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Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Max Trenorden; Acting Speaker; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr Bob Kucera; Deputy Speaker; Dr Janet Woollard

SOUTHERN RAIL LINK, MANAGEMENT OF BUDGET

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): Today I received a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

This House condemns the Labor Government for its complete failure to properly manage the southern rail link project budget, resulting in a major financial drain on key portfolio areas and essential services.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [3.08 pm]: I move the motion. The development of major infrastructure such as a rail requires careful planning and engineering studies, prudent financial planning and good consultation throughout the community. The previous Government undertook that over two years in determining the viability, patronage, route, costings and funding of the southern rail project. I remind members that the previous Government started with a \$300 million allocation from the sale of AlintaGas for the funding of the major part of that capital works project. The opposite has happened since this Government has come to power. I will retrace the history of this project. This project is affecting health, education, law and order, regional development and the environment. Every area of government is being affected because of this Government's foolhardy approach to developing a south metropolitan railway. The history under Labor has been one of untruths, confused statements and absolute project mismanagement. Just 18 weeks after it came into government, the Labor Party threw out two years of planning and decided to re-route the southern rail link along the freeway and via a tunnel under the city. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure conceded recently -

I absolutely regret we didn't do it better, . . . I really didn't want to make a decision before we went out and did more consultation but there were concerns within Government about doing it that way.

What the minister is saying is that there were concerns within Government - within the Labor Party - about actually consulting with people in the community. Indeed, in debate and interjection across the Chamber at the time, it became fairly obvious to me that the Labor Party had made the decision to re-route the railway prior to the last election but had decided not to tell the public.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Wrong, wrong, wrong!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If I am wrong, then the minister can explain, because the minister, and the Premier, gave every impression that that decision had been made, but they did not come forward. The re-routing of the railway is not just about cost. We chose the Kenwick route. We can argue about the route. The Government was entitled, as a new Government, to reassess the project. No-one would deny that. However, what it has done is target everything into the central business district. Fewer people work in the central business district today than was the case 20 years ago. A railway that ran across the suburbs would have transported the working people, whom the Labor Party used to represent, who live in Rockingham and maybe work in Canning Vale or Kewdale. How many lawyers, financial planners and corporate executives will travel along the railway to the central business district? How many will pay those prices? The railway, on its original route, could have served a wider cross-section of the community. However, the Government changed its mind.

Look at the disinterest from the Government! Look at the arrogance of a Government that is not even prepared to be accountable to the people through the Parliament! Government members are not even present in the Chamber.

I will go through the costing record. Let us see what the member for Girrawheen knows about it. I know from personal experience that some of the lower-income people in her community need better education. What is the member for Girrawheen doing for her constituents who have some schools that are badly in need of redevelopment? They are 1950s and 1960s schools, and they desperately need redevelopment. Where is the member for Girrawheen on this debate? Can she justify \$2.8 billion for the railway when the kids in her constituency need better education? Where is the member for Girrawheen? I hope she speaks in this debate.

I will deal with the history of the costing. In July 2001 when the Premier announced that Labor had changed the route, he said that the cost of the direct route would be contained within existing budget estimates. From his press release, they were \$1.2 billion. Less than a year later, in May 2002, the responsible minister said that the budget had increased just a little from \$1.2 billion to \$1.419 billion - just a lazy \$219 million extra in less than a year. Three months after that, there was a further upward revision. The minister stated in the Parliament -

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We are very confident that this project will be delivered on time and on budget.

The minister said that; yet in December 2003 we found that the project had gone up another \$100 million. It will now cost \$1.518 billion to build it.

When the Treasurer was questioned in this Parliament about the cost of this project, he claimed that it was still on budget. A few weeks later when the minister responsible talked about a \$100 million blow-out, she admitted that she knew that six weeks earlier. Therefore, the Treasurer misled this Parliament. He said that the project was on budget, when the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure admitted that she had known for six weeks about the further \$100 million budget. One of them has been less than truthful in this Parliament, either the Treasurer or the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. One of them has not been open and accountable throughout this process. That is a fact.

Mr R.C. Kucera interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Is the minister for Rottnest Island going to join in this debate? What a pleasure that would be, because he is the most incompetent minister in an incompetent team - the most incompetent by a long, long way.

By December 2003 the cost had blown out by a massive \$400 million. Where is the member for Girrawheen, who has children in her electorate who need better education? Where is the member for Collie? Collie needs an upgrade in education facilities as well. What is the member for Collie doing about health services in the south west? Other government members of Parliament are either absent or not willing to contribute. They are happy to see everything subsumed in the interests of this cost blow-out. Now we find that it is not only the \$1.5 billion to build the railway, but also \$1.2 billion that this Government will borrow. It will borrow 80 per cent of the cost. The previous Government was intending to fund half the project cost. This Government has not only increased it by \$400 million, but also will borrow 80 per cent of the capital cost for this project, which will run at a massive operating cost and will now incur an interest bill of \$1.3 billion over 33 years.

