

will be those previously of the safety and health magistrate; that is, it can affirm the WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner's decision, set it aside or substitute for it any decision that it considers the WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner should have made in the first instance.

The 2004 amendments, in conjunction with the Industrial Relations Act 1979, also provided for a commissioner of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission with knowledge of or experience in occupational safety and health, and knowledge of the OSH act and mine safety and certain petroleum legislation, to exercise the jurisdiction of the tribunal. Uncertainties with the appointment provisions have been identified. The bill clarifies that only one designated commissioner can exercise jurisdiction. Their designation may be ended or varied and they can finish hearing a case if their designation to the tribunal ends but they continue to be a commissioner. The status quo is maintained in that they may carry out other functions of a commissioner under the Industrial Relations Act 1979.

**Consultation:** Extensive consultation took place during implementation of the 2004 amendments. These proposed amendments seek only to clarify their interpretation. The tripartite Commission for Occupational Safety and Health, the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission and the State Solicitor's Office were consulted in the development of this bill.

**Conclusion:** In summary, this bill contains amendments to the OSH act to clarify interpretation of provisions. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

#### **ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Motion*

Resumed from 10 March.

**HON ED DERMER (North Metropolitan)** [7.42 pm]: I am very pleased to speak in support of the motion moved by Hon Helen Morton. I appreciated His Excellency the Governor's speech at the official opening and I certainly appreciate the service that His Excellency has provided to Western Australia both as Governor and also, of course, in other important fields, most obviously engineering and education. His leadership role as a chancellor at the University of Western Australia was a particularly important role that he had. I appreciate the way that His Excellency performs his duties both in representing Her Majesty and also representing the people of Western Australia. It is a dual role in that sense.

Considering the official opening of Parliament and considering the role of the Governor, it reminds me that there are three essential components to our parliamentary system: of course, ourselves here in the Legislative Council; the Governor as Her Majesty's representative; and the members of the Legislative Assembly. Each of those three components is very important. Our own role is obviously a very important part of that but not everybody acknowledges the importance of the role of the Legislative Council. I am going to spend some time tonight putting forward a few personal thoughts on our role, the way we are structured and why our role is very important. I noted the report in *The West Australian* of the maiden speech of the member for Riverton. If the report was correct, he was suggesting that the Legislative Council might be surplus to requirements. He was suggesting that at least in its current form, when we are elected as members of Parliament, the Legislative Council might be surplus to requirements. I thought that was very interesting, and certainly a challenge that needs to be addressed head-on when that type of thing is said. I do not mean to be unduly —

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** What shall we do—abolish the Legislative Assembly?

**Hon Peter Collier:** That is a great idea!

**Hon ED DERMER:** I occasionally entertain the thought of how we would go with a junior chamber abolition bill, Hon Simon O'Brien, but we might not get support from the other place for that. I think there is certainly a role for both houses, in all seriousness, although I do like to remind members that ours is the senior chamber based on its establishment in 1832 versus theirs in 1890, and it is important to remind them whenever there is an opportunity.

I do not mean to be unduly critical of the member for Riverton; his was a maiden speech, so a degree of naivety is probably to be expected —

**Hon Sue Ellery:** You're very generous!

**Hon ED DERMER:** — in a maiden speech. I would enjoy nothing more than exchanging thoughts across the floor with my colleagues opposite, but I am just anxious that I have only got an hour and I have got a bit to cover.

Several members interjected.

**THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash):** Order, members, this is a very serious matter and I think the member is entitled to be heard.

**Hon ED DERMER:** It is. What I would perhaps enjoy, if I manage to get through what I want to say, is if we can have an exchange at the end, and if members can remember their interjections at that stage, perhaps bring them in then.

In one sense we have got the member for Riverton—clearly an inexperienced member—suggesting that we are surplus to requirements, and that if there is to be a house of review, it should not be based on elected members. I think that is very wrong. The other day I was listening to the radio and I was interested to hear Liz Cunningham, the Independent member for Gladstone in the Queensland Parliament, which is the only state Parliament in Australia that does not have an upper house. She is a very experienced member, and in this radio interview she was suggesting that Queensland would benefit from having a Legislative Council. I believe she is right and I believe it is very important that we do not forget how lucky we are to have a Legislative Council in Western Australia.

We were elected by proportional representation, and have been since the 1989 election. I was not around then, but the Council was of course. It is very important for people to remember that because we are elected by proportional representation, we are no less elected than members who are elected in single-vacancy electorates, as they are in the other place. I have heard very good arguments put to suggest that a proportional representation election is a more valid basis for representation than a single-vacancy election. I recommend to members a book that I read in the very early 1980s called *Mirror of the Nation's Mind: Australia's Electoral Experiments* by a gentleman called Jack Wright that actually deals head-on with the issue of proportional representation. It is a good read. It is certainly a good read for anyone who might begin to suggest that because we were elected by proportional representation rather than single vacancy, we were in any way less elected. In fact I would argue that PR is at least as valid, and anyone who read Jack Wright's book would understand that PR is at least as valid, and probably more valid, a way of electing people to serve in Parliament.

As important as we are as a Legislative Council, and as valid as proportional representation is as an electoral method, the idea in Jack Wright's book, *Mirror of the Nation's Mind*, is that PR very much mirrors the view of the full community in the Parliament. Unfortunately, we still need to be realistic about our chamber, and we are a seriously imperfect mirror of the state's mind. I think we are a distorted mirror, and I will go on to explain why I think that is the case.

I think we are a distorted mirror because of the malapportionment that exists in the way that we are represented here. The other day I recalculated the figures, and I used figures based on valid votes rather than total enrolments or total votes. It works out that the half of the members of the Legislative Council who represent metropolitan regions represent 74.846 per cent of the valid votes cast and counted. Obviously, the other half represents 25.154 per cent, which adds up to 100.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** You guys rigged the electoral system along these lines. What are you complaining about now?

**Hon ED DERMER:** I am not putting a party line at all; I am just reflecting. I have done the arithmetic and it speaks for itself. The malapportionment distorts the mirror. I will explain why that is the case. This is my personal reflection. We have elected 36 members to take office on 22 May. The analysis I have done is not as thorough as what someone like Malcolm Mackerras or Antony Green might do, using computers and checking the registered tickets of each party. I have just looked at history and common philosophy to see how they might determine the likely preference exchange that parties may have registered and the number of Western Australian electors who make their own decisions on preferences. Quite often they are guided by commonality of policy and history of association. No political party is advocating that Western Australia elect its Legislative Council by PR as one block. That is the simplest PR form.

I have endeavoured to analyse how the results would have gone if the election had been done by PR as one block across the state—36 members—by the very simple process of taking the total percentage vote for each party, multiplying it by 36 and dividing it by 100. That suggests how many members each party would be likely to have. It is very instructive. I will quickly share it with the house. I mention the Australian Labor Party first because it is first on the list. I am not showing any particular bias. We have elected 11 members to take office on 22 May. Based on proportionality, we would have elected 13. The figure comes in at 13.01 quotas. The Christian Democratic Party, on that basis of 36 across the state with proportional representation, would have had 0.84 of a quota, not quite one but certainly within range. A number of smaller parties did not register large parts of quotas. The other significant one is the Family First Party on 0.91. It is obviously very close to getting one-thirtieth of the vote, which would have given it a member in this chamber. We would expect that it would get some preferences from the Christian Democratic Party that would have got it over the line.

