Military Cross during his term of duty in Vietnam, was an outstanding Governor of Western Australia. It is a source of great pride to this State that a second Western Australian, following Sir Paul Hasluck, has been appointed Governor General. I am sure members will express their support for the Jefferys as they take on this role. I am sure that Michael, as Governor General, and Marlena, who will complement him superbly in that role, will be a most distinguished couple. I was delighted to hear Major General Jeffery say that he would address youth issues. It has been the convention that Governors General do not speak out on issues; however, I have a suspicion that Michael Jeffery will speak out on issues, as he did as the Governor of this State. If he speaks out on and raises the stature of youth issues in Australia, he will do a great service to all Australians, particularly young Australians.

This legislation, however, relates to the Treasurer's Advance authorisation. It is a conventional budget Bill that simply allows the Treasury to draw down an amount of money - in this case \$300 million - for the normal ongoing operations of government. It covers the period between the end of a financial year and the first part of a new financial year prior to the final approval of all budgetary measures. It is a normal cash-flow exercise for government. The amount of \$300 million has been static for a number of years; I have no objection to that.

I will not delay the House. I have an opportunity to speak for a long time about almost anything on this Bill, but I do not intend to do that. However, I will draw attention to one aspect of the financial affairs of this State, which follows some issues I raised during the Estimates Committee. I am concerned about the level of state public sector net debt. One of my first speeches in this Parliament back in 1991 or so was on the issue of state debt. Following that speech, the issue began to be reported in the media and became a significant factor leading up to the 1993 election.

The Treasurer very much enjoys bringing into Parliament graphs to share with members. In opposition I do not have the resources to produce colour graphs, but I can nevertheless produce graphs. I will indicate to the House what has happened to the total level of state debt measured on a consistent basis. When the coalition came to government in 1993 state debt was a massive \$8.4 billion; that is, in nominal terms, not even real terms. That level of debt over the eight years of the coalition through to 2000-01 was reduced to just over \$4 billion; therefore, about \$4 000 million of Labor's debt was paid off during the coalition years. There is no doubt that it

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was done largely through the privatisation of various agencies, of which I was supportive; there was no alternative. Western Australia was in a parlous financial position.

What disturbs me is that, having gone through that process, having put the State back into a AAA credit rating, having reduced state debt and having had some sound financial principles in place, state debt is now rising again. The level of state debt inherited by the Labor Government in 2000-01 was \$4 381 million; in 2001-02 it went up to \$4 490 million; in 2002-03 it was at \$5 008 million; by the end of 2003-04 it is projected to be \$5 960 million; and by the end of Labor's term it will be \$6 458 million. The graph indicates that although state debt was dramatically reduced, it is again rising. Under the Labor Government's financial predictions, the rise in state debt during the term of this Government will be in excess of \$2 000 million. If my maths are correct, that works out at about \$1 000 for every man, woman and child in this State in just four years. That is an enormous addition to state debt and it is serious because that debt is real debt.

The Treasurer prefers to describe state debt as a percentage of revenue or a net debt to revenue ratio. Debt is not a relative concept. A relative concept by definition is a numerator divided by a denominator. Relative measures are of use only in jurisdictional comparisons. It makes sense to compare one State with another in a relative sense. Similarly, financial rating agencies that compare one Government with another at a particular time make use of measures such as debt to revenue ratios; similarly with comparisons over time. The point I make is that the debt is real debt: it is financial borrowings by state government departments and enterprises and it is growing at an alarming rate.

What concerns many people in the community is that state debt is increasing but construction has not yet started on the south west metropolitan railway. This is cuckoo-land stuff. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the Premier told this Parliament and the people of this State that the project would be on time and on budget. That statement was made in the famous press release that the Government issued on the changed route of the railway line. It is an expensive project and it is a project that should be implemented progressively to meet the growing demands and population of the south metropolitan suburbs, including Mandurah. The previous Government had started some railway construction work at the Kenwick interchange, which would have been under way had it still been in government. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the Premier tried to tell us that they could change the route of the railway line, add to it a tunnel under Perth, a new rail bridge over the Narrows Bridge and two new rail bridges at Mt Henry and that it would cost the same. It is absolutely farcical. There has been an absolute failure by the media in Western Australia to question that matter properly. What media worth their salt, in a financial or political sense, can accept that a tunnel under the city, a new bridge across the Narrows Bridge and two new bridges at Mt Henry will not add to the cost of the project? Yet, we suffer a media in this State that does not take that step of analysis. I say that, not to have a go at any particular media outlet or journalist, but because it was exactly the same in the 1980s. One of the greatest problems of WA Inc was that the media in Western Australia failed to do the simplest analysis. I know that well because a journalist with *The West Australian* and I, when I was at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, wrote some of the first articles exposing the financial risks and problems that were going on in government commercial dealings at that time. Very few people listened. We started off with tiny articles but they grew. How can the Government possibly suggest that this rail project will not cost any more? It is beyond comprehension. It is beyond comprehension that the Western Australian media misses the point. We know that the project is two and a half to three years late already; therefore, it will clearly not be achieved, but neither will the capital cost. This Treasurer will wear this project and his credibility will blow out the window unless he can provide detailed, accurate costings of the project. It is not as though it was a recent decision. Two years have passed since the decision to change the project. We still cannot get reliable figures on dates, timings and costs. I want that on the record because I want all Labor members to understand it is the reason the State is getting into debt; it is the reason capital works programs in schools are being cut; it is the reason we are not seeing the continuing development of the health system that should be occurring; and it is the reason for the debate earlier today during which it became clear that the Government cannot place an additional community welfare officer in Onslow. Money is being squirrelled away to try to handle the rail project. This Government knows that if it loses its AAA credit rating its credibility goes out the door. It is all because of this project.

The issue is not just the debt of the Government; the debt has to be serviced and interest must be paid. I show the House a second graph. The graph indicates the levels of interest servicing costs that had to be paid. As the level of debt fell under the coalition, the interest bill fell. At one stage under the coalition, the Government faced interest bills of \$500 million to \$600 million a year. This Government makes grand statements about three out of four years being deficit years under accrual accounting. That was not the case under the accounting of the time, which was revised to accrual accounting and backdated to declare deficits. This Government did not declare that the previous Government carried debts of \$500 million to \$600 million a year in interest payments because of Labor's mismanagement in the 1980s and early 1990s. Because of the repayment and retirement of

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debt under the coalition, this Government inherited interest repayments in 2000-01 that were reduced to \$200 million. That is one-third of the interest costs that the coalition had to meet. Little wonder that this Government had a dramatically improved financial position. However, we find again that interest costs will rise from just over \$200 million when Labor assumed government to well over \$300 million in 2005-06. What is more incredible about that is that there were two reasons interest costs were high when the coalition was in government. It had a huge level of inherited debt - in excess of \$8 billion - and the interest rate level was high. That was the legacy of Mr Keating as Prime Minister. The Treasury was paying interest rates in this State well in excess of 10 per cent. High interest rates were charged on a huge debt. That was the interest cost burden the coalition had to manage. The coalition managed it well enough for the State to regain its AAA credit rating. I find it extraordinary that, without work having even started on the south metropolitan railway, there is \$2 billion worth of extra debt under Labor for this term of government and interest costs are rising from approximately \$210 million to \$320 million. It is a time of low interest rates. The Government has half the level of debt that the coalition inherited and interest rates are half the level they were then. In spite of half Labor's previous debt being paid off and interest rates having halved under the stewardship of the Howard-Costello federal Government, this Government is experiencing rising debt and rising interest costs. That is not good financial management.

As everyone knows - except for members of the media who have failed to do the analysis - the rail project will blow-out by \$300 million conservatively. Many engineers say it will be a lot more. The Government is delaying the project, pushing it out and hiding the cost blow-out. The minister is not accountable; she cannot detail the costings or the timing of the project after two years. The Government is concealing from the public the financial risk around the corner. The Government is exposing the people of this State to a financial risk. Should interest rates rise over the medium term, which is always a risk with the Australian dollar, the State will be exposed to an even greater financial risk. This is not good management at all. It is a serious situation. How can there be rising debt when the project has not even started? How can there be rising debt and rising interest costs in an environment in which interest rates are half what they were a decade ago? It is anything but good financial management.

We now see the implications for other areas. Because the Government is not managing the south metropolitan railway project properly other agencies are having their reserves taken from them. The Government has plundered Western Power and the Water Corporation by increasing their dividends. That will reduce their capital reserves for their investment in much-needed infrastructure in this State. Over the weekend, the media carried an article about the probable demise of so-called energy reform, as Labor sees it. Western Power will not have the ability to raise borrowings to complete the Cockburn power station project. What a farce! What does the Minister for Energy and Treasurer say? It can be a private-public partnership without it being privatisation. Give me a break! Of course it is privatisation. If a fully government-owned power station is matched with private investment it is privatisation. I do not have a problem with that philosophically or practically. However, as far as energy is concerned, it is the wrong asset. The Government has got it wrong. The Government should not try to pretend it is not privatisation. The Labor Party can convince itself of anything. I have never seen such a duplicitous group of people who will pretend they are not doing something and try to rename it. If the Government wants to privatise the Cockburn power station, it should admit it. It should tell people that it is privatising 50 per cent of the power station. That is what it will end up doing unless it allows Western Power the capacity to borrow.

Similar constraints affect the Water Corporation. The dividend from the Water Corporation is so high that it no longer has the capacity to undertake worthwhile capital works programs such as the infill sewerage program. What is the point of the Minister for the Environment and Heritage talking about the Swan River in this Parliament when the Government has effectively cut in half the infill sewerage program? This State is being deprived of much-needed capital works because of the failure of this Government to manage its economic affairs. The Treasurer can claim budget surpluses - big deal! He has increased taxes on Western Australian families and businesses by \$400 million a year. That is an increase in taxes of \$200 for every man, woman and child in this State. The Treasurer pats himself on the back and says, "Look, I've produced a surplus under accrual accounting." The public is a bit brighter than that. The Treasurer says there is a surplus and, yes, notionally, there is one under accrual accounting. The Treasurer should explain to the public why there is such an explosion in the level of state debt and interest costs. It does not make any sense at all to the public. The public knows the level of debt is rising. At the end of the day, cash matters. It does not matter whether it is a government or private business. The Treasurer is running up debt for this State and delaying a project that is not fully funded. The Treasurer now has the opportunity to give accurate costings for the rail project. In the meantime, services in education, health, community services and policing will continue to deteriorate. I spoke to representatives of the Police Union (WA) today and they are not happy because capital works for the Police

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Service have been cut significantly. In the first year approximately \$6 million to \$7 million in capital works will be cut and \$6 million will be cut in the second year.

I will give an example of the hypocrisy of Labor members of Parliament. The Minister for Education and Training boasted of a record capital works program for schools. He mentioned \$135 million. He did so unashamedly. In the last year of the coalition Government, the capital works program in that area was \$141 million. Why would he do that? Why would a minister tell a blatant untruth to the Parliament? Does he think that people in the education sector are so silly that they will not look at the figures? The Labor Party believes it can say and do anything in Parliament and people will not notice. I tell the Treasurer that people are noticing. They are noticing that the finances of this State, having been restored, are slipping again.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Restored after three deficits.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We have the financial whiz-kid from the health portfolio who said we had three deficits. He does not even understand accrual accounting. The minister has made an absolute shambles of the health portfolio. That is why he will be removed from the health portfolio. I will ignore his interruption. We will not have to put up with him for much longer, because he will not be the health minister. That will be a good thing for the health care system in this State, because he has wandered around, hail-fellow, slapping people on the back, telling them how good he is and consistently making disparaging comments about his predecessors, who built hospitals and expanded health care in this State. He has not delivered.

I will tell members where the media is lacking. I will go back to the election campaign in 2001. The Labor Party came out with something like \$1.4 billion worth of election promises. The Liberal Party came out with something like \$440 million worth. The media accepted and fell for this line from Labor that it would make up the difference by an efficiency dividend and save \$800 million across government. That is unbelievable. What sort of financial journalist would fall for that? The media continue to fall for it because the Treasurer still cannot tell us which programs, departments and staff have been cut. He cannot account for the \$800 million. That is another underlying reason for our increasing level of debt. The Treasurer is smiling. He should stand and tell me where the \$800 million has been saved. When we have asked him that question and he has provided an answer on notice, he, like the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, has not been accountable. We are starting to see the telltale signs of a lack of accountability by a Labor Government. It is exactly the same pattern. When I sought the simple figures for the level of debt interest payments, the Treasurer refused to answer those questions. To the credit of his department, it supplied them to me. When I asked him in his role as minister responsible for native title to explain the financial obligations of the State for its land use and the Aboriginal native title settlement on the Burrup Peninsula, he refused to answer. He refused to answer on an issue as important as that.

