

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [2.47 pm]: It is a shame that again we see the Minister for Agriculture and Food leaving the chamber and not staying to listen to some of the criticisms of his department. It is good to see that the minister has come back, but I will wait a while to make sure that he does stay and listen.

Now that the minister is present, I mention an issue that I raised earlier today—that is, the problems in the Carnarvon area. That area has been declared a natural disaster, but the minister has not been up there in recent times. I am asking the minister to please go up there. There are problems that need sorting out, some with staff and others with the growers. In the coming week, before the situation blows up, I am asking the Minister for Agriculture and Food to make a special trip up there. I am sure that the minister knows that about six and a half metres of water is coming down that river, which could cause the same problem. Will the minister give an undertaking that he will get up there as soon as possible to talk to those people?

Mr D.T. Redman: I cannot give an undertaking sitting here.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Why not? Will the minister undertake to get up there as soon as he can?

Mr D.T. Redman: As soon as the floods happened, the Premier and I —

Mr M.P. MURRAY: That is right; it was before the water receded, so the minister did not see the damage because the water was still covering it.

Mr D.T. Redman: This government put in place the single biggest amount for soil recovery in that area—more than ever before. I am absolutely supportive of the position this government has taken to support the people of Carnarvon.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The minister had better get up there because things are running riot and the minister's name is being bandied around as missing in action. That is what I am telling the minister. I am asking the minister to go and talk to those people. Some of the staff in the Department of Agriculture and Food are using personalities and pulling people down. I am asking the minister to get up there and take control of that area.

Following on from that issue, the minister has reneged on his stated proposal and has now said that labelling of genetically modified foods is not necessary. The minister has talked about choice time and again, yet he is not giving the consumer choice. I do not know why. I think it is because the minister is scared that people will vote with their feet, and with their dollars at the supermarkets. We do not want stop-go, press-button, or red, white and yellow on the badges! The minister has claimed that we have adequate labelling rules in place. I do not believe they are. We do not have to put the words “genetically modified” on the labelling. I ask the minister to support the people who want to know what is in their food before they buy it. They do not want to get home and find out that it may have been contaminated with genetically modified organisms. I ask the minister to ensure that people are aware of what is in the foods they buy in the supermarket. The South Australian government is chasing the minister's hide because of the contamination that may come from Western Australia via the transport of stock. He should be aware of this issue. He has not played the game. He has walked away and left farmers in a position in which they do not know where they are going. Shires are saying that because of the minister's mistake, it will cost them \$20 000 to clean up the mess in their shires. The minister has been missing in action again. I am asking him to get out there and do some work.

Mr D.T. Redman: Don't stand there barking about it. Bring it on for debate. I'm happy to have it.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The minister ran away from the last debate and shut it down. He reneged on the promises he gave in that debate regarding protocols.

Mr D.T. Redman: Bring on the debate.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I have no worries with that. Again, the minister is walking out of the chamber because he cannot answer the questions. What a weak minister! He is absolutely the lowest.

I return to what I was saying prior to the lunch break. I conclude by thanking my staff. I mentioned Laurel Dhu, who was nominated for a citizen of the year award. I would also like to mention Lauri Glocke, my research officer, for the work that she does.

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The SPEAKER: There are members having conversations in this place. You are welcome to have them, but they are distracting both the member on his feet and also some people in this place who would like to hear what the member is saying.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I also thank Dee O'Brien, who fills in on numerous occasions when staff have to take leave. It is unfortunate that one of our helpers, Sonya Mumme, has been extremely ill. She has had severe problems and major operations. We wish her well.

The other issue that I want to raise, which is very near to my heart and very near to the hearts of the people of Collie, is the transport of large machinery on the Coalfields highway. There was a four-car accident only last week. I believe that the pilots did not do the right thing and stopped suddenly, causing the cars to go nose to tail. They were transporting wind turbine blades. These blades are extremely long—maybe 30 or 40 metres long—and they were transporting two in a row. The community is asking that between the hours of, say, 6.30 am and 8.30 am these long and sometimes wide loads not be on the highway because it is a very, very busy highway at that time when people are going to work. I am sure that people in Perth have not seen the amount of traffic on those roads. This is already being done for the Worsley construction phase. That has been done without anyone being asked. It is incumbent on the minister to accede to that request so we do not have that interaction. Most of the accidents have involved trucks. The problem on that highway is that they have not stopped. Just so that members understand, 80 buses bring the workers from Bunbury to the construction site. They have done the right thing in that area, but a lot of work is still going on around the area, and the traffic count is very high. I am asking that the government look at this situation, talk with industry and talk with the construction groups. I do not see why those blades have to be transported at that time of day. There are other times during the day when they can be transported. They go out to Merredin. We have no problem with those trucks using the roads; we have a problem with them using the roads during those very busy periods. Last week, three young people who were at the P-plate driver stage were in a serious crash but, luckily, they were not badly injured. However, their cars were written off. As an apprentice, there is a cost somewhere down the line. The other concern is that the pilot operators did not stop. They were told about this accident and they kept going. On Sunday morning I will be travelling with one of the groups of pilots who are bringing up a load to see what they are doing. They are leaving at 5.30 in the morning, so they will miss that initial rush. I am asking that we look at that road again. We know it is a contentious issue and we should be doing something about it.

In my final couple of minutes I would like to pay tribute to the shires in my electorate. At Capel, we have Murray Scott, commonly known as Scotty, and Paul Sheedy. They are very strategic in the way they work through things. They are very quick to let us know when there is a problem. They are not always whingeing but looking at things from a very strategic platform.

At Donnybrook we have different political alliances with Steve Dilley, but we have no problems working together, along with John Attwood, the chief executive officer. Donnybrook is progressive. Some years ago Donnybrook was named the ugliest town in WA. Now it would be one of the prettiest country towns around the place as a result of the work that has been done. It has one of the major tourist attractions in the South West—a playground that was built with a donation of nearly \$1 million from a person in the community. It is a great tourist attraction and many people visit it.

Then we go across to Dardanup, which looks a bit more to Bunbury than it does to the hinterland of the Collie and Donnybrook regions. Brad Day is easy to talk to and work with. Mark Chester is very quick off the mark. He is back on deck after having major heart surgery either last year or a bit before that. The colour of his hair and face has changed a bit but he is still working very well.

Finally, I would like to thank Wayne Sanford from the Shire of Collie. We have many arguments and disagreements, but we work closely together to ensure that we get things done for the betterment of not only Collie, but also the South West.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [2.56 pm]: I rise to also respond to the Premier's Statement. As we all know, on Tuesday, the first parliamentary sitting day this year, the Premier moved a condolence motion relating to the natural disasters throughout Australia and the more recent tragedy of the fires at Kelmscott and Roleystone. I spoke to that motion. I would like to use part of my response to the Premier's Statement to refer to some other matters related to the Roleystone and Kelmscott fires. As the member for Darling Range mentioned yesterday in his response to the Premier's Statement, it was a very significant event for the local community.

As mentioned, the fire commenced about 11.45 am on Sunday, 6 February, allegedly as a result of the use of an angle grinder by an off-duty police officer. I have not personally met the off-duty police officer who is alleged to have used the angle grinder, but I have heard that this person is an outstanding individual. At first I was actually surprised by the level of community sympathy for this individual. Once I spoke to a number of community leaders and people who have been in contact with the off-duty police officer, that surprise was no more. He is a

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pillar of the local community. Although some people are angry about what happened, they have great sympathy for him. As one City of Armadale councillor mentioned, he had to be charged under the Bush Fires Act 1954 but he will have no shortage of character references if the matter goes any further.

On that fateful day, as was mentioned, there was a massive easterly blowing in the hills down from Roleystone towards Kelmscott. I did not even know that there was a bushfire until about two o'clock that afternoon as I had been at South Beach in Fremantle enjoying my wife's birthday, which also falls on 6 February. I realised there were some fires in our area only when we managed to traverse the Kwinana Freeway at Armadale Road and I saw the massive amount of smoke. It was only when I got closer to home that I realised it was in our area. When I arrived home, I rang a very good friend, Jim Sharp, and his wife, Frania, whose house is on Brookton Highway, 500 metres north of the alleged source of the bushfire. When I telephoned, worried about my friends, Frania Sharp answered, and her immediate concern was about how we were travelling. I thought that this was an incredible measure of the person: Frania Sharp was only 500 metres or even less from the fire, and if the wind had turned around, her house would definitely have been in the line of destruction. It is a measure of her and her family that they were more concerned about their friends than necessarily their own welfare. That is a reflection of the community spirit in the area.

If members had been in the vicinity of Armadale or Kelmscott when the bushfire took place in the afternoon of 6 February this year, especially in Kelmscott, they would have thought they were in a war zone. There were fire trucks, water tanks and police officers, and hovering above were Helitacs. It was the Helitacs, which are the helicopters that pick up the water, that saved many properties on that fateful day. It was great to have such a ready source of water available at Champion Lakes, which is a great facility. We know that the former member for Armadale, Alannah MacTiernan, had great vision—"vision" was written across her forehead—but I am not sure that when she advocated and oversaw the building of Champion Lakes, she would have thought it would play such a critical role in fighting this massive bushfire in the Roleystone-Kelmscott area. Champion Lakes is a fantastic complex. When the Minister for Sport and Recreation tours the area in a couple of weeks, I hope to take him to Champion Lakes to advocate for its continued development—I know the Minister for Planning is also very aware of Champion Lakes—and argue that the Western Australian Institute of Sport's rowing and canoeing programs should be based at Champion Lakes. It is about time we moved away from a western suburbs culture and look at where the facilities are. Bar the Olympic course at Penrith in New South Wales, Champion Lakes is by far the supreme rowing and canoeing course in Australia and may continue to develop even further.