**Hon Peter Collier:** Are you just working this out on a statewide basis?

**Hon ED DERMER:** That is right. I took the 36, multiplied it by the percentage of the vote achieved by the party groups according to the Electoral Commission figures, divided it by 100, and that tells me how many quotas each party would have for the PR across the state.

**Hon Peter Collier:** Essentially like the Senate.

**Hon ED DERMER:** It is somewhat different from the Senate. It takes the total votes for each party and, on the same proportions, looks at how the 36 positions in this chamber are likely to have been allocated if that had been the voting system. The Family First Party with 0.91 would almost certainly have a guernsey if the election had been done on that proportional basis. The Greens are fascinating. On this system they would have had 3.99 quotas. Labor had 13.01. Our normal preferences would have given them four members. Interestingly, it works out to be the same as the result they achieved under the current system of four members from 22 May. The Liberal Party would have had 14 members, whereas, in fact, it will have 16. The National Party would have had two members whereas, in fact, it will have five. That is a very big difference. When we assume that the Christian Democratic Party and the Family First Party might have got enough votes from elsewhere to get one member elected each, that would be an allocation of 35 members. I do not believe it is possible, without conducting a more thorough study of the sort that Antony Green might have done, to work out who the thirty-sixth member might have been. It is just a ready-reckoner type of analysis that I have done. However, it makes the general point. It can be seen that because of the malapportionment, one-quarter of the population is represented by half of the members and three-quarters of the population is represented by the other half of the members, which has an impact. In that sense, the mirror is distorted by the malapportionment, to use the analogy that Jack Wright used when he talked about proportional representation being the mirror of the nation's mind. The mirror of our state is distorted by malapportionment. The Liberal and National Parties are advantaged while the Labor Party and quite probably the Christian Democratic and Family First Parties are disadvantaged. Curiously, the Greens (WA) seem to be neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by having this system rather than a more pure form of proportional representation.

It is okay to talk about the advantage and disadvantage of parties but it is more important, I believe, to remember that the political parties are not an end in themselves. This is something that we as members need to remind ourselves of often. What is more important than either the advantage or disadvantage to parties, or politicians, is the advantage or disadvantage to the citizens whom we are chosen to represent. Although, clearly, one could look at this and say that the current system advantages the Liberal and National Parties, I do not believe that any citizen of Western Australia is advantaged by having a malapportionment system. A degree of softness probably creeps into the performance of the parties that are advantaged that would not be there without the malapportionment. It is my personal view that every Western Australian deserves the benefit of the best democracy we can achieve. In that way I do not think that malapportionment advantages any citizen, even those who might be living in areas where they have a greater say because of the malapportionment. I do not believe malapportionment is to anyone's advantage when a quarter of the population is represented by half the members and three-quarters of the population is represented by the other half of members. I did the same calculation for my maiden speech in 1997, and the proportion was the same because the basic rules for the Legislative Council have not changed.

Thinking about these matters reminded me of a political pamphlet I saw in 1974 in support of the Labor Party candidate for the Metropolitan Province, who was a gentleman by the name of Graham Hawkes. It is the most interesting piece of political literature that I have ever seen. The heading he used to capture people's attention was "pipsqueak". It was right in the face of the elector. All members raise money for campaigns, spend their own money and produce pamphlets. They then get given the depressing statistics about how long a pamphlet survives or are told that the odds of a pamphlet surviving from the letterbox to the front door is about one in a million. I reckon Graham had the right idea. If someone received a pamphlet addressing him as a pipsqueak, it would be in his face and would capture his attention. People read it at the time. Graham was referring to the fact that the weight of electors in the Metropolitan Province was very small compared with that of electors in other electorates. The electoral reform in the late 1980s brought about the current situation whereby a quarter of the population is represented by half the members and three-quarters of the population is represented by the other half of the members. It was a much greater malapportionment in 1974. Graham's pamphlet tackled the issue head-on. I am sure that when people read the word "pipsqueak", they turned over the pamphlet and read the rest of it. If the Labor candidate for the Metropolitan Province in 1974 had won, it would have been a classic case in the annals of political history. In 1974, of course, the prevailing winds were blowing against Labor. Unfortunately, Graham did not win. He would have made a marvellous contribution to the Legislative Council had he won. Had he won, the political scientists and those who advise us would have told us that honest, confrontational political literature must work, but he did not win. Graham is very committed to democracy. Now, 35 years later, he is a regular correspondent in *The West Australian*, putting a strong case for electoral reform. He is a member of the Electoral Reform Society of Western Australia. The fact that he was not able to join us here—it would have been great had he done so—has never deterred him from making a very significant contribution to public debate and the good of our state.

We have talked about the way the Legislative Council works, how I think it is important and how proportional representation is a very good electoral system. However, I want to get back to why I think Legislative Councils and upper houses, particularly those elected on the basis of proportional representation, are vitally important to a

good Parliament. I think about how someone like Liz Cunningham, who has experienced a monocameral Parliament in Queensland, may have reached the view that Queensland would be advantaged by having an upper house. She spoke on it very briefly so I do not know exactly her thinking. Why is it constitutionally an enormous advantage to have an upper house based on proportional representation at elections? The argument I am about to put might sound a little ironic because it is coming from a man who spent seven and a half years as a government Whip. My central role did not involve many speeches, although I would like to have had more opportunities, because my duty was to assist the implementation of government legislation. Having had that experience, the argument that I am about to put at first glance might seem a little ironic, but it is quite logical. I hope that I will successfully explain that. Having had the role for seven and a half years of minimising the amount of words spoken in Parliament with a view to maximising the amount of legislation gives me an experiential understanding, which in many ways is deeper than, and certainly a useful complement to, a more theoretical understanding.

In the past there have been debates in Australia about the nature of Parliaments and about how to improve our democracy. There has been criticism of the Westminster system. My personal view is that it is the most consistently safe democratic and effective system throughout the world. An interesting criticism was made, which was to suggest that although of course governments are accountable to Parliament, to be the government and to continue to hold that commission a government must maintain its majority support in the lower house. In most examples where there is party discipline, there is a concern that rather than a government being accountable to Parliament and the Parliament controlling the government, via party discipline the government can control the Parliament. That will happen if a cabinet is making decisions. I am very proud of the way the Australian Labor Party works. As a government Whip, I was an exponent of that discipline. However, I do understand that beyond our party there is a role for Parliament. Although the Liberal Party has a different discipline, in effect, if someone kept voting against a Liberal government in the Legislative Assembly, the Liberal Party would start to wonder why it was endorsing that person and spending its money to have that person elected. I therefore think the discipline applies to both sides. Although a government still needs a majority in the lower house to maintain its commission, the concern was that, by way of party discipline, in many ways a government can control a lower house where it has its majority. In that sense, although the government is of course responsible to the lower house, where it must maintain a majority, once it has achieved a majority the cabinet can, via party discipline, dictate terms to the lower house. There is the danger in the system of cabinet wielding an unhealthy degree of control over the Parliament. The answer to that is the Parliament, in effect, fighting back and having a degree of independence, which comes from having an upper house elected by proportional representation. Proportional representation often generates an upper house in which the governing party does not have a majority. From a Labor Party point of view it is appropriate that we are highly disciplined, but it is healthier for the Parliament if we do not quite have a majority. The same principle applies to the Liberal-National government. Perhaps a proportional representation-based upper house is Parliament's best defence in the dynamic that exists between Parliament and government. I think it is a key part of the variation of the Westminster system that we benefit from.