There we have it. We have rising state debt and rising interest payments in an environment in which state debt was halved by the coalition and the rate of interest in the marketplace has fallen from in excess of 10 per cent to just over five per cent. It is not a good record. It is achieved simply by increasing taxes. Any surplus claimed by this Labor Government has been achieved solely by increasing taxation on families in particular, but also on businesses and particularly small businesses in Western Australia. I am sorry; I think the Treasurer is a fair enough sort of bloke and he tries hard. However, I do not give him any acclamation for his financial management. He has had benign economic times, a strong property sector and a strongly growing national economy, which has been enjoyed in this State as well. He has not yet had to face a real financial challenge. That is nothing like the problems we inherited in 1993 when this State was on the brink of financial collapse because of the absolute incompetence of a Labor Government of which he was a minister, as was the Premier and the now Attorney General. It was not entirely of his individual doing, but that is the legacy that we inherited.

I hate to see these figures, because, through slackness and laziness, this State is again getting into a position of rising debt and rising interest costs. Again we are heading into financial difficulty, which I think will be exacerbated dramatically by the full impact of this rail project if the minister proceeds with her reckless, ill-thought-out proposal to tunnel under Perth and build new bridges across the river and tries to pretend to the people of this State that it will not cost more. I want to know - now would be a good time or perhaps later this week - the exact timing and the full cost of all aspects of this project. The Treasurer should not play the sorts of games that his minister is starting to play whereby she is trying to shift some of the costs of the rail project into the planning portfolio. Everyone is awake to that. We do not want the slippery, under the carpet-type stunt in which Labor excelled in the 1980s and early 1990s. It will not wash this time. After two years the Treasurer has a responsibility to now bring forward the exact costings of that rail project.

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MR P.G. PENDAL (South Perth) [5.04 pm]: In supporting this legislation, I will raise an issue that has a context within the Bill. Effectively this Bill will provide something like \$300 million to the Treasurer for unforeseen circumstances in the foreseeable future. I know he gets plenty of suggestions about how he might spend the State's money. Today I will add to that by a factor of one.

I draw to the Treasurer's attention a matter which has been before the House on several occasions in recent times and which has certainly been a matter of wide public debate; that is, the question of public liability and the provisions this Parliament made via the amendments to the franchise of the Insurance Commission of Western Australia. I hope to persuade the Treasurer of the need - a modest need in terms of a state budget the size of this one - to make some modest allocations to prevent the closure and collapse of some of our important community-based organisations, which, despite the efforts of the Government and this Parliament, have not received any relief as a result of the legislation that has been passed.

Before the Government brought its legislation to the Parliament, I was one of those people who wrote to the Treasurer and the Premier suggesting that we amend and extend the franchise of the Insurance Commission of Western Australia to allow it to step into the breach that had been caused by the public liability insurance crisis. I acknowledged at the time that it might be difficult for the Government to do that, given that it was a Government of the persuasion of that which 10 or 12 years ago had made some unfortunate incursions into the State Government Insurance Office finances. However, I made the point that this would be an occasion on which there was a justification for the survival of some of these community groups, especially when they were well-established community bodies.

It was with some sadness that I learnt that the solutions the Parliament had applied through its legislation had not had their intended effect. Effectively they have had something of a Clayton's outcome. I use this occasion - I wrote to the Treasurer yesterday - to ask that a reassessment be done so that some of these bodies can survive. I will give a specific example. I happen to be the patron of a group that operates out of Whiteman Park, the Perth Electric Tramway Society. It is essentially a heritage organisation that uses the skills of retired railway men and women to restore and operate rolling stock in a way that is important to the heritage of Western Australia. Because of the legislation passed in the Parliament, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia was able to negotiate with the Perth Electric Tramway Society a special premium of \$20 196. To a voluntary body, \$20 196 may well be a king's ransom; it is a massive amount of money. So massive was it for this group that it approached the Whiteman Park board and simply said that it would have to close its doors because it could not pay it. The Whiteman Park board understood the problem confronting the group, and, I might say, others, and decided to make a one-off grant that was the equivalent of 45 per cent of the current year's premium. That knocked down the premium for the Perth Electric Tramway Society to \$10 208. How many small community groups do members know of that have \$10 208 to pay just their insurance premium? I ask the Treasurer to take this on board because he has some interest in trying to find a solution. I asked the society to tell me its track record on safety - no pun intended. It has been paying premiums for 17 years and not made a solitary claim. I presume the bulk of that money has been paid to a private insurer. It makes me wonder how the Insurance Commission of Western Australia has arrived at a figure that is probably more applicable to a premium holder on the eastern seaboard with a very poor track record of accidents or public liability exposure.

My argument is not particularly sophisticated, and I make no apology for that. We set out to find a solution through legislation, yet six or 12 months down the track, the solution does not work. I understand that by March next the Perth Electric Tramway Society must revert to paying the full premium of \$20 196. It will not get a discount from the Whiteman Park board next year. That will mean that the society, which is doing something vital for the heritage of the State, must close. It is not a social hobby that keeps retired people from under their wives' feet - it probably does in some cases - it contributes to the retention and preservation of movable heritage in this State that the State could not afford. I reiterate that the society operates only with volunteers.

This legislation seeks to grant the Treasurer access to approximately \$300 million for unforeseen circumstances in the immediate future. I have written to him seeking a meeting with the society and me and, if necessary, the Insurance Commission. It is not unreasonable to ask for some form of modest assistance when personal or private profit is not involved and there is no commercial complication, especially for an organisation that is utterly important to the State's heritage preservation.

I have been left with no alternative but to use the device of the Treasurer's Advance authorisation to at least bring this matter to the Treasurer's attention, because he had to be in the Chamber during this debate. I seriously put to him, the Government and the Insurance Commission that the solution we thought we had found some months ago has not materialised. However, the society has been kept away from death's door by the intervention of the Whiteman Park board and the 45 per cent one-off payment it agreed to make. It is a serious

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matter and I ask the Treasurer to seriously take it on board and to meet me when the correspondence is drawn to his attention. I support the Bill.

MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [5.13 pm]: I support the Bill, which is the usual practice with a Bill of this kind. Obviously the Bill authorises the Treasurer to withdraw up to \$300 million to make payments and advances for the financial year 2003-04. It is necessary to raise loans for public purposes. I understand also that the 1993 loan Act authorisation for public purpose borrowings of \$214 million will remain at 30 June 2003. Is this authorisation of \$300 million in addition to the \$214 million?

Mr E.S. Ripper: Two Bills are before the House. This Bill gives the Treasurer authority to spend up to \$300 million more than has been budgeted for. We do not have that \$300 million. We would be able to spend it without going into deficit only if more revenue than was expected came into the Treasury coffers. The Loan Bill is a separate matter that relates to borrowing for capital works.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: That is for \$250 million.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is right.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Am I right in saying that the \$300 million borrowing is to carry the Government through to the end of the financial year when new revenue will be available; \$214 million of the loan Act authorisation for public purposes borrowing will be left at the end of this financial year; and, in addition, the Government intends to borrow another \$250 million under a new loan Act authorisation? The minister can answer me in his response. It seems to me that the amount the Government will be advanced is another \$500 million or \$700 million.

I will take up an issue where the Leader of the Opposition left off and reiterate some of the things he said. For a long time it has bugged me that the media in Western Australia have not picked up on the true bottom line of the State's budget. People in business must know their net worth and their net debt. When the coalition Government took office in 1993 the net debt for the State was \$8.5 billion. Over the ensuing years it was reduced to about \$4.2 billion. It was a significant reduction accompanied by a significant reduction in interest. I have often suggested to journalists that, had the coalition Government not reduced state debt, in 1999 it would have been about \$11.5 billion based on the 1993 debt of \$8.5 billion, which attracted more than \$200 million a year in interest. Credit has not been given to the coalition Government for ensuring that net state debt did not increase one iota over its eight-year term. By any measure, that is a major achievement. Had the coalition Government not sold assets the debt would have been between \$10 billion and \$12 billion. Due to the sale of assets, the coalition Government returned to the State more than \$200 million a year of saved interest. At the time, the interest rate would have been 10 per cent compared with about four per cent or less now. Not only is debt in Western Australia increasing but also interest rates are at an all-time low and huge revenues are coming into the State. In his second reading speech on the Stamp Amendment (Budget) Bill the Treasurer stated -

The revenue measures in this Bill will raise around \$162 million in 2003-04 and around \$700 million over the four years to 2006-07. There is no doubt that this budget has been framed in difficult circumstances, with pressure on both the revenue and expenditure side of the budget. Nevertheless, the Government is unwavering in its commitment to sound financial management, and continues to resist the temptation to allow the budget to slip into deficit or rely on debt to fund the significant cost and demand pressures that exist in key areas such as health and education.

That is a furphy. The truth is that this Labor Government, since it came to power two and a half years ago, has had unprecedented windfall gains in revenue. Stamp duty will raise not only \$162 million in the next financial year, but also more than \$700 million over the next three to four years. Debt is going up and revenue is coming in, interest rates are low, and this Government is trying to tell us that it is governing the State well as far as the budget is concerned. Had it not been for the low net debt that this Government inherited, it would be in dire straits at this stage. It is my considered view - I am no accountant - that if it were not for the predicted goods and services tax revenue, this Government would certainly lose its AAA credit rating. We are getting differing messages and this Government's objective has confused the public. The Government should take out a one-page advertisement showing its cash flow; most businesspeople understand a cash flow because that is how they run their own businesses. The public could then see what interest rates are being paid, what the interest rate will be in the next few years, and where net debt is going. The Government could also advertise the revenues so the public would know exactly what is happening in Western Australia. I am concerned about the level of debt in the future. The Labor Party is not capable of managing this \$10 billion business. The previous Government made a good fist of governing this State, particularly the State's finances. This State's debt was \$4.5 billion when the assets sales occurred at the end of the 2001 financial year. Had those assets not been sold, state debt

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would not have risen one iota for eight years. By any measure, that is a remarkable achievement, and this side of politics has not been given the credit it deserves for putting the State in that strong financial position.

The Government and the Treasurer have talked about five deficit budgets in eight years. During the estimates hearings the Government declared that it had held back \$30 million for capital works in the area of housing and works. This information was contained in answers to questions, it is in *Hansard*, and is available for everybody to see. The chief executive officer said, in answer to a question, that it was not quite right; the money was not spent last year, so it will be carried over. During an interview with the ABC, the CEO of the Department of Housing and Works admitted a further \$65 million was carried over in the housing area. Some 14 000 people are on the waiting list for housing in Western Australia, including 720 families with a disabled person, and this Government is carrying over \$95 million in capital works. It is no wonder that it has a surplus budget. A spud farmer like me would only have to debt finance some of his capital works, delay a few projects and carry over the money, and he would then have a surplus budget.

The difference between this Government and the previous Government is that the then Treasurer - Hon Richard Court, who was also Premier of the State; this Premier does not have the courage to be Treasurer as well because he knows it is a difficult job - was honest in the way he brought down his budgets, and there were deficit budgets. Budgets can easily be manufactured or manipulated in the last three months of a financial year to bring down a surplus. I think that has been happening, and it is evidenced by what occurred during the estimates hearings. The Department of Housing and Works is one small area only. Moneys have been held back in a whole range of portfolios. It is an indictment on this Government that it has pushed the line that it is a good financial manager, even though it had a surplus budget, which has already evaporated. I am concerned for the future of families in this State, and I am also concerned for the future of the health and education budgets.