We now have a project with a total cost of \$2.8 billion, and work has barely begun. A few roads have been cordoned off. When the tunnelling under the city starts, what will happen? It is below the water table, minister. There are acid sulphate soils. There will likely be peat beds under there. There are old rubbish tips under the city of Perth. There are ties between buildings. Engineers do not even know where they are. The Government made this decision before drilling and soil testing were done. The area is an old riverbed. Engineer after engineer have pointed to the cost. Members opposite laugh. If construction starts on that tunnel and it is halted because of environmental or safety concerns, what will happen? The minister must resign on the spot if there is one day's stoppage for environmental or worker safety concerns. The Government has not done the proper preparation for that. It has added \$400 million to the cost, and construction has not even started.

Every area of government is being affected, including essential services such as power and water supplies. There is not a dollar for new water sources for this State in the budget. The Government has taken away health services in country areas and delayed projects. On top of this \$2.8 billion project, the Government has been talking about the Reid report and \$1.7 billion being spent on health. Give us a break! The people of Western Australia do not have that money. The previous Labor Government that lost the State's AAA credit rating added \$4 billion to state debt. This Government is now heading this State down the same path. It is a Government of incompetency, because it has not taken advantage of a buoyant national and international economy to improve the fundamental finances of this State. This minister has been irresponsible, less than honest, shrill and unpredictable. She has not at any stage been able to consistently cost and detail this project. She will have to resign when that project - that tunnel - is delayed.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [3.16 pm]: The Gallop Government's version of the Mandurah railway line is unjustifiable in three key areas: first, the cost; second, passenger numbers; and, third, the adverse impact upon capital works in regional Western Australia.

Mr R.C. Kucera: You said on the weekend that you supported it.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: No, I do not.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Now you have changed your mind. Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: When did I say I supported it?

Mr R.C. Kucera: You said you supported it. You said it had to be built.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The consequences of the railway for regional WA are clear, even before one spike is driven into the railway line. The minister, who has likened herself to the great C.Y. O'Connor - I do not quite

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know how that happened - has thumbed her nose at industry and local government in the regions. She has been in a stoush with Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd over who pays for access roads to major receival points for grain. She has told us that a start on the Peel deviation is not a possibility before 2008. There is no way that the Lancelin-Cervantes road will be built before 2006.

We have seen the minister cunningly fast-track an estimated \$1.3 million in contracts to make sure the railway line cannot be wound back or staged without the State incurring great costs. This public transport project is pillaging money that has historically been collected from road users at the bowser and raised from vehicle registration charges. In the past three years the State's contribution to road funding has tumbled by approximately \$100 million a year, with country roads taking a direct hit. These roads carry produce, link communities and convey our children to school. In one fell swoop the minister changed the route of the railway to save 12 minutes in travelling time. As a result, every regional Western Australian will be penalised for many years to come. When interest on the borrowings is taken into account, this railway will ultimately cost more than the \$2.8 billion about which the Leader of the Opposition spoke. This project will cost \$100 million a year to run, including interest. That money could have fixed dangerous roads and turned the lights back on in the bush.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Where is your evidence for that?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister will have her turn. She will get up shortly.

Every day people in regional WA risk their lives on hazardous roads because the funding tap has been turned off. More than \$22 million a year in direct grants to local government has evaporated, forcing councils to shelve vital projects and retrench staff. Fewer dollars spent on country roads mean less local buying. For every \$1 million spent on roads, approximately 17 jobs are created. However, for the minister and her city-centric colleagues, country roads do not matter, unless they are in Labor electorates, and that seems to have been very common in recent times. While the minister plays with her city trains, the rest of the State's infrastructure is running off the rails. For example, the section of the Bussell Highway between Vasse and Margaret River, known as death alley, needs \$24 million but did not get a cent in the budget. The Corrigin to Hyden road, a 65-kilometre black spot, urgently needs \$24 million but received just \$1 million in funding.

On electricity issues, people in regional areas cannot even boil a kettle. As I speak, some country regions are without power. Members need only talk to country people to know that they think this Gallop Government has its priorities very wrong.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Where? Name one right now.

Mr T.K. Waldron: Albany yesterday.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Right now, inland from Kalbarri.

Mr R.C. Kucera: A storm went through Albany yesterday.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Albany yesterday and Beverley a few days before that. The Minister for Energy is an abject failure in his job. People in regional Western Australia are absolutely amazed that he is still the minister. Regional Western Australia is blacked out every second week. As I speak, some regions of WA are without power. Spending \$6.6 million on the installation and upgrading of switching devices and a further \$6 million to upgrade ageing feeders is just a drop in the ocean. It will require \$50 million a year for 10 years to fix the problem. We have told the minister that time and again and he has refused to make that commitment. It is something that we will push exceedingly hard for.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What are you talking about? We are committing \$100 million a year.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister put in \$12 million this year.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We have doubled your commitment. It is \$100 million.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I do not have all the time in the world.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Order, members!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I will run through a couple of issues because I am running out of time. Most people in regional WA have lost confidence in the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. The railway is an explosion of unnecessary public expenditure that could be better utilised on scores of other important regional projects. Her capacity to keep all the contract plates spinning on their bamboo poles is a real worry.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Let me ask you the key question: will you honour the contracts?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I will ask the minister the questions.