I will talk for a moment about how that works in practice and I will again draw from personal experience. I have been in this chamber for more than 12 years. In my first five months here there was an Independent Liberal member in the chamber, which meant that although the Court government did not technically have absolute control—the Independent Liberal member did not play a large role at that time—the government effectively had absolute control of both houses for five months. I believe that that was an unhealthy control. The Court government's industrial relations legislation, which was the big debate at the time, was unfair and unbalanced legislation. One of the Labor principles that burns most strongly in my heart is the need for employees to be in a fair and balanced bargaining position, and that is why I think the union movement is an important institution for upholding fairness in our system and maintaining a peaceable society. Perhaps I am not being objective in saying that I think it was very unfair and unbalanced legislation, but that is a very heartfelt policy issue for me, so I saw the legislation as objectionable. It was extreme legislation, and I think that in the end, the eventual defeat of the Court government in 2001 can be in large part linked directly to the extremities to which a then minister drove the Court government in its industrial relations policy. One of the problems for the Court government was that during that first five months it effectively had absolute control of both houses. The government was unable to avoid wrecking itself, in my view, by bringing forward extreme legislation.

Over the almost 12 years following my first five months in Parliament, every bill that has become an act has needed the support of non-government members who are independent of the governing party's, or parties', discipline. The need to persuade enhances debate. If the governing party has the numbers, whatever it says in debate will be rhetorical and point-scoring in nature. However, if the government does not have the numbers and has to persuade members who are not part of its party disciplinary structure to vote with it, it will of course enhance debate, because members will have to be brought around to a view that they might not have held before the issue was debated.

It also enhances effective scrutiny. If an opposition party wants to set up a select committee to examine something that the government is doing, and it can persuade cross-bench members—members who are not part of a party disciplinary structure—to support it, there is probably a very good chance that the inquiry is warranted. A house in which neither of the major parties has control in their own right creates the need to persuade, enhances debate, enhances scrutiny and in many cases saves the government of the day from its own worst excesses. Again, I think that a house in which there is not a government majority can be Parliament's most effective defence against government control. Parliament should be subject to the will of the people. It is open to the electorate, the people, to have such enormous trust in a party or coalition that it gives that party an extraordinarily big vote at an election. Even with a very fair and proportionate system in the upper house, that party, by virtue of its merits and the trust that people have in it, can get a majority in both houses. That can happen. If that level of trust is present in the community, it should happen because it is the democratic will. If members are in a party that gets that support, they must remember the quality of that trust and not abuse that excessive power. They must understand that if their party has been given control over both houses, they have been given a special trust. In that situation a wise government recognises the extraordinary trust it has been given and acts with appropriate care to honour that trust.

Obviously, bad legislation is unhealthy for the people. However, people's reaction to bad legislation is unhealthy for a government, because often it will lose the next election. At a commonwealth level, the Howard government is a very good example of that. For three terms it was saved from its excesses. It was saved by the necessity to negotiate. It might have had to negotiate with the Democrats, the Greens or Senator Harradine, but it had to negotiate. It was saved by the need to persuade members of Parliament to its views. If in government a member thinks that something is a great idea and his like-minded colleagues in cabinet think it is a great idea, it is not a bad discipline on the government to have to go into one of the houses of Parliament and persuade somebody who is not part of their party's disciplinary structure to support that idea. The need to do that saved the Howard government. Part of John Howard's success in surviving for as long as he did was that he was saved by the absence of coalition control over the Senate for most of the time. Members outside the government's party disciplinary structure need to be persuaded of the merits of proposed legislation. The Howard government survived for three terms on that basis. Its fourth term came out of the 2004 election. It gave the Howard government control over both houses. Barnaby Joyce was semi-disciplined and that gave the then government some anxiety. But what happened? When it gained control over both houses, which is similar to the situation of the Court government in 1997, the extreme industrial legislation followed, because the cabinet could do it. The key balance and fairness that comes from having a balanced industrial relations system is that it creates peace, shares some of the prosperity and allows for an enhanced bargaining position for people who would otherwise be in a weak bargaining position. The public realised that the industrial relations legislation was extreme and in 2007 the Howard government lost office. Relationships between citizens, Parliaments and governments are very complex and represent a multi-factorial reality in politics. My argument simplifies it a little bit, but that objection to Howard's extreme IR policy was a big part of his undoing. It illustrates, in large part, that his previous success was based on the fact that he had to convince senators whom he could not discipline to support earlier legislation.

It is commonplace for upper houses of Australian Parliaments to not have a government majority. The role of enhancing the work of the Parliament from the upper house is now becoming common. The Rudd government is in a similar situation. Rudd government ministers are working overtime to persuade senators to agree with its legislation. That was also the situation in this state in the second term of the Court Liberal government after the new Legislative Council took over in May 1997.

This very healthy development, in my view, in the constitutional and political sense of having upper houses that commonly do not have a government majority is evolving all around Australia. We then come to the most curious example of all: as a result of the Western Australian election in September 2008, there has been a complete role reversal, because rather than the Legislative Council being the chamber in which the government needs to persuade non-government members to support its legislation—as is common throughout Australia—the Legislative Assembly is now in that situation. That is because come 22 May, the National and Liberal governing parties will have, one would expect, a clear majority in the Legislative Council.

This begs the question: why? That is a question that I ask with some concern. I would rather that the important role of enhancing scrutiny by requiring governments to persuade members beyond their disciplinary structures was exercised by the Legislative Council than by the Assembly. We are certainly better at it. We have certainly had more experience. However, the 2008 election has taken that role away from the Legislative Council and it has now been taken over by the Legislative Assembly. I say that because even though the Liberal and National governing parties have joined together in the Assembly, there are three Independent members in that house, and albeit that one of those Independent members is now a member of cabinet, those members will still be able to hold the government to account.

**Hon Bruce Donaldson:** Why do you think that is the case?

**Hon ED DERMER:** I am going to get to that. We certainly live in curious times. It remains to be seen how these curious times develop. It is very interesting that Western Australia is the only state in which the governing parties will control the upper house—the proportional representation house—but do not control the Legislative Assembly. The election was obviously very close, because otherwise the Liberal and National Parties would have a clear majority in the Legislative Assembly. However, the result in the upper house was not close, because the Liberal and National Parties will have a very comfortable majority. In a situation in which the governing parties will have a comfortable majority in the Legislative Council come 22 May, the onus is on us as members of the Legislative Council to work all the harder and be all the more vigilant to ensure the effectiveness of this chamber and the Parliament by performing our special role in this Legislative Council.

