

**PARLIAMENTARY TRAVEL EXPENDITURE***Statement by Treasurer*

**MR RIPPER** (Belmont - Treasurer) [9.06 am]: Members are no doubt aware of the recent public reaction to a proposal by the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission to visit a number of overseas centres as part of its work. With the benefit of hindsight, this reaction is probably not unexpected given the significant belt tightening that this Government has imposed across the public sector, particularly in the area of travel. As part of the budget process, I am required to consider the budgets of all agencies, and this of course includes the allocations made for the running of the Parliament. I can advise members that the parliamentary group has been exempted from the priority and assurance dividend savings and cuts to travel, which have been imposed on many other government agencies. By this I mean that the overall budget for Parliament has not been cut by an amount commensurate with priority dividend, assurance dividend and travel savings.

In making this decision I am mindful of the separation between the Executive and legislative arms of government which should be observed to ensure that the power of the State is exercised with appropriate checks and balances. However, I am also mindful that the community has an expectation that in times of restraint, that restraint is exercised equally by all. For this reason, Mr Speaker, I wish to inform members that I have reached an agreement with you to reduce travel expenditure by the Legislative Assembly in terms similar to the 20 per cent cut imposed on other agencies. Therefore, while the Legislative Assembly's overall budget will not be trimmed, the amount spent on travel will fall. This does leave some scope for some funds to be reallocated within your budget should you see fit, Mr Speaker. I acknowledge, Mr Speaker, that you have already imposed limitations on the general approvals that you are likely to give to parliamentary committee travel in an effort to reduce costs. In addition, I have held discussions with the President of the Legislative Council and have requested that it also exercise restraint in travel expenditure.

I take this opportunity to thank you, Mr Speaker, and the President of the Legislative Council, for your cooperation.

**UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION FEES***Grievance*

**MS SUE WALKER** (Nedlands) [9.08 am]: I raise a grievance concerning the state of plans by the State Labor Government to slug university students in Western Australia with compulsory student union fees. In 1994, the Western Australian Liberal Government passed the Voluntary Membership of Student Guilds and Associations Act. As a result, students are not compelled to pay any fee whatsoever to join a student union as a condition of their enrolment at university.

It also prevents fees being imposed that are not directly related to a course of study. Following the passage of the Western Australian legislation, student union membership has decreased to around 25 per cent. The students' lack of willingness to join a union or student organisation has demonstrated how meaningful that is to their studies.

Through voluntary student unionism, students are not forced to join a fund or fund a student organisation as a condition of enrolment at university. Voluntary student unionism neither prohibits money being given to a student union or association nor does it prohibit students from joining a union. However, it does allow students to choose whether they join a union and whether they part with their money. Voluntary student unionism is a matter of freedom of choice and association.

Student unionism infringes on the fundamental right of freedom of association. When the Liberal Government repealed the antiquated laws that required compulsory union membership, it observed the following facts -

Australia is a signatory to three international agreements specifically outlawing the practice of compulsory association.

Article 20 of the United Nations declaration of human rights states that everyone has the freedom of peaceful assembly and association. I continue -

Australia is also a signatory to the . . . International Labour Organisation's convention concerning freedom of association. These conventions specifically denounce the practice of compelling individuals to become members of associations. UN General Assembly resolution 217(iii) of 10 December 1948, in addressing these statements on human rights, stipulates that every individual and every organ of society should strive to secure their universal recognition and observance. Governments have an obligation to protect the rights and liberties of their citizens. As legislators, we have an obligation to uphold and defend those rights and freedoms which have been universally recognised, including the right to freedom of association.

Voluntary student unionism does not attack student guilds or silence students but rather, it allows students to determine what is important to them. It allows students to have a real control over how they want their organisation to operate. If the Gallop Labor Government turns back the clock and repeals voluntary student unionism, students should be ready to be ignored. They should get ready for their money to be misspent and they should get ready for the inefficiency that would result. They should also be prepared to accept an environment that does not promote excellence, innovation or

choice. It is easier for a union to have a guaranteed source of income than to win members over by its performance. These are the consequences of compulsory student unionism.