As I mentioned when I spoke on the natural disasters condolence motion, and as indicated when the member for Darling Range spoke yesterday, the community spirit was outstanding in Kelmscott, Armadale and Roleystone on the day of the bushfire on 6 February and afterwards. I would be very disappointed if I did not take this opportunity to mention some of the outstanding achievements and support that occurred on that particular day and the days that followed. I place on record my appreciation for the magnificent work performed by the firefighters. I also thank my colleague the member for Jandakot, who is a volunteer firefighter. Although the member for Jandakot did not fight in the Roleystone-Kelmscott region that evening, he was nonetheless very important, as he was directed to do his part at Forrestdale. The work of the volunteer and careerist firefighters was absolutely fantastic. Many worked all night and some collapsed with exhaustion in the morning.

I also say a big thank you to other emergency services personnel. May I also recognise the efforts of the police, who were led by Daryl Gaunt, the superintendent of the south east metropolitan district, and John Bouman, the officer in charge at Armadale Police Station. As the member for Darling Range recorded yesterday, John Bouman is an outstanding person.

I also appreciate the work of the City of Armadale, led so well by Mayor Linton Reynolds, who was absolutely fantastic. Linton Reynolds received public praise from Fire and Emergency Services Authority staff in front of 1 000-odd evacuated residents at the Armadale Arena recreation complex on the Tuesday morning following the fire. I also say thanks to the other City of Armadale councillors and workers who were led so well by chief executive officer Ray Tame. I am grateful for the outstanding work of Brian Watkins, who is the chief fire control officer of the City of Armadale, his rangers, and all other members of council staff. I also thank the management staff of the Armadale Arena recreational centre. The Armadale Arena became the central spot for people who needed help and for community meetings. The staff there performed an excellent job. One would hope that some of the people who went to the Armadale Arena, probably for the first time in their lives, now recognise the great facilities at the Armadale Arena. The membership of its health club may now increase.

Of course, other people need to be thanked. I start by thanking the efforts of FESA. As members know, this side of the house yesterday moved an amendment to the Premier's Statement seeking an independent judicial inquiry into the bushfire and various factors related to the bushfire. Unfortunately, we were not successful. Moving that

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amendment does not detract from our support for FESA; however, the operations of FESA and the support that the firefighters received needs to be examined.

I also thank other government departments, such as the Department for Communities, the Department of Education, the Department for Child Protection, the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture and Food, the Department of Environment and Conservation, Centrelink, Western Power and Main Roads Western Australia.

I also thank the Australian Red Cross (WA), the Country Women's Association of WA, St John Ambulance Australia, the Salvation Army, Champion Lakes Mission, St Matthews Church, the Kelmscott Anglican Church, the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Lions Club of Western Australia. The local Lions Club was fantastic; for at least three or four mornings people from the Lions Club were serving up sausages. There were further outstanding groups, such as Volunteering WA, Armadale Youth Resources, and business and state groups, such as SGIO Insurance, RAC, HBF, Westpac and BankWest, which were all at the Armadale Arena dealing with people who were in a great state of anxiety and sorrow. I must say that overall, people from these organisations dealt with people at the centre in a very commendable way.

The local Harvey Norman franchise provided furniture to victims. Fortescue Metals Group provided groceries and "Twiggy" Forrest made a visit down there on Monday night. Chicken Treat provided the obvious—chickens. Cafe2U provided lovely cappuccinos and lattes. The member for Darling Range mentioned yesterday the outstanding generosity of the Kelmscott Super IGA, which was fantastic in its provision of water and food products. Clark Property is providing accommodation to some of the victims and is prepared to build a home for free for any victim who was uninsured. These are some of the examples of the generosity provided from afar and from locals.

The local community spirit in the Armadale area is very, very strong. In many respects the area has a country feel to it, and that breeds a great community spirit. During this dark time of need, the community came up to the mark. People were absolutely fantastic. I think it is now time for this government to come up to the plate and support Armadale. Of course Armadale was very well supported under the previous Labor government, and my predecessor, Alannah MacTiernan, the former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, did much for Armadale and the surrounding regions. It is now time for this government to look towards Armadale and do things in my area.

I found out today that a new police station is being built in Cockburn in the electorate of the member for Jandakot. I am sure it is needed; many police stations are needed. It is strange: we have a police station in our region, but it is not up to the capacity of a major regional centre. I will talk a little more about police stations later.

Basically, the fire started just off Brookton Highway. That is a road that needs major work. As we know, Buckingham Road bridge collapsed within a couple of hours of the fire, and as a result, we now need temporary detours. I am impressed that Main Roads WA intends to erect a temporary bridge within three weeks. It will be very commendable if it achieves that. Main Roads is looking at erecting a more permanent structure after 11 or 12 months. When planning the permanent structure, I hope Main Roads looks at realigning the entry and departure from the bridge because there are blind spots leading into and away from it. That highway is dangerous. Within two years of my graduation from Kelmscott Senior High School 12 of my former school colleagues died in car accidents, and at least half of that number were on Brookton Highway.

Mr M. McGowan: How many?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Twelve people in my year or one year below or above my year at Kelmscott Senior High School died in car accidents within two years of leaving school. At least half the number of accidents were on Brookton Highway. Brookton Highway is even more dangerous now due to the volume of heavy haulage transport using it. Part of the increase will come about because of the rail closure in the Wheatbelt due to this government's refusal to invest in rail infrastructure in the country. That will lead to up to 57 000 extra journeys on metropolitan roads, many of which will use Brookton Highway. At this stage, Main Roads has taken the sensible decision, due to the closure of Brookton Highway at Buckingham Road bridge, to redirect heavy haulage vehicles via Canning Road, down Welshpool Road onto Tonkin Highway. Heavy haulage trucks should be using Tonkin Highway. They should not be travelling along Brookton Highway onto Albany Highway through residential areas. The member for Darling Range made a very good point either outside this chamber or perhaps in this place. Did he comment on the link road through Jarrahdale yesterday?

Mr A.J. Simpson: I said it outside the chamber.

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Dr A.D. BUTI: There is a need for alternative routes to be considered. One is the temporary route, but that can only be temporary because it is a bit dangerous. Even that route will go through school areas. There is a possibility of a link road through Jarrahdale, which will allow greater use of Tonkin Highway.

Mr M.P. Whitely: No; not through Jarrahdale. It would not be popular.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It may not be popular —

Mr M.P. Whitely: No; it was a stupid idea. There is a big history there.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I know the history. It may not be popular.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It's not a good idea.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Members!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member for Bassendean, it may not be popular, but it is preferable to heavy haulage trucks going down Brookton Highway during peak-hour traffic, and using Albany Highway to go through Kelmscott. We can talk about that outside the chamber.

Mr M.P. Whitely: Obviously, there is a history.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay, the member can talk about that in his speech.

Another issue that needs consideration is the Davis Road underpass at Kelmscott. This also has a long history. The previous government had agreed to build an underpass at Davis Road in Kelmscott. Anyone who knows Kelmscott well knows that it is very difficult to get across the railway line at Denny Avenue. I feel very sorry for people who try to cross the Denny Avenue rail line in peak-hour traffic when the traffic is bumper to bumper. The previous Labor government agreed to build the underpass, and was about to sign off on it when the election was called. We know what happened in the 2008 polls. I am sure members on the other side can tell me what happened—actually, even I know what happened in 2008. Unfortunately, one of the ramifications of that poll is that the Davis Road underpass will now not be built.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr A.D. BUTI: At the Davis Road project community reference group meeting in 2009 it was stated by a Main Roads official that this government would not consider any new projects that were not promised in the state government's election manifesto. The Davis Road underpass was not part of that; therefore, the residents of Armadale-Kelmscott will have to wait until a Labor government is returned before the underpass is built at Davis Road. It is an absolute necessity, so one hopes this government will rethink that.

Another area I want to briefly talk about is the issue of arts and culture in my region. When the Armadale Redevelopment Authority was established in 2002 by the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the Labor government, it became a sponsor of the Perth International Arts Festival. As part of that sponsorship deal, cultural events were held at the Araluen Botanic Park gardens. They were very, very successful. In addition, some festival events were held in the Armadale CBD. After a couple of years, the Perth International Arts Festival management decided that Armadale was not an appropriate venue for its events, even though the Araluen gardens events were outstanding and very well patronised.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Shame.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes. I wonder why we are unsuitable.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Because it is a working-class area.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is all I can think of—we are not part of the western suburbs or the inner city. Unless we are part of the inner city or the western suburbs, the Perth International Arts Festival does not seem to want to consider us. I am sure the member for Darling Range and the member for Gosnells will agree that there is a need for cultural events to be held in our regions. I would like the state government to urge the festival managers and decision makers to reconsider their decision of a few years ago to cease holding their events in our region.

There is no doubt that we have a good train service from Armadale to Perth, but it could be improved. I want to talk about a couple of things regarding that service and the bus services. As a result of the Thornlie link coming into play, which was built by the previous Labor government, trains from Armadale stop at every station to Cannington and then from Cannington they go non-stop to Claisebrook; but they stop at Oak Street to allow people to use the circle bus route that connects the universities. That is a very sensible approach. The Thornlie train stops at all the other stations, including the all-train stop at Oak Street. Probably one of the unforeseen problems with that is that the Royal WA Institute for the Blind has its centre at Victoria Park. Some of the people in my electorate from Armadale, Kelmscott, Sherwood and Challis are visually impaired. If they want to

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take the train to the blind institute in Victoria Park, they have to get off the train at Cannington and wait for the Thornlie line train. That may seem a minor issue for some people, but for visually impaired people it is another stress. I would like this government to consider whether all the trains that stop at Oak Street to allow students in particular to join the circle bus route, can also stop at Victoria Park. It could be argued that once we start down that path, there will be other reasons to do the same for other stations. That may be the case, but at this stage it is not the case, and I think serious consideration should be given to mandating that all trains stop at the Victoria Park train station, which is a lovely train station upgraded under the Carpenter Labor government.

