

Ms Wendy Duncan; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr David Templeman; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Ben Wyatt;  
Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr Tony Buti; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Blayney

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**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2015–16) BILL 2015**  
**APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2015–16) BILL 2015**

*Estimates Committees A and B Reports and Minutes — Presentation*

**MS W.M. DUNCAN (Kalgoorlie — Deputy Speaker)** [4.14 pm]: I present to the Legislative Assembly the reports and minutes of Estimates Committees A and B.

[See papers 3036 and 3037.]

*Estimates Committee A Report — Adoption*

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** I move —

That the report of Estimates Committee A be adopted.

As members are aware, the estimates committees were held from 9 June to 11 June. On each of those days we had two committees sitting—Estimates Committee A and Estimates Committee B—in the two chambers of the house. They sat each day from 9.00 am until 10.00 pm.

I would like to thank the staff of the Legislative Assembly for their contribution. They are long days and staff conducted themselves cheerfully and diligently. I thank the Acting Speakers involved, the members for Forrestfield, Maylands, Mirrabooka, Morley and Southern River, for their contribution, and in particular the member for Geraldton who helped out as a temporary Acting Speaker. It is quite a demand on their time.

Members may be interested to know the number of opposition and government questions —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz):** Members, there are too many conversations in the chamber. I am having difficulty hearing. I am sure Hansard is not finding it easy either. Thank you.

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** Members may be interested to know the number of opposition and government questions asked during estimates. This year we kept records of the number of further questions asked and who asked the further questions. According to the figures that have been provided to me by parliamentary staff, in total there were 2 159 questions asked during estimates and the opposition asked 1 864 of them. As a percentage, this means the opposition asked 86 per cent of the questions.

In Estimates Committee A, the opposition asked 980 questions and government members asked 129. By way of further breakdown, the opposition asked 232 first questions and 748 further questions. The government asked 83 first questions and 46 further questions.

In Estimates Committee B, the opposition asked 884 questions and the government asked 166 questions.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, there are still too many conversations. Please take your conversations outside.

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** By way of further breakdown, the opposition asked 212 first questions and 672 further questions. The government asked 92 first questions and 72 further questions.

In Estimates Committee A, 97 supplementary information requests were made and all have been answered. In Estimates Committee B, 73 supplementary information requests were made and all have been answered. I thank members for their cooperation and commend the report to the house.

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington)** [4.16 pm]: I rise to speak on the tabling of the report of Estimates Committee A. Firstly I say that I thought some of the chairing this year was much improved and there was at least some attempt to get ministers to answer the questions that were being put to them rather than run off into the weeds. I must state my admiration to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum for being the champion government member at refusing to answer questions, but doing it in a polite and pleasant way. The Minister for Mines and Petroleum pretends he cannot hear what is being asked of him, so he asks for questions to be repeated. He fumbles with the page in the budget paper and then says, “Oh, what—page 753?” when the member has clearly said page 752! Then he will ask, “The fifth dot point?”, and the member asking the question will reply, “No, the fourth dot point.” The minister then insists on reading out loud the whole of the dot point even though the member asking is only referring to the last sentence. One has to admire his capacity. He will say, “Look, that’s a great question”, and make a couple of paragraphs worth of remarks. Then he asks the director general to make a couple of paragraphs worth of remarks. The director general obliges him and then he throws to some other adviser from the phalanx of government officials that he has brought in with him. The Minister for Mines and Petroleum is to be admired for his capacity to slow down the process. He is to be admired for that work on behalf of the government to prevent information being provided to the people of Western Australia. He is to be admired on that level. Generally speaking, people see the estimates process as being an opportunity for the people of Western Australia, through their elected representatives, to find out information. Given that that

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is not the task of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I admire his work on that issue! If there was a gold star and a special commendation for not allowing the work of the committee to progress to properly hold the government and its expenditure to account, it would go to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. Now the other ministers will all rush off and have a look at what he did and try to replicate his performance next year when they also try to frustrate the work of Parliament through Estimates Committee A.

I also note that wonderful Thursday night on Estimates Committee A. I saw on the schedule that I had the shift between 7.00 pm and 10.00 pm—members all know how exciting that is. That was when the Minister for Finance; Mines and Petroleum was in, and, therefore, because I am shadow Minister for Mines and Petroleum and the member for West Swan is shadow Minister for Finance and the member for Gosnells is shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food, we were the team assembled by the opposition to deal with that last session on the Thursday night. Interestingly, we saw the government Whip rush into the chamber at the start of the session, because if the opposition members had not sat there, the session would not have been a quorum. The government Whip rushed in and signed the paperwork to make himself a full member of the committee because apparently—I do not know, Mr Acting Speaker, who it was—one of the government members scheduled to be a member of that committee had absconded. They had absconded, so the government Whip had to come in to cover that absent member. It would be interesting to know which party they were from and whether they were just at home or at some bar in the city taking advantage of the three hours that they had told their family they would be at work when in fact they were not here—or were they at important parliamentary duties of one kind or another?