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The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members! The Leader of the National Party is clearly not taking interjections at this stage.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Scores of subcontractors were hurt in the abject failure of the Consolidated Constructions Pty Ltd contract for the Marble Bar road. The minister laughs about those subcontractors all the time. Those subcontractors have little faith in the minister delivering in any process. They have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars because of her inept actions. The credentials of some of these people need to be questioned. I am talking about the Gosnells railway station. Is the minister aware of the article in *The Australian Financial Review*? She likes asking me questions. Is she aware of the Lakis Constructions Pty Ltd bid?

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Yes.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Is the minister aware that Hong Kong is trying to extradite one of the people involved in that project?

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Yes.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Did the minister know that before the contract was let?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Good question.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: There were a lot of yeses leading up to that point. If I am reading the speech, why does the minister not read me the answer?

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Has the contract been let?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I am asking the minister Ms A.J. MacTiernan: No; you didn't ask me that.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: As the minister is being smug, the article also asks whether the same individuals are involved in any other railway station constructions. Will the minister talk about that?

Ms A.J. MacTiernan interjected.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Members opposite love bagging us, but the bottom line is that this project is totally out of control; it is going through the roof like a thermometer on a hot day. I know that I am not allowed to talk about hot days while the Minister for Energy is in the Chamber, because he is terrified of hot days. However, the fact is that there are more hot days to come for this Government.

MS K. HODSON-THOMAS (Carine) [3.24 pm]: The Leader of the Opposition has outlined the lack of consultation that took place on the railway project, and that has been quite evident in the past three and half years. It continues to be a grievance that people raise with me on numerous occasions. When we attended a shadow cabinet meeting at the City of Canning offices, it was explained to me how terribly disappointed the council was with this Government's proposal to change the route from the Kenwick route to the direct route. Everywhere we go, regardless of the number of petitions that the member for Mandurah wishes to present in this place, people continue to say that it is certainly not worth supporting this railway project with a \$400 million blow-out. The Leader of the Opposition has already articulated why this project has blown out by \$400 million. The minister told us on three different occasions in this place that it would be \$1.2 billion, then it would be \$1.419 billion and then it would be \$1.518 billion. As the Leader of the Opposition has already stated, the works have hardly commenced.

Point of Order

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Minister for Tourism once again continues to intimidate a female member on this side of the House. I ask that any member, particularly a female member with maybe not the strongest voice, be able to present her speech. I am tired of male members of the Labor Party intimidating female members on this side of the Chamber.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is an outrageous and unparliamentary assertion to make the allegation that someone is intimidating another member of Parliament. It is, in fact, a gross abuse of the system of taking points of order for a member to use a point of order to make that sort of allegation against another member of Parliament. Mr Acting Speaker, I suggest that the only course of action is to ask the Leader of the Opposition to immediately withdraw and apologise. It is unacceptable that a member can use a point of order to make an untrue and outrageously offensive allegation such as that.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The Treasurer has made an outrageous statement. It is quite clear what was happening, and it happens on a regular basis. There are constant little undertones that occur across the Chamber, finger

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pointing and all the rest of it. Female members on both sides of the Chamber have noticed that it occurs when they stand. Therefore, the allegation is clearly that there was a deliberate undermining of the member on her feet.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I will make this comment. I find that, of all the people in this Chamber, the Leader of the Opposition is not in a position to make that sort of claim. He is without comparison the rudest and most insulting person in this place.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Unfortunately, Leader of the Opposition, there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: As I was saying, the budget estimate for this project has been revised on three separate occasions in this place. As the history of this project shows, that is certainly not likely to change. If anything, the budget for this project is likely to blow out even further. I was talking about the \$400 million blow-out that people have mentioned to me on numerous occasions. It is an enormous amount to invest in a railway line along the middle of the freeway, which will bring little or no benefit to many local communities. We find that whether we talk to them about schools, hospitals, road projects or road safety projects. I am inundated by people asking me why the Gallop Government cannot see reason: "Why can't they understand that changing this route down the middle of the freeway has in essence prevented many important projects within our community?"

The *Journal of the American Planning Association* of July 2002 outlined a study of 258 large public works projects that revealed that rail projects on average run over budget by 45 per cent. The southern rail link is talked about as a \$1.5 billion project; therefore, a 45 per cent increase will take the budget well over the \$2 billion mark. That point has been made by numerous professionals in the community. The project has not really commenced, and already it is \$400 million over budget. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has tried repeatedly to claim that taxpayers will not be exposed to any further cost blow-outs in the massive and extremely risky CBD tunnel rail project. No-one believes that claim. No-one in this place surely can believe the minister's comments in relation to the tunnel under the CBD. Certainly, people on this side of the House do not believe the minister, and nor do professional people in the community. The minister admitted that the Government has assumed many of the risks within the tunnel contract, such as cracks to buildings, the removal of underground structures, increases in construction material costs, the removal of contaminated soil and water, and the relocation of power and water facilities. Far from protecting Western Australian taxpayers from further cost blow-outs, the Government has exposed taxpayers to greater risks.

The minister has claimed that she has been open and accountable in presenting documents to this place relating to the contract. She has provided that detail to Parliament; we have seen those contracts. However, she has removed the sensitive material that might show what Western Australian taxpayers may wear in further blowouts. That is not being open and accountable. The Commission on Government stated -

Upon the awarding of a government contract . . . a copy of the complete contract should be lodged for public inspection with the State Supply Commission or tabled in a house of Parliament.