In November 2000, at the last quarterly meeting we had with the Western Australian Local Government Association, when the member for Greenough was president, the whole of the executive was told by the then Premier that the organisations should immediately meet with the member for Victoria Park, who was then Leader of the Opposition, and extract from him an agreement that road funding would not be cut because it would be very easy for Treasury to cut \$200 million from the road budget. Everybody nodded and seemed to understand. Guess what happened? The Government changed, and this Labor Government sliced the roads budget, took away all the good work that had been done under the Transform WA program by ministers Charlton and Criddle, and we are now going backwards at a rate of knots.

That brings me to the next issue concerning my electorate and many other electorates in the south west. - the South Western Highway. I understand that an amount of \$60 million has been removed from that project. That highway is a death trap. It carries heavy traffic, B-double trains and larger vehicles, mixed up with school buses, and cars driven by elderly people going to Bunbury for treatment for their ailments, and also pregnant women going to Bunbury to see their gynaecologist or their doctor about the birth of their child. If a first-pregnancy woman cannot visit an anaesthetist or a surgeon within an hour's drive of her hospital - we have state-of-the-art birthing suites in Manjimup, Pemberton and Bridgetown - she must travel to Bunbury to have her child. She will have to travel there nine or 10 times. At this time of the year there is heavy rainfall and large trucks - such as container trucks, taut liners and trucks loaded with woodchips - billow moisture on the road which obliterates a driver's vision for at least 10 seconds. It is a recipe for disaster. This Government has made a feeble effort to construct a passing lane just past Balingup, when the road between Donnybrook and Bridgetown is in dire need of upgrading. I am not saying this for political purposes. This is an issue that the Treasurer should revisit. I am surprised there have not been more deaths on that road. Members can imagine what would happen if one of those trucks hit a school bus. I travel 100 000 kilometres a year, I have been a member of Parliament for more than 15 years, I have been driving on that road during the past 30 years, and I have never seen it in a more dangerous state. It is dangerous for me, after all those millions of kilometres that I have driven, so members can imagine what it must be like for an inexperienced young driver or a person who may have to go to a regional centre to visit his podiatrist, let alone attend for a mental health issue and so on. People who have a mental health problem must drive to Perth, or Bunbury if they are lucky, for treatment.

I also want to put the case in relation to the railway line. The railway line is years ahead of its time; I said that in government and I am saying it now. The southern freeway is not overused. I contrast the Kwinana Freeway with the Mitchell Freeway. I have stayed with my children at both ends of the spectrum. At times the Mitchell Freeway is banked up for 15 kilometres, which you know full well, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms K. Hodson-Thomas). Commuters call it the parking lot. The train goes backwards and forwards with three carriages on it that are chock-a-block. The people are packed into it like sardines. Although there is a railway line and freeway in that area, there is a huge traffic problem that no-one seems to acknowledge or recognise. The southern freeway is nowhere near as bad as that. There is not even a railway line there, but the freeway is not congested

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to anywhere near the extent of the northern side of the city. I put it to the Treasurer: would it not be more sensible to fix projects like the South Western Highway and build the Peel deviation so that all the traffic is taken out of the centre of Mandurah? The member for Mandurah is a great advocate for the railway. Rail has some mystique about it and so on. However, I challenge members to consider the numbers of people who will be transported on the southern railway compared with the capacity of the freeway to handle the traffic. Why does the member for Mandurah want that traffic to continue to go through his electorate?

Mr D.A. Templeman: I have not said that.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: What has the member said?

Mr D.A. Templeman: There is no doubt that the Peel deviation is a very important road. The rail issue is a very important infrastructure project as well.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I have only three minutes left. Obviously, the member for Mandurah will make a speech on this Bill so that he can tell us how important the Peel deviation is. The Peel deviation will take all the traffic from the south west. Most of the agricultural and manufacturing produce comes to Perth from there. Many people from the south west regularly come to Perth for a host of things, including vacations, medical treatment, education and so on. A huge number of young people from the south west travel between the south west and Perth to attend universities. Many people from the south west travel to Perth to play football. All the teams, including the team the member for Collie supports, and teams from the south west league and the lower south west league, travel to Perth to play football. On Sunday nights after the football games, particularly on a wet day - one can imagine how many bruises and bumps the players have - the players get into their cars and travel back from Perth. That puts their lives at risk.

The Peel deviation project should proceed as soon as possible. It would be much better for the people of the south west if it were and it would open up the lower south west area for tourism opportunities. When I drive home on a Thursday or Friday night and I get to Bunbury, I notice that three-quarters of the traffic goes to Busselton and the other quarter travels down the South Western Highway. People have said they prefer to live north of Donnybrook because they do not want to travel on the road between Donnybrook and Bridgetown further south.

I refer to the amount of money the Government is spending. It is borrowing large amounts of money and extending the finances of the State, as has traditionally been done in the past. A large amount of money has been spent on business exits in my electorate, including in Manjimup, Pemberton, Bridgetown, Nannup and Northcliffe. The people who received that money have either retired their debt or invested the money elsewhere. A large number of workers have left the district. The Government has not embarked on a single capital works project in that area. Apart from buying the Pemberton sports club for \$550 000, which was proposed under the previous Government, and the purchase of the Australian Plantation Timber Ltd building in Bridgetown, the Government has done very little in that area. The Government made a precipitate political decision to decimate the timber industry in that area for political purposes. What have the people been given in return? They have been given 30 piece of silver to buy them out and to shut them up. The Government has provided them with no money for infrastructure payments.

DR J.M. WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [5.34 pm]: Treasury is asking for an advance of \$300 million. I hope the Treasurer will examine a couple of areas in this Bill regarding extraordinary or unforeseen payments, which are areas that the Government did not consider during the budget estimates. I will bring those matters to the Treasurer's attention. One of the key areas is health. Once again, before I say what I believe is wrong with the state of the health system, I congratulate the Minister for Health on the nurse practitioner legislation, which will go a long way to reducing health care costs in the future.

However, during the estimates committee and in this House, the Minister for Health admitted that there are funds in the budget to purchase a magnetic resonance imaging scanner for the Fremantle Hospital. The minister was very pleased and proud that the Government had purchased an MRI scanner for the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. He said that there was money in the budget for an MRI scanner for the Fremantle Hospital as soon as the federal Government gave the licence. Why did the minister say that? He said it because of the recurrent expenditure from the MRI scanner. The minister and the Government are hoping that if the Commonwealth provides the State Government with a licence for another scanner at Fremantle Hospital, the State Government can claim a Medicare benefit for hospital patients. It could then class the patients as non-hospital patients. The minister is waiting to cost shift before he will consider the needs of the community south of the river.

The Fremantle Hospital is the only major teaching hospital in Western Australia that does not have an MRI scanner. It could well be the only teaching hospital in Australia without one because this Government wants to

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cost shift. While the State Government is holding the federal Government to ransom, the community south of the river is suffering.

Mr R.C. Kucera: You really do talk some rubbish. It is about time you put your priorities where they should be and became a Western Australian.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Come on! The minister wants to cost shift. He is neglecting patients south of the river to enable the Government to cost shift, so that when the Fremantle Hospital gets a licence for an MRI, it can bill patients under Medicare as non-hospital patients. Meanwhile, patients will go into that hospital who need to have an MRI scanner -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K. Hodson-Thomas): Member for Alfred Cove, take your seat!

Point of Order

Ms S.E. WALKER: The Minister for Health stated that it is about time the member for Alfred Cove became a Western Australian. As I understand it, people have to be naturalised to be eligible to become members of Parliament. The minister was referring to the member's nationality, which I find very poor. He was referring to where she was born. He should withdraw that comment, because the member for Alfred Cove is naturalised.

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Before I give the member for Alfred Cove the call, I remind members that it is highly disorderly to interject. That goes for members on the government and opposition sides. I will not have any hesitation in calling members to order for the first, second or third time.

Debate Resumed

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I was surprised at the minister's comment, because I am an Australian citizen, and I am doing my very best to represent the people in my electorate and the people south of the river, whom this Government refuses to acknowledge. It wants to cost shift with the magnetic resonance imaging scanner.

I will deal with another health issue. I refer to the Auditor General's report on stroke, and the recommendations in that report. That report stated that any hospital that admits more than 100 patients a year who have had a stroke should have a dedicated stroke unit. I ask the Treasurer to request the Minister for Health to provide him with the figures for Fremantle Hospital. Last year, more than 255 stroke patients were admitted. They were allocated all over the hospital, rather than going to a dedicated stroke unit. If this Treasurer and this minister are not willing to put a dedicated stroke unit into Fremantle Hospital for those stroke patients, they should place advertisements in the newspaper stating that if people have a stroke, they should not go to Fremantle Hospital; they should go to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital or Royal Perth Hospital, because if they go to Fremantle Hospital, they will not receive optimum care and treatment - not because of the medical and nursing staff, but simply because this Government refuses to put money into health care where it is needed. Fremantle Hospital deserves to have a stroke unit. The stroke patients who go to that hospital deserve the same level of care as patients who go to hospitals north of the river. The Minister for Health refuses to give that hospital an MRI scanner because he wants to cost shift with the federal Government, which refuses -

Point of Order

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I need to correct that matter. The member is misleading the House.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K. Hodson-Thomas): That is not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Fremantle Hospital, which is a teaching hospital south of the river, does not have an MRI scanner because the Government wants to cost shift. It wants to wait until it gets a licence so that it can bill the federal Government. Fremantle Hospital admitted 255 stroke patients last year, and it does not have a dedicated -

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the member for Roleystone to order for the first time.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: It does not have a dedicated stroke unit, even though the Auditor General spent the community's money in carrying out a review, which stated that any hospital that had more than 100 patients admitted with a stroke should have a dedicated stroke unit. Has the minister put those facts to the Treasurer? I do not believe those facts have been put to the Treasurer, because I do not believe the Treasurer would want people south of the river to receive second-grade care; and the only way they could receive first-grade care would be to go to a hospital north of the river.

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Mr R.C. Kucera: Have you taken up this issue with Senator Patterson? As I have explained about the issue with the children's hospital, have you asked Senator Patterson to honour her responsibilities? Two years ago a report stated that there should be additional MRI machines for the south west of this State and that children are now seen as people with special needs.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: If the minister wants me to see Senator Patterson and represent him, I will be happy to do so. The minister can pay for me to go to Canberra and meet with her, and I will put the case forward for him.

Mr R.C. Kucera: I can assure the member that I would be delighted if she spent much of the next session in Canberra talking to Senator Patterson.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I am sure the minister would be. However, I will not be doing that. I will be in this place representing my electorate and people south of the river. The minister asked me whether I had discussed this matter with Senator Patterson. I have just pointed out to the Treasurer that the money is in the budget for the capital expenditure. It is the recurrent expenditure that this minister does not want to use for people who live south of the river. He wants to be able to cost shift to the federal Government.

Fremantle Hospital does not have an MRI scanner or a dedicated stroke unit. One of the other reviews last year was about the accident and emergency department and beds allocated. It is almost as though the teaching hospital south of the river does not exist, because the minister certainly does not put any resources into it. It has reached the stage that advertisements will soon need to be placed in the newspaper stating that under this Government, if people are very ill and need this or that, they should go north of the river. That is the only place into which this Government is putting resources.

It is not just health that I would like the Treasurer to consider in terms of payments of an extraordinary -

Mr R.C. Kucera interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I formally call the Minister for Health to order for the first time.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Under the Bill, the purposes for which money can be paid or advanced include payments of an extraordinary or unforeseen nature, and also payments to public authorities, to accounts forming part of the trust fund, or for the purchase of stores. The Treasurer wants \$300 million in advance. Unlike other members on this side of the House, I would be quite happy to ask the Treasurer to show me what he will put south of the river and to cross the floor on this or any budget Bill if my constituents are neglected by this Government.

Mr M.P. Whitely: You are not an Independent. You've just let it out of the bag.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I formally call the member for Roleystone to order for the second time.