Of course, it was then quite amusing at quarter to 10 that night—if memory serves me, the Acting Speaker was actually in the chair of committee A at the time—because we did not have any additional questions on that particular division, the three opposition members were sitting at the back of the chamber having a conversation, when suddenly the government members realised that they were without a quorum. It was an amusing sight to see the staff of the Parliament running around the building trying to find the third government member to bring the committee back to a quorum. I admire the speed at which the government Whip ran into the chamber from doing whatever very important work I am sure he was doing in whatever part of the building to ensure that the committee did not collapse for want of a quorum. We were happy to oblige and came back in for the next division, which we dealt with before we finally closed the session.

I want to talk about some of the answers that were provided to us. The first goes to the question of the 500 Club and its use of the office of the Premier for a fundraising event. The Premier kept asking us how we knew that it was a fundraising event and said that he had no knowledge of the financial affairs of that event. He did not know who had asked the 500 Club, had not seen any accounts or any of the other issues. But, apparently, even though he had not had access to any of the information from the 500 Club, he knew that the event had not run at a profit. Yet when we pointed out to him that the 500 Club is one of the single largest donors to the Liberal Party and a significant donor to the National Party as well, he said that the 500 Club function was not to do with fundraising. That is interesting because the 500 Club's purpose is to raise money for the Liberal and National Parties.

**Ms W.M. Duncan:** The Nationals get nothing from the 500 Club. We get zero.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** It now gets zero, does it?

**Ms W.M. Duncan:** That is from when we became independent. They cut us off.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** They have cut the Nationals off, but they were certainly a very significant donor to the National Party over many years and we have seen that in the disclosure in terms of the political parties here in Western Australia. If the member for Kalgoorlie is saying that the 500 Club is not helping the National Party, I can tell members that it is certainly not helping the Labor Party. Now it is just a fundraising arm of the Liberal Party—an associated entity in terms of the legislation.

In respect of this matter, the Premier just does not get it. It is not his office, it is the office of the Premier, and he cannot use it as some personal chattel. The Premier does not want to tell anybody in this state what actually happened with the 500 Club's use of the facility. He said that there was no invoice raised for the use of the facility. Why not? I cannot remember any facility that I tried to use when I was state secretary for the Labor Party that did not ask me for costs. There are costs involved for using any facility. The Premier said that none of his staff was involved in organising the function. And yet, clearly, how did the 500 Club know that it could turn up on that particular day? Who told them that the facility was available for them to use? Who told them that they cannot go down that corridor but they can go in there? Who told them that they could not go in that office, but that they could use that space? None of these things were explained. Clearly, someone on the Premier's staff, which we suspect might have been John Hammond, was involved in the organisation of the event. It would have been impossible to organise that event at Hale House without someone in the Premier's office being involved. That is just as clear as night follows day. And the Premier's arrogance in the way that he sees Hale House as simply being his shows the problem at the core of this government: that he does not get it.

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Interestingly, in committee A we asked about Browse and the Premier said that things were happening. Then today, just two weeks later, the Premier tabled an interim agreement with the Browse partners. It was reported in the media today, on the online *The West Australian*, in an article written by Peter Klinger, that this matter was determined by cabinet last week. Clearly the government knew the details of that agreement, but did not share it with us through the estimates committee process. When we see that that agreement is effectively the government giving up on all the undertakings the Premier had made to the people of Western Australia, we can see why they engineered to only make the agreement available after the estimates committee process, when we could not in that back and forward, across the chamber manner that we can in estimates and only in estimates, hold the Premier to account for his complete and utter abdication of any responsibility for the economic development of this state. That is just another occasion on which this Premier in his former role as minister for state development or resources development, whatever the title was, back under the Court Liberal government in the 1990s has batted zero. He batted zero in the Court government and now in his own government he continues to bat at zero—a duck. He gets out first ball on every occasion when the interest of state development in this state is being bowled to him.

**Mr P.C. Tinley:** He is no Bradman.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** He is certainly no Bradman, member for Willagee. He is a complete and utter failure.