The 1980s should serve as a constant reminder of the pitfalls of Governments conducting commercial arrangements in secret. The minister can claim that we do not need to know that information. Nevertheless, opposition members need that information to ensure that taxpayers will not wear any further cost blow-outs. The minister cannot make guarantees to this House. On previous occasions, in the first instance she said that the railway budget would remain within \$1.2 billion, she then said it would be \$1.419 billion, and she now says it will be \$1.5 billion. The project's budget will continue to blow out, and it will not finish at today's \$400 million increase. The cost increases will slowly creep up, and the people we represent will miss out on their schools and their school maintenance. I refer to the school at Ellenbrook, and the major interchange needed in the electorate of the member for Girrawheen. Rather than having an interchange at Mirrabooka, what is the member to get? Warning lights! Warning lights will be provided also on Leach Highway to try to placate truck drivers as they travel to the port of Fremantle. The warning lights somehow will make us feel more comfortable as we drive along Leach Highway. It is simply not good enough. This minister has failed to provide a proper railway project to Mandurah, the budget for which continues to blow out.

MS A.J. MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [3.35 pm]: What a powerful analysis! One can only imagine what the first shadow cabinet meeting of the coalition was like yesterday, when members opposite decided to blame the rail project for absolutely everything. The rail project was to become the central organising principle around which members opposite would operate. This is notwithstanding the fact that members opposite promised to deliver a rail project, and to do so by 2005.

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Mr C.J. Barnett: Construction was under way, and you stopped it.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Right. Where was that then?

Mr C.J. Barnett: The Kenwick interchange.

Mr P.D. Omodei: And on the freeway and the underpass.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I see. We did not stop it, but I want to get this clear. The proposition of the Leader of the Opposition is that the railway should have been built to Mandurah by 2005.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That was the plan.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Is that what the Leader of the Opposition thinks would have been the right thing to do?

Mr C.J. Barnett: That was the plan.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Okay. It was right that it should be built by 2005, but he now states that it should not be built by 2006! He says that members opposite will go to the people of Mandurah and Rockingham and tell them that they may delay the rail project because it is to be provided too soon. Before the last election, 2005 was the right date for the delivery of the project, but now members opposite do not believe 2006 is the right date. What is the essence of the argument? They claim that we cannot afford this project. We know that Standard and Poor's has said time and again that the project is perfectly affordable. It stated that even at the height of the debt to be incurred -

Several members interjected.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I do not know what has happened to the concern that the Leader of the Opposition had about attacks on women members in Parliament -

Mr P.D. Omodei: You poor thing!

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I am wondering.

Several members interjected.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I want some guidance from the Leader of the Opposition. He can sit there and sledge time and again while I speak, yet I listened to his speech virtually in silence. I want to address the nonsense points he made.

The coalition, when in government, committed to build the rail project. Now members opposite tell people that the State cannot afford the rail project, even though they had already committed to it. The coalition's project, ill-conceived as it was via Kenwick, would have ended up costing the State more than the fast, direct link. The Gallop Government has demonstrated in this House repeatedly that the Kenwick deviation, with all its costs that had not been brought to account, and the fact that it would not attract anywhere near the same level of patronage as the current proposal, would have cost in an operating sense - I have detailed the figure before me - \$15 million a year more to operate than the current option. Therefore, over 30 years, this second-rate Kenwick deviation would have been a more expensive project than the fast, direct railway. Not only would the Kenwick option have delivered a substandard public transport result, but also it would have been more expensive.

All the arguments can be made about why the Government is not spending more money on health services, but the Government is spending an extra \$808 million on health services, which is an increase of 35 per cent. The Government is spending an extra \$475 million on education and training, which is an increase of 24 per cent, and spending on police services is up by \$159 million, or an extra 35 per cent. As we go around the State -

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Order, members!

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: As members go around the State, whether to Kununurra, Karratha or Geraldton, and see the magnificent infrastructure projects that we are putting in place, they will see that it is clearly stupid to assert that we are not investing in the rest of the State. The figures speak for themselves and quite clearly indicate an increase in capital works expenditure. This Government will spend \$13.4 billion compared with \$11.4 billion spent by the previous Government. Our capital works expenditure across the State is, in fact, up by 17 per cent. On every analysis this argument is wrong. This is simply a coalition of the unwilling - a group of people cobbled together - that is unable to articulate a policy, unable to argue consistently or coherently for a position, too scared to take a position and has no vision whatsoever.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

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Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I can say one thing about the pontificating from members opposite about working people: an enormous social equity will be delivered -

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Mr Acting Speaker, I crave your protection from the member for Nedlands.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Granted.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition is the most problematic. Mr Acting Speaker, she has not participated in this debate. I listened in virtual silence -

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Member for Nedlands, not "she"!

Point of Order

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is the member for Nedlands.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, members. The minister has the call.