Mr E.S. Ripper: This is an authority to spend \$300 million should unforeseen matters arise. It is not as though \$300 million will be in the Treasury to be spent. It is an authority, and it will be used only should circumstances require it to be used.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I accept that. However, the reason I raised the issue of the MRI scanner was that I was not sure whether the Treasurer was aware of the fact that although the money is in the budget for the capital expenditure, the reason that the minister did not go ahead with the purchase of an MRI scanner was that he wanted to cost shift to the federal Government to claim back on Medicare for patients who have these scans. The minister may like to make a statement about that. Had the minister brought that to the Treasurer's attention - that is, if the minister put a scanner into Fremantle Hospital now, he would not be able to cost shift without the licence.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I support the minister's efforts to get the federal Government to give us a fair deal on health funding, and this is part of that.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The Treasurer supports this cost-shifting exercise. Who are the losers? The losers are the community of Fremantle. What about the constant argy-bargy that goes on with the cost shifting for aged care? The cost shifting must stop. Why can the Treasurer not try to persuade this minister, this Government and the federal Government to work together to stop the cost shifting? Why can we not put first the patients in aged care homes and the patients who go to Fremantle Hospital, rather than there being a political game between the State and federal Governments?

Mr E.S. Ripper: I would like there to be something in this country like the Canadians have. They have a Canadian health care accord, which is based on additional investment in health and a cooperative effort on agreed reforms. The Canadians appear to have adopted a very good process. It would be a good thing if we could get that sort of national agreement in this country, but so far it has not been possible.

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Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The Treasurer has just said that he wants a system whereby people could make an additional investment in health. I have listened to what has come from the federal Liberal Government and I believe the Treasurer has the wrong person representing him in Canberra in these discussions. The federal Government has said that it wants the community to make an investment in health. When I worked in general practice, some people visited the surgery once a week with one complaint after another; but they were really only making a social visit. If those people had to pay a little each week towards their care, they would not use all those services. I agree with the Treasurer that people should invest in health; they invest in other things, such as cars and video recorders. People should be encouraged to make an investment in their health and their families' health. It will be some time down the track before that issue is dealt with, but I am happy to support the Treasurer on it. People in hospitals need these services now. The Minister for Health has ignored people who have had a stroke. The next person to have a stroke could be the Treasurer's mother or father. They could find themselves in Fremantle Hospital because that is where the ambulance took them. Would the Treasurer like them to go into a hospital in which they will not get the appropriate level of care? That is happening to patients now. Some people in my electorate have family members who have had a stroke and been admitted to Fremantle Hospital, but who have not been looked after in the way prescribed by the guidelines and to a standard that is acceptable nationally. This State is way behind and this minister is doing nothing about it. He is doing nothing about establishing a stroke unit, he is doing nothing about the extra beds that are required, he is doing nothing about putting money into the accident and emergency unit and he is doing nothing about providing a magnetic resonance imaging scanner at Fremantle Hospital.

Mr R.F. Johnson: The trouble is that a lot of patients these days are happy to be treated in car parks outside hospitals because the health system is in crisis. The Government said that when we were in government we were in crisis; this Government is in double-jeopardy crisis.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The member for Hillarys has said that patients are being treated in car parks; I do not know about that.

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

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The issue of funding for people with disabilities comes back to cost shifting. The Minister for Community Development is trying very hard to help people with disabilities, but I believe that 66 000 people in Western Australia have disabilities and there is funding for only 22 000. Some simple things could be done to help people with disabilities. The Government is currently conducting a review of carers and of the cost of incontinence pads. A small item such as that, which would cost a family about \$2 000 a year, would be a big saving in the long term for the Government. Providing support to carers at home would enable them to keep their loved ones at home longer rather than put them into nursing homes. Unfortunately, nursing staff often are not permanent and many nursing homes rely on agency staff; therefore, elderly and often confused patients continually see a different face on each shift. There are, therefore, great needs in the aged care area.

Other issues about which I am concerned in my electorate are crime and energy. I will deal with crime first. In recent months many of my constituents have come to see me and I have been horrified at their condition. Many have been not only robbed at home but also assaulted. They have come in with broken ribs, bruised faces and cuts.

Mr R.C. Kucera: They have all been to a Liberal Party branch meeting!

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I am sorry, I did not hear the minister.

It is no longer just a case of offenders breaking into a home and stealing; there is now an upsurge in both stealing and assault. My electorate is in the Fremantle district and it is a very wide area. I believe this Government reopened the Hamilton Hill Police Station 12 months ago because of the level of crime in the middle part of the Fremantle district. The statistics for that area indicate that the number of offences has gone down. The communities in my electorate who live near Canning Bridge are constantly exposed to crime because that area is considered a hot spot. People can travel up and down the freeway, along Manning Road and get into and out of the suburbs in that electorate easily; crime rates are therefore increasing. I ask the Treasurer to reconsider opening the Brentwood Police Station, as the Government did with the Hamilton Hill Police Station, and give it the appropriate number of officers to cover the suburbs immediately surrounding that station. Currently officers from the two police stations in my electorate cover the area from Canning Vale to Fremantle. In an emergency it is not possible for the police to get to a scene quickly, particularly the hot spot at Canning Bridge. If the Brentwood Police Station were reopened, it would take the police only 10 minutes to get to an emergency. Crime is, therefore, a big problem in my electorate and in the Fremantle district. There would be a decrease in crime rates if the Government opened the Brentwood Police Station, as it did with the Hamilton Hill Police Station, which is in the electorate of the Minister for Education.

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Another serious problem in my electorate relates to energy provided by Western Power. I wrote to the department between six and eight weeks ago to complain about the number of blackouts in my electorate. My constituents have phoned me and told me about the blackouts, which have not stopped. I have heard nothing from the department and these blackouts are causing hardship. I was concerned when I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about the sale of Western Power. I believe, from discussions I have had with the unions, that although negotiations for the sale of Western Power have commenced, the sale of AlintaGas was first suggested when Labor was last in government.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is totally wrong.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: That is what I have heard from the Labor Party's own unions. They have told me that the Premier introduced something that got the ball rolling.

Mr E.S. Ripper: They saw you coming.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Why are these unions phoning me and asking me for support? I hope the Treasurer will consider the issues I have put on the table.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [7.00 pm]: I support the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003. My comments on the Bill will have a rural flavour because there are issues that need to be questioned. I support the Leader of the Opposition's dissertation about the Government's financial focus on the southern railway from Perth to Mandurah. Although the Treasurer is not in the House at present, I believe the railway will be subsidised to the tune of \$100 million a year. If that figure is not correct, I am sure someone will correct me.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: That figure may take into account funding costs, but the actual operating deficit is less than half that.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: Is the figure \$50 million to \$60 million?

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Well under half the figure is the operating deficit. Taking into account that interest charges etc. will provide a much higher figure.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: I thank the minister for that. It will probably bear out the argument I am trying to establish. I digress for a moment. It is interesting that the member for Warren-Blackwood raised comments made by the previous Premier, Hon Richard Court, to the Western Australian Municipal Association. In 2000, I was the President of the Western Australian Municipal Association and I recall the meeting at which the then Premier made comments about road funding. I am leading into road funding vis-a-vis the railway to Mandurah. The former Premier was quite correct in what he said. He advised other members of the WAMA executive and me that if a Labor Government came to power, we could expect a cut in road funding to the tune of \$200 million. They were prophetic words. The WAMA executive accepted the Premier's advice to meet with the then Leader of the Opposition, Dr Geoff Gallop. We met with Dr Gallop and he gave a commitment to honour the road funding agreement with the then Government. There has now been a cut in road funding of \$200 million. For local government, the cut is \$14.2 million. The railway to Mandurah will take an enormous amount of the Government's money. It will bite into the \$300 million in borrowings that the Treasurer is looking for. Like the member for Warren-Blackwood, I must ask what the funding comprises. I believe \$300 million will be borrowed for 2003-04. I am aware of an additional amount of \$250 million, but I am not sure where it fits in the scheme of things. Perhaps that will be answered for me. The cut to local government road funding of \$14.2 million will have a devastating effect on country people. The anticipated effect has been brought home to me sharply by correspondence and telephone calls from local government. I have been told that staffing levels will probably be cut. Social community projects, which local governments spend money on, could be reassessed. There will be a redirection of budgets.

As you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.J. Dean), will know, Western Power and the Water Corporation provide a capital dividend to the Government. Both organisations provide substantial funds. The capital dividend taken from Western Power reflects on that organisation's ability to spend. There is enormous concern in country areas about the maintenance of power supplies, particularly in the wheatbelt and my electorate. Although I sound like a broken record, Dongara and Kalbarri experience power blackouts on a regular basis. Money that could be returned to Western Power by the Government is not being expended in that area. As far as I am aware, it will be some years before that occurs. People in those towns have to put up with a situation that their city cousins would not be prepared to stomach. The Water Corporation provides a substantial dividend. Because I am unaware of the exact amount, I will not quote a figure. The dividend to the Government is reflected in the

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cutback in the infill sewerage program. In turn, that reflects on local country suppliers and businesses that supply the program.

I am aware of a situation in my electorate in which the Government is not prepared to enter into discussions between the local government and a mining company that wishes to establish a mining project in the mid west. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has not considered it necessary to talk to the local government or mining company involved. An 80-kilometre stretch of road needs funding in order to bring the project on-line. The mining company is prepared to put some money into the road project, as is the local government. However, both parties are seeking some state funds. That is not happening; the minister is not prepared to discuss the issue. The mining project will bring an economic benefit to the State as well as to the proponents of the project and the local government.

A subject I have raised many times in this place is Indian Ocean Drive. That road impacts on the tourism industry along the west coast from Lancelin to Geraldton. Part of the road has been funded but, for the sake of a mere \$39 million, \$700 million worth of projects are being hung out to dry because the Government will not take action on that road. The Government is hell-bent on pouring money into the southern corridor and Mandurah at the expense of some very good projects in regional Western Australia that would provide good returns to the State. I repeat my earlier comment, even though the minister interjected that the actual figure is only part of the amount I cited; that is, \$100 million a year will be needed to keep the railway line operating. If that is the case, the Government's financial focus is on the wrong area. The funding and loans the Government seeks would be better directed to regional areas.

The Government came to power with a promise to focus on heritage issues, but it has broken another promise. It has been singularly remiss in not addressing heritage issues and heritage funding has been cut. The Government appears to be hell-bent on selling off heritage assets to fund health, law and order and other areas, and the State's heritage assets are being compromised.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [7.12 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): I give the call to the member for -

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The wonderful electorate of Hillarys - the pearl of the northern suburbs, Mr Acting Speaker!

I will cover two areas in my fairly brief comments on the Bill before the House. The Treasurer's advance account primarily is used, and this is the main objective of this Bill, to ensure that public servants are paid. I would hate to see public servants not being paid, although I would not have a problem with that in one area; I refer to the extra bureaucrats, spin doctors and media and public relations advisers the Premier now has within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Premier has increased the number of people in the department by 12 or 14 people. That is a disgraceful waste of public money.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: It's not working.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member is right; those people are supposed to make the Premier look good. Overall, a minimum of \$10 million has been spent in this area across the various ministerial offices, but a large part of this expenditure is with the Premier's department. The final figures are not known because the money spent by the Minister for Education and Training on spin doctors, media advisers and PR people is not known. Expenditure on media advisers appears to be a priority for this Government, which wants to make itself look good in the build-up to the next election. It is an absolute abuse of taxpayers' money when, as mentioned earlier in the House today, more child protection workers are desperately needed to try to head off at the pass any dreadful physical, sexual, mental or emotional child abuse or neglect. Children are at risk from abuse. The Premier and the Minister for Community Development make announcements and issue press releases stating that the Government has it right, and that 25 extra child protection workers will be dotted all over the State. However, it has not happened yet. This is a gunna Government: it is gunna do this, that and the other. The same announcements are made three or four times during a six to nine-month period. Government members must be hard up for genuine good news, as they must rely on old press releases and announcements to make them sound good. This is the work of the spin doctors, media advisers and PR people. The money being spent to try to make the Government look good is an absolute disgrace. Members opposite should be ashamed. It is almost like the WA Inc years, with such an inappropriate waste of public money for the benefit of the Premier and his ministerial colleagues.

I now touch on something close to my heart - my electorate of Hillarys. As you would be aware, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.J. Dean), a devastating fire at the Hillarys marina, or Sorrento Quay, recently put 10 businesses out of operation for six months while the facility is rebuilt and premises are refurbished. I was going to raise this

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matter as a grievance on Thursday, but I was told that I might not get that opportunity. Therefore, I raise it tonight. I would love the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to be in the Chamber to respond to my comments. If she is around the building and can hear me and see me on the in-house television service, I invite her to the Chamber. I would love her to answer some questions. Has the minister visited Hillarys Boat Harbour, for which she is responsible? In technical terms, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, as her department incorporates marine and harbours, owns the Hillarys Boat Harbour, or Sorrento Quay. I visited as soon as I could after the fire. I was in the south west that weekend until Sunday evening, and I visited Hillarys on the Monday morning just after the fire to see the devastation for myself. Many issues must be addressed. Has the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure visited the scene of the fire? Does she consider it important or unimportant? I have not seen any media alerts or press releases indicating a visit by the minister, so I must conclude that she has not bothered to visit. Various issues are involved.