I return briefly to the arts. One of the societies in the Armadale region, the Armadale Society of Artists, is currently in residence in a house given to it by the Armadale Redevelopment Authority for a peppercorn rent. Although the society is very grateful for that facility, it does not have the capacity it needs to grow further. The Society of Artists is a very important one in my area; in addition to providing an outlet and opportunity for local artists, it also engages very, very closely with the Armadale Medical Centre to provide programs for people with mental illness. I have been to some of the group's shows and seen the outstanding ramifications and benefits for people with mental illness engaging in art. One would hope that this government looks to assist the Armadale Society of Artists to find more permanent and suitable accommodation.

I return to the issue of transport and the ability of the people of Armadale to easily use public transport to travel east to west and west to east. We have a reasonably good linear train line, but the east–west service is not up to the standard that many residents want. I acknowledge that through the efforts of Don Randall, the federal member for Canning, the member for Darling Range and the former member for Armadale, Alannah MacTiernan, a bus service from Armadale to the Cockburn train station was established for a three-month trial period. I wrote to the Minister for Transport on 4 January of this year, urging him to make that service permanent at the end of the trial period. I advocated that the service should be extended to Fiona Stanley Hospital, pending the opening of that facility, and continue to Murdoch University, thereby providing a great transport facility for students going to Murdoch University, and, hopefully, Fremantle. In that letter, I also wrote that the trial seemed to be set up to fail because the predominant part of the trial period was over the summer holidays, which is not a period of high-volume traffic, and because the lack of convenient bus stops prevented a number of people from using the service. I also queried the short duration of the trial and the fact that a passenger threshold of 75 per cent was required for it to be considered successful. How many bus routes in the metropolitan area have a 75 per cent passenger occupancy rate? I would argue that very few would for most of the day. It was with great joy that we heard that the minister had decided to extend the trial to April. The member for Darling Range and I had discussions with the Public Transport Authority in my office a couple of weeks ago and the member for Darling Range made the great suggestion that the bus route should perhaps take in Piara Waters and travel onto South Street, Murdoch University et cetera. I think that is a great idea and one that I hope we take up with the Minister for Transport.

There is much more that I would like to say, but before I conclude, I will note that although I am the member for Armadale, I am concerned about this government's efforts to look after the people of Western Australia—not only those in the metropolitan area, but also those in the country regions. I have relatives who live in the country.

Mr M.P. Murray: Who live in Collie.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes; they come from Collie.

Amendment to Question

Dr A.D. BUTI: Therefore, I move an amendment to the question that Premier's Statement be noted. I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that the Liberal–National government be condemned for its attack on regional development commissions, loss of autonomy in the regions and centralisation of power in the metropolitan area

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham) [3.25 pm]: I am very pleased that the member for Armadale has moved this amendment because it is a very important subject. I am sure that all regional members of this house will be very concerned. All those people with an interest in regional Western Australia should be very concerned about what this government has planned for regional development commissions in this state. Regional development commissions have been around since the 1980s. They are a fundamental part of ensuring that the voices and concerns of regional people are heard, that services are delivered and that things are done in regional Western Australia. We have nine regional development commissions, one for each of the regions, and, as I have said, they started operation in the 1980s. They vary in size, but each region has its own regional development commission with staff located in the region who are concerned about, listen to and act on matters to ensure that local concerns are taken into account, services and projects are delivered and things are done in country WA. It is a

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good model. I had the privilege of being the minister responsible for the South West on two occasions and the minister responsible for Peel on one. On each occasion I was very impressed by the actions and operations of the development commissions and the staff appointed to them. They are very powerful organisations, very well supported by their communities and very well supported by their regions. The South West Development Commission in particular is an excellent organisation that does a great job for the South West and is well respected and well supported by the people of the South West.

That is why the changes proposed by the National Party are a huge concern to me. The Leader of the National Party is absent from this place; he is visiting Western Australians in another region of the world. It came as a great concern to me that in the early months of last year, the Leader of the National Party commissioned a big review into the regional development commissions, conducted by Hon Wendy Duncan, which reported in November of last year. I have a copy here. It is dated November 2010, and is titled, "Structuring Regional Development for the Future: A Review of the Functions and Responsibilities of Regional Development Commissions". It is a substantial report with appendices containing the submissions made to the review. It is a substantial document. A lot of work went into it. It was put together at a cost—I kid you not!—of \$221 503. This report cost \$221 500! Members may have thought that the review would look to greater decentralisation, more local decision making, more local control and greater control by regions of what is done in regions. But the reality is that it is the exact opposite. This report could have a one-word title: "Centralisation". If members prefer a longer title, it could be "Centralisation in Perth of Regional Decision Making", because that is what this report is all about. Hon Wendy Duncan has spent \$221 503 of taxpayers' money in chairing this review, which has come up with ways designed to produce more centralisation and a new bureaucracy in Perth. I am not just saying this; members need to look at the report. I have it here. The foreword to the report, signed by the chair, Hon Wendy Duncan, MLC, states —

Each of these recommendations is worthy of implementation. ...

- ... a new peak body with its own executive chair and staff whose work will be focussed on ... strategic directions, policy and prioritisation, and strategies common to all ... Regions;
- Ministerially appointed ... boards ...

They are going to retain the ministerially appointed regional board but, as stated on page 3 of the report —

To ensure collaboration across departments and agencies, the WARDC will be ... located in the metropolitan area.

Mr P.B. Watson: Is the office in Bali?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It does not say which metropolitan area. It might be in Kuta. The member for Albany might be onto something! It does not say which metropolitan area, and it is very metropolitan in Bali. The Minister for Regional Development could be setting it up there right now while he is sunning himself in Seminyak!

All the way through the report are references to the new structure and the creation of a new office with new staff and a new executive director that is based in the metropolitan area. We can safely assume, despite the member for Albany's excellent suggestion, that it will be based in Perth. This report was put together by none other than Hon Wendy Duncan and a bunch of other people, including the Minister for Regional Development's chief of staff, the head of the Department of Regional Development and Lands, and a few other people of that nature. We can safely assume that this is government policy and that the government has put it together. It has now been noted by cabinet and the minister, and the Premier will be looking to implement it. We will have a new bureaucracy on top of all the other government departments. The new structure, new executive director and new board to control the regions will be based here in Perth. The regional development commissions will become regional offices of the new structure that is based in Perth. Page 76 of the "Structuring Regional Development for the Future" report outlines the roles of the regional offices under the new structure. The report highlights in italics certain words in its outline of the role of the regional development commissions. The report states that they will "drive and coordinate", "identify potential opportunities", "appraise regional conditions", "aid and enable", "give advice" and "facilitate". One word that is not in the report is "do". The development commissions will not actually do anything. They will feed advice to the body in Perth and the body in Perth will decide everything. The development commissions will not decide or do anything. Those two words are missing in the description of what the regional offices will be responsible for. The Great Southern Development Commission, the South West Development Commission and the others currently have the capacity to decide and do, but that will be removed under the proposed model.

All I am saying to the government is that it has it completely around the wrong way. It should be devolving responsibility to the regional development commissions and giving them a greater capacity to decide and do

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things. The report uses all these modern words like “appraise”, “coordinate”, “identify opportunities” and “coordinate initiatives”, but the development commissions will not actually decide or do anything. My impression of the development commissions, the people who work for them and of regional people, is that they would prefer it to be the other way around. They do not want a new bureaucracy in Perth to run the regions; they want power devolved to them. There is already a new Department of Regional Development and Lands in Perth. Why does the government need to create another bureaucracy to control the development commissions? Surely the sorts of people we put on the development commission boards—mayors, councillors, business people and the good, honest folk of country WA—are capable of making decisions themselves and deciding what will be done for their regions. They do not need to be told what to do by a new bureaucratic body that is located right here in the central business district.

The government needs to devolve responsibility to and trust the people in regional Western Australia rather than create this proposed new model. Country people need to understand that that is the government’s model and that Labor’s model is the opposite. If and when we come to office, we will remove and reject the new model that the government has put in place. We will devolve responsibility to country areas. We will give them the opportunity to make decisions and do things without being directed by a bureaucracy that the government has set up in the middle of the city.

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [3.55 pm]: When the National Party was in opposition, it wanted everything to be located in the country. It wanted agencies to go to the bush and it wanted to develop regional cities. It has been the Liberal Party’s policy to get rid of the regional development commissions. When the Premier was in opposition, he was quite vociferous about it. He said that he wanted to get rid of the development commissions. I wonder who is in charge of spending \$200 000 on a policy and then sending the policy to people to look at between late November and February when most farmers and people in regional areas are on holidays. The government wanted to release this report when no-one had the time to look at it. There were a lot of submissions from my electorate. The Great Southern Development Commission covers a large region that goes right into the electorate next to mine. That commission has been very active about getting things done in our region. I have worked very closely with Bruce Manning, the CEO of the Great Southern Development Commission. The development commission held the money for and coordinated the construction of the Albany Entertainment Centre because we did not trust the City of Albany to hold the money. Under the proposed model, Bruce Manning will become just a little manager in Albany who sees how everyone is going instead of making the types of key decisions that he has been making for the past eight or 10 years. Some tremendous people work in the development commissions but a lot of their jobs will go to people in Perth. It is a similar situation to what occurred with the Department of Agriculture and Food. The National Party said the same thing about providing jobs in the country. The Minister for Agriculture and Food is a National Party member.

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Does the minister know what the motion is?

Mr D.T. Redman: I certainly do.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What does it say?

Mr D.T. Redman: It talks about development commissions, but you are talking about the Department of Agriculture and Food.

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O’Gorman): Order, members! The member for Albany is making a speech. He is entitled to make his speech in the way that he sees fit. As long as he is speaking within reason to the amendment, I will allow it. If the minister wishes to raise another issue, he can do so.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. It is good to see that someone has a good idea of what is going on instead of the pretend speaker who likes to make decisions from his chair; he is a typical schoolteacher. There are a few other schoolteachers here.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I ask that the member withdraw his remark about teachers in Western Australia because he was making accusations about what a typical schoolteacher might be in reference to his perception about how I behave.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is obvious that there is no need to withdraw. The minister is merely trying to make a political point and get it into *Hansard*.