I presented a petition to Parliament that outlined the community's concern about the reintroduction of compulsory student unionism. I hope that the Government will take heed and not turn its back on the rights of the individual to freedom of association.

**MR CARPENTER** (Willagee - Minister for Education) [9.12 am]: I should first put matters into perspective. When I attended the University of WA from 1977 to 1979 - although I attended briefly in 1975 - this was a hot issue on the university campus. It is indicative of the lack of progress in conservative political thinking that it is still locked into this argument that raged back in the 1970s. It was not an issue for years until 1994 when Hon Norman Moore became the Minister for Education and decided to revisit the old cold war days and make student unionism extremely difficult. That had a severe negative impact on university guilds.

The Labor Party has indicated that it is interested in putting resources back into university campus life. I reassure the member for Nedlands, who today presented a petition signed by 61 petitioners on this issue, that as the Minister for Education, I do not intend to reintroduce compulsory student unionism. I made that clear when I was the shadow minister for education. It is not appropriate for the Labor Party to impose a form of compulsory student unionism in universities when freedom of association is expected and required throughout the rest of the community. I make that point clear to the member for Nedlands.

I do not know where the concern about this issue has come from. I have made it clear publicly on numerous occasions, both before and after the election to all interested parties including the student guilds and associations and the university administrations, that I would not recommend that the Government impose a form of compulsory student unionism.

The member for Nedlands raised an associated issue in the petition that she presented. That issue related to the resources of universities. All members know and all members would agree that in recent years the amount of public funding that has been provided to universities in Western Australia has diminished. That reduction of funds has had a severe impact on the capacity of universities to provide the type of academic and cultural life that they would like to provide to the university students. Most of the universities' arguments about funding are directed at the federal Government, which provides the public funding for public universities. Universities have been driven increasingly to raise their own funds, and that has impacted on the staff, the shape of the courses that the universities are able to offer and a range of other issues.

State Governments can and do influence the financial resources that are provided for the amenities of universities. The Kennett Government maintained funding to universities via an amenities fee. That Government did not, of course, associate the funding with student unionism.

We have had discussions with all the university administrations and their guilds about the issue of whether we can help the universities resource the amenities on their campuses. I believe that we can. The universities and the representative bodies of the students want us to do that.

I will give members an indication of what has happened at the universities since the Voluntary Membership of Guilds and Associations Act 1994 was assented to on 5 January 1995. Prior to 1995, membership of student guilds at each university was roughly 100 per cent. Membership of student guilds was compulsory. Students paid their guild fee and became members of the guild. As I recall from my university days, that also made students members of the student union, although they had the option to be conscientious objectors.

Since 1999, only 30 per cent of students at Curtin University of Technology are members of the student guild; 6 per cent of students are members of the student guild at Edith Cowan University; 35 per cent of students are members of the student guild at Murdoch University; and 30 per cent of students are members of the student guild at the University of Western Australia.

The Voluntary Membership of Guilds and Associations Act has had a severe impact on the financial capacity of those universities to maintain guild life. The university administrations do not want compulsory student unionism to be reintroduced. However, they want to be able to raise an amenities fee. The universities, in partnership with the student guilds, want to raise fees so that they can provide resources to the students.

I am prepared to discuss that issue with the universities. In fact, we have discussed that issue with the universities and the student guilds. I want to make sure that university life in Western Australia is full and vibrant. I do not want to reintroduce any cold war political argument that was afoot in the 1970s. I am committed to ensuring that the universities have adequate resources. We are in the final stages of negotiations with the universities about how we can best provide that without any form of compulsory student unionism.

Ms Sue Walker interjected.

Mr CARPENTER: We hope to introduce a source of revenue to the universities for themselves and the guilds that will help the universities to provide facilities and services on campus for the benefit of everybody. Local governments provide resources for everybody; similarly, there is an expectation that people must contribute to benefit from those

resources. The member for Nedlands has caught me at the initial stage. Very soon we will be able to bring forward a more definitive plan for this. That is the area we are moving into. It is not about compulsory student unionism.