Hillarys Boat Harbour was built by the previous Labor Government, which I commend for that great development. However, it was built on the assumption that it would attract one million visitors a year. The marina has almost four million visitors a year, but the entry and exit roads are inadequate for that number of visitors. The fact the fire happened on the Saturday evening or Sunday morning can be considered to be fortunate. If it had occurred on a busy Saturday or Sunday afternoon during summer when literally thousands of people visit the facility, there could have been very serious consequences to human life; namely, either death or serious injury. There are two ways into the marina but only one way out. On a Saturday or Sunday evening during the busy summer period, it can get chock-a-block with traffic and can become a total car park. That is a problem I have flagged many times. It would be a miracle if an emergency services vehicle, which was responding to a fire or somebody having a heart attack or collapsing, got there in the appropriate time. The only reason the fire brigade managed to get within a reasonable distance of the fire in the early hours of the morning was that there was no traffic. Even then, the fire brigade could not get near enough to put the fire out as quickly as it should have been.

My other concern is security, which is an area for which the minister is responsible. Hillarys marina has a harbour manager, who has an office in the building, as well as marina officers. They have responsibility for the boat pens. The boat owners pay quite a bit of money in fees to moor their boats alongside the pens at Hillarys marina. Those people are very unhappy for various reasons, one of which is that there is virtually no security for which the marina pays. It seems to rely on private enterprises to pay for security at Hillarys marina. Some of them do, but not enough. However, the Government has an obligation and a responsibility to provide security, particularly for the boat owners who pay annual fees to moor their boats alongside the pens. The Government is receiving an income from those boat owners. There have been thefts. If a security officer had been on duty on the night of the fire, perhaps the fire would have been noticed sooner than it was and perhaps there would not have been the devastation to those business premises that can be seen today.

Another issue I must take up with the Government is that there is no sprinkler system in place. Hillarys marina is open to members of the public to visit. They spend time in the restaurants and the food hall, which is where the fire started, and they use the amusement arcade and other facilities. I will tell members why there is no sprinkler system in place. There is no sprinkler system because it is a government building. The Government designed and built those premises and it authorised its construction. The Government does not have to take note of the local authority in relation to building issues. It did not apply for a building licence; it just went ahead and built it. That is the way things work and I accept that; I do not have a problem with that. Do members not think that the Government would have had the decency and the commonsense to put in safety protection measures, such as a sprinkler system, for members of the public and the people who rent those buildings? What other business would be allowed to build premises today and not install sprinkler systems or smoke alarms? Every day of the week we are told how important smoke alarms are in not only private residences but also business premises that members of the public visit. There were no sprinklers at Hillarys marina. I take issue with the minister for that and ask what she will do about it. I hope that when the buildings are rebuilt the Government insists that smoke alarms and sprinklers are installed. If they had been installed, we would not have seen the devastation at the marina that can be seen today.

I will touch on the people who lease boat pens at the marina. They have a problem. The minister has introduced a four-hour parking limit, which was her answer to the traffic problem and the people who park for extended periods. If people park there longer than four hours, they get an infringement notice and are fined, and they pay dearly. I was under the clear impression that under previous agreements in which people leased boat pens, something like 0.5 of a car parking space was available for those pen holders. I was also under the impression that it had been reduced to 0.3 of a parking space in these sorts of developments. Neither 0.5 nor 0.3 of a car parking space is available for those pen holders, who often need parking so they can work on or unload stuff onto their boats. If they park there for a minute longer than four hours, they will get fined and will pay dearly.

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There should be a system in place whereby they are given special passes to allow them to park there for longer than four hours. I accept that it is the minister's right to introduce four-hour parking limits for visitors, but when a boat owner pays rent for a pen, some allowance should be made for that boat owner. Not all boat owners are down there all the time. Probably only half the boat owners at the most are there at any one time. It is not unreasonable for them to have special dispensation stickers to allow them to park for longer than four hours. The minister should look into that and do the best she can to alleviate that problem for boat owners.

I also inform the House of a dreadful thing that happened. On the Monday morning following the fire I visited one business owner. He showed me around his burnt-out premises. The low-life in society never fails to amaze me. Between the time of the fire and the Monday morning, somebody had been into his premises and had stolen his two microwaves and his stereo system. Not only that, a bottle of really good whisky that was given to him in a presentation box was also stolen. The box was discarded but the bottle of whisky was taken. What low-life would go into a business that has just suffered devastation and steal two microwave ovens, a stereo system and a bottle of whisky? That business owner cannot trade for the next six months, he has bank loans to pay and he has had to pay his staff.

That noise was not the fire alarm, was it? My speech has not set off a fire alarm, has it?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): It is not Hillarys, so we are all right.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, Hillarys has had its devastation. I do not want to see it here, because there are no sprinklers in here either.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Were you speaking down there?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, I was not there at the time; I was down in the south west.

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

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will not use all my time. I will keep my comments brief.

Mr E.S. Ripper interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I may not use it; I am just seeking it. I will try to keep to my last four minutes without using the extension of time. I am just covering my bets because I want to make these points. They are important for the people in my electorate, particularly small business people. I am also concerned about the safety of members of the public who visit Hillarys marina. A plan must be put in place to ensure that if there is another fire or somebody suffers a heart attack or collapses, there is proper access for fire engines, police and, most importantly, ambulances to help people in physical distress. I want to make sure that happens. All the posturing from the minister and Government will get us nowhere if somebody is badly injured or dies because an ambulance cannot be sent to the scene quickly enough.

Those are the subjects I wanted to cover under this Bill. The reason I have raised them is that the authorisation fund is for paying wages to people, such as government workers at Hillarys. I want to make sure that they do their job properly in ensuring the safety of people at Hillarys. Even ministers' and the Treasurer's wages are covered by this Bill. Is it right that if the Treasurer runs out of money, he will not get paid unless this Bill gets through?

Mr E.S. Ripper: I think our wages are already the subject of an appropriation by Parliament. This appropriation is for unforeseen expenditure. The salary of members of Parliament is a foreseen expenditure.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Does that include the extra money that ministers get?

Mr E.S. Ripper: Yes.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: And all their expenses?

Mr E.S. Ripper: If an overexpenditure were to occur on a budget item, it would have to be financed through the Treasurer's Advance. That rule applies to all budget items, including ministerial office expenses.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Okay, but public servants do not fall into that category because they are covered not by Parliament but by this fund. Would nurses who treated people who were injured at Hillarys as a result of another dreadful fire or some other catastrophe be covered under this fund?

Mr E.S. Ripper: If some natural disaster were to occur which required additional expenditure in the police, health or firefighting services, that additional expenditure would be authorised under this legislation, if it was beyond expenditure that had been authorised by the budget.

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Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is why I support the Bill. The convention of Parliament is that such Bills are always passed so that the Treasurer can make sure that public servants are paid and expenses that may come out of the blue are met. I will not take up the extra 10 minutes. I have one minute left and I will sit down before that minute disappears, because I want to keep faith with the Treasurer. The Treasurer was quite right when he said that when I was on a special committee I said that a 10-minute extension was not necessary. I might point out that he was the one who argued for it. I wonder why. He was in opposition at the time. That is the reason.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Time is up!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Treasurer need not panic. He is always happy to remind me that I was not necessarily in agreement with the 10-minute extension. I am always happy to remind him that he was always in favour. The difference is that he was on this side of the House and I was on that side of the House. That will again be the case in about 18 or 20 months, so we will see whether he agrees with the 10-minute extension then.

I hope that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure reads *Hansard* and takes note of my comments, because if I do not get the opportunity to raise a grievance on Thursday, I would like her to respond to me anyway so that I can talk to the boat-pen holders and to the businesspeople who are really suffering after the devastating fire at Hillarys. I greatly sympathise with them.

MR A.D. MARSHALL (Dawesville) [7.36 pm]: The Government is saving money in its budget by either amalgamating agencies or closing them, which is of grave concern to the community in the Peel region. In the past 12 months, in Mandurah particularly, administration has been taken from the Peel district education office and is now dealt with by the Fremantle district education office in Hampton Road, Beaconsfield. I give an example of why this is not working; only today I received a letter from a constituent whose children are having a lot of trouble accessing a speech therapist who can examine them so that they can get treatment. I phoned the Peel district education office, which is what people normally do. The person who is supposedly in charge was not there, nor was the clerk, and I was referred to someone in Fremantle who is supposedly in charge of all speech therapy services in the region. When I telephoned the office in Beaconsfield I found that he was not there. I was told that he would phone me back the next day. This sort of thing is going on all the time. Recently there have been a number of bullying incidents in schools in the Peel region. When I phone the Peel district education office to find out what is happening in the area I represent, nobody has an answer.

The cost saving change looks pretty good on paper. Four senior officers are operating out of the Beaconsfield office. Each day they travel to their various zones. However, they take an hour to get to Mandurah and an hour to get back to the Beaconsfield office where they complete their summaries for their day. If they are not conversant with the location of schools in Mandurah, they must get a map out. They have no feeling for the area whatsoever, whereas over the past eight or nine years the CEO of the Peel district education office has been right up to the mark.

The growth of the area means that three new primary schools, one middle school and one senior campus have been built in the past eight years. All that building occurred under the former Government. I do not know the exact count, but there are four or five new schools in the Rockingham area. The Peel region is supposed to start at the border of Rockingham but the Peel education region encompasses the Rockingham area, which causes some confusion. There is a metropolitan versus a regional way of thinking between the two cities. Under the previous Government the chief executive officer of the Peel district education office did a good job. People knew exactly who to phone and exactly where to get answers. Because the administration has moved out of the Peel region, which includes Rockingham, and has been transferred to Fremantle, there is a discrepancy. The discrepancy caused by cost saving does not give credit to the educational issues that confront me in the Mandurah and Peel region. This cost saving has no merit and the administration should be changed.

The former Court Government upgraded the health care facilities from the 32-bed supposed hospital, to a 150-bed hospital called the Peel Health Campus. Instead of the health campus incorporating mental health services, they were annexed in rental accommodation. Now that the area has grown and is ready to take on and control mental health services through one hospital's administration, it cannot do it because its mental health services are operating out of Rockingham. Once again there is dissent. People from Mandurah, Lake Clifton and Waroona must travel vast distances. Instead of travelling to the Peel Health Campus for treatment, people must travel to Rockingham to have their treatment administered. The administrator at Rockingham is so busy because of Rockingham's larger population that he does not have time to think about what is happening in Mandurah.

Some members might say that cost cutting is a good thing, but I will point out some areas in which cost cutting is a very bad thing and there is a need for change. The high incidence of cannabis-using patients at the Peel Health Campus is quite alarming. I have heard the Mayor of Mandurah quite rightly say that Mandurah is divided into two areas; there is a very affluent part and a lower socioeconomic area. I can remember years ago

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travelling to Tyler, Texas. I arrived at dusk and booked into a motel, and the next morning I found that the television was chained to the wall and the sheets were so thin that I wondered if I might tear them if I rolled over. My wife and I did not realise that we were in the wrong end of town. We went there to see our son at the University of Texas. Tyler had an uptown and a downtown, and we went to the downtown. People are not alerted to the fact that the same applies to Mandurah, which has a downtown and an uptown. If people go to the wrong end, they will be very disappointed with the city. They will think it is full of battlers - the same kind of people I grew up with in Palmyra. I know that area. They are the people who need assistance. Some get into cannabis and things like that, and get into a confused mental state. The latest legislation disappointed me immeasurably, because I have seen the damage that has been caused by drugs in my city. When help is needed, the administration is in Rockingham, for goodness sake! It is like ringing Melbourne. By the time we find out where the administrator is to be contacted, it is too late. A person might have a death on his hands.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: Do you know what it sounds like to me? All those facilities were shrunk out of the country towns into the regional centres and are now shrinking out of the regional centres into the city.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I know, and some smart alec thinks it is a cost-saving exercise. It may be a cost-saving exercise, but it is an administrative disaster. It is costing regional people their way of life and services. I disagree with it.