Debate Resumed

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: This is a coalition of the unwilling that is unable to formulate or articulate a policy for the city or for making the city sustainable and livable in the twenty-first century. All the coalition is saying is that it does not want the rail and that the rail is the cause of every problem in the State. Of course we have decided that this is a big investment and that it is a program we will prioritise. We are very clear that it is a project that we cannot afford not to do and it simply must go ahead if we are to ensure the level of investment required for the quality of life and mobility of the community into the twenty-first century.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I put our children's education first.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We put education right at the forefront.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, you didn't. You put this rail before education.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I will tell the Leader of the Opposition what we found. Over eight years -

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Nedlands has already been called to order twice today. The Leader of the Opposition took a point of order not 10 minutes ago on exactly what the member for Nedlands is doing now. I therefore ask her to desist, please, otherwise I will call her to order.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We believe we can do both. The reason the program is so extensive that it will cost \$1.5 billion is that the coalition Government in its eight years spent not one cent on rail. It spent billions of dollars expanding the road network, but not a cent on the rail system. We therefore have a lot of catch-up to do. We have to construct the Greenwood railway station, which the previous coalition Government promised to do but did not do; we have to take the rail to Clarkson, which it promised to do but did not do; and we have to buy new rail cars, which it promised to do but did not do. The scale of this project is because of the coalition's eight years of absolute neglect. After the previous Labor Government had brought the rail system into the twentieth century, the coalition sat on it and did absolutely nothing. Now it is again up to a Labor Government to move forward and take the rail system into the twenty-first century.

I will address a couple of matters that were raised in this debate. The first was about our position before the last election. I came into this House on many occasions when we were in opposition and asked whether we could set up a select committee to examine the most desirable route, as the Kenwick option did not appear to make sense. We said that the member for Dawesville could chair the committee and the coalition could comprise the majority but that we needed that information. It was very hard for the Opposition to corral sufficient technical information to make a decision on what appeared to be a lot of nonsense and whether that decision was the right way to go. Time after time the then Government refused to adopt that approach. I said that we could continue to argue about the timing, but we should agree on the route. The then Government refused to do that. When we came into government, the first question we asked the public servants was why the rail could not go along the freeway. They said that it could and that it was the best option, and they showed us the way to do it. Mr Acting Speaker, this is the way we are going to do it.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont - Deputy Premier) [3.45 pm]: So we have the first day in Parliament of the reconstructed coalition. It has come into Parliament with its big strategy, which is to blame the railway for every deficiency that it sees in public services.

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Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: No, your financial management.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I have one question for the Opposition: if it is elected, will it give a commitment now to honour the contracts that have been signed for the railway to go ahead?

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: We haven't seen the contract yet.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Will the coalition give that commitment?

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Give us the full details of the contract.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: I will take up that interjection. Will the Deputy Premier offer us a completely

unqualified briefing and full access to those contracts?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: But, the coalition must face -

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: No, of course not.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The coalition in opposition has a basic question in front of it of sovereign risk.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: You want us to commit to something you won't tell us about.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: If the Government of Western Australia has signed contracts, will the coalition, if elected,

honour them?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: Why are you keeping them secret? Why are they so secret?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is interesting to note that we cannot get an answer from the coalition to the basic question that every business in this State would ask of any alternative Government; that is, will it honour contracts entered into by the previous Government? We cannot get that question answered by this mob opposite. That is the first big parliamentary mistake of the reconstructed coalition.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: Why don't you show us the contracts?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: We can tell the Chamber of Minerals and Energy that the coalition in opposition, should it be elected, will not give a commitment to honour the contracts that have been entered into by the Labor Government. We can tell the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia that on a basic question of sovereign risk, the coalition in opposition, if elected, will not give a commitment to honour the contracts that have been entered into by the previous Government. That fundamental economic error indicates that this mob opposite is just not capable of forming an alternative Government. It is the number one fundamental issue for the coalition to state that it is prepared to honour the contracts entered into by the previous Government.

Leaving that issue aside, I will go to the so-called substance of the argument. The argument appears to be that because we are spending money on this priority - that is, a fundamental piece of infrastructure for this city that will improve its economic efficiency, its livability, its environmental amenity and its attractiveness to corporations to locate to this city - somehow the Government is not doing the right thing by other services. That is where the argument falls completely flat. I want to do a comparison between what this Government is spending a year on key services and what was spent in the last year of the Court Government when the Leader of the Opposition was a member of the Cabinet budget committee. Today in health we are spending \$808 million a year more than was spent in the last year of the Court Government; that is, a 35.1 per cent increase on recurrent spending in health. I compare the Government's spending on education and training each year with the Court Government's spending in its last year. This Government spends \$457 million, or 24.4 per cent, more on education and training than the Court Government spend each year. A comparison between the Government's annual spending on police in the latest budget with the last budget of the Court Government shows an increase of \$159 million each year - a 34.7 per cent increase. In the area of critical social need - that is, disability services - a comparison between the Government's annual spend in the latest budget with the last year of the Court Government -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Why don't you tell the truth in this Parliament?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The Leader of the Opposition wants to sledge, intimidate and shout me down. He does not want to listen to the argument. He does not apply to himself the same rules that he applied to the Minister for Small Business. The Leader of the Opposition wants to sledge, intimidate and carry on to prevent the argument being put. I will persist because I want the Leader of the Opposition to hear that this Government's disability services spending is up by \$72 million each year compared with the expenditure in the last year of the Court Government. That is an increase of 35.3 per cent. I have gone through those four key areas of health, education and training, police and disability services for a very good reason. If we add up the increases in spending in

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those key areas, each year this Government has spent the equivalent of a southern railway project - extra - on those key services. We are building the southern railway and every year we are spending the equivalent of a southern railway on additional services in those key areas. How can the coalition come into this place and say that the railway project is bleeding other services when every year we spend the total amount that we have budgeted to spend on the railway project on increased funding for services in those key areas?