In committee A I also asked the Premier about financial counsellors. His performance on that issue is appalling. One one-thousandth of the cost of the Perth Stadium—if one believes the government's accounting for the cost of the stadium, which is completely wrong, but let us leave that aside. Let us assume that it will cost only \$1.5 billion to build the stadium, when we know it will cost lots more. But even if it only costs that much, just one one-thousandth of that money would keep the financial counselling services going.

The Premier came in here today and said that it is outrageous that 42 separate agencies are contracted out of that money. If there were 42 agencies last year and 42 the year before, why is it only in 2015 that having this number of organisations involved in financial counselling is a problem? It was not a problem last year. Why is it suddenly a problem this year? The Premier just does not get it. How many children will lose the roof over their heads and become wards of the state because of this decision? It is a disgrace.

I just point out that I am on the board of a non-government organisation called William Langford Community House that operates in Langford. In the past we have got two principal pieces of funding from the government—\$120 000 year for financial counselling and \$180 000 from the Department of Local Government and Communities for the ongoing work of the organisation. We have lost one-third of our funding. The \$180 000 is contracted over five years. That level of funding was part of the \$600 million the Premier has so often crowed about in this chamber. That is the same organisation that the Premier is happy to come in and laud when he is talking about the additional funds put into the NGOs—the not-for-profit sector—but on the other hand he is accusing them of inefficiency and taking \$120 000 off them. It is a disgrace. It is an embarrassment and the Premier will be condemned by the people of Western Australia for that behaviour.

The next issue I will talk about is Perth Stadium. The Premier's performance in estimates on the stadium was abysmal. Asked a simple question—how much is the project's total cost?—he could not answer, yet it is claimed in the budget papers that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is responsible to work with other agencies for all major projects. The Premier is happy to cut ribbons, stand in front of facilities, get his photograph taken or put out a media release about a bridge, but where is he when such a simple question gets asked: how much is the total cost? He could not tell us.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** He doesn't care.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** He absolutely does not care. That amount of money would keep financial counsellors going for a millennium if that was his priority, but that is not his priority. Helping children or helping families in bad times are not the Premier's priorities. Building a brand-new stadium is his priority. Of course, we know that he committed to build the stadium without any agreement to have any football matches played there. He agreed to build the stadium without receiving a commitment for any money from the commonwealth. He agreed to build the stadium without getting any commitment from the AFL to put in a capital contribution. He agreed to build the stadium without any agreement to get a single cricket match played there ever. Of course, he agreed to build a stadium at the most expensive location he could find, when the Langoulant report specifically recommended against the site on the basis of its transport links. The Premier has never properly explained to people, for example, that people from Mandurah will effectively not be able to get to the stadium unless an additional rail link is built between Cockburn and Thornlie. I note that that was a matter reported in the newspaper recently, and I wonder whether it is an additional cost that should be added to the stadium project price. As the member quoted in the newspaper pointed out, it is hard to get to the stadium without that link. As I say, the government has done a great job in refusing to provide information to the people of Western Australia. Its performance in these

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committees was completely against the spirit of the process. I was interested in the Deputy Speaker outlining the number of questions asked by each side in the chamber, but of course the reason we asked so many additional questions is that the government would not answer the ones we asked upfront. If the government was simply more transparent and honest with the people of Western Australia, we could get on to even more topics.

I finish by highlighting an issue that came up in respect of questions I asked about mine fatalities. At the moment, the Department of Mines and Petroleum is investigating a tragedy at the Nifty copper mine. Part of the issue, as explained to me in the estimates committee, being looked at is the approval last year to restart mining at that mine after a ground disturbance. That approval to restart the mining was provided by the Department of Mines and Petroleum, yet the Department of Mines and Petroleum is investigating the death and all the issues surrounding it, including the approval to recommence work. It is clearly a conflict of interest; an agency cannot investigate itself. I do not know the full story from the department because of the speed with which things need to be done in estimates, but if the argument of the department and the minister is that there are two different divisions of the department, there is only one director general and there is only one minister. The buck stops at the minister's desk and he is having his own agency investigate its own performance. With those comments, I note the committee's report.

**MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee)** [4.35 pm]: I am keen to make a quick contribution to the noting of the Estimates Committee A report. It was the sixth time I have had the pleasure of attending estimates and hopefully there will not be too many more from this side of the chamber!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** One more!

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** One!