The Peel Inlet Management Authority was started by Owen Tuckey, one of the legends of the Peel region. PIMA did a remarkably good job over 15 or 20 years. It had its own office and had control of the waterways, which, incidentally, are the largest in Western Australia. That attraction will be developed for tourism, fishing, and sport and recreation, which PIMA had controlled. All of a sudden, as a cost saving, PIMA was abolished overnight. In came the Water and Rivers Commission, bless me. The trained bureaucrats of the Water and Rivers Commission should know what they are doing. We are thankful to have them, because our waterways are clean and fresh. They are not like the Swan River. The Dawesville Channel saved those waterways. We have something to skite about and look after. The Water and Rivers Commission now has control of those waterways.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: Don't forget the Murray and Serpentine Rivers. They are not too clean.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: There are the Murray and Serpentine Rivers as well. However, where are the people based who are supposed to work for the Water and Rivers Commission in Mandurah? They come to Mandurah two days a week. They operate out of Rockingham! I wonder which party holds the seat of Rockingham.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They don't have a river in Rockingham.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: That is right. Has there been political influence? Everything has suddenly moved out of Mandurah to Rockingham or the metropolitan area of Perth. Rockingham is on the edge of the metropolitan area. What does Rockingham have? It has a bit of ocean.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: They have a very nice ocean.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: No, it is only a bit when compared with the vast waters of the Indian Ocean that stretch along the Mandurah coastal strip. It is minuscule in comparison. People from the Water and Rivers Commission come to Mandurah two days a week. For the other three days they work in the Rockingham area. That work in Rockingham could be done in the blink of an eye. It does not make sense.

For the past nine years the Peel Region Tourism Association has fought for its own identity. It has developed and marketed tourist attractions. People are beginning to realise that the Peel area is special. At huge cost the previous Government established the North Dandalup Dam as a water resource. It was designed to be a picnic area as well. It is quite peculiar how a tourism triangle developed - a one-day event. People can leave Perth along the South Western Highway, as rickety as it is with its potholes and bad bends, which need extra attention, and arrive at North Dandalup Dam, where they can enjoy the beautiful views of the magnificent Dwellingup trees and the ocean. It is an unbelievable sight from there, and there is also a great picnic area. This area is so close to Dwellingup that buses often continue on to Dwellingup, which has started to come alive through tourism. The previous Government established a fine woods operating area, a caravan park, and the Dwellingup museum. The place began to thrive. People began to realise that there were outdoor activities such as riding the rapids. People had something to do in Dwellingup. People can travel down the hill to Pinjarra, with its heritage of Blythewood and the great ancestors of the area who founded the place. Suddenly, from putting in a dam, a triangle of tourism events was created that brought money into the area, provided employment and gave many people tremendous enjoyment. That is one small item that the Peel Region Tourism Commission has worked on to develop its identity. It is now into the horse game. The Peel region will be called -

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: The equestrian centre of Western Australia.

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Mr A.D. MARSHALL: Yes, it will be the equestrian centre of Western Australia. This will be most important. Through Serpentine, the Peel region will be the gateway to the equestrian life of our State. A couple of members will be going to Kentucky to study what is happening in that area. The *Sunday Times* printed an article that said this would be an expensive trip. Those members will bring back knowledge and embrace the equestrian industry and the breeding of horses.

The Peel region is the tourist destination of Western Australia. It is the most visited one-day destination in the State. It is the gateway to the south west. It has the largest waterways in the State. Everything there glistens. What does the Government want to do? It wants to amalgamate the tourism association for the Peel region with the metropolitan tourism association, which, I believe, takes in communities as far away as Merredin. What a stupid idea. It is trying to take away Peel's identity.

Mr D.A. Templeman: What did we say to them? We are against it. I am against it. I told you that. We signed the same letter. We are fighting for the Peel because the Peel is a unique area.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: The problem is that I listen to the member for Mandurah, but his ministers do not. I must shout out as a member of the Opposition to remind them of the damage they are doing in our area.

That brings me to the Peel deviation, which the member for Warren-Blackwood explained. He said it is the most important project for the area and spoke about the number of vehicles that pass through the gateway to the south west - Mandurah. He also spoke about the congestion on the Old Coast Road, which passes through Dawesville, and the lack of interest shown by the minister in simply applying to the federal Government for funding under the roads of national importance program. Every day in question time we hear the ministers of this Government complain that they do not get any support or money from the federal Government. At least \$50 million is in the pot waiting to be designated to Western Australia, if the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure applied for it. In a seven-minute reply to a grievance the other day she said that it would not work and that she would not apply for that funding. I have received information today from Canberra that she is wrong, wrong, wrong. All she need do is apply correctly and Western Australia will get the money. Do members know why she will not apply for that funding? It is because it is provided on a dollar-for-dollar basis. If Western Australia is given \$50 million, she must match it, and she does not have the money.

Money has been wasted on the Mandurah to Perth rail link. It is \$500 million overbudget to save 10 minutes of travel time. The Court Government's rail link for that region would have been finished in 2005. Admittedly, it would have taken 60 minutes to travel between Mandurah and Perth. In saving 10 minutes, everything has been blown out of proportion. The Government changed the rail link because of Labor ideology that it must be involved with railways. I congratulate the Government for doing that, but it should get out of that fairytale way of thinking for the sake of the people who will use that train service. Will that rail link be finished by 2005? No, the Government has said that it will not be finished until 2006 or 2007. It will not be finished by then; it will not be completed before 2008. Every year that the Government allows to go by before that project is completed will cost the businesspeople of Mandurah thousands of dollars. All the business about budgeting and saving money -

Mr A.P. O'Gorman interjected.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: The little boys on the back bench have woken up. It is nice to see them here. Did the member for Joondalup have too much to drink overnight?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.D. McRae): Members, we have been progressing well in this debate. Please leave your comments for when you are invited to participate. I draw the member for Dawesville's attention to the fact that we are debating the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I am also concerned that we are not getting money for the Peel deviation. The Perth-Mandurah rail link is being delayed and it already has a deficit of \$500 million, which is a huge amount of money. One problem in Mandurah that can be fixed with just a bit of money is the limited bus service between Perth and Mandurah. The last bus from Perth to Mandurah leaves at 5.15 pm on weekdays and at 6.00 pm on weekends. Talk about a curfew at Northbridge! The people in my electorate have a curfew. If they want to go to a nightclub in Perth, visit friends, dine out, go to a show or go to the Burswood International Resort Casino they cannot get home by public transport. If people in my electorate want to work back during the week so that they can get a bit of overtime, whatever extra money they make is lost because they have to pay for the fuel and running costs to drive their car to Perth.

I would have liked to talk about the infill sewerage scheme, which has been dropped out of the budget altogether. That scheme is very important to Mandurah because so many properties have septic tanks. I would have liked to talk about the closure of the courthouse in Pinjarra, which was an absolute disgrace. I would have liked to talk about the closure of the Peel catchment centre, which is part of the Department of Agriculture. I would have

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liked to talk about the supposed amalgamation of the Fremantle Hospital Board and the Metropolitan Health Services Board to save money. That will be a disaster, because people south of the river do not talk the same language as people north of the river. As I explained in an earlier speech, they call the Fremantle football team the Dockers when what we actually have is lumpers.

I would have liked to talk about the 200-odd reviews that this Government is doing. The Premier of this State cannot make a decision, so he appoints review committees. I would like someone to tell me one day what all these reviews are costing the taxpayers of Western Australia. Sometimes people need to make a decision in life and not delay. The people who hesitate are the losers. The State is losing because the Premier cannot make a decision.

The state budget is being overspent because of this Government's mismanagement. The Government is relying too much on federal allocations to bail it out, and it complains when it does not get enough. Health, education and law and order are always crying out for more money. One of the biggest growth areas in Mandurah is real estate. However, the proposed increase in stamp duty will cost people who are buying a home in Mandurah an extra \$18 000 to \$25 000, so the first home owner grant from the federal Government will be eaten up immediately. This Government is taking money from the people of this State. The Government reminds me of a bookmaker. When people go to back a horse the bookmaker smiles and says he will give them 6-1 when it is 4-1 on the books, and they think gee they have done their money. This Government is giving people extra odds, but it is then taking the money from them with a smile on its face. All the major projects in Mandurah need to be looked at. The amalgamations to support this Government's budget have proved to be a disaster. I hope the Treasurer and all the ministers will have another look at what they are doing to the fastest growing area in Western Australia and a city and an electorate that I am very proud to represent.

MR J.L. BRADSHAW (Murray-Wellington) [7.53 pm]: I will talk about a few things that interestingly coincide a bit with some of the things the member for Dawesville has just talked about. I am a bit perplexed that the Government has gone down the path of amalgamating things out of Mandurah. Over the past 20 or 30 years country towns have been losing facilities such as the public works department. The number of facilities and services in regional centres has been shrinking and they have been going into the metropolitan area. It is amazing that the Government talks about decentralisation when all it does is centralise. It is about time the Government took decentralisation seriously. I doubt that the Minister for Peel and the South West even knows where the Peel region is. It is disgraceful. The Minister for Peel and the South West is the member for Fremantle and Attorney General -

Mr P.B. Watson: He is an excellent minister.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: I do not think he has ever been to the Peel region.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Yes, he has.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Okay. Where did he go - to Mandurah!

Mr D.A. Templeman: No. He has been to Boddington. He has been to Pinjarra. He has been to Waroona. He has been to Mandurah on a couple of occasions. You are wrong. You have got to start telling the truth.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.D. McRae): Order, members!

Mr B.K. Masters: Can you remember the front page article in the *Harvey Reporter* last week? Would you like to repeat for the member opposite what it said?

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: I can remember. The protocol of this Government is that it will not tell the local member when a minister is coming to the district, unless the local member is a Labor member, of course. Three ministers came to Yarloop in my electorate on 9 June. They did not even bother to tell the local government people that they were coming, so the local government people got a bit upset and gave them some bad press. I guess that is what the member for Vasse is talking about.

Mr D.A. Templeman: They might be worried about what you have said or done! You might be a renegade local member!

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: They came to Yarloop and talked rubbish. The trouble is that they did not talk to me first. They should have asked me what they should have said.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You said that they did not come to your electorate. You had three ministers in your electorate all at once. You have done very well. You should not complain at all. Three ministers in one day is pretty good.

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Pandal; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: I heard a whisper during the afternoon that they were coming. I had planned to go to the meeting anyway because it was to do with Wagerup, which is an important issue. Just before the meeting I found out that they were coming. I wondered why they were coming to Yarloop just out of the blue. More than 18 months ago the medical practitioners forum made recommendations that the Government has done nothing about. Forget the fact that the people in Yarloop have breathing difficulties and have streaming eyes and noses and have to leave the town. The ministers could not care less, but all of a sudden they turned up en masse. I could not work it out. Two days later I got a letter from Alcoa Australia Ltd saying how good it was that the ministers were coming down. There had been a press release on the day they were coming, so they were in cahoots with Alcoa. I then suddenly realised what it was all about. Alcoa gave the ministers a bid of a prod and said it had a big problem in Yarloop and needed them to come down and help it, and they came down to help. They should have stayed at home, because it was a total waste of time. All they did was give a slick presentation and say they would have a review, set up a chair of environment at a university, and have one-on-one consultation with the locals in Yarloop. Everyone said they did not want that. They just want the crap taken out of their air so that they can breathe properly and so that they do not get blisters on their feet when they walk on their lawns barefoot. The people in Yarloop were not impressed. They want a decent place in which to live, not reviews and a slick presentation. When the Minister for Health, the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection and the Minister for State Development came to Yarloop and were introduced, not one person clapped them. That was amazing, because country people are generally quite polite.