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

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Mr P.B. WATSON: I did not realise that the minister was so temperamental.

Royalties for regions is a great idea, but it is no good having royalties for regions if the government takes all the workers out of the regions. A perfect example of that is the Department of Agriculture and Food. The government has absolutely drained the staff from Albany. All those people who had families either had to transfer to Perth or were made redundant. The same thing will happen with the development commissions.

Point of Order

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Mr Acting Speaker, I ask that you bring the member back to the motion, which relates specifically to regional development commissions. The member is commenting about the Department of Agriculture and Food. I am happy to have that debate on another day, which is a different matter from this motion.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It was very clear from the plain words that the member for Albany used that he was drawing an analogy between the National Party's neglect of the bush in respect of the Department of Agriculture and Food with the its demonstrated neglect of the development commissions. Anyone with commonsense who was listening to the member for Albany would have clearly understood the analogy that he was drawing between these two types of neglect by the National Party. I do not believe the minister should be allowed to use the standing orders to protect himself from the member for Albany drawing attention to this obvious neglect.

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.B. WATSON: I will get through this speech before the end of the night!

That is very disappointing, because as I say, I agree with royalties for regions and the way it is being implemented in the regions, but we do not have people in the regions because they are losing their jobs and moving to Perth. This is a further example of the value of the development commissions. It was Liberal Party policy to get rid of the development commissions. When the Premier was on this side of the house, he was quite critical of the development commissions, and I just wonder which tail is wagging the dog.

I forgot to mention earlier some very important people from my electorate. The Relay for Life is coming up, and we have a group called the Fairy Slappers. The Fairy Slappers are a group of ladies who got together because —

An opposition member: I'm glad you're explaining it!

Mr P.B. WATSON: I am an honorary member! One of their friends died from cancer, so these ladies got together to raise money for charity, and they raised \$32 000, so they are doing a tremendous amount of good for the community. I will read out their names: Dani Lynch, Sue Bassett, Leeanne Anning, Jane Guelfi, Sue Loveridge, Kathy Flint, Maria Scamozzi, Kylie Fletcher, Sharon Anderson, Di Binet, Jude Want and Bec Thompson. The Relay for Life will be on again in April, and I know that they will all be down there.

I would also like to put in a plug for the WA Police force. On Saturday night, we had the Valentine's —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Member for Albany, I remind you that we are debating an amendment here, and I would like you to come back to that amendment. I gave you some latitude earlier.

Mr P.B. WATSON: This is a very important part of our region! This is the last thing I will say. I am sure that the Acting Speaker would like me to talk about how the police and citizens youth centre raised \$7 000 on Saturday night. The people working in the kitchen were Kathy and Lester Rose, who never fail to deliver quality food and catering. I will also mention Joanne Rose, Kelly Waterhouse, Kathy Green, Theresa Kramer, Dana Stanton, Terry Eaton and Rosie Eaton. Terry is the PCYC —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany, I am waiting for you to tie these names back to the amendment we have before us. If you cannot get it back to that, I am going to sit you down.

Mr P.B. WATSON: When I went to the development commission the other day, I was talking to Bruce Manning about what happened at the PCYC on Saturday night, and the \$7 000 raised. There was also Tanya Crabtree, David Flick, Michael Lynch —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany, can you please take your seat!

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Preston) [3.43 pm]: I return to the subject of the development commissions! I feel it is my duty to speak very strongly in favour of retaining the development commissions after being approached by every shire in my electorate. They all felt that there was a problem and that decision making would be shifted away. There might be a board or a group of people in the country, but the city boffins will make the ultimate decisions. That is something that concerns me. I am also concerned about people building castles. I believe that the minister is perhaps trying to do that so that he will not have to travel to those castles because he lives in

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Perth. It is something that really concerns me. Obviously, in the short time that he has been living in Perth, he has lost touch with what country people want and why they elected him. They thought they would get a person who would represent the country areas very strongly, but this does not seem to be the case. Each of the shires in my electorate have put forward their concerns to me about what is happening here: the decision-making processes and the feel for what is needed in country areas being taken to the city. That has really got up their noses. The member for Blackwood–Stirling was not at the very important meeting in Manjimup the other day about what is going to happen in his community in the future; he did not bother to take the time to turn up. Concerns were raised at that meeting. They knew on the Thursday that there would be a presentation about what can and cannot be accessed for timber workers and small business. They drew up a petition, which they took to the function on Thursday. Did the member for Blackwood–Stirling attend Thursday’s meeting?

Mr D.T. Redman: No, I didn’t. I was in town on Friday in response to the timber industry challenges.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: He did not go to the Thursday meeting or the Wednesday meeting, so he missed two meetings. Still, I suppose he got one out of three. Those people were expressing their concerns about the decision-making processes for their community being taken away. The shire president said that it was one of the worst decisions that he had heard of and that it would damage country areas. It shows that there is some real empathy for the South West Development Commission. I cannot speak for some of the other development commissions, but if they are not up to standard, bring them up to standard. If some of them are not doing the right job, let us get in there, fix them up and give them some funding, which is probably the first thing they would need to lift them up so they can move forward. I am talking about funding for staff.

To give members an idea of what happened at that meeting, I will read a petition that was drafted but did not conform with the standing orders of this place. Unfortunately, the minister was unable to do anything with it, but I will read it out because I think it is relevant to what is happening today. It states —

To:

The Minister for Regional Development — Hon Brendon Grylls MLA

The Minister for Blackwood–Stirling — Hon Terry Redman MLA

We, the undersigned hereby express our concerns with the proposal to centralise the nine development commissions to the metropolitan area. Concerns include:

- Centralising all the agencies abolishes the vital opportunity for regional accessibility, i.e. people that wish to have input in regional issues will have to travel to the metropolitan area to meet staff. The agencies are a strong vocal advocates for the region and their loss will have a negative impact.
- There are grave concerns that centralisation would see a decrease in funding in the region, due to the lack of local input and control of funding. The concerns are especially great for smaller projects that may be overlooked with centralisation.
- SWDC has proven its social and economic value and we should not risk this loss by reducing their capabilities.

That came from the minister’s own electorate; he tabled the petition because it did not conform with the standing orders for petitions, but I am glad to have been able to bring it out and show it to members. I am sure that he was very happy that it did not conform with the standing orders, because it would be quite embarrassing for him as it came from his own area. There is a push to take back control of those communities and the way in which they work to achieve their objectives. This is to the detriment of all those areas.

Reference has been made to providing assistance to people in those areas. Last year 30 different events received seed funding, and \$5 million in grants was provided through the development commissions. Why are we taking that sort of economy away from these areas? These are people who understand their own requirements and can put their grant applications together. They can talk directly to the South West Development Commission to have their grants approved or the funding changed around to suit. Why would that be taken away? I just do not understand the logic of that at all. It is something that is very visible, and people are talking in the streets about what is being taken away from country towns at the same time as we are talking about super towns; talk about give a thing, take a thing! Gee! It is just confusing for people.

The chief executive officer of the Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance, Matt Granger, said that he was —

... concerned the new structure was the first step in the regional development commission becoming like other regional branches of a government department — bound by the top-down, Perth-based authority.

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“It is hard not to see that as a move to reduce autonomy at a regional level.”

That is a comment from the CEO of one of the strongest lobby groups in the south west, and one that is also funded by government so I suppose that will be gone as well next year because he dared to speak against the government.

That organisation has published a paper called “Roads to Export”, and if anyone wants to read about being on the front foot and doing things the right way, that is the paper to read. They are concerned because the South West Development Commission’s ability to have input will be taken away, and that project will fall away. I think it is a very good paper, and the South West Development Commission should get the credit it deserves, because once control is moved to the city, it will disappear. Why will it disappear? Because Mr Grylls is reported as stating —

... the submissions showed the commissions were well-loved in the country but not respected as key stakeholders by the heads of government departments located in Perth.

That is a very, very important issue. Why do the heads of government departments in Perth not like it? Because they do not like the south west having the autonomy to make its own decisions; these grabbers down this end want to make decisions for people in country areas. We should not allow that to happen. It comes through loud and clear that the minister understands what it is about, but I believe he wants this so that he can go to Dumas House, or one of those places and say, “I don’t have to travel down there; the commission is here. Can you send an email out to those people in the south west? They’ll live with it.” It will not happen.

What will happen is that people will get angry, and we are two years away from the ballot box. Believe me, there will be change. I am talking about the south west alone now when I say how angry people are, from the CEOs and councillors, right the way through. We need autonomy in the south west for the little things. For example, this was the eighty-fourth year, I think, of the Collie–Donnybrook bike ride, and it received funding of \$3 000 or \$4 000 to help run that historic event that could have fallen away. It was not a great deal of money, but those things need local knowledge. If that request had come to Perth, it would have been buried. Firstly, the paperwork would have been higher than this bloody room; and, secondly, nobody would have known what it was, and people would have been asking, “What’s the Collie–Donnybrook bike ride? It might be historic, it might have been going for 84 years, but what is it?” It was probably, at one stage, the biggest pushbike race in Western Australia. They are the type of things we will lose along the way.

Another area in which the South West Development Commission has helped—I have utilised its help myself—is skilled migration. That is an area that is very confusing and very hard to negotiate without assistance. I am ashamed of myself for forgetting the lady’s name, because she was absolutely excellent on skilled migration.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Ask the member for Albany; he’ll know her name!

Mr P.B. Watson: I’ve got a few names I haven’t mentioned!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: He will probably have five of them!

That is the sort of work done at a grassroots level. These people were tradesmen who were going to be sent home because their visas had run out, but they were needed on the job. That is the sort of work that I do not think is seen by some of the people who are making these decisions. Every day we read in the paper about what skills areas we need and the need for tradesmen and those sorts of people, and the people of the development commission are helping to get it done. The development commission also provides seed funding and collaborates with business communities to get things done, and the community is concerned that will be diminished or gone altogether. The Premier spoke to me in the corridor the other day about Perdaman Industries. They may be up and running in Collie, but they received lot of support from the South West Development Commission with the toing and froing necessary to get a big business off the ground. That development commission is going to be taken away, and a board is going to be put there. The mind boggles why any country person, or any country politician, would want it removed. We hear all the time the old story that they have been stacked with different people, and this one gets sacked and that one gets sacked with a change of government. I am not concerned about that. What I am concerned about is losing our autonomy and the drive to go forward from the regions. I find that very difficult to understand coming from people who brag about being part of the regions.