The issue I particularly attended to was, of course, transport. The member for Cannington picked up the point about the Perth Stadium and, if I have some time, I might round on to that matter. However, the particular concern I had was the questions we put to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads about the Perth Freight Link. We have made a great deal about the nature of the spending priorities of this government and its ineffective processes, and we have called for a more reasoned approach to how the state's resources are being spent. Nothing highlighted that more starkly than the questions we put to the minister about the Perth Freight Link. Nothing highlighted more the lack of genuine oversight and rigour than the business case for Perth Freight Link; it defies description. In one particular case we were very keen to understand, as with any business case, the assumptions on which the investment is being made. Time and again, the minister, in response to every question from every different angle, was unable to really adequately address the issue of the cost-benefit analysis of not only Perth Freight Link, but how it fits into the wider strategy of freight management in Western Australia, not just in the current growth pains, but also in the longer term to 2030 or 2050. In fact, I found it risible, really, that the minister could not answer simple questions about the assumptions of traffic load and 20-foot equivalent units—containers in lay speak—that would be coming across the port and potentially using the enabling infrastructure of the Perth Freight Link. We received an answer to a question about the estimated number of trucks that would be going through the Perth Freight Link by 2031 as supplementary information and the answer was 6 860 trucks a day. We asked the question on the assumption of containers because any issue in relation to the movement of trucks on our roads, particularly around container traffic ingress and egress across our ports, will always be informed by the assumptions around the amount of container traffic expected. Any stakeholder in the port of Fremantle will say there is a potential laydown area or potential capacity for two million TEUs.

Based on the minister's public statements we were trying to tease out in the estimates committee, Perth Freight Link is linked to 1.7 million TEUs. The member for Fremantle asked several questions about this and they were always on the basis of the number of truck movements relative to the volume and flow of TEUs across the port, which is a particularly important point. One thing we identified was that the consultation with the community has been poorly handled—in fact, mishandled—and done with a level of arrogance that defies understanding. I am talking specifically about the 77 letters received by constituents in my seat and the member for Fremantle's seat about the future of those people's properties. It caused enormous anxiety for those people and also for the businesses. The businesses on Stock Road include the Good Guys—an electrical store—Harvey Norman, no less, and a very good community-oriented sports store that supports all the community sports teams around town with different sorts of sponsorship. Those businesses are in limbo with no certainty on what their future income might be. The principal reason is that the road connecting to Stock Road in phase 2 of the Perth Freight Link, on the basis of information or lack of information that has been provided to us, so we have to make our own assumptions, will be turned into a cul-de-sac. We do not know if Harvey Norman will lose half its car park, which would make its business unviable, or if the connecting street—Garling Street—from Stock Road from which the business derives the majority of its traffic flow will be turned into a cul-de-sac. We can get no information.

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But there is a deeper personal cost to this. Yesterday, a constituent came to see me who is under significant financial stress. I will not even go to the attempts he has made in terms of financial counselling. He suffers from a mental health disorder from years in the Navy. He has a house in Willagee and is one of the people who received the letter. He also has a significant set of circumstances that are not helping his depression. He has a tax bill from the Australian Taxation Office to the effect of \$30 000. He has received a letter saying that the future of his ownership of the title of the land, which he owns wholly in his name, will be put in doubt and may be resumed by the government in order to build this six-lane freeway. It is beyond comprehension that all he should get is one letter. On the basis of the original letter, he called the Department of Transport and was connected with the person that the letter says he should be connected with, and this person had no knowledge of the letter being sent, to whom it was sent or what the answers were to any of the questions that those constituents of mine might ask. This is a man with depression, who is under significant financial pressure that is causing him to sell his home, willingly, because he has other opportunities in terms of accommodation, and he was just in the throes of settling the arrangements with the ATO via the sale of his property when all of a sudden he is left in limbo. We cannot find out for that individual how he will adequately sell a house that has no caveat on it but has this cloud hanging over it about its value. How can a person look a potential buyer in the eye and say it is all good? We can all say “buyer beware” and that it is up to the agent and people to make their own investigations and inform themselves on these things, but that is not good enough. This guy, this constituent of mine, is a particularly ethical man and he is completely stuck as to how he might sell the property while disclosing the fact that it could be resumed by the department at some point in the future.

The committee teased this matter out. We were not exactly inundated with a level of detail around the assumptions of Perth Freight Link that would allow us to form an opinion about its potential worth and cost benefit. However, one of the things we certainly got out of the committee on questioning the relevant minister was that there is no plan. There is no freight strategy for Western Australia into the future, despite the fact that the strategy has been written and sitting on the minister’s desk for two years waiting for his endorsement or submission to cabinet or whatever process internally within the government that they would do in order to deal with it. We know for a fact that that strategy has contained in it the implications and requirements for the future growth of freight traffic into Western Australia around the outer harbour and further wider options, as I understand it—again, there is a lack of transparency from this government on this matter—such as Bunbury and beyond. It contains information on how freight and rail links might be enhanced to support not only the end game in the mature state of a freight strategy that might see the outer harbour being the principal point of entry for container traffic, but also the transition plan between the existing port and any new option like the outer harbour at Kwinana.