On the subject of the protocol of ministers coming to my electorate, when the Premier came to my electorate recently he did not even bother to tell me that he was coming. He turned up at Stirling Cottage for lunch, and when he walked in and saw me sitting there having my lunch I could see the look on his face as he thought, "Uh oh, I've made a stuff up here!" It is disgraceful. If members opposite are saying that the Minister for Peel and the South West has been to Pinjarra and Waroona - Boddington is not in my electorate so that is fair enough -

Mr D.A. Templeman: It is still in the Peel region.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Not once have I been told that the minister is coming to my electorate.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You had better go and talk to him.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: I would not waste my time. This Government has broken the protocol of notifying local members -

Mr D.A. Templeman: I do not tell the member for Dawesville when I go across the bridge into his electorate -

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: I am not talking about members of Parliament; I am talking about ministers coming into electorates -

Several members interjected.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: What did the Attorney General do with the courthouse in Pinjarra? The Minister for Peel and the South West is supposed to be making the Peel region fire up and expand and what does he do? He shuts down the courthouse in Pinjarra. Now everybody has to travel to Mandurah and get in the queue at the court there. It is totally disgraceful.

A public meeting was held in Pinjarra at which the upper House member, Hon John Cowdell, was present, as was I and another 200 or 300 people. People said, "We have got to write to the Premier about this." I said, "Write to the Premier! It will probably take six months to get a reply if you get one at all. You should get Hon John Cowdell to arrange a meeting with the Premier." Hon John Cowdell then jumped up and said, "I'll get you a meeting with the Premier." The people got an appointment with the Premier but the day before the meeting the Premier said, "Don't bother coming, I don't want to see you." What the Premier did to the people of Pinjarra was disgraceful. There was no meeting with the Premier and the courthouse was shut -

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Were those his exact words?

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Probably.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Yes or no?

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: What difference does it make whether he said it politely? He meant, "Don't bother coming here because we are going to shut the courthouse down anyway."

Mr P.B. Watson: When the opposition member comes to Albany, no-one wants to meet him -

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Don't you believe it! The member will get a big shock at the next election.

Several members interjected.

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Pandal; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.D. McRae): Members, I have been concerned about a general drift in this debate and the level of interjections that take the speaker away from the matter under discussion. I drew the attention of the previous member, in some ways erroneously, to the question, but the point was still the same; that is, we are debating the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003. To understand what the question is really about, members must read the long title, which states -

An act to authorise the Treasurer to make certain payments and advances and to specify a limit for the payments and advances so authorised for the financial year commencing on 1 July 2003.

This is not a general appropriation Bill; that is, it is not drawing money from an account and allocation already made. This seeks to give the authority for expenditure under certain conditions. I advise the member for Murray-Wellington that under Standing Order No 94 the debate must be relevant to that question.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Thank you for that direction, Mr Acting Speaker. What I have to say relates to the money to be spent in the next financial year. I was led astray by some backbench members.

I do not think the Minister for Peel and the South West knows where the Peel region is. I have written to him on a couple of issues and he has handballed them on to someone else to deal with. He does not even take up the cause.

I will now talk about bus services in the Peel region. A few years ago the Government said that it would improve the Mandurah bus service. I put a question on notice or wrote to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure asking whether the Government was going to provide a bus service for the people of Pinjarra. I thought it was a pretty simple request. However, the response was, "Oh no, it is only the Mandurah people who will get a better bus service. Stuff the people in Pinjarra and Waroona! We do not care about them! They do not need a bus service. Why would they need a bus service?" There is no Centrelink or other government agency in Pinjarra-Waroona and that is why there is no bus service there. If people do not have a vehicle to enable them to get across to Mandurah, they hitchhike! To get to the government services located in Mandurah, they stand on the main road with their thumbs out to get a lift. It is totally disgraceful. Thank goodness for Wally Barrett who lives in Pinjarra and has a bus. He now provides a service approximately once a week from Waroona to Mandurah. He subsidises the travel costs and told me that he is paid \$5 to \$8 per passenger for a return trip. He picks people up in Waroona, drives them across to Mandurah, and then drives them back to Waroona at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It is a subsidised service that he provides out of his own pocket. He gets no government help; not a thing. I take my hat off to Wally Barrett for the great work that he does for those people at Waroona.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Hear, hear! He is a good bloke.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Yes, he is. However, it should be the Government that is providing that service, not Wally Barrett. Thank goodness he does though.

I will now discuss the Peel deviation. How long does it take to get from one end of Mandurah to the other on the Mandurah bypass and the Old Coast Road? Vehicles must stop and start all the way because there are about 12 sets of traffic lights from one end of the journey to the other.

Mr D.A. Templeman: That is true and I agree with you. However, even with the Peel deviation in place that will not change -

Mr A.D. Marshall: Yes it will.

Mr D.A. Templeman: No, member for Dawesville, because the growth that occurred within that narrow strip to the Dawesville channel south -

Mr A.D. Marshall: South Mandurah.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Yes. When the Peel deviation is in place there will still be a traffic issue along that road because -

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Of course there will be because of all the people living along there.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It will still be a stop-start route because of the number of traffic lights installed for the safety of the communities along there. That must be remembered. Even when the Peel deviation is in place, there will be traffic lights along there - there will probably be more, because the member for Dawesville is arguing for one at Erskine - and they will be in place for the safety of the communities that live there now and in the future.

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Penda; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: I am not saying the lights should be removed. It is an issue for the people who want to drive through that area to the south west and to Bunbury, Busselton, Manjimup, Pemberton -

Mr B.K. Masters: Don't forget Capel.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Yes, and to Capel. Thousands of people each week travel down that route and all those vehicles must stop and start along that section of it. If the Peel deviation were in place, those wanting to bypass Mandurah would not use that route. It would be good for Mandurah as well not to have that traffic on the road through Mandurah. However, there is no hope of the Peel deviation being built in the next five to 10 years. That is a disgrace because it is an environmentally sound development that will allow people to travel more quickly through the area rather than create traffic congestion. The deviation should be put in place. It has a higher priority than the rail project. I am not saying that we do not need the train, but the deviation has a higher priority because it will allow people to drive more freely around Mandurah. Many people live in Mandurah and work in Perth. However, the Peel deviation has a higher priority than the rail line and it would cost about \$200 million.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It would cost \$300 million.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Okay, the cost is probably increasing by the day. It is a big cost.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): I draw the member's attention to Standing Order No 94. The member's speech must be relevant to the Bill being discussed. This is not an appropriation Bill and the member cannot have such a wide-ranging debate. I ask that he bring debate back to the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: What I have to say relates to the money to be spent and how it should be spent -

The ACTING SPEAKER: The authorisation Bill is about putting money into an account, not about appropriating it.

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Based on that, I will wind up my speech. I feel that the Minister for Peel and the South West does not understand where the Peel region is and what he should be doing to promote it. When Hon Julian Grill was Minister for the South West he was always down there doing a great job promoting the region. We never hear of nor see the Minister for Peel and the South West in the region. I have just been told he has been to my electorate, and I will take it that he has done so. He never bothered to tell me he had come, and I did not even read about his visit in the newspaper. He certainly did not go looking for the photo opportunities that I thought most of the ministers go for. It is a pity the Government is not looking after the Peel region and my electorate.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [8.10 pm]: I listened with great interest to my colleagues the members for Murray-Wellington and Dawesville. I respect those two members, who have been in this House a lot longer than I. I respect their points of view and arguments in relation to this Bill, which involves the authorisation of money and advances to areas of need. The speakers who have preceded me mentioned a number of issues, but we need to remember that, when the Peel region was established in 1993 by the former Labor Government, it was acknowledged by that Government as having special qualities and unique needs.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: Was that 1993 or 1983?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It was 1993. It was designated in 1992, but established in 1993, just before the previous Government came to power. It was designated because the Peel was seen as an important region in its own right. When we are talking about dollars being put aside, as we are in discussing this Bill, I hope that the Treasurer looks very favourably on the growing needs of the region that I and the members for Dawesville and Murray-Wellington represent. They have painted a picture that contains some truth, but they have been a little misleading in painting the current Government as not having made any provision for growth in the region. There has been mention of transport and health. The Peel Health Campus has enjoyed a five per cent increase in overall funding in this budget as a result of the growth that has occurred.

Point of Order

Mr J.L. BRADSHAW: Is the member speaking to the Bill before the House?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): I draw the attention of the member to the fact that the House is debating the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003. I am not allowing widespread debate. The member must bring his remarks back to the Bill. I will ask this of all speakers from here on.

Debate Resumed

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Pandal; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Speaking about the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003, as money is put aside by this Bill, I hope that the Treasurer looks very favourably on Mandurah and the Peel region, recognising the growth occurring there. I hope that, as part of any future allocations from this or any other moneys made available, that growth is acknowledged, planned for and budgeted for by the Government. Great things are already happening there. This Government has made tremendous investment in the region. I look forward to seeing more investment in the region, and I hope that, through the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003, in the distribution of funds in the future, the Peel region is considered as a needy region.

MR B.K. MASTERS (Vasse) [8.14 pm]: Like the member for Mandurah I take this opportunity to talk about the needs of my electorate. The Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003 should provide greater funding inputs. I will make a few relevant points about the fact that not enough money has been provided to the Treasurer to do what is important in my electorate. In the first Estimates Committee of the Gallop Government in 2001, the Minister for Peel and the South West put his foot in his mouth when he said that my electorate of Vasse and the Augusta-Margaret River area, was, in the view of some people, the chardonnay coast. In his view, the area did not require more government assistance. In recent weeks we have seen some newspaper articles, particularly in *The West Australian*, talking about how desirable it is to make the sea change and move down to the country, in particular the Busselton-Dunsborough area, to live the relaxed lifestyle that all of us, in theory, have always dreamed about. We have an image of the Margaret River wine region, which immediately brings to mind tourism, holidays, high-quality wines, lovely lifestyles, holiday homes throughout the region, including that of the Minister for Peel and the South West at Augusta, and so on.

The Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003 should have more money in it because the reality is significantly different from the perception I have briefly outlined. I refer members to the comments I made on the last budget. Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.P. O'Gorman), it is inappropriate that I repeat those comments now for the reason of which you and your predecessors in the past half hour or so have reminded us. I bring to the attention of members a very important and significant touch of reality. I understand that every few years the Department of Education and Training, using Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, calculates what is called the H factor or the H index for the schools in any particular area. It is essentially a measure of the socioeconomic advantage or disadvantage of the area under question. As has been explained to me, the worst possible H index a school can get - be it a primary or a secondary school - is 90, while the best H index is 110. The average, for a school in a medium socioeconomic area, neither significantly advantaged nor disadvantaged, is 100. Members will be surprised to learn that the H factor for the Busselton Senior High School is 92.8, which rates it as having the sixth greatest socioeconomic disadvantage of any school in Western Australia.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Can you remember what the five lower schools are?

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I can remember four of the other five, but I am not sure if I have the order right. The schools are Carnarvon, Girrawheen, Mirrabooka, Balga and one other that I cannot remember. Busselton comes in sixth lowest. The perception is that Busselton is a rich and thriving place. It is certainly thriving. The annual population growth in the past six or eight years has been about six per cent. In places like Dunsborough it has been about 17 per cent in some years. To say that the area is rich or advantaged, however, is simply not true. This may offend some members opposite, but the people moving to my electorate are those that John Howard calls the typical Aussie battlers. They are moving out of Perth and Bunbury, looking around the south west and deciding that that is the lifestyle they want to lead. The reality is that because this Government is not putting enough budget money into certain appropriations -

Mr M.P. Murray: They all live on the foreshore or in marinas in two or three-storey houses.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: The member wants to pick the exception rather than the rule.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You mentioned a very interesting thing. The situation in Mandurah is similar. The perception is of high-quality homes on the canals, etc. Do you know the area's average weekly household wage?

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I have those figures in my electorate office, but I cannot provide them to the House now. Not everyone in Busselton, and the Vasse electorate in general, enjoys the idyllic retirement lifestyle. The common perception is of rich farmers from the wheatbelt or retirees from Perth bringing their millions to the area and building three-storey properties in marinas, which the member for Collie clearly sees when he goes there. I do not criticise him for that.

Mr D.A. Templeman: He owns one!

Mr B.K. MASTERS: Half his luck. I did not know marron poaching was that profitable.

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Pandal; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

The Vasse electorate has very significant needs. Therefore, the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2003 should legislate for the provision of a larger, rather than smaller, sum of money.