However, one important question remains: how is it that the same election, which had such a tight result in the Legislative Assembly, had such an overwhelming majority for the governing parties in the Legislative Council? Two factors must be considered in answering that question. I referred to one of those factors earlier. A big contributor to the extraordinary result for the Legislative Council election in September 2008 is the malapportionment that is caused by the fact that the one-quarter of the population that lives outside the metropolitan area is represented by one half of the members, and the three-quarters of the population that lives in the metropolitan area is represented by the other half of the members. That is clearly an explanation for why the National Party will have five members, when its overall statewide proportion would suggest that it should have two members.

**Hon Bruce Donaldson:** What about the five seats in the Mining and Pastoral Region where they got all the dummy votes?

**Hon ED DERMER:** I am fascinated by Legislative Assembly affairs, but I am talking about the Legislative Council.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** I just thought I would throw that in!

**Hon ED DERMER:** I have been talking about why we have this curious—I will not say anomalous—situation in which the government will have a large majority in the Legislative Council but not in the Legislative Assembly. The first factor is the malapportionment, as I have said, where one half of the members represent one-quarter of the population and the other half of the members represent the other three-quarters of the population. That cannot be the whole explanation, because that malapportionment existed in all of the Legislative Council terms in which I have served. The elections of 1996, 2001 and 2005 had that malapportionment with one half of the members representing a quarter of the population, and one half representing three-quarters. In each of those terms, the government of the day had to persuade crossbench members to support the legislation if it wanted it to become law. Therefore, there had to be another factor, as well as malapportionment, to explain why the September 2008 election gave the Liberal and National Parties the big majority that they will enjoy after 22 May.

I enjoyed my engagements with my colleague Hon Bruce Donaldson in our roles as Whips. One of the sad things about this year is that Hon Bruce Donaldson will have retired by 22 May; otherwise, he could have enjoyed the divisions to follow, I imagine.

**Hon Bruce Donaldson:** Same here.

**Hon ED DERMER:** Thank you, Bruce.

So now having distracted myself, I will stop doing that.

There are two factors that would explain why the September 2008 election generated a Legislative Council in which the Liberal and National Parties together will have a very clear majority. One is malapportionment. However, that malapportionment was there in 1996, 2001 and 2005, and the results then did not generate either side of the Parliament having a clear majority. Consequently, there had to be something special about 2008 to account for the Liberal and National Parties achieving this very large majority on 22 May.

That second factor I think is pretty straightforward. It was the extraordinary campaign of the National Party. I would have been happier if Hon Wendy Duncan was not distracted by urgent parliamentary business elsewhere, because I would be very interested to get her view. I would also like to congratulate her party and her party colleagues in person for the excellence of their campaign. How do we explain the phenomenon of the September 2008 result with the very large Liberal and National Party majority? What is the factor that was different from previous elections in 1996, 2001 and 2005? The malapportionment was the same.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** One Nation.

**Hon ED DERMER:** That would be an issue for one of those elections, Hon Simon O'Brien, but in 2005 One Nation was not the same factor.

The National Party had only one member and will now come in with five. I think the National Party campaign is the second factor that explains this outcome. What is it about the National Party campaign? It is very much to its

credit. I think the Nationals rose to the challenge of the electoral reform that occurred in the Legislative Assembly. I have said this before in this Parliament, particularly for members opposite who are always talking about the level playing field in terms of market economics: there is a need for a level playing field in terms of political representation. I think the National Party rose to the challenge that was laid down by the very important electoral reform that the Gallop government managed to achieve for the Legislative Assembly.

How did the Nationals do so well? I have made a study of it, because it is important in public life to analyse the success of competitors when it arises and try to learn from it. In my endeavour to understand the success of the Nationals' campaign, I identified three components. I would be fascinated to hear feedback in the fullness of time from Hon Wendy Duncan to see whether I have left out an important factor, or I have overemphasised one of these three components. The first component in the success of the National Party was the elegant simplicity and the strong resonance of the royalties for regions policy. A party can have a terrifically elegant and resonant policy, but that party will not get very far unless it has the energy with which to prosecute that policy and to present it to the electorate, and I think the Nationals demonstrated enormous energy in their campaign. However, there is a third component that is also very important. It is a component that the Nationals used to achieve the success that they achieved—that is, separating themselves from the Liberal Party in their public perception and presenting themselves as their own outfit and as a separate entity from the Liberal Party. I think that all three of those components together contributed to the success of the National Party campaign. The Nationals' campaign, much to their credit, plus the malapportionment in the way that Legislative Council members are elected, which I think is much to the misfortune of all Western Australians, explain this very curious situation. Contrary to the effect of proportional representation in most chambers where it is found throughout Australia and the world, the result of the election in September 2008 means that the governing parties in this chamber will have a clear majority, whereas most governing parties in houses of Parliament elected by proportional representation cannot control that chamber of Parliament. Earlier I described the attendant advantage of putting an onus on governments to persuade members outside their own disciplinary structure to support proposed legislation. We certainly live in unusual times. I sincerely wish that the peculiarities of Western Australian politics were the most pressing uncertainties confronting Western Australians, but I fear that that is not the reality. It is beholden on all of us to attend to our duties as best we can and to do our best to realise the expectations that we have raised in getting ourselves elected to this place.

**HON BRUCE DONALDSON (Agricultural)** [8.27 pm]: I, too, add my support to the motion of Hon Helen Morton in acknowledging and thanking the Governor and Mrs Michael for their attendance at the opening of the thirty-eighth Parliament, when we heard Dr Michael's speech outlining some of the highlights of the government's program for the next four years. It reflected the high regard in which His Excellency Dr Ken Michael and Mrs Michael are held in Western Australia. That high regard is a result of his long history in Western Australia and the positions he held long before he was appointed Governor. Dr Michael had a very illustrious career in government agencies. He was Commissioner of Main Roads, he had a position at the university and he was also the gas regulator at one stage. He is a quietly spoken man, but people listen to what he says. He thinks before he speaks. He has always endeared himself to everyone I know who has been in contact with him. It was a pleasure to have Dr Michael in this chamber, and I will give the reasons for that because I have a bit of background with His Excellency going back many years to when he was Commissioner of Main Roads.

I also assure the house that it was not designed that both my colleague the now opposition Whip, but government Whip for seven and a half years, and I would speak tonight. It is sheer coincidence. I did not ask Hon Ed Dermer until about lunchtime today who would be speaking tonight. When he said, "Me", I said that that was a coincidence because I also would be taking the opportunity to have my say. It is purely coincidental. However, we have enjoyed a very good working relationship over all that time and I know that will continue until I get out on 21 May.

**Hon Ed Dermer:** I hope we will enjoy some further exchanges between now and then, Bruce!

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** I am sure there will be, but I am sure whoever takes over my position will also enjoy a good working relationship with Hon Ed Dermer because he is that type of person. I do acknowledge that and I thank him for treating me very well in my role as opposition Whip.