I will conclude my remarks and make the point that I will have a lot more to say as we come to consideration of each of the divisions in our further addresses to the house. I note with some pleasure that from some of the other divisions we got some more direct and fulsome answers from the relevant minister, and I conclude my remarks on that basis.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [4.45 pm]: I will be very brief as I make comments on Estimates Committee A. As a Whip, this estimates process that we face each year is always very interesting. I note the Deputy Speaker’s report and particularly the percentage of questions asked. There is a trend here of course that when a member asks a question they then make sure that they ask about three other questions supplementary to the first question. Those statistics are very interesting, but it is important to note that the estimates is essentially an opportunity for the opposition to get questions up to investigate the budget as it is printed and to ensure that prudent and effective analysis can be made of the budget. I remain a little concerned about the time allocation for some of the divisions in the Parliament for various ministers to report to. Members will note, for example, that to my understanding none of the committees in Estimates Committee A finished early. In the past, committees have finished early because of a lack of questions. However, it is important to note that that has not occurred particularly in the last number of years of the Barnett government. One thing that concerns me a little in terms of time allocation is that some divisions are not able to be properly debated or are fast tracked and we then find that time runs out. As an example, in Estimates Committee A, the transport portfolio, which was held in this chamber on the evening of Tuesday, 9 June, contained the important divisions on Transport, the Commissioner of Main Roads and the Public Transport Authority, and had effectively only three hours. In those areas there is substantial expenditure and significant projects that should have received an appropriate analysis. The other Estimates Committee A area, which was significant again this year, was Minister Hames’ divisions on the morning of Wednesday, 10 June until 3.00 pm that day.

WA Health is a major portfolio and there were the other significant areas of Tourism, Fisheries and Indigenous Affairs. I think there was an allocation of five hours, which is a significant amount of time, but given the significance of some of those other portfolio areas, apart from Health, there is an argument that the time should be increased.

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One of the problems we are finding in my shadow portfolio area of Local Government and Communities is in the presentation of the budget papers. People want to ask many questions about projects and issues associated with projects but find it difficult to find line items that relate to them because they could be hidden under another term or a term that is not exactly related to the particular program or project. The other issue is the dot points, which are usually under the significant issues and trends part of the budget, where we find that in some respects, we have to draw a long bow to address an issue of concern. I have been in this place for 14-plus years; I do not know whether in recent times there has been a change of the wording or the way in which budgets are presented, but it seems to me that some portfolios are very light in detail. That could be because of cuts to programs that ministers do not want clearly identified or it could be that the important information is not presented in a way that is easy for members to identify. It was interesting that three hours were allocated to my own shadow portfolio of local Government and Communities, which, as I said, was dealt with on Wednesday evening, 10 June. We could have asked more questions in that area but three hours was the allocation, it seems to be a traditional period of allocation.

The other committee A divisions were on Thursday. Again, the number of divisions and the amount of time available for effective analysis of the budget are pushed, I think, in the Attorney General's area. There was an allocation of four hours from 2.00 to 6.00 pm. Seven divisions were covered, including the Attorney General, the Corruption and Crime Commission, the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. It seems to me that in the next estimates process that area should be looked at to see whether enough time is allocated for that number of portfolios.

In, I think, one of the Thursday divisions, a minister was absent due to illness, and that is absolutely acceptable. However, if a parliamentary secretary or another minister steps in to represent them, it should be almost convention that the representing person does not attempt to filibuster on answering questions when the minister is not there; it should be almost an automatic deferral to the director general or an appropriate officer in that committee to respond. In that situation, it is important to get answers from the relevant director general, who is in the best place to answer the question because the minister is absent. I think in one of the committees, that was not necessarily what happened. A parliamentary secretary was sitting in and then a minister was representing. I think the parliamentary secretary should have been much quicker in deferring to the director general and/or appropriate officer for a concise answer.

The government pushed back the delivery of the budget, which therefore pushed back when the estimates hearings were held and constricted the amount of time available for supplementary answers to be provided. I am not sure whether in her report the member for Kalgoorlie highlighted the number of supplementary questions there were this time around. She gave me an overall view of how many questions were asked, but I am not sure whether in her report she says exactly how many formal supplementary questions were asked, the answers to which were required to be delivered to members before we commenced the debate today.