The coalition comes into the Chamber and complains about the financing of the railway. The Opposition accepts no responsibility at all for the financial planning that it undertook for this project and for debt in general when it was in government. The Leader of the Opposition sat on the budget committee of the Cabinet of the previous Government and apparently does not accept a jot of responsibility for the plans of that Government. The plans of that Government - I refer to the "2000-01 Pre-Election Financial Projections Statement" - were to take debt from \$4.54 billion in 2000-01 to \$5.9 billion in 2003-04. It is the Leader of the Opposition's disgraceful view that somehow the Department of Treasury and Finance is unprofessional. However, a fundamental requirement of any coalition in opposition that pretends to be the alternative Government is to acknowledge the professionalism of the Department of Treasury and Finance in this State and to not dismiss information it gets from that department that it does not like. People are shown to be unfit for government when they dismiss information from key central agencies, such as the Department of Treasury and Finance, and sledge them for an alleged lack of professionalism. People take the road to ruin when they are dismissive and intellectually arrogant and when they take an "I know best", high-handed political attitude to advice delivered by what is an excellent department. The Leader of the Opposition engaged in a disgraceful attack on the Department of Treasury and Finance, and that shows that he is unfit for government. We have seen that behaviour twice in recent weeks. Debt was forecast to rise from \$4.54 billion in 2001 to \$5.902 billion in 2003-04. That was the Opposition's plan as revealed by the Under Treasurer at the beginning of the 2001 election campaign. I repeat: the forecast for debt for 30 June 2004 was \$5.9 billion. Our current forecast for debt - I have every hope that we will better this forecast - for 30 June 2004 is \$5.086 billion. This Government is coming in with a debt that is \$816 million less than the coalition Government's forecast. If we compare the coalition's -

Several opposition members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Order, members!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is a bit difficult to speak with the constant interjections. One might think that coalition members are attempting to intimidate a member of Parliament. I do not feel intimidated. However, I am finding it difficult to be heard. The point is this: in comparison with this Government's plan, the coalition's financial plan for financing the railway would have resulted in \$816 million more debt at 30 June 2004. The Opposition's argument falls to the ground. It is a poor effort from the coalition on what should have been its first and gala day in Parliament. If I were one of the Liberal shadow ministers whose portfolio responsibilities have been reduced, I would have been angry to see the terrible performance given by the Leader of the National Party. I would be asking why we have shackled ourselves to this mob, why the Leader of the National Party is our potential alternative Deputy Premier and why we had to give up some of our portfolio responsibilities to make way for a performance like that. That was a terrible performance by the coalition. It has demonstrated conclusively that it is unfit to govern this State. I am sad to say that I expect that that will go on day after day unless there is a significant change in the way the coalition is led.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham - Parliamentary Secretary) [3.58 pm]: The new coalition opposite has laid its cards on the table in relation to this important public infrastructure project. It is opposed to this very important project and the people of the southern suburbs of Perth will be constantly informed of that fact over the next eight months leading up to the next election. The coalition is opposed to the people of Rockingham and Mandurah having a rail line. That is amazing because the debate was led by the member for Cottesloe, whose electorate is served by a rail line. The Leader of National Party spoke second and his electorate is served by a rail line. It is amazing that although their electorates are being served by rail lines they want to deny a rail line to other residents of the State. The Leader of the Opposition explained why that is the case when he stated that people in the southern suburbs are hardly lawyers and so forth and, therefore, do not need to go to the city. Members heard that condescending and disgusting argument. The coalition is opposed to the southern railway and we support it.

A couple of things need to be pointed out. First of all, the coalition thinks that funding for the railway project is a magic pudding that can fund everything. I do not have the exact figure, Mr Acting Speaker, but do you know how much money this State spends on capital works each year? It spends nearly \$4 billion each and every year, and that figure is growing. This year it is \$4 billion and that amount will certainly grow under the Gallop Government. Every single year we spend that equivalent. This \$1.5 billion project includes not only the

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southern rail line that will service Rockingham and Mandurah, but also the northern suburbs, the Thornlie spur and upgrades to the Armadale line. We will get all that for \$1.5 billion over the life of the project against an annual \$4 billion budget for capital works. I will ram home to my constituents the fact that the opposition spokesperson on transport minus roads - she said that this railway would be of little or no benefit.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Members should be referred to by their proper title.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): The member for Rockingham will please refer to the member by her proper title.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is her title, is it not?

The ACTING SPEAKER: I think you called her "she" a couple of times.