**Hon Ed Dermer:** I even enjoyed it when you beat me occasionally, Bruce! I enjoyed working with you.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** In my local government days I had a lot to do with Dr Ken Michael when he was Commissioner of Main Roads. We met quite regularly through local government meetings with the Main Roads people when we discussed the distribution of road funds from the state government. We also looked at the role of the federal government, the funding it put into roads and the percentage of shares between country, metropolitan and country urban. Over that period some changes had to be made and some country local governments probably lost their percentage of shares. The percentage of shares was split up more equitably and became more responsive to the needs of those local governments.

Members will be aware that 82 per cent of the road network is controlled by local government, and that local governments rely not only on their own funds, of course, but also on assistance from both state and federal governments. Dr Michael used his best diplomatic skills to have some changes made and to also give local government a great deal of support. One aspect of that support was the development by Main Roads of what was then known as ROMIS, which was the road management information system. Main Roads had, and managed very well, knowledge of almost every road in Western Australia and the state and condition of those roads. Local government had to report back to Main Roads on where the funding had gone and on which roads they had expended their own municipal funds. Main Roads, therefore, had a very good database. It was quite clear, not only from a Western Australian point of view but also from a national point of view, that we could not front up on the doorstep of a government—any government, whether it be state or federal—and say, “We want some more money”, because the first question the Treasurer would ask was: “Why? What are you going to spend it on?” Saying “We just think we need some more money for our roads” does not go down well with governments in this day and age. Therefore, Main Roads developed a software system and supplied it to local governments in Western Australia free of charge, and also made it available to other states for a very minute fee. I recall, from the days when I wore my national hat, the number of workshops and conferences I attended around Australia flogging the ROMIS system. It has developed now into the road management asset network, but it is the only way in which local governments can be accountable; if they do not have the hard data, how can they prove that they need additional money? That was, therefore, one of the initiatives that Dr Michael developed when he was Commissioner of Main Roads.

During about three years between 1989 and the end of 1992 I was a member of the Australian Local Government Association in Canberra representing Western Australia and I held the transport portfolio in that association. Although Western Australia had that role in the Australian Local Government Association, it was never invited to the table. It was with the support of Dr Michael and also some of the transport ministers in the then Labor government who made sure that we got a berth. I became a member of AUSTROADS, which comprised all the Main Roads commissioners around Australia, and of the Australian Transport Advisory Council, which dealt with not only roads but also rail networks and ports. I was also invited to all the transport ministers’ conferences that were held, both federal and state. I remember Bob Brown was the federal minister at the time. I was always made welcome and asked to be in the photo opportunities. It was the efforts of people like Albert Tognolini and Ken Michael who made sure that Australian local government had representation, and to this day that still exists. Prior to that, people who had a role before me had been struggling to get to that table, yet all of a sudden things started to happen and it all started to happen from Western Australia. I acknowledge the state government of the time and the transport ministers who changed during that time who assisted us in getting that representation.

I was talking to Dr Michael and Mrs Michael recently and I told him that I hoped he would not mind if I talked about his little flutter at gambling. We were at a conference that was held at the Wrest Point Casino in Hobart. Of course, they make sure that people must walk past the one-armed bandits to get to the conference room. When we had finished one afternoon, the Western Australian representatives, local government representatives from around the nation and some of the transport ministers were walking out when Dr Michael saw one of these one-armed bandits. He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out two or three \$1 coins. “I might as well put these in”, he said. He popped the first coin in and that disappeared. He put the second coin in and all of a sudden he had won about \$10. We were watching these credits grow and he got up to about \$200 and he said, “Gee, this is easy. It is better than being in the Main Roads department. I am earning money at a fast rate!” I think Tim Shanahan or somebody who was with me at the time said, “I think if I were you, I would cash out now because you’ll lose it.” Dr Michael said, “Oh, it’s just easy.” Members know the result—he lost it all. Mrs Michael said to me that she thought it was the first and only flutter that Ken had ever had. It was probably a good lesson for him, but he thought it was great fun at the time. People can sometimes play those machines and have a lot of fun for a while, but they need to know when to pull out or be prepared to keep playing until they lose what they first put in. However, I do not think that he has ever gambled in that sense or form ever since.

As I said, I was disappointed with the gradual changes to the Main Roads department that caused it to be downsized around the state. I remember local government relying very, very heavily on the engineers in some of the regional centres. I have noticed, with all due respect to some of the contractors who now do our roads and our network arrangements, that some of the seals on those new roads do not last very long. Even towards the end, Main Roads was still tendering for the work against others. When I was in local government, my own locality relied very heavily on the engineers at Northam to give us advice and to help us design some of the approach roads that may have been in the process of being changed. I thought it was a very sad day when Main Roads was downsized to what it is today. I do not know whether the Minister for Transport, Hon Simon O’Brien, who had a stint in local government, felt that Main Roads did a good job then, but of course things changed before he became the minister. I do not suppose we can resurrect these things in this day and age. Main Roads played a significant role in the road network in Western Australia. A lot of credit is due to it for the very important database it established over that long period. Of course that continues today with the software programs that it developed. A lot of that information now is used Australia-wide. It was nice to see Western

Australia leading the charge in that area when I would have expected New South Wales or Victoria to have been at the forefront. I give full credit to people like Dr Michael.

I can also remember Dr Michael was very passionate and used to get very excited about a new road project if some bridges were to be built. He loved building bridges. He is a good engineer. That was one of his passions: if there was a bridge to be built, he would be out there building it!

I am sure that the Governor and Mrs Michael will continue to endear themselves to all Western Australians they come in contact with. Dr Michael had a very good head start, as I said earlier, because of the previous positions he held in Western Australia, and he has continued in that regard. If one reflects upon all the years, successive governments across all political party lines have got it pretty right in relation to the governors appointed. I have been in this Parliament for 16 years and have got to know some of them. Prior to that, there were governors who were appointed long before I got into Parliament. We have been very fortunate because the representation has been first rate. It is a great credit to the governments of the day that they have chosen wisely and well. Dr Ken Michael is no exception.

It was interesting to be reminded of some of the issues about Western Australia in the Governor's address. He said —

...1,089,257 Western Australians cast valid formal votes in the election.

Through this process, 21 new members of the Legislative Assembly and 14 new members of the Legislative Council have been elected to work in the interests of the people of Western Australia.

That is a quite significant renewal program when we consider that at the last election there was also a big renewal. If we look around this house, we see that there have been big changes and that will continue. I hope that those 14 new members in this house get the same enjoyment out of Parliament and its procedures that I have done over the past 16 years.

**Hon Ed Dermer:** It does not take long to become a veteran, does it?

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** No, it can happen very quickly. My accountant reminded me today that he is enjoying his twentieth wedding anniversary. I was the MC at his wedding! He told me that he was celebrating 20 years of marriage this weekend. He said, "You were the MC at it!" First of all, I had forgotten I was the MC, and, secondly, 20 years have gone very quickly. It will be my forty-sixth wedding anniversary in a couple of weeks—forty-six years married!

**Hon Ed Dermer:** As long as you don't forget the date!

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** I know the date!