My friend David Smith, the Mayor of Bunbury, called it “the most retrograde step in all of my time in public life.” And he has been in public life for a very long time. He is a well-respected person who has been around for a long time and seen the changes over the years, and he is still on the front foot trying to get change in Bunbury, although there are a few problems down there. They are the sorts of comments that are being made. Where else can we go than this place to beg the National Party, which is driving this change and saying that the development commissions should be diminished, demolished, pulled down, made smaller, and run from the city?

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The other thing that concerns me is that Hon Wendy Duncan was supposed to put a presentation on the development commissions to the Western Australian Local Government Association, but it was pulled. I wonder why it was pulled? It was certainly for a political line, in my view. She was scared, or worried about the reaction she was going to get, which would have been made public.

Mr D.T. Redman: Rubbish! Rubbish! Hon Wendy Duncan can mix it with the best.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I am not criticising the woman.

Mr D.T. Redman: It sounds like it.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I am talking about the process, and why her presentation to WALGA was pulled. Why was that? It can only come back to her being embarrassed in public, because all the shire representatives would have come out and told her that the wrong thing was being done.

Mr D.T. Redman: Or a conspiracy theory from the opposition.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: There is no conspiracy; it is happening. That is the point I am making.

This is a very, very sensitive issue for some people who have minor margins in their electorate, now that there are new rules within the Labor Party about who we will give our preferences to, and because of the boundary changes that will be made. I would be thinking very closely about this, because those changes will impact very much on the political make-up into the future.

The other thing that concerns me is not exactly about the commissions, but the *Bunbury Mail* of 16 February had a story that stated —

The West Australian Local Government decision is set to make a final ruling on a list of recommendations that will see councillor numbers reduced —

Fine—but then comes the sting —

and stricter controls on who can stand for local government this month.

So we are now not only having things taken away, but also we are going to tell people who can be on the councils and who can stand for council. What sort of government is this?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Criminal convictions.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: It is in the paper—read it! It has to be true; it is in the paper!

Mr C.J. Barnett: It's the same standards as this Parliament.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Well, it does not say that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is what it will be.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The way I read that is, people could be excluded because of their race or colour, or where they have worked previously.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Criminal convictions.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I am telling country people to beware of this government, because it is going to snatch it away; and if it does not and cannot snatch it, it will scrape it away slowly, and then, finally, country people will find out it has all gone and they will say, “Why aren't we making decisions? What happened to royalties for regions? What happened to the decision making in the regions?” The government is after that decision making being done in the city, and we should be very aware of that and support the regional development commissions.

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [4.00 pm]: I have been listening to this debate and I have come to the conclusion that the members who have spoken up to now probably have not read the report titled “Structuring Regional Development for the Future: A Review of the Functions and Responsibilities of Regional Development Commissions”. I may be wrong. Certainly, the report that I read does not sound anything like the report they have been talking about. The report suggests a couple of quite worthwhile changes to make the regional development commissions work better. One change is to move their back-office functions to head office. We all know that in the Pilbara and the Kimberley it is hard to get staff. Members can talk to their colleagues who have electorate offices in the Kimberley or the Pilbara and ask them how easy it is to attract electorate office staff! They cannot attract those people for the \$40 000 or \$50 000 a year they are paid. It is exactly the same for the commissions with those basic administrative functions.

Mr P.B. Watson: Every job in Albany is filled!

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: They can get staff in Albany, but not in the Pilbara or the Kimberley.

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This report also contains a suggestion that we standardise the boundaries of government departments. This would almost be a revolution for government administration in Western Australia. I think it would be one of the best things we could do in the longer term for Western Australia. There is no doubt that the development commission boards would be smaller, but there is no question that local boards would be retained. The report states that the head office will be in Perth initially. I take that to mean that within a few years it will be moved out of Perth. The report indicated that all the commissions were short of staff, so it is sensible to consider moving functions—if it is not particularly important where they are carried out—into the city, as more staff are available there. For example, member for Albany, the decision might be made to shift the headquarters of the commission to Albany, since it is so easy to get people to work there! Overall, the report is about regional development and making government and planning more efficient. I urge all members to have a good, hard look at the report, because a lot of it is valuable. For members to drift off into talking about the number of councils that comprise local government authorities is a red herring. Members opposite should read the report, and they will see that it contains a lot that is sensible for regional development. Nobody in my electorate from local government or the commission has come to complain about this report. They have all accepted it. That is because we are a progressive go-ahead area.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [4.02 pm]: I remind the member for Geraldton that the reason Geraldton is now such a vibrant city is the work done by not only the previous government but also the Mid West Development Commission, which played a pivotal role in ensuring a number of those projects in Geraldton went ahead, including the landmark foreshore redevelopment. It was the strong local input by the then member for Geraldton and the development commission that progressed projects like that in the member's region.

One of the things I am very strongly supportive of in the report is the alignment of government department boundaries. That is easier said than done, though. One need only look at the Peel region. We now have no government department that has a common boundary with Peel. All the major government departments in the Peel overlap, most of them into the metropolitan area. The last one to go, which I opposed vehemently, went last year, and that was the Peel police district. Until last year, the Peel police district was the only government department that was defined by the Peel Development Commission's boundaries. That has changed, and now we are part of the south metropolitan district. The Peel district is a very unique example of both how effective a commission can be and how it can be swallowed up by a centralised approach. That is the concern this amendment motion is specifically bringing to the attention of the house.

I will briefly talk on the government department boundary issue in the Peel. We are part of what is now the South Metro Education Regional Office, which is now a massive district after changes were made by the Minister for Education. Previously the Peel region had its own district director who had a direct line to the director general and who was able to advocate for Peel because he intimately knew the issues for schools in the Peel. That layer of direct input has gone with the changes to the educational structure.

Mr D.T. Redman: They are actually now under the senior executive.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, they are not. The most senior person in the Peel area for education is middle management level. We do not have a district director who is able to argue and know his or her region and advocate for education needs for the region as a high level bureaucrat, a high-level representative for the area. He was positioned there; that position no longer exists. This has happened not only in the Peel but in some parts of the Minister for Agriculture and Food's area, I understand. This is the problem. We now have what is more or less a super district director. The district director for the south metropolitan education area is responsible for something like 200 schools. I am meeting with her next week, and I will put to her the concerns I have. I have schools in my region that have some of the lowest retention rates and some of the highest bleeds of children from state education to the private sector. Very low socioeconomic indicators are permeating through to other socioeconomic problems that we face in the Peel, yet the government has taken away that very important voice at the table who can advocate for his or her schools at a regional level. That is what will happen, and what has happened.

The Minister for Agriculture and Food will be down in Mandurah in less than two weeks—I hope he is coming. This is a real issue for the Peel, in particular. The minister should note that the education district does not align with the Peel boundary; the police do not; Main Roads does not and the Department of Water does not. We overlap. If people are south of Mandurah, they are dealt with by Bunbury, and if they are north of Mandurah they are dealt with by Perth. We in the Peel are almost cut in half. These are real issues. The recommendation on the boundaries may be very good, but I can tell the member for Geraldton that it is going to be very tough to achieve, because already this government has allowed police services in many parts to be amalgamated, or created, into bigger hub-type structures. That has been allowed to happen in education already, and I have just

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given members a classic example. It has happened under the jurisdiction of a National Party component to the government.

Mr M.J. Cowper: Didn't you move the health responsibilities into south metro?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Who did—me?

Mr M.J. Cowper: The Labor government.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No. South Metropolitan Area Health Service has been the Peel and Kwinana–Rockingham scheme since before I was elected to Parliament. The member for Murray–Wellington should be standing up and defending the Peel region. Under the member's government, the coppers have gone into the south metropolitan subregion and they should not have. I know that we have coppers from the Mandurah station being dragged up to the north. We have a fantastic police officer in charge of the Mandurah station. He is a brilliant bloke. I have been on patrol with him. I have a lot of respect and time for Bryce Scanlon, the superintendent. But the reality is that I am not necessarily confident at any time during the night that if a couple of cars in Mandurah have been called to a priority case within the subregion and outside of Mandurah, there will be another car, and hopefully more, on the road if something else happens.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Member for Mandurah, we are talking about relevance here, and you are talking about police.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: With all due respect, Mr Acting Speaker, you might have been sat down earlier due to the very flagrant manner in which you were trying to mention in your speech most of the people who live in Albany. I am speaking directly to this issue. One of the recommendations in the report relates to the alignment of boundaries of government departments to fit in with the development commission boundaries. It is very relevant. I would hate to dissent from your ruling, Mr Acting Speaker, but I think I might be supported.

We have already seen happen what we are warning the government about. It has happened in Peel. We have already seen the centralisation of power and loss of autonomy. This is what the member for Collie–Preston, the member for Albany and the member for Rockingham as spokespersons for regional development have been warning about. It is already happening. The saddest thing is that it has been happening under the National Party's control. It controls whether the Liberal Party is in government and it has allowed it to do this. It would be wonderful if the Leader of the National Party was here to debate this. The Premier has told him that he never liked these development commissions and he has to do something about them. The Premier has told him to tweak them a bit so the government can control them more—centralise them but make it look as though the government is still giving them a regional favour. It is like a soufflé. All the ingredients have been added but it is not doing its job. All I am saying to the National Party members is that that is what has happened.

I am surprised that reference to the termination of the Peel Development Commission is not in the report because I was expecting it. That is the biggest threat that we face in the Mandurah–Peel area.

Mr T.K. Waldron: The Peel Development Commission's been fantastic.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is absolutely magnificent. I am a strong supporter of it, and I have always been. That is the fear I always had if a Liberal–National government came to power. I will be watching that carefully.