Debate Resumed

Mr M. McGOWAN: The opposition spokesperson on transport minus roads.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: It is the member for Carine, not "she". She is the cat's mother.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Carine - she - said it would be of little or no benefit. The Leader of the National Party then said that it was unjustifiable. Those words will be repeated over and over again so that the people of the southern suburbs know exactly what the Opposition thinks of them.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [4.02 pm]: I am very pleased to contribute to this debate, because we have now exposed those opposite for what they are; they are the great derailers. Why are they the great derailers? We need only look at some of the comments that they have made in this and the other place to understand that opposition members have never been committed to a railway in the southern corridor. All their words have been hollow. Let me throw back at them some of the words that they have spoken in this and the other place. Only recently Hon Ken Travers asked Hon Simon O'Brien what he would do. Hon Simon O'Brien does not support the southern suburbs railway and he wants to close the Fremantle line. He wants to take us back to the dark ages. He would not have built the northern suburbs railway line. That is just one bit of rhetoric. What about the opposition spokesperson, the member for Carine? She said, "Let's scrap the whole bloody project."

Withdrawal of Remark

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Members should be referred to by their titles.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Kingsley is quite correct. Titles, please.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Let me say again what the member for Carine said. She said to the media, "I want to scrap the whole bloody project." She said that she agreed with the National Party.

We must put this in context. What it demonstrates very clearly is that the Opposition has never supported the rail link. The member for Dawesville wanders around and fluffs about; he does not know what his side wants. He has to change feet as if he is changing tennis strokes, because he does not know what he is talking about. He told a few people that he was the one who promised the rail line. He said that he promised the railway, but the Opposition when in government, delivered nothing. It did not deliver one centimetre of rail during all its eight years in government. That is an appalling example of where those opposite stand on public transport.

Let me get right to the point. Richard Shalders, the former Liberal member for Murray, which is now the seat of Mandurah, said to me when I was officiating at a quiz night that I should make sure that I stuck with the railway because it was important to the community. He said that the Labor Government had two very good projects for the community: one was the Dawesville Channel and the other was this railway. He said that I should not let the Opposition derail it.

We must understand the important implications of this railway, not merely for the people of Mandurah, but also for others. Of course the growing population in Mandurah and the Peel region will benefit from the railway, but

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so too will the 400 000-plus people who live in the southern corridor and who at this stage are not serviced by a rapid rail transport system. The growing population in the southern metropolitan area down to Mandurah, their fellow citizens in the northern corridor to Joondalup and Currambine, and those to the east, should be treated the same. The Mandurah region has the fastest growing population in Western Australia.

The Opposition has clearly drawn a line in the sand. It does not stand for the railway. If the Opposition is in power, it will never build a railway to Mandurah. The Leader of the Opposition said to his constituents in West Perth that, if the Opposition became the Government, it would stage the railway. What does "stage" mean for the people of Mandurah and the southern corridor? It means that the railway will not get to Mandurah. The Opposition would stop it at Thomsons Lake in Jandakot. I hope the member for Dawesville goes back to Mandurah, cap in hand, wringing his hands and saying that his own side has deserted him. The Opposition will not take the railway to Mandurah at all.

MR B.K. MASTERS (Vasse) [4.07 pm]: I support the motion. It is clear that the Government does not understand the significant increase in costs that will be incurred by this project. It will be some \$300 million more expensive in capital terms. There is no doubt about that at all. I think the minister will happily accept that when she adds all the pieces together. In addition, because the Government will need to borrow more money to pay for the project, the repayment costs will be more significant than would have been the case under the previous Government.

I am no longer a member of the Liberal Party, so I hope that I can speak from an independent point of view. In the short and medium term, the project's benefits will be limited. The minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that in the new areas that will be serviced, namely Mandurah and Rockingham, fewer than 20 000 people a day will get onto the trains. Unless the Government is desperately serious about increasing the population density of those suburbs where the railway will be located, there will never be the medium to long-term benefits that the project could create. In other words, unless planning decisions are being made hand in glove with transport decisions, the goal of achieving very strong long-term benefits from this project will not eventuate.

There is also significant dishonesty or lack of clarity in some of the Government's statements in support of its proposed model. My understanding is that some 10 000 bus passengers coming from the southern suburbs in the Canning Highway area will be forced to transfer from bus to train if they are to avoid mixing with normal traffic on the freeway. Those people will obviously spend an increased amount of time travelling to Perth every day. For the Government to add those 10 000 people into the mix and to claim that they will be benefiting from the railway is clearly not valid. I believe that the Government has dishonestly claimed that there will be integration between planning and transport where appropriate. For example, for some eight kilometres there is no possibility of higher urban density along the west side of the railway because it consists of the Canning and Swan Rivers. There is therefore no potential for people to live there and no potential for the catchment population to be increased to make the railway more viable.

I believe that this Government has taken money away from key areas such as the Peel deviation, deep sewerage, the environment, salinity and projects such as the completion of the Maitland industrial estate, which is an income generating project. Rather than put money into those things, the Government proposes to waste money by putting it into a project that, although important, does not need to go ahead right now.

MR D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN (Mitchell) [4.10 pm]: If we cut through the hysteria of the member for Mandurah and look past the political rhetoric of the Deputy Premier, we can get back to what this motion is all about. This motion is about the financial management priorities of the Labor Government versus the coalition alternative. I am not interested in rhetoric and I am not interested in figures. I will give one very simple illustration of the difference between our priorities and those of the Labor Government. A family contacted me recently to say that for the past two years, during the time of this Government, they have been trying to get dental treatment for their four-year-old daughter.