I was reading about some of the workload that the Governor undertakes. He is patron or joint patron of approximately 200 charitable, academic, cultural, business and government organisations. He said that he would continue to promote Western Australia's interests both domestically and internationally. I am sure he will do that with great credit to himself and to Western Australia. I think we tend to sometimes forget the number of times the Governor and his wife have to attend public functions; I am sure that some evenings they probably think they would like to have a quiet night at home. But that is their role, and they always have smiles on their faces and will chat to people, which I think is a great sign that they are enjoying their role very much. I wish both of them continued success over the rest of this term and any other term they may have; that will be up to the government of the day.

I was going to talk about Indian Ocean Drive in my valedictory speech, but I will talk about it now. I attended a number of transport ministers' conferences when Bob Brown was the federal minister. At one particular conference Indian Ocean Drive was in the top three of Main Roads' list of priority roads, and I had been talking to Bob Brown about the establishment of Indian Ocean Drive. I think I must have worn him down, because he turned to Pam Beggs, who was with me in Sydney, and said to her, "Would the state government be prepared to provide 50-50 on this road? I think it's got a lot of merit", and she said yes. He turned to me and said that it would probably be best if I went through the local member, and asked who the local member was. I remember saying to him, "I don't think you'll like it when I tell you." He asked who it was and I said it was Wilson Tuckey. He said, "Oh! Oh! That should not make any difference. You talk to Wilson and have Wilson talk to me and we might be able to come to some arrangement."

This was in 1991 and we thought this was going swimmingly for us—was Bob Hawke Prime Minister then?

**Hon Ed Dermer:** 1991 was the year of the change. It was only very late in 1991 that —

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** Yes, it was. Unfortunately, Bob Brown was shifted from the transport portfolio —

**Hon Ed Dermer:** For almost all of 1991 Bob Hawke was the Prime Minister. It was very late in the year when it changed.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** I forget exactly the sequence, but the cabinet was changed and suddenly Bob Brown disappeared as federal minister. The next federal minister—I cannot remember who it was now—did not quite see the same priority or need for Indian Ocean Drive. Main Roads was considering funding cuts and it was trying to cut its cloth according to its means and was probably having to concentrate on some of the major infrastructure in Western Australia. It was probably coming under a bit of a pounding at the time. Let us face it, most governments do on the issue of roads. There is nothing worse than people bouncing over a badly maintained road. Consequently, we did not get the funding. In 2011 we are expecting to open Indian Ocean Drive, having completed stages 1 and 2—a distance of 65 kilometres from south of Lancelin to its join with the existing Pinnacles Road—at a cost of \$145 million. I thought at one stage that it was going to cost about \$38 million—back in 1991 it would have cost only about \$14 million or \$17 million. I suppose in relative terms that is still pretty expensive, but that would have been the cost back then. It is 20 years later, I am leaving Parliament and I will not see Indian Ocean Drive completed. That is a bit disappointing, but I might just remind the Minister for Transport—if he is still the Minister for Transport at that time—that I would like an invitation to its opening, or I might just turn up; who knows?

I would like to talk a little about the economy. We had a situation where we thought there was no tomorrow. None of us envisaged—I do not think any of the so-called financial gurus had worked it out—that the world's economy could collapse in such a short time. We were all wondering how our kids would get on if they wanted to buy a house. The residential market took off with the mining boom. Consequently, it got to the stage where it would be very, very difficult for young people to ever own a home. We woke up one morning and suddenly found that the world was starting to collapse. One of the greatest problems has been greed, a simple word. We saw too many financial gurus. We saw lending, banking and financial institutions in the United States collapse under the sub-prime markets. If people happened to run out of money and they could not pay the mortgage on their house, they could give the keys back to the bank but they were not responsible for the balance of the money as we are here in Australia. We saw some executives receiving almost obscene money while the companies they were running were losing billions. General Motors is teetering. Who would have imagined that? Money literally had to be printed to salvage some of the financial institutions. If the banks did not supply the billions of dollars, pounds or euros, they were frightened of a domino effect. The economy would have collapsed even worse than we are seeing it today. We all woke up and asked ourselves whether this was really happening.

There are generations of young people who have never seen hard times financially. The saving mentality of Australians waned somewhat over a number of years. We can all remember that one of our concerns in Australia is that our savings per capita were very, very poor. We were borrowing money overseas to fund a lot of infrastructure projects in Australia when we could have been borrowing it from our own financial institutions with the savings of all Australians. That was not happening. The savings curve was getting worse and worse. It is ironic that we are all being encouraged to spend today. Young people have let themselves down a little at times. Many of us had to work hard. We got married, started off with the basics and valued what money was all about.

**Hon Ed Dermer:** I think we grew up with parents who experienced the Great Depression.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** Generations have come along now. I am not trying to be critical of the young ones because I see it every day, even in my own family. They tend to want the very best in their home the moment they get a home loan and build or buy a home. There is no thought of saving for a new washing machine et cetera. A lot of them are their own worst enemies. That is life and that is the way our society has evolved. From that point of view, 18 months ago people could name the job that they wanted and there was hardly a small business that did not have a sign on its window saying "staff wanted". Businesses wanted to expand. A mechanic who worked for local government as grader driver, bulldozer driver or whatever suddenly was employed in the mining industry. They did not last long at the local government because the mines wanted them. A shire could pay them only \$80 000 a year whereas the mines offered them \$150 000 or \$160 000. They worked long hours, but that is the sort of money they were making. Consequently that put huge pressures on a range of small businesses because they could not compete. Today I was looking for a job for myself and I saw a sticker on a takeaway place. I thought that perhaps I could take orders and speak into the microphone.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** There is no travel associated with that!

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** I was hoping that either Hungry Jacks or McDonald's would fly me overseas to see what happens in other countries.

**Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm:** There is no fast-food crayfish either!

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** That kills that idea then! I am 70 years old and am seeing things in my lifetime that I never thought I would see again. Society today has been very confusing. I am sure that some of the young people must be shaking their heads and wondering what has happened. Only recently there was no tomorrow. The revenues were flowing to governments and Western Australia was the boom state. It had a couple of billion-dollar surpluses and everything was pounding along at a million kilometres an hour. People were upgrading their homes and the median house price was \$470 000 or \$480 000; it just kept jumping. Some people were saying

that the interest rates should not hurt the young ones, but only a few years ago the young ones were borrowing just \$150 000 whereas suddenly they were borrowing \$400 000. That is a big difference. It has been a real worry and it will continue to be a worry for the present government because of the reversal of revenue streams.

There are no two ways about it: greed has been half the problem behind everything that has been happening. All of us, I am sure, read in the paper at times that the mining companies were seeking hikes of 25, 30 and up to 70 per cent for iron ore. That is not sustainable. I am not a mining expert or a financial expert; I am a million miles away from that. However, I wondered how long that could be sustained simply because the Chinese are very good businesspeople. They have now got the upper hand and they are certainly making it count. They will make sure that they will not be subject to that type of greed again. Likewise, there was going to be no tomorrow with nickel. However, I saw the boom once before with Poseidon. A lot of people made an awful lot of money but an awful number of people got burned. Nickel is used in the production of stainless steel. At the end of the boom, the growth rate in China, which was in the order of 12, 13 or 14 per cent, started to dry up. It is now about four or six per cent. That has had a huge effect on Western Australia. I can understand why we now need a bigger share of the goods and services tax. While the revenue was streaming in, we were subjected to the Commonwealth Grants Commission, which was penalising us for what was happening in Western Australia. However, Western Australia was providing over 30 per cent of the export income of this nation. We can talk about the chicken and the egg but that is what has been happening.