I conclude by commenting on a really important issue that the member for Collie nailed in his speech. The fact is that within our communities and the regions the development commissions have the capacity—this has evolved for a number of them over the past number of years—to focus on the key issues for that particular region. These development commissions were originally set up as economic development commissions. They were essentially set up to primarily play the role of the development of the local or regional economy. One of the things we found with the Peel is that to do a lot of the important economic development, we needed to understand far greater the mechanics of the region—the people, the education background, the capacity and the need to build capacity. Before we came to government in 2001, the Peel Development Commission said, “We have to make sure we know what our social indicators are. What are some of the issues that affect the people of Peel and what is holding them back in terms of developing as a vibrant region that sustains employment, provides appropriate services and ensures that the region can build as a vibrant place to live?” The focus changed. It included a focus on the socioeconomic effects and some of the social issues that face the region. The commission was able to lead that. I do not believe that could have happened had we had what was being proposed through this change by the government. I honestly believe it is taking away that direct autonomy for the region to establish its priorities and then have those actions and targets that relate to those projects or priorities get up as issues for government. It is probably the greatest politicisation of the structure now.

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Mr D.T. Redman: You guys had political appointments in those offices.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I ask the minister to name some of the political appointments in Peel. One of the longest serving chairmen of the Peel Development Commission, who has now passed away, is the late Owen Tuckey. We would not call the late Owen Tuckey a card-carrying member of the Labor Party.

Mr M.J. Cowper: He was a very, very nice man.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He was; he was a great bloke. He was absolutely passionate about the region. While in government, the Labor Party supported people such as him holding those positions. That is one example. There are a number of examples of former chairs, current chairs, former members and current members.

Mr D.T. Redman: But what about term-of-government employees who were in those offices who were political appointments?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Term-of-government employees?

Mr D.T. Redman: I know in the Albany office —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We did not have any in ours; they were all public servants.

Mr D.T. Redman: You did.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I can honestly say they were not in the Peel office—not to my understanding.

I conclude on that note because this notion has run its course. The fact is that if we want to see an example of what will happen under this new change, we have already seen it in the past couple of years in particular in the Peel district. There are now no government departments in the Peel district. I say to the Minister for Planning that there is no autonomy within the planning area. We have a planning office for the Peel region but it is not fixed within the boundaries in terms of a proposed alignment. The police does not, education does not and health does not. To my understanding or knowledge, Housing does not. It is in the southern zone. I think the government will dilute this even further. What has happened in Peel will be the template in the future under these new arrangements. It is very wrong and it is very correct of the opposition to bring that concern to this Parliament through this motion.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Blackwood–Stirling — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [4.18 pm]: I want to make some comments about this motion and highlight a few things that are very relevant. The first point that needs to be made is that this issue is a recommendation of a committee. A report has been tabled, which contains a series of recommendations. Decisions have not been made by the Liberal–National government relating to the report. Quite rightly, as oppositions do, this opposition has commented on a report that has been tabled and it will certainly have its views. There is a matter of interest out there, certainly in regional areas, about its position on the recommendations. I find it very difficult to sit here without a wry smile listening to opposition members talk from the high moral ground about their position on regional Western Australia when we are talking about what has happened. We need to look at the Labor Party’s record. Yes, development commissions were formed. They were formed by the last coalition government. We can put a little tick next to that one. When we look at the sort of resources that went into them, from memory when I was in opposition, we were talking about \$20 million per year for the four-year forward estimates, which were the resources that nine development commissions had to divvy up around regional Western Australia to make a difference.

The single biggest shift that has ever happened in Western Australia in support of the regions happened in this term of government through the Liberal–National government’s royalties for regions policy—the single biggest shift. Even the member for Albany stood in this place and said he supported royalties for regions. The task for members opposite is to come up with a policy that challenges that position. I find it quite remarkable that members opposite can sit on their high horse and try to take the high moral ground about decision making and the role the development commissions play in regional Western Australia to make a genuine difference in providing sustainable regional development. The history of this government in the short time it has been in office shows it can stand on two key issues among a raft of outcomes that royalties for regions has been able to deliver. Two significant projects in the north are the Ord–East Kimberly development, a significant project in regional Western Australia that had not moved under the Labor government. It is the single biggest shift in that development that has occurred for some time. The same applies to the Pilbara Cities project. We have overseen the single biggest shift in decentralising —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Member, we are talking about the development commissions, not royalties for regions projects. Will you sit down when I am speaking, please.

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Mr D.T. REDMAN: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I beg your indulgence because a significant part of the funding the regional development commissions receive is royalties for regions funding. I draw your attention to that link, Mr Acting Speaker.

Members opposite also face the challenge, politically, of where they stand on the Liberal–National government’s position around regional development commissions and royalties for regions. We hear the occasional comment, “Yes, I support royalties for regions”, but there is a push out there to try to undermine it, and they are having a struggle doing that. Earlier today, even the member for Forrestfield made a point about the fibreglass cows in the south west. The member for Rockingham stood up and talked about the great role the South West Development Commission played and that at one stage he was the Minister for South West and said, “Yes, we support this; great people work down there and great people make decisions.” One of the decisions the same people we are talking about made through a local decision-making process —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Planning, when you walk past someone who is talking to the Chair, you will acknowledge the Chair before you pass. Thank you.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

One of the decisions made at a local level was to put in place a unique marketing project that had nothing but success. I remember arriving at Perth Airport on my numerous trips to Perth from regional Western Australia, looking at one of the cows and talking to a young lady who was taking photos of one of her friends —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, we are not talking about cows; we are talking about the development commissions. I hope you get back to it, please.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I beg your indulgence, Mr Acting Speaking, in drawing the link to the South West Development Commission, which was the point raised by the member for Rockingham, and one of the decisions it made. I therefore believe I am on the topic of the amendment motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I will make that decision, minister.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The member for Rockingham has highlighted the huge value of the South West Development Commission, as he was Minister for South West at one stage. The member for Forrestfield has said that he did not like one of the decisions the commission made locally and, in fact, the role it took in that process. It is not hard to be a little confused about the position of members opposite about local decision making and development commissions.

When we look at the history and the role those development commissions have played, we can see that they have played a strong local coordination role. The member for Mandurah is quite right in saying they have an economic role in pulling together the respective groups to get solid economic and sustainable outcomes going forward. They are a conduit for bringing together collective regional views and local ideas to try to make a difference in regional areas.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Absolutely. I believe when the opposition was in government, it filled roles in those offices with political appointments, and we will maintain that view. When we got into government, the fundamental difference was that we gave them some resources to spend. It is no darn good an organisation having \$20 million over the four-year forward estimates to make a difference in regional Western Australia. The two and a half year history of this Liberal–National government has seen the biggest shift in support for regional Western Australia probably in the history of Western Australia. Members opposite are trying to take the high moral ground on a report that has not even gone to cabinet yet, and a government decision has not been made on it yet.

Mr M. McGowan: Yes, it has.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Not in terms of a decision on a government position.

Mr M. McGowan: Read the press release.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The report has certainly been tabled.

Mr M. McGowan: The Premier and the minister will make the decision. Perhaps you should come back and argue it next week because you don’t know what you’re talking about. Put the minister on Skype and he can argue it.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: This Liberal–National government can stand soundly on its two and a half year record when we have probably quadrupled what members opposite achieved in eight years, when they were having a crack at running government in Western Australia, with little or no support for regional Western Australia.

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I come back to an earlier point. The Pilbara Cities project is one of the most strategic projects to support development in that region and to keep people living there. No-one would argue that. The development commission up there has played a role in that process, but the project has been managed out of the Perth office—probably quite rightly. Likewise, the Ord–East Kimberley development has been managed out of a Perth office, with strong support locally and with the Kimberly Development Commission playing local roles. It is very important it does so. Hon Brendon Grylls gave a speech recently at a Committee for Economic Development of Australia conference in which he laid on the table some thinking around the south west about super towns. That will mean that the Pilbara Cities concept will be applied to regional Western Australia in the south west. I understand that even some early comments from the member for Collie–Wellington showed that he supported the principle of super towns and was probably struggling to come up with something to say to try to undermine it. I am sure people in regional Western Australia will embrace the concept and see a significant shift in their areas that they have not seen for a long, long time.

While I cannot speak for the Minister for Regional Development—he is not here—I can certainly have confidence that his position will be that there will not be a shift of staff to Perth. I can also have confidence that there will not be a diminution in decision making by the development commissions around resources. They play a sound role and I support that. I am certain that the minister aims to enhance local capacity to manage and direct resources to achieve a genuine and sustainable shift in regional Western Australia—a position that the Labor opposition was not able to achieve in eight years in government.

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [4.26 pm]: I think it has been interesting today to hear some of the comments from members opposite. I think some good thoughts have been put forward, while some have probably been a little ill-informed. One thing I have learnt over the years is that no-one in this place knows everything—that is for sure. I think members opposite are jumping the gun. I can understand why they want to make points about the review. That is fine; they should do that. But they should remember, as the member for Blackwood–Stirling said, that a report of a review has come out, but that is a review; it has not been responded to and decisions have not been made. It is good to highlight some of the points. Members opposite are talking as though it is a done deal and all the recommendations will be implemented. Lots of reports are written —

Mr M.P. Murray: It's no good tackling the player after he has kicked the ball.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Right. The report refers to governance. The royalties for regions program links to the development commissions because the funding goes through the development commissions, so there is a very strong link there. Otherwise, they would not be able to operate as they have done over the past couple of years; namely, pretty well. A lot of good local projects have been implemented in country WA. But I think we need to look a little more widely at strategic projects that will benefit towns in regional WA with bigger projects that will require more money. I think we need to think more strategically. I think the background to that report refers to strategic thinking so that we maintain local input, the local government fund and funding for the development commissions, but we need to take a broader approach. To do that, we need proper governance. I am not saying that everything in the report will happen; it only makes recommendations. But we need to make sure we have strong governance throughout the regions and good accountability. When dealing with large amounts of money—we are dealing with very large amounts of money—we all know accountability is the key. We should take this report seriously. Obviously, the government will respond to it.