Mr R.C. Kucera interjected.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: If the Minister for Tourism is not interested in the debate, he should walk out. I want to tell the minister what his Government was up to while he was the Minister for Health. The minister should listen, because as the former Minister for Health he is directly responsible for this case. When this family's daughter was two years of age, it was determined that she needed to have all of her teeth removed. However, she was unable to get that dental treatment under this Government's health system. By the time their child was four years old, her teeth were black and worn back to her gums, and she had abscesses in her mouth and was having difficulty swallowing. That is the type of health system that we have in Western Australia as a result of this Government's financial management priorities. I will list a number of other examples. We heard

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today how this Government will not go back on its decision to abandon a universal screening program for newborn children. At a cost of \$494 000 a year, we could look after every newborn child.

Point of Order

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The member is misleading the House. The Minister for Health did not say that at all. I ask the member to check *Hansard* and see what the minister really said.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: There is absolutely no point of order.

The Government will not introduce that screening program, but it will commit to borrowing an amount of money that will require an extra \$40 million of repayments a year for a Mandurah railway line that will not even go into Rockingham. If the Minister for Small Business had been with me the other day when I talked with the small business community in Rockingham, he would know - I think he already knows - that it is not very keen on his program. I could list a range of programs that could be funded in this State if the Government had different financial management priorities. The example of that four-year-old girl sums it up. The former Minister for Health sits there grinning. The member for Rockingham sits there grinning. Labor members do not take this matter seriously. The Treasurer continues with his political rhetoric about what the Government is doing with this railway, while a school needs to be built in Ellenbrook and in Dalyellup, and the Peel deviation needs to be built; yet, this Government will not commit one cent of money to those projects. The reason the Government will not commit any money is that its budget strategy is completely consumed by this massive increase in debt as a result of the Mandurah rail project.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you know that capital works spending in our first four budgets is ahead of capital works spending in education?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Come in spinner! This is the Government that takes \$500 million worth of private spending on housing and puts it under its capital works budget!

Mr E.S. Ripper: As you did when you were in Government!

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: But we did not go out and boast about it in the way that this Government is doing. What we have instead is a \$2.8 billion capital works program on a railway that will not even take commuters into Rockingham.

Another example can be found in the Reid report, which the Leader of the Opposition referred to earlier. The Albany Regional Hospital redevelopment will not be completed until 2013. Imagine if some of this wasted money had been diverted into bringing that project forward. Up to \$560 million worth of the Reid report recommendations will not take place until after 2014. The bulk of the expenditure on Princess Margaret Hospital for Children will not happen until 2008-09. Nowhere is the difference between the coalition and the Labor Government more acute and more defined than in the Government's appalling financial management of this railway project.

DR J.M. WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [4.17 pm]: I support the motion.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right, the member for Alfred Cove has only just been given the call and started to speak. It would be a good idea if members showed some courtesy and let her at least have a chance before they tried to interject.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: In 2001-02 the Government went into debt by \$24 million, in 2002-03 by \$70 million and in 2003-04 by \$635 million. In 2004-05 the Government will go into debt by \$910 million, in 2005-06 by \$454 million and in 2006-07 by \$322 million. These increments do not even take into account the cost blow-out for the rail project. I was very pleased to hear the Minister for Health state that there will a new southern metropolitan hospital. However, where will the money come from? Will that be yet another empty promise, or another promise that will take 24 years or 28 years to fulfil? A Labor Government promised 28 years ago that there would be a hospital in Geraldton. It took Labor 28 years to build that hospital. The motion refers to the major financial drain on key portfolio areas and essential services. I have mentioned health. Another key portfolio area is police. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has stated that she is meeting the Government's pre-election promise to provide more police. I have not seen more police. The people in my electorate have not seen more police on the streets.

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Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (21)

Mr C.J. Barnett Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan Mr M.J. Birney Mr M.F. Board Dr E. Constable Mr J.H.D. Day	Mrs C.L. Edwardes Mr J.P.D. Edwards Mr B.J. Grylls Ms K. Hodson-Thomas Mr M.G. House Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr A.D. Marshall Mr B.K. Masters Mr P.D. Omodei Mr P.G. Pendal Mr R.N. Sweetman Mr T.K. Waldron	Ms S.E. Walker Dr J.M. Woollard Mr J.L. Bradshaw <i>(Teller)</i>
,	No	pes (27)	
Mr P.W. Andrews Mr J.J.M. Bowler Mr C.M. Brown Mr A.J. Carpenter Mr A.J. Dean Mr J.B. D'Orazio Dr J.M. Edwards	Dr G.I. Gallop Mr S.R. Hill Mr J.C. Kobelke Mr R.C. Kucera Ms A.J. MacTiernan Mr J.A. McGinty Mr M. McGowan	Ms S.M. McHale Mr A.D. McRae Mr N.R. Marlborough Mrs C.A. Martin Mr M.P. Murray Mr A.P. O'Gorman Mr J.R. Quigley	Ms J.A. Radisich Mr E.S. Ripper Mr D.A. Templeman Mr P.B. Watson Mr M.P. Whitely Ms M.M. Quirk (Teller)

Pairs

Mr W.J. McNee Mr R.A. Ainsworth Mrs M.H. Roberts Mr J.N. Hyde

Question thus negatived.