**Ms W.M. Duncan:** In my report I said there were 97 supplementary information questions in estimates A. They have been answered. Estimates B had 73 and they have all been answered.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will finish here so that the member for Kwinana can conclude. I am not sure how that number sits with trends over the past couple of years—whether more supplementary questions are submitted or declined. One of the important things to note is that members tend to ask supplementary questions if they think the minister has been hedging his or her responses in the formal estimates committee. I am interested in that as a trend, but we can talk about that another time; I do not expect the member for Kalgoorlie to give me that answer now.

As opposition Whip, I thank members from my side for their shouldering of the committee requirements. It is a big week for members and I appreciate the support of my colleagues from the opposition for their work in estimates this year.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [4.57 pm]: I would like to return the compliment to the member for Mandurah, the opposition Whip, for the work he put into estimates, in particular for rostering me on between 7.00 and 10.00 pm on Thursday evening! I am not quite sure what I did to him previously, but, clearly, he wanted to make sure I hung around for as long as possible!

I want to make a few brief remarks about the performance in chamber A. This was my seventh estimates hearing and from my perspective it was one of the best. I have often said that I came to this place with images of how estimates hearings took place in the Senate, in particular John Faulkner grilling ministers and bureaucrats to the nth degree late at night and getting into the finest detail. Obviously, I was bitterly disappointed upon arriving in this place to realise that the opportunities for that level of detail are very remote. Estimates hearings provide us

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with a glimpse of what we hope is proper cross-examination of government, although I must say that the estimates, as they work in this place, still go some way to curtailing the level of detail we should be able to go into in cross-examination of the government about funding its programs.

One of the issues I wanted to comment on was the amount of time that was allocated to the very significant health portfolio. I am sure it was not deliberate but previously I think we had from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm for Health plus one other portfolio. This year we shared it with Tourism, Fisheries, and Training and Workforce Development. We found that even though Health represents 28 per cent of the government's overall budget, we spent about three hours on that area all-up, which was really quite an inadequate amount of time to dedicate to a budget as extensive as the Health budget. Nevertheless, we were given a good opportunity to ask questions.

I think this year the estimates committees were chaired as well as, if not better than, previous years. My first couple of years attending estimates committees were very frustrating as I think the chairs were trying to work out consistent protocols across each of the committees and between each of the chairs about the number of questions asked, the number of supplementary questions asked and whether members of the committee who did not originally ask the question were then allowed to ask a supplementary question. Those things seem to have been remedied. I think the estimates committees are now working quite well as a whole.

It would seem that never a year goes by when the Minister for Health does not comment on the number of advisers he has compared with the number of advisers that the previous Minister for Health, Hon Jim McGinty, had. The Minister for Health continues the bromance by comparing his performance with that of the previous minister, bragging about the number of advisers he does or does not bring into the chamber and insisting that he brings less advisers into the chamber than the previous Minister for Health. The presence of advisers is absolutely vital to ensure that we have the opportunity to get to the detail of the portfolios. Obviously, Health is a big department and we have at least a dozen advisers in the chamber. We have to squeeze our questions into a limited period and if advisers, by virtue of their expertise, provide very detailed and sometimes long answers, that in itself tends to hold up the estimates process. I think we need to be cognisant of that. As I said, it is therefore important that we allocate the appropriate amount of time to big departments such as Health to travel the length and breadth of their portfolios.

One of the observations I wanted to make is that by virtue of having advisers in the chamber, we are obviously consuming vast resources of the government to ensure they are here. We were very conscious of ensuring that we only keep the advisers here for a minimal period. We tried to plan ahead as much as possible and had informal arrangements about what time we would spend on each of the elements or divisions that we were to discuss. That of itself is useful but again tends to restrict the lines of inquiry. Towards the end of the Health budget debate, we found that a number of members lined up and tried to have their questions answered or at least get them into the system so we could at least get the government's answers on the record.

I am not sure why, with the minister's permission, we have to seek supplementary information, and without the minister's permission, we have to put questions on notice. It would seem to me to be an unnecessary extra step for members of the committee to take questions that they did not have the opportunity to ask or questions that they thought the government did not provide an adequate answer to and then go away and put those questions on notice. I am not sure why we cannot have a mechanism in estimates by which questions that members have in the barrel, so to speak, are ready to go—questions that they want answered so the government is on the record—so they can have them in written form and commit to putting them on notice, simply by virtue of tabling them or submitting them during the estimates committee hearing itself. I am sure that there may be a range of reasons why that may be difficult procedurally but it would seem to me to be a perfectly reasonable step to take, particularly since estimates is an invaluable opportunity to get these things on the record. Perhaps in that instance, we can have 10 minutes at the end of a particular division in which members can, by way of summary, place a range of questions on notice, thereby at least signalling to the minister and the advisers that they have an interest in that area. If time did not permit members to ask those questions in the chamber and have those answers delivered straightaway, at least it would signal to the committee that they are seeking answers in that area.