The other thing mentioned was coordination. We can all talk about coordination round and round in circles. I think the nine development commissions have done a pretty good job. I will not knock development commissions, because I have worked with them closely, particularly in the last couple of years when they have been better resourced, which is a fact. As the member said, we had \$20 million a year going out to regional development over four years and now we have so much more. There are 44 local governments in the Wheatbelt, which I represent, and the coordination and the amount of money meant that they were not really delivering. Local governments were trying their best, but they did not have the resources to deliver properly. That has been greatly improved through the allocation of funding. We now want to take another step, which I think is the right way to go.

I was at a meeting in Narrogin the other night talking about the allocation of funding to a couple of good businessmen whose judgement I respect. I was able to explain to them that it is about not forgetting to maintain the local funding to do some of those smaller local programs, which are very important to local communities. There is also no doubt that the extra funding to development commissions through royalties for regions has made a huge difference. I know that while the Labor Party is in opposition it will always try to have a crack at royalties for regions—I do not blame it for that—and try to pull it down. Royalties for regions, development commissions and local government grants have really delivered to country WA. The problem is that the Labor Party realises

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how successful royalties for regions has been and it wishes it had thought of it. I know that after the last election and the week after that it was very much embraced.

Dr A.D. Buti: You made the wrong decision!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: History can judge that, but I think it is going pretty well. The problem, until that happened, was with one vote, one value. The Labor Party took it for granted that the National Party would be gone and therefore it did not have to invest in country WA. The Labor Party thought there was no need to invest because there would be only one or two National Party members here. But the Labor Party underestimated how much it took country people for granted. I want to give the member for Collie–Preston a pat on the back. He highlights that point sometimes and I listen, because our government needs to make sure that it never takes country people for granted. If we find ourselves doing that, we need to have a look at ourselves. That is what happened and we have replaced it with this system.

I think we are jumping the gun. I understand the point the member is making. The report and the review are there and it is now for government to make the final decision. I think it is good that the member for Armadale has instigated this debate. I cannot support the motion because the motion is looking to the future and decisions that have not been made. When the decisions are made, I am confident that this government will make a good decision that will give better governance and coordination. At the end of the day, members must remember that 25 per cent of royalties goes to the regions. That has made a huge difference in regional WA. I know local country members on either side of the house recognise that and I appreciate their support for that.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (22)

Dr A.D. Buti	Mr J.C. Kobelke	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr P.B. Watson
Ms A.S. Carles	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr C.J. Tallentire	Ms R. Saffioti (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr A.P. O’Gorman	Mr P.C. Tinley	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr A.J. Waddell	

Noes (25)

Mr P. Abetz	Mr M.J. Cowper	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr M.W. Sutherland
Mr F.A. Alban	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr J.M. Francis	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Dr M.D. Nahan	Mr J.E. McGrath (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr I.M. Britza	Mr A.P. Jacob	Mr C.C. Porter	
Mr T.R. Buswell	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr D.T. Redman	
Dr E. Constable	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr A.J. Simpson	

Pairs

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr B.J. Grylls
Mrs C.A. Martin	Dr K.D. Hames
Mr T.G. Stephens	Mr J.J.M. Bowler
Mr D.A. Templeman	Mr G.M. Castrilli

Amendment thus negatived.

Consideration Resumed

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [4.38 pm]: In recent weeks we have heard much about the bravery, courage and selflessness of our emergency services personnel. I think the plaudits and recognition are very well deserved. The sincerity and depth of these sentiments, however, will be put to the test later this year as both the police and career firefighters negotiate their wages. If the government in its ideological zeal seeks to erode hard-fought conditions; if the election commitment of the absent Brendon Grylls on regional housing for police serving in regional WA fails to materialise for yet another year; and if the wage offer does not reflect escalating household costs and charges, the government will be judged harshly. As part of these industrial negotiations it is likely that, especially in the case of police, personnel will be saying that they are expected to do more with less. I am getting increased feedback from a number of police stations, some of which are quite large, that their numbers are diminishing and are not sufficient to undertake the role that they need to undertake. I will use one police station as an example, but it is by no means an isolated example. I am very conscious not to disclose too many details about operational matters. When I ask questions about numbers in particular stations, it is always the standard practice to say that the figures will not be released because of operational reasons. Having said that, I make the point that there are a number of areas of high demand for police, and we very much lack front-line police where

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they are needed. For example, I am told that at Joondalup station, which is a large, 24-hour station, the numbers are down somewhere between six or seven police a shift. It is having to cope with five police per shift. That enables them to put only one van on the road and leave two sworn officers and one unsworn officer in the office. The reason for the numbers is that officers are away on sick leave, annual leave or maternity leave. That is a serious deficit for that large policing area. I will talk a bit more about why that has happened shortly. I can see that the minister is hanging on my every word. To some extent, this deficit may be due to a broken promise by the government.

I think an emerging issue on the industrial front is the use of auxiliary officers for operational purposes. We have heard on many occasions that these were first introduced as a sleight of hand to obscure the fact that the government had broken its promise to deliver an additional 500 police officers in its term of government. We now know that the number will be only 350, with the shortfall of 150 being made up of auxiliary officers. Auxiliary officers are not trained to the same extent as fully sworn officers, and their duties are supposed to be confined to administrative tasks. If they start to perform operational duties that would be more properly undertaken by fully sworn and trained police, one could conclude that that is policing on the cheap. In this regard, I note with concern a recent development. I have heard that auxiliary officers are attending and going on site with fully sworn and trained officers when they raid clandestine laboratories. It may well be that they are there to record exhibits, but certainly in the debate on the issue in this place we were led to believe that the officers would be doing the administrative tasks back at the office and certainly not in a dangerous situation such as that, which is definitely operational. Those auxiliary officers potentially will have to give evidence, for example, on the manner in which certain materials were seized, who was on the premises and so on, yet they have not had the same level of training about the evidentiary requirements that fully trained police officers have. On this front, there are three problems. First, it is sending people who are not fully trained into dangerous situations. Second, they are paid less than normal police officers, which is again policing on the cheap. Third, if we had those 150 real police that we were promised instead of the auxiliary officers, they would be able to help with the deficit that exists in places such as Joondalup. I think there are real questions to answer here.

The second issue in this regard relates to housing in regional WA and in particular to National Party promises. It is very unfortunate the Leader of the National Party has other priorities than Parliament this week, but I hope that when he returns from Bali, rested and ready to go, he will take the opportunity to read this speech. Not only has the government broken its promises on the additional police officers that it intends to recruit in this term of government, but also the National Party campaigned very hard on regional housing at subsidised rents for police, nurses and teachers, and ultimately for fully subsidised housing. Not only has this not occurred, but rents are actually going up.

The National Party has done something. It has brought in district allowances for some of these public servants in the north of the state, but it does not help people in your electorate of Albany, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson). In fact rents are going up. Someone from your electorate, Mr Acting Speaker, told me that for people who are signing a new lease, rents are going up \$200 a week and for an extension of rent, it is going up \$10. Not only is the National Party breaking its promise on highly subsidised and Government Regional Officers' Housing, and ultimately free housing, but also rents are going up in areas other than in the Pilbara and the Kimberley. That is very unfortunate. I know that the police are certainly very sad that that is occurring.

I refer to an article by Jon Groves in this month's *WA Police News*. Mr Groves is a very hardworking officer in Karratha—in fact, I think he appeared with the commissioner on a program on SBS recently in which he showed all the injuries that he had incurred in the course of his duties. He wrote —

At the launch of the improved new District Allowance (D.A.) rates in Karratha in August 2010, I personally advised the minister —

That is, Minister Grylls—

that, we the Union, would still be holding him to account for his failed housing promise. During that conversation the Minister indicated to me that we should be entirely satisfied with the new District Allowances.

Whilst the new District Allowance significantly improves matters in the far North of the State, there is very little if any benefit to the many hundreds of police families that have committed to living, and working in many other areas of Regional W.A.

Mr Grylls readily conceded this point at that August launch, and it appears that Mr Grylls and his National party colleagues are now committed to selling out their grassroots supporters, in their traditional heartland electorates.

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I am sure that police officers in Albany, Esperance, and Merredin will seek little comfort from the fact that the promises made that influenced their vote have now been dropped, allegedly on the advice of an uninvolved trade union.

Mr Grylls in his post election celebratory speech of November 2008, crowed to the party faithful that they will be rolling out the “Housing our Workforce” incentives after the New Year. I read that to mean in 2009, yet now in February 2011 we have seen nothing of the promise, but a whole swag of fibreglass cows and musical toilets flowing from the Royalties for Regions fund.

And so it goes on.

The government has also made significant promises about graffiti. I was about to accuse the Attorney General of being derelict in his duty, but today I received an answer to a question I asked on 24 November. It related to the much-heralded graffiti legislation that was passed in this Parliament in 2009. I asked the Attorney General how many convictions had been recorded under section 216(2) of the Criminal Code since the offence of selling graffiti material implements to children came into force. The answer came back —

There have been no convictions recorded under s216(2) of The Criminal Code in which a person who sells a graffiti implement to a child commits an offence.

No convictions! This is despite the fact that the Attorney General has put out a number of press releases, including “Liberal–National government doubles penalties for graffiti”, “Graffiti and hoons targeted as State Government cracks down on crime” and “Graffiti vandals now face up to two years in jail”. That is the outcome of that legislation. We actually said at the time it was debated that we believed that that particular section was of little utility, and it appears we may well have been right. Nevertheless, we have the press releases, so we cannot say that it was all in vain.