As I do not wish to waste the time of this House, I will quickly go through the high priority issues in my electorate. For the past three or four years, the number one priority of the Department for Community Development for Busselton has been the provision of emergency or crisis accommodation; yet, no money is provided under the supported accommodation assistance program. In Busselton, people escaping domestic violence or other emergency or crisis situations have nowhere to go. Busselton Senior High School is severely in need of an upgrade or partial relocation. The 1 300 students desperately need a better school than the one they are in now, which was designed 30 years ago to house 700 students. The technical and further education college is bursting at the seams and needs to be relocated. Planning for a new hospital needs to start today. It is a 30-year-old hospital and well beyond its use-by date.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): The member is talking about budget appropriations he thinks should be made. We are dealing with the Treasurer's Advance authorisation, and I ask him to come back to that.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I have almost finished explaining the reasons I believe the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill should provide for a bigger sum of money. I take your point, Mr Acting Speaker. I could talk about deficiencies in mental health services; the need for state government funding assistance to combat coast erosion; problems with Western Power; the lack of money for roads; and, in the environmental area, the need for significant additional funds for national park management and so on. I will stop there as I do not wish to abuse the privilege of this House by bending the debate of this Bill too far away from what the legislation is designed to accomplish. Nonetheless, there is serious and significant unmet need in the south west, in particular in my electorate of Vasse. Therefore, it is important that more money be given to the Treasurer to spend in the ways I briefly outlined.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont - Treasurer) [8.23 pm]: The purpose of this legislation is not to establish a fund of \$300 million that people can draw on but to give the Treasurer the authority to spend, if necessary, up to \$300 million on unforeseen events. A natural disaster could occur, requiring additional activity by the Police Service, Fire and Emergency Services or the Department of Health. If that activity causes agencies to overrun their budgeted appropriations, the Treasurer's Advance could be used to extend to them additional funding. Other matters might cause what are colloquially termed budget blow-outs. If there are good reasons to provide additional money in those circumstances, the Treasurer's Advance is the authority to do that. The Treasurer's Advance could also be used when a new project requiring infrastructure provision comes to the attention of the Government. Alternatively, an environmental incident might occur between budgets, and additional money might be needed to remediate the site. The Treasurer's Advance provides for that sort of circumstance. I can think of four additional sets of circumstances in which the Treasurer's Advance might be required. If there is underexpenditure in one area of spending, the Government could decide to transfer funds to an area in which there has been overexpenditure. Even though the net effect of that transfer would be revenue neutral, the authority of the Treasurer's Advance would be required for the provision of the money.

Moneys expended under the authority of the Treasurer's Advance are in effect retrospectively appropriated by Parliament through appropriation Bills that come before the Parliament at a later time, usually in the form of appropriations (consolidated fund) Bills Nos 3 and 4. The passage of those Bills provides retrospective parliamentary authority for the Government's decisions to use either recurrent or capital funding under the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Act. Accountability is ultimately achieved. Through those Bills, Parliament is advised of and asked to approve, albeit retrospectively, all the different decisions made under the authority given by this legislation.

I hope that explanation corrects the impression of the member for Warren-Blackwood that this Bill will require the borrowing of an additional \$300 million. This Bill is an authority to spend up to that amount. If the money is not available through additional revenue or the transfer of funds from items for which there has been underexpenditure and the Treasurer nevertheless uses that authority, the budget would go into deficit. This Government does not intend to use the authority conferred by Parliament for the expenditure of \$300 million unless that money is available. We do not intend to use the Treasurer's Advance to take the budget into deficit.

I respond to the Leader of the Opposition's remarks on debt. Debt is expected to be \$5 960 million at 30 June 2004. The pre-election financial projection statement of early 2001 forecast a debt figure of \$5 900 million at 30 June 2004. In other words, net debt at 30 June 2004 is now expected to be \$60 million more than was forecast when the Under Treasurer brought down the pre-election financial projection statement. The \$5 960 million debt we are forecasting is inflated by hundreds of millions of dollars when compared with the figure the coalition forecast at the beginning of the election campaign. That is because in two big areas of expenditure the

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Pandal; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

Government has shifted from private financing facilities, which do not show up in official debt figures, to traditional state debt financing arrangements, which show up in debt figures. The first area is the rolling stock for the railway line. Under this Government's plans, the rolling stock is to be purchased, financed by traditional state borrowing. Under the previous Government's plans, the rolling stock for the railway line was to be leased; in other words, privately financed. That did not show up in the official debt figures or the coalition debt forecast. Likewise, the Government's light vehicle fleet is currently financed through traditional state debt and appears in the figures. The coalition funded the fleet through the private Matrix Finance Group facility, which did not show up in official debt figures. If one takes into account the rolling stock and the Matrix matters, this Government's debt figures are below the debt figures forecast for the same period by the coalition at the beginning of the election campaign.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They were not forecast by the coalition at all. That's untrue.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: At the beginning of the election campaign, the Under Treasurer outlined the state of the books; namely, that debt would be \$5 900 million at 30 June 2004. I did not hear the then Treasurer, Hon Richard Court, say that that would not be the case because the coalition had a plan to turn it around. I thought he might have said so because the figures were such an appalling reflection on the financial management of the coalition. Therefore, I had to believe that the coalition owned those plans. That is probably true because my understanding is that the coalition was going to build the railway.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We started construction, you may recall.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The coalition was going to build the railway, and the Labor Party was going to build the railway. Of course such debt forecasts were made. If the railway debt is bad now, why was it not bad then?

Mr C.J. Barnett: In actual dollars, debt will rise by \$200 million. To talk about forward forecasts is garbage. The dollars needed to pay interest are important. Every householder knows that to be the case.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I am not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to talk forecasts. I compare the coalition's and Government's plans at a common date; namely, 30 June 2004. The Government's figure is \$60 million more than the coalition's forecast, but our debt is inflated when compared with coalition debt because private financing facilities have been shifted back to official debt figures.

Debt is used to finance very important capital work projects. The Government is running a \$3.5 billion capital works program, which is the biggest in the history of the State.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Every year's is the biggest.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is still the biggest in the history of the State. The Leader of the Opposition cannot have it both ways: he cannot say he wants a bigger capital works program while claiming there should be less debt. The Leader of the Opposition referred to his worries concerning debt, yet before he was halfway through his speech, he referred to the need for extra spending. Every subsequent speaker in this debate, including my colleague the member for Mandurah, talked about the need for increased spending. Most speeches were made by coalition members. I will not complain about the comments of the member for Mandurah because he did not harp on about debt while putting in claims for additional expenditure.

Mr R.C. Kucera: He's a very good local member.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Indeed, he is. I listened closely to his comments. Before the Leader of the Opposition reached the halfway point of his speech, he talked about the need for Western Power and the Water Corporation to spend more on capital works - in other words, to borrow more money. I worry about the Leader of the Opposition because he cannot have it both ways. He launched into an attack on the media, which I hope journalists noted. I, too, have some advice for the media: please, media of Western Australia, notice when the Opposition wants to have it both ways; when the Opposition wants to reduce debt and increase spending on capital works; when the Opposition complains about taxes but wants additional money spent on health; and when the Opposition makes these statements, yet wants to preserve a surplus. The Opposition will have to be accountable during the election campaign. I noted with particular interest the Leader of the Opposition's criticism of efficiency dividends as a means of funding election promises.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They're a joke - farcical.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Is the Leader of the Opposition saying that the coalition will not use an efficiency dividend mechanism to fund its election promises?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I give an example of how to manage the finances of the State. I take the example that appeared in the media on the weekend. The \$20 million in extra dividends taken annually from Western Power could

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Pandal; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

finance \$300 million to \$400 million of debt, which could fund the Cockburn power station in one hit. That's what you don't understand.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: That might pay the interest on a certain amount of debt, but that does not mean the level of debt is consistent with the maintenance of the State's AAA credit rating.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You've not made the saving. It's tortuous but we're getting there.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Although the State would have the financial capacity to borrow more than currently borrowed, debt beyond a certain level is not consistent with the maintenance of the AAA credit rating. A certain amount of debt is consistent with the maintenance of that rating, but inconsistency arises when debt is beyond that level.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You've got rising debt; that's your problem.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The coalition would have had rising debt, too.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: What was the solution? The coalition forecast rising debt. The financial plan at the beginning of the last election campaign was that debt would have been more than the Government's debt at 30 June 2004.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You love to bring in charts. Here is a little chart showing an increase in debt by \$200 million under Labor.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I return to the efficiency dividend payment. The Leader of the Opposition described the productivity dividend as garbage. Does the Leader of the Opposition say no productivity or efficiency dividend measure will be part of the plan he will put to the people during the election campaign? Is it garbage, or will he use it?

Mr C.J. Barnett: What's the point of asking a rhetorical question if you'll not take an answer? The answer is that in the 2001 election campaign, Labor made promises worth \$1.2 billion, and the Liberals offered promises worth \$440 million. The difference is approximately \$800 million. That's what you can't fund. We did not promise over a billion dollars in election promises. We promised \$440 million, which we could fund. You made over-the-top promises, which you couldn't fund. No wonder you stand there befuddled. Of course debt will go up - it's obvious.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The difference is that during the election campaign, the Labor Party conscientiously funded and costed its promises. The lot opposite were remarkable. I could not believe their incompetence. This mob had all the resources of government available to them until the beginning of that election campaign, yet they could not cost and fund their election promises. They could not present a financial plan to the people of the State. It became a shemuzzle on the first day of the election campaign with their first policy announcement. This was superintended by the current Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Mitchell, who wrote into the south west policy an enormous number of promises, including the Peel deviation, which were not funded. The financial plan at the beginning of the campaign went straight off the rails because the member for Mitchell, now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, frankly, stuffed it up. From then on there was never any semblance of credibility about the Liberals' financial plans. I could not believe my luck as shadow Treasurer. I asked myself what was wrong with the mob. They had been in government and had the advice of Treasury for eight years, yet they could not prepare a credible financial plan with their promises costed and funded. The Leader of the Opposition might try to compare the Liberals' level of promises with our level of promises. We had a financial plan, which we put into effect, and we have delivered on that financial plan.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You have rising debt.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Our promise in the election campaign was to live within the means of the forward estimates put forward by the coalition, and that is what we are doing.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We did not submit forward estimates.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It passed a law to say that at the beginning of the election campaign the Under Treasurer had to submit forward estimates. It was a new development. The state of the finances showed that the coalition would have debt of \$5.9 billion by 30 June 2004.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We would not have.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The coalition would not have? That is terrific.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We would have had the power and water industries growing in this State.

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Phillip Penda; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Arthur Marshall; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Would have, could have, should have -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Look at the record.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I have looked at the record. It shows five deficits in eight budgets.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O’Gorman): Order! The Chamber is getting into disarray. The Treasurer invited interjections from the Leader of the Opposition and has tried to stop them, but things are getting out of hand. We will keep to the Bill.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I thank you for your wise advice, Mr Acting Speaker.

I have dealt with the major matter of debt which the Leader of the Opposition raised. The Leader of the Opposition likes to confuse recurrent, day-to-day expenditure with capital expenditure. I do not have that confusion. The Government’s surplus that arose from day-to-day expenditure, which is an important part of our financial management strategy, helps to fund the \$3.5 billion capital works program in which we have engaged.

On the question of promises, I revealed in a previous speech to the House that the coalition has so far made on its own estimates \$850 million worth of promises and, on more realistic costings, \$1.6 billion worth of promises. If the Leader of the Opposition thinks that he will have only \$300 million or \$400 million worth of promises in the next election campaign, he has already \$400 million on his own figures which he will have to chop off and repudiate. I will wait with fascinated interest for the day when that statement comes out and all previous promises are repudiated because they do not add up.

We have had an interesting debate on matters that are not strictly related to the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill. I will return to the Bill. It is a routine Bill that is put forward with every budget. It gives the Government some flexibility to respond to unforeseen circumstances and new developments during the financial year. The Government is required to exercise financial discipline in the use of the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Act. We try to keep a tight rein on between-budget expenditure, because it is in the budget process that people have the best opportunity to make a proper comparison between competing priorities. One of the failures of the previous Government was not to exercise sufficient control on between-budget expenditure. We have tried to approach that matter more responsibly and more seriously. Nevertheless, unforeseen circumstances and new demands will arise. That is why the Government needs the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time, proceeded through remaining stages without debate, and transmitted to the Council.