With all the euphoria in the mining and resources sector poor old agriculture was floundering. I can remember two budgets being presented to this house in which agriculture was not mentioned. It probably applied to more than two budgets, but those are the couple I can remember. The country was suffering from a drought and commodity prices were low. Many people were receiving exceptional circumstances grants and some were getting help from Centrelink. Generally, agriculture, which used to carry Western Australia at one time, was forgotten. It was therefore nice to hear some financial experts the other day thanking heaven for agriculture, because there has been a turnaround in commodity prices, especially grain. There have been better seasons and there is still a long way to go in the eastern states to recover from the drought, but at least agriculture, even with the collapse of the wool industry, is now starting to bear fruit. At the end of the day people must eat. There are still too many starving millions around the world, but we cannot ask farmers in Western Australia or Australia to produce below cost so that we can feed people. How we get that balance right I do not know. It will be a huge problem for the world over the next 20 to 25 years, because people are starving and yet we cannot afford to produce grain at other than above the cost of production. The question of how those countries that import our product are able to finance it is another story.

I am sure we have all been reading articles in newspapers about the cattle industry. Western Australian cattle producers are certainly not getting the returns that producers in the eastern states are getting. Western Australia now relies very heavily on live exports out of Darwin, Geraldton and Broome. I am told that with the current price per kilogram most beef producers are struggling. I do not produce beef these days so I do not know firsthand. Of course, the latest events at Harvey Beef are of real concern, because if Harvey Beef, which handles about 3 500 cattle a week, were to close tomorrow, where would beef producers get their stock slaughtered? One can only hope that it does not happen. I hope that Harvey Beef can sort out all the problems of productivity. It might need better structured wages or whatever. I do not know the sum total of the problem but something certainly needs to be done.

I would like to talk about Western Power. When the disaggregation of Western Power was taking place under the previous Labor government, our party room had a robust debate at the end of which I said I could not support the policy. I spoke in this house and said I would not support it. I would not cross the floor because I suppose I would look a bit lonely as only two or three of us were maybe going to vote against it.

**Hon Ed Dermer:** It is not a good example for a Whip to cross the floor.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** That is quite true, but I did speak against the policy. I remember looking across at where Hon Norman Moore sits, which is where Hon Kim Chance sat, and I said that I hoped that I would not come back in two years' time to say that I told members so. I use the analogy of Wesfarmers. Wesfarmers is now the biggest private employer of labour in Australia; it has about 200 000 employees since it took over Coles. When it set up its different divisions—Bunnings, Target, Officeworks, Kmart and Coles—it appointed line managers. One of its biggest successes was Bunnings. It did not disaggregate the entire Wesfarmers conglomerate; it appointed line managers who are responsible to Mr Richard Goyder.

I thought this issue was commonsense; I could not see how Western Power could be split up without cross-subsidisation within the generation, transmission or retail sections. There had to be cross-subsidisation because not all of them make a profit. However, at the end of the day they were providing more than \$200 million as a dividend to the state. Where are we today? We are busy funding. The Minister for Energy would be able to inform us, but I am sure we now have a problem in the region of a few hundred million dollars. To me, that was not a good venture. I also did not agree with the Water Authority being cut up, and we were in government when

that happened. I saw the Water Authority being left with an untenable arrangement if, for example, it wanted to source new water supplies and look after the retail section. What happened? It already had problems with the Environmental Protection Authority at the time, so the government set up the Water and Rivers Commission, which was a de facto EPA. Some of the people at the commission were friends of mine, but it was a de facto EPA. That organisation wanted to put a package together and pursue a vision of where it wanted to go, but it was stymied almost within its own walls. I did not think that that was a very smart move either, quite frankly. The government dumped the Water and Rivers Commission and formed the Department of Water. I am not sure whether that is any better; I have not studied it, but I will try to find out. That is now water under the bridge, and it is up to the Minister for Energy to fix the problem with Western Power.

When I was clearing out my parliamentary office, I realised that perhaps if I had kept it a bit tidier, I might have found this letter earlier. I found a letter with the heading, "Don't Make The Same Mistake We Made When We Split Up Our Electricity Corporation". It is a letter from a chap by the name of Geoff Horne. It states —

Whilst my wife and I have been here in W.A. enjoying a long promised holiday I have become aware of the W.A. Government's plan to split up W.A.'s electricity business and I am writing to provide you with comments based on our experience in Sth Australia.

...

In my younger days I was a practising accountant and by nature have always had an interest in the cost of organisational change. The break up of the ETSA —

A South Australian corporation —

corporation commenced in 1996 when it was split into two separate corporations and then further splitting in 1998 lead to six separate corporations. My assessment is that the impact of this structural change and the critical loss of 'economies of scale' has cost the state —

South Australia —

in excess of \$350M.

Does that ring a bell? The letter continues —

Initially the break up costs were funded by the newly created corporations but as you may expect ultimately it has to be recovered from customers. Consequently over the past 8 years in S.A. we have been faced with rising electricity tariffs.

It has become more pronounced since privatisation but the combined cost of

- (a) the separation process and
- (b) the resulting loss of 'economies of scale' is still a contributing factor in the higher tariff prices.

Since 1995/1996 our main small/medium business tariff (160—similar I understand to your S1 tariff) has increased by 19-20% and our residential tariff has rocketted up by close to 60%—it may be 58 or 59 but certainly not less.

Does that ring a bell? That is what will happen here. We have been going backwards.

It is interesting that this gentleman got in touch with me and had gone to the trouble of sending me copies of support from the Western Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy. In fact the executive director is my old mate Tim Shanahan, who was one of the people who said we must have this reform. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry said we must have this reform. Bob Browning and David Franklin from Alinta said we must have this reform. I wonder what they are saying today or will say over the next couple of years when they get their accounts.

I take this opportunity to briefly mention someone for whom I have had a great deal of time. Members may have seen the article in *The West Australian* titled "Country GP scores his half century". I refer to Kununoppin general practitioner Dr John Radunovich. He went there for a year, and 50 years later he is still there. How is this for a nice set of numbers? The article states —

... 50 years as general practitioner in the same country town, three-quarters of a million consultations, 1.5 million work-related kilometres travelled, 10,000 operations and somewhere around 2000 babies delivered.

Dr John Radunovich, 77, planned to stay in the tiny Wheatbelt town of Kununoppin for only a year when he arrived in 1958. But that turned into another year, and so many more. He fell in love with rural medicine and up to five generations of townspeople are eternally grateful.

At the beginning of last year, he decided the time was right to work on his golf handicap. He would leave, he thought, after the annual hospital fete, a big event in the town where he could "make his farewell speech". And he did.