Speaking of graffiti, members who drive north along Mitchell Freeway will observe a footbridge across the freeway at Greenwood. One can discern across that footbridge that graffiti close to the road has been removed. However, in the centre of the bridge, over the railway line, graffiti has been left there for some weeks on end. We all know that one of the fundamental principles of graffiti is to remove the product of the vandalism swiftly so that the vandals cannot admire their work. I inquired why the graffiti in the middle of the bridge had been left untouched while the graffiti just a few metres either side of it had been expeditiously cleaned. It appears that the Department of Transport has service level agreements with the relevant local government authority. In other words, the Department of Transport tasks the local government authority to get out there and clean off the graffiti. However, the middle section of the footbridge is the bailiwick of the Public Transport Authority, which does not have a service level agreement with the City of Joondalup and so it has not been cleaned. The Western Australian Local Government Association is very keen for the government to have a universal application of these service agreements so that anomalous situations such as this one do not occur. It must be said that the current situation is irrational and ludicrous and needs to be remedied without further delay. WALGA has also advised me that although it sits on the so-called Graffiti Taskforce, a number of the recommendations of that task force, which is referred to glowingly in the Attorney General’s press release, have been rejected by the expert committee and the government has not followed a number of its recommendations. We need a better coordinated response to graffiti.

I would be derelict in my duty as shadow Minister for Road Safety if I did not talk about the road toll. The road toll for this year—I know there are peaks and troughs—is double what it was last year. That is a matter of some concern. It will be two years in March since the Minister for Road Safety launched the much heralded Towards Zero road safety strategy, yet we are still waiting for funding for that strategy. In particular, road funding is essential. That is one of the elements of the Towards Zero road safety strategy. Safer roads are important. Road funding has been cut under this government and I believe we are seeing the outcome of that. Another thing I should mention in this regard is that what road funding is available needs to be spent where the accidents are occurring. I understand that the government is about to enter into a state agreement with local governments for their state road funding. When doing that, the government must be mindful that 61 per cent of serious injuries and fatalities occur on local roads.

While I am talking about road funding, it has been predicted that the increase in the number of speed cameras will substantially increase the revenue the government raises from speed and red-light cameras. I am still waiting for an answer to a question I asked the Premier in September, when he was the Treasurer, about how much revenue has been raised. I will raise that matter again next week if I have not seen the figures. We advocate allocating 100 per cent of those funds to road safety purposes. I have introduced a private member’s bill into this place to set up a road trauma victims’ support service. There has not yet been any indication from the government of whether it will support that bill. Two major advocates for that bill are Glenda and Alan Maloney. They sent an email to the minister in January, which I will read to members —

Mr Mick Murray; Speaker; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr David Templeman; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dear Mr Johnson,

As you are aware for the past three years we and now others are endeavoring to establish a dedicated and holistic Road Trauma Support Unit for Western Australia.

We greatly appreciate the \$35,000 funded by the Road Trauma Trust Fund which has enabled the commencement of the contract to investigate mechanisms and costs associated with establishing said unit.

Research by Edith Cowan University will be completed by the end of the financial year and a proposed model will be presented to the Road Safety Council.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The letter continues —

On the 18/11/2010 The Hon. Margaret Quirk introduced a Bill to amend the Road Safety Council Act 2002 to allow monies from the Road Trauma Trust Fund to be used for a long overdue unit in our state.

Revenue from Speed and Red Light cameras are expected to be \$119 million by 2012/13. The RTTF retains 1/3 of this, a significant increase on previous years.

We implore the coalition to have a bipartisan outlook on this matter. Obviously when the RTTF was established Post Trauma issues were not taken into account, this amendment to the Bill could rectify the gap that exists.

I too add to the Maloney's plea for the government to take a bipartisan approach to this. The first thing that must happen before the unit is established is an amendment to the Road Safety Council Act so that the purposes for which the road trauma trust fund moneys can be applied can extend to this very valuable service. In my second reading speech, I outlined what that service does. It operates in other jurisdictions and I believe that the victims and relatives of victims of road trauma need to receive the same level of service here. Glenda and Alan Maloney have done an excellent job, but being advocates for other victims who are in the same situation is a heavy weight to bear. I think that they would very readily surrender that mantle once they are satisfied that such a service has been established.

I will briefly mention school crossings. It seems that after every term and every school year goes by, there is still no clarity about the circumstances of school crossings. The minister held a review in mid-2009 and put a moratorium on making any changes until that review was finished. That review has finished and it appears that things might have moved on now because decisions have been made and schools have been notified that they are no longer entitled to a manned crossing. However, there has not been a public announcement and I am still at a loss to know whether the minister intends to change the current policy. In the meantime, the minister quite rightly points out that police are being used to fill in for crossing guards who are absent, which is not the optimal use of their time. I would be very pleased if the minister could make a public announcement, because we all get a lot of queries about the current situation regarding school crossings. I am not sure whether the situation is in limbo or whether the brave new world is coming whereby we have only traffic lights. Whatever it is, we would like to know about it and not be kept in the dark.

The first of the final two matters I will talk about is privatisation, especially for policing. When I was researching this matter, I came across something I said in my inaugural speech. It is a bit long, but I think it is just as relevant today as it was a decade ago. Last week was the tenth anniversary of my election to this place, and of the election of many other members, including you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson). With the indulgence of the house, I will read the part that relates to the privatisation of police —

... it is my considered opinion that government should bear the principal responsibility for policing. Trends over recent years, which have eroded this responsibility, should not be encouraged. The collective will of the people of Western Australia is to have a highly professional, well-trained and intelligently deployed public Police Service. To do otherwise is to erode accountability and, more fundamentally, the standard of service delivery that is demanded. We must resist the trend which has occurred in the United States, where private security guards now outnumber publicly employed police personnel.

This is by no means a new concept.

This is something the Premier might like —

Adam Smith in his seminal work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* —

I suspect he has a copy under his pillow —

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wrote some 200 years ago that the administration of justice was an area in which government had a key role to play. He asserted that government alone had the means to expend the moneys necessary to protect the whole of society.

Having accepted that policing is a government responsibility, we nevertheless need to manage our police resources intelligently. Changing circumstances and conditions might mean that police personnel need to be redeployed and priorities reassessed. Although that is a matter for the Commissioner of Police and his management team, he should do so having regard to community concerns and expectations. It is the role of the Government to articulate those concerns to him.

While on the issue of police resources, I must make the observation that tougher, more targeted legislation will impact on crime rates only if sufficient means are given to use those new powers.

These remarks were made at that time in the context of the trend of local governments to deploy private security patrols because there was a general dissatisfaction with police patrols in our suburbs. Now I think there are some broader challenges. There was recently a debate in Karratha about a mining company that pays the salary of one police officer to undertake work on community crime prevention. I understand that once the Gorgon project is up and running, it will pay for a police station and a police presence on Barrow Island. We heard last year that companies whose operations border the notorious Coalfields highway make contributions so that additional police traffic patrols can be conducted.

I appreciate that in all those cases there is some acknowledgment that the activities of those companies have generated additional work for police and that they feel they should make a contribution. However, policing, and lack of resources, often involves competing priorities, and in the absence of transparency in these commercial arrangements, police could be open to allegations that they give priority to those who have made a financial contribution rather than to operational imperatives. We will certainly be watching this development in Parliament this year and will make the government justify the necessity for entering into these commercial arrangements.

As a general proposition, Western Australians believe that there are some services that are core and should never be privatised, and policing is one of them. Policing is an essential community service and should be run to a standard, not for a profit. These services need to be available to all Western Australians, not just those who can afford to pay. Central to this concern is the need for accountability and redress. If privatised, the chain of responsibility is too weak. No-one is more aware of this issue than I am, and there must be the possibility of close ministerial oversight. The buck needs to stop with the minister.

Finally, on the issue of accountability and the fact that this government is arrogant and rides roughshod over community concerns, I want to be a little more parochial and mention an incident in my electorate. The properties of some residents of Moffat Place in Warwick back onto a car park at the Warwick train station. Two of the residents contacted my office in January after receiving correspondence from a community relations officer with the Public Transport Authority. They were advised that construction work was due to commence early in 2011 on an extension of the car park. In common with most people in my electorate, I am very pleased that the car park is being extended, but the problem is that these properties share a dividing fence with the car park. Previously there was a row of trees and shrubs, creating a buffer zone between the car park and the fence line. The trees and shrubs have been either removed or allowed to die off, and the plan is for additional car spaces in those areas, so the car park will extend all the way to the fence line. Residents—there are about eight houses affected—say that they were offered no consultation by the PTA. They have written to me to voice their concerns, which include increased noise pollution, increased pollution from vehicles, increased security risks, and problems with insurance claims when there is damage to the fence. They say that they will be liable for all claims, rather than it being on a shared basis as for normal suburban fence claims, because the PTA is a public authority. Residents want a limestone wall to be built as a buffer between the fence line and the car park.

My office contacted the minister's office by email on 2 February 2011, requesting a meeting between residents and representatives of the PTA. We were advised on 8 February that the minister's office had sought information from the PTA concerning the issues raised by the constituents and would provide a written response to me in the near future. The minister's office also advised that the community relations officer with the PTA had been consulting directly with affected residents to discuss their concerns.

I queried when that response might be forthcoming, and was advised that it would be early the following week; we still have not received the response. I contacted the PTA to request a briefing, and that was refused on the basis that there was a "ministerial" on foot. I was further advised that the PTA community relations officer had spoken personally to every resident who had emailed or written, and had no intention of having a public meeting or facing a "hostile" group of residents who were clearly "one-sided". The same community relations officer wrote a letter to one of the residents to say that lights and CCTV would be repositioned and that some of the

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landscaping redone, but that the PTA would not replace the fence. Residents are very keen to have a joint meeting with the PTA, but say that the PTA has refused all their requests.

As I said, I know that parking at the Warwick station is very welcome for many local residents, but the PTA's arrogance with particular residents is extraordinary. It is extraordinary for someone who is paid as a community relations officer to refuse to attend a public meeting with a maximum of probably 15 people. The concerns of the residents are legitimate and reasonable, and I do not know why they are being treated with such contempt.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr R.F. Johnson (Leader of the House)**.

House adjourned at 5.07 pm