### **KEMP, MR DEAN, RETIREMENT**

#### *Grievance*

**MR BOWLER** (Eyre) [9.19 am]: My grievance is also to the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who I notice is wearing a Subiaco Football Club tie like I am - the mighty maroons. We are colour coordinated. In part, my grievance is a tribute to the career of Dean Kemp, who recently announced his retirement after 243 games. It was a wonderful career with the West Coast Eagles Football Club and before that with Subiaco and before that with the Railway Football Club in Kalgoorlie. Dean epitomised not only a good footballer but also a good person in those 243 games. I could count on one hand the number of times he went for the player rather than the ball.

Mr Board: He was a fantastic player.

Mr BOWLER: Exactly. Because he always went for the ball, he ended up getting concussed and knocked around. He was the person with the real courage because he put his head over the ball and copped the whacks. We all would have liked to see him reach the 250-game milestone. It was not to be. All Western Australians, even my friend the member for Kalgoorlie, were glad to see him retire in the end, because we could see that he was not the player that he used to be and that his health was suffering. Dean had a wonderful attitude. He did not seem to play for the money. Every year we hear about Australian Football League stars threatening to go to other clubs. In 11 years with the Eagles, we never heard that about Dean Kemp. There was never any talk of his management holding out for more money from the Eagles. In the few days since Dean's retirement, there has been widespread acceptance that he was possibly the best West Coast Eagle to ever don the jumper. In fact, I doubt whether he was the highest paid West Coast Eagle. There are probably several players who have complained, badgered and threatened to go to other clubs who get more money. However, he just turned up every year, come what may, and played the game for the jumper, despite the fact that the Eagles kept changing the jumper, which was a great source of annoyance to me. Being a bit of a traditionalist, I wanted the Eagles to at least retain its colours; every year it would throw in a new colour. The Eagles will probably have purple or pink next year. Dean was the epitome of the game and what we like to see in players. He was a role model for all Western Australians. As a youth in Kalgoorlie, Dean was not just a footballer. My friend Matthew Birney played with Dean and I coached them both in basketball.

Mr Birney: The member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr BOWLER: Sorry - the member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr Carpenter: You have copped a few hidings in your time.

Mr BOWLER: They were both good basketballers, but Dean was a better basketballer. As a matter of fact, I think he was as good a basketballer as he was a footballer. People might say that I am exaggerating, but that was the widespread opinion in Kalgoorlie.

Mr Omodei: Was he as good a basketballer as the member for Kalgoorlie?

Mr BOWLER: Just a little better; it was a line ball. Matt was a good junior. I heard that the Perth Wildcats approached Dean to play, but then he was drafted and went to the Eagles. Thank God, because he became an ornament to the national game. As his basketball coach, I had a sneaking admiration for his basketball ability, but I was glad he took the path into football, because of the greater exposure it gave him. He never forgot Kalgoorlie. During the off-season he would always come back. The other day, when Subiaco and East Fremantle played, he was there. I was at a function and I walked around the corner, and he walked past me and said, "G'day Bowls" and just kept going as if nothing had changed. With Dean Kemp, it did not. He was also a champion hockey player. He could have gone on to represent the Kookaburras if he had taken that path.

Mr Board: Do you know that he was our champion for youth in Western Australia for two or three years? He used to go into the detention centres and work with indigenous people. He motivated a lot of young people who did not have opportunities, and in many ways he changed a lot of people's lives.

Mr BOWLER: Exactly. I praise the previous Government and the administrators for choosing Dean, because I know he is a great role model and I hope he continues in that area in some way.

People in the goldfields all knew Dean, but the first taste most Western Australians had of him was when he played for Subiaco in the West Australian Football League. Sadly, these days not that many people go to WAFL games. Many people had the opportunity to see him and many other future champions on ABC television every Saturday afternoon when the games were telecast live throughout Western Australia, not just in the metropolitan area. That gave people in the country a chance to see their country kids go down there and make good. It gave country people a chance to see their favourite WAFL team. I understand that netball is the most popular game in the goldfields as far as participation is concerned. Every Saturday we can watch the national netball competition and that is well received by the netball fraternity. They can also watch the basketball, and that is the only opportunity county people have to see basketball on a regular basis - unless they have Foxtel. Sadly, the ABC has recently announced that it is looking at the possibility of