But he's still there, albeit working reduced hours as the search goes on for a new doctor—not easy these days. Two almost signed on but failed at the last minute.

He's disappointed that so much attention is paid to the problems of rural medicine and so little to the delight that long-time country GPs like him have found in their work.

Stress? Isolation? Overwork? Not a bit of it, he says cheerfully.

Yes, there were—and still are—long days. Yes, there were busy times. But there is also the unmitigated delight in knowing every one of your patients and their families, and in seeing the children and grandchildren of babies you've delivered grow up and prosper.

Life in Kununoppin revolves around the hospital and he is its central cog. Only 54 people live in the town which, when he arrived, had shops, services, a hotel and much more. The shires around had 4000 people. Now it is 1000.

He fought to save the hospital when it faced closure and he fought to have an aged-care facility, where 12 people live, added to it. The hospital is by far the biggest employer in the town with 35 nursing and other staff travelling long distances and combining their medical work with farm work.

Dr John stopped performing surgery and delivering babies about 10 years ago when other doctors in the area with whom he'd shared the work began retiring and midwives were hard to find.

Is he ready, really and truly, to end it all, even if another doctor can be found? "Yes, I am, though my wife isn't sure," he says with a twinkle.

I got to know John Radunovich when I lived in Koorda in 1967, nearly 42 years ago. I happened to wake up in the middle of the night with a pain in my stomach, and my wife went to get my mother, who was a nurse, and she took one look at me and felt around my stomach and said I had appendicitis. It can occur just that quickly. My father laid me out on the back seat of the car, and we drove to our neighbours' house, where the telephone exchange was located. They were away, but they had left open the door to the kitchen, where the exchange was located, as they always did when they were away. When my father rang Wyalkatchem hospital, they said that the doctor had gone away for the weekend and he had better ring Kununoppin hospital, so my father rang Kununoppin hospital, and Dr John Radunovich told him to bring me straight over there. The roads were not crash hot in those days, and I felt every bump in the road during the 60 or 70 kilometres that we had to drive to get to the hospital. I think we got there at half past three in the morning, and by six o'clock I was on the operating table. It was coincidental that the guy I sat next to at Hale School was the late Dr Lindsay Matthews. He was based in Merredin at the time, and Dr John Radunovich rang him and asked him to come over and perform the anaesthetic for him. He told me that he had been doing about 140 or 150 kilometres an hour at the time. I think he drove a Jaguar then. Considering the condition of the roads at the time, he must have been mad. How he ever got there in one piece I do not know.

That was my first interaction with Dr John Radunovich. He was a trustee with me on the Country Medical Foundation for a number of years. I have always contributed to the fete at Kununoppin hospital. I certainly went to the opening of the aged care facility that is attached to that hospital. We could not find a nicer guy and one who is so dedicated to the area in which he is practising. He has been a terrific advocate at the Centre for Remote and Rural Medicine in trying to ensure that young interns gain practical experience in country hospitals. He has encouraged a lot of young doctors to take up rural practice. He said that it is a hard life, but he has gained many rewards from his interaction with the community not only in his area but also in and around Koorda. Some of the people in Wyalkatchem do not necessarily always go to the doctor in Wyalkatchem; they also go to Dr John Radunovich. He also performs surgeries at Beacon and Bencubbin every week. It is a tremendous credit to him that he has been practising for so many years. I wish to acknowledge his outstanding contribution to medical health in country areas. He deserves to play a lot more golf. He loves his golf. However, he is the sort of person who would be there if someone was in trouble. I acknowledge and thank him for the effort that he has put in on behalf of the region that I represent.

I think I have said enough tonight. However, I must say that I am looking forward to my valedictory speech.

**Hon Norman Moore:** That will be a travelogue!

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** Someone has suggested that!

**Hon Ken Travers:** Will we need to put up a screen for the photos?

**Hon Kate Doust:** Do you know how to use PowerPoint?

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** A power point?

**Hon Kate Doust:** No—PowerPoint.

**Hon Ed Dermer:** A PowerPoint presentation.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** A PowerPoint presentation? Actually I was asked to do that once in the party room. Richard Court asked me to do it once. It was on Westrail. He had a girl sitting outside in the corridor —

**Hon Kate Doust:** A girl?

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** Sorry—a young lady. He had her sitting outside in the corridor, knowing that I would push the wrong button, and sure enough I did, and we had to call her in, and she had to fiddle around for a while until she got the presentation back, and she pointed out to me very clearly that I had to push this button and not that one.

**Hon Jon Ford:** The answer is no.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Now we know why the WestNet Rail privatisation was such a disaster, don't we? It was his PowerPoint presentation.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** I thought it went off very well. I convinced my party colleagues we had to sell it.

I must say to Hon Peter Collier that someone did ask me if we were going to have a slide show, because I am a bit behind the times. As the member says, I could go through some of the trips I have been on. I could also talk about some of the private trips I have been on. They have not all been on the imprest account. Not all my trips have been with committees; however, I will say that there has been a fair degree of travel with committees. I did not like the sort of reputation I was starting to attract when members were told to watch out which committee I was going on if they wanted to travel, because that is the one they should go on!

**Hon Robyn McSweeney:** That's why I went on it.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** So right, because I did travel.

**Hon Ken Travers:** In fact, the Parliament will make its three per cent saving just by your retiring.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** I am sure it will!

It has been a great privilege and I have really enjoyed the companionship across the chamber. We may have different philosophies in life, but generally we all get on pretty well together. It is like a big club in many ways, and we do have some great times and I know that will continue. I said to all those new members coming in—about 14 I think—that if they can get even half the enjoyment I have had from being a member of this house, they will know that it has been well worthwhile their going through the hassles of being preselected et cetera. I am so glad, as I am getting out, that I am sitting on this side of the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Peter Collier (Minister for Energy)**.

### **ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2008**

#### *Second Reading*

Resumed from 11 November 2008

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [9.23 pm]: The opposition will support this bill. It is essentially the same as the Electoral Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2008, except for two key areas, which I will indicate in a minute. The bill that came before the house when we were in government included a provision that would reduce the threshold for disclosures of political donations from \$1 800 to \$1 000. That provision is not included in the bill before us now.

The other area in which the bill is different is the voting entitlements of prisoners. This bill retains voting privileges for those serving a term of one year or less. The proposition in the bill that we brought before the house was three years or less. Other than that, the bill is the same as the one that we brought before the house.

**Hon Norman Moore:** It is actually the same as the bill the house passed.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. I just wanted to touch on what is not in the bill, which is the lowering of the political donation threshold, because it is important to put our position on the record.

**Hon Norman Moore:** That has nothing to do with the bill.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am pointing out the difference between this bill and the bill that was previously before the house. I will not take a lot of time, but —

**Hon Norman Moore:** I'm just trying to help you.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, and I am trying to help the Minister for Electoral Affairs. The point I am trying to make is that we think this bill is deficient in the sense that it does not take the opportunity to lower that threshold. We sought to change the threshold to \$1 000 to be consistent with the position taken in the commonwealth legislation whereby the federal government is seeking to do the same thing. I understand that that has been the subject of a Senate report, and I think it is now before the Senate. It is still the federal government's