I think Estimates Committee A conducted itself in a very civilised and appropriate manner across all the divisions that I was involved in, perhaps with the exception of one. As the shadow Minister for Science, I had the opportunity to quiz the Minister for Science. I was not in this place for much of the time that the Minister for Science, who is also the Premier, provided his answers. I must say that I was surprised at the rancour, the annoying tone and the unfortunate theatre of estimates that existed during that division. We should remember that public servants are in the chamber with us. Parliament, as always, is a public forum. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to conduct ourselves in a manner that befits this place. At times we get testy with each other. At times we might be subject to debate that annoys us. Even though we might be annoyed and we might show that annoyance, I think the display from the Premier that day in response to questions, particularly from the member for Cannington, was extraordinary. Although the member for Cannington was moderating his tone, even though

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clearly the contents of his questions were annoying the Premier, I thought the Premier entered into a level of histrionics and drama that did not befit the estimates committee process. I seek to place on record that I think it is important that the Chair who was presiding at that time ensure that members conduct themselves appropriately but also that members understand that they have a responsibility in this place to conduct themselves with a level of dignity and appropriateness befitting the Parliament of Western Australia. I note that in the UK Parliament members always refer to each other as “my learned friend”, “the right honourable” and so forth. We often dispense with that stilted and ceremonial style of debate, perhaps consistent with our Australian culture. However, if we are incapable of having a dignified debate in this place and of getting issues into the open, and if members descend into histrionics and name-calling across the chamber, in what is supposed to be an intimate committee environment, perhaps we need to revert to a more formalised, stilted and structured manner of debate.

**Mr I.C. Blayney:** I seem to remember that I was chairing the committee at that time, and it was a difficult session. But you probably should note also that the Premier was more than happy to answer your questions, and there was certainly no rancour in the way he answered your questions. We quite happily slotted you in so that you could ask those questions.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** For the science questions, yes, absolutely. However, during the time I am talking about, I was not rostered on, so it was not a time when I was in the chamber; I was observing it from afar. However, I thought it was inappropriate for a committee of the Parliament to have that tone and manner of conduct. I note also—I think it is an appropriate interjection, member for Geraldton—that the Premier did allow me to ask questions around science and did answer those questions in an appropriate way. I understand the member for Victoria Park wants to make a couple of remarks, so I will conclude by simply making those observations and thanking all members for their participation in the process.

**MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [5.11 pm]:** I want to make a couple of quick comments in respect of Estimates Committee A. All of my sessions were in Estimates Committee B, except for one, and that was with the Deputy Premier in the Aboriginal Affairs division. I note the comments that have been made by my colleagues around the performance of ministers in answering questions. The member for Kalgoorlie outlined the statistics of how many questions were asked et cetera. I generally do not have any problem with any of that. I think by and large the estimates committees that I was involved with were conducted well.

However, I want to make one point. A very short time was allocated for a number of agencies. For example, some of the energy utilities were allocated about half an hour each. That was in Estimates Committee B, not A. In Estimates Committee A, one hour was allocated for Aboriginal Affairs. That division ended up being about 45 minutes. I do not have any complaint about how the Deputy Premier answered questions. He answered them fulsomely, and so did the director general and other staff. Generally I did not have any problem—certainly not with the Department of Treasury—with government members asking the odd dorothy dixer to take up time. When four hours has been allocated, as was the case for Treasury, we can generally accommodate the odd question from the government. However, when we have only 45 minutes, we do not have time to accommodate a range of questions. It just so happened that with Aboriginal Affairs, a couple of government members—one in particular—keep bowling up questions. I think the member for Geraldton might have been in the chair at the time, and he was good enough, even though I was not next on the list, to promote me up the list so that I could get in that last question when only one minute was left on the clock.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** That was me!

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Somebody was good enough to promote me up the list.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** The Deputy Premier is always ready to take credit!

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I know! The Deputy Premier can turn any story into a story about himself, I will say that.

Question put and passed.

*Estimates Committee B Report — Adoption*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker):** The question is —

That the report of Estimates Committee B be adopted.

**MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [5.13 pm]:** I was certainly present for a large component of the debate in Estimates Committee B, and I want to raise some points with respect to one particular time block during that committee. A total of four hours was allocated to police, road safety, and training. The fact of the matter is that four hours is barely enough time to scratch the surface of these complex areas. Members would be aware that over the course of the last year or so, there have been significant cuts to technical and further education. There have also been significant fee rises that have made it unaffordable for many people in my electorate to undertake TAFE courses. There have been increases of not just five, 10 or 20 per cent but of over 100 per cent for some TAFE courses. There have been significant changes in that area, significant cuts and significant cost increases

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for people. Therefore, time certainly needed to be allocated to enable us to drill down into those questions. Unfortunately, less than one hour was available for those matters. That is because over three hours was taken on police and road safety matters—quite rightfully—which again are very big and complex areas. Traditionally, four hours has been allocated to whatever portfolios the Minister for Police has had. However, in previous years the minister has not had such a large portfolio as training added to the police and road safety portfolios, particularly when training is so controversial.

I also want to put on record again this year the absolute lack of accountability in the estimates process when it comes to road safety. The fact of the matter is that road safety does not come under the minister's police portfolio. It comes under Main Roads. In total in the budget papers, road safety is allocated half a page. Everyone knows how thick the budget volumes are for the various portfolios. There are two huge volumes. I have not bothered to look up how many pages there are in each volume, but I think each volume has between 300 pages and 400 pages, so there is a lot of detail in the budget papers. There is detail in the budget papers about agencies and offices that have budgets that are minuscule compared with road safety. However, there is virtually no detail when it comes to road safety. Annually, there is over \$100 million in the budget to be expended on road safety. We have put it on record as part of the estimates process, and certainly in the Estimates Committee B hearing, that the government continues to sit on at least \$80 million for road safety that it does not spend each year. We see a smoke and mirrors exercise by the minister and the Premier, whereby they say they collect around \$100 million and they spend around \$100 million. They are trying to suggest that they spend all the money they get from speed and red-light camera fines. That is simply not true. They are sitting on at least \$80 million that, as I pointed out last year, is not being spent. That is money from speed and red-light camera fines that is sitting in the account and not being spent on road safety.

In speaking to this motion today, my point is not principally about the fact that the government is not spending that money. I want to focus on the government's total lack of accountability when it comes to the expenditure of that money. The government does not provide a list of the projects that it is undertaking with that money, which is in the order of \$100 million. The government does not as part of the budget process list the programs or expenditure of the Office of Road Safety. It is simply not listed in the budget. If I turn to the WA Police budget, I can see what its forward works are, what its programs are and what it intends to spend. For example, the government has a line item for closed-circuit television cameras. We can see how much money is on budget for CCTV cameras this year and in the out years, and what has been allocated. Similarly, we can see what money has been allocated for the new hoon cameras. We can see what capital works are in progress for police stations and the like. We can see those line items of expenditure. When it comes to road safety, those line items are simply not in the budget. They just put in the global amounts with no breakdown. There are not even the usual major issues and trends headings in any detail at all. It is less than half a page in the budget. In each of the last three years the minister has been handing across a piece of paper at the actual estimates committee hearing. She does not have the courtesy to provide it even the day before, a week before, or perhaps even when the budget itself is brought down. I do not think that would be a good enough solution, but it would be better than what is happening now.

I put it to the house that the programs and expenditure listed on that single piece of double-sided A4 paper should be printed in the budget papers. We should know what such a huge amount of money is being spent on. About \$110 million is listed as expenditure, and the first detail we see of that expenditure is when we are handed it at the committee hearing. It is not even handed out at the start of the committee session. My recollection is that that session went from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm. We were not even handed the document at 2.00 pm. I think the member for Hillarys asked when we were going to get it, and the minister's response was that we should wait until we get to road safety. When we actually moved on to the session on road safety, suddenly we were allowed to have that bit of paper. That is pathetic; it is not accountable; and it is just playing politics with an issue that should be beyond politics. I asked the minister why this information could not be included in the budget papers and she said that maybe it would be next year—maybe, maybe, maybe—and that we are restructuring road safety. I suggest that there is nothing to stop the government from doing that.

Effectively, members of that committee are caught on the hop. We see the information on where the government will be spending that money literally the minute we start asking questions during estimates. That is obscene. It is not good enough, and it is not accountable. We have to quickly look down and see how much money is going to Main Roads, how much is going to WA Police and so on, and there are just headings and expenditure. For example, in general terms, my first thought was that \$60 million of the \$110 million road trauma trust account money is being spent by Main Roads. That is the vast majority of the total funding. I want to seek the assurance that I think everybody in the community seeks—that is, is the \$60 million being spent on genuine road safety initiatives? It can be argued that surfacing any road, putting an edge on any road, improving an intersection, building a bridge over another road or building a tunnel under something would all be things that would enhance road safety in a particular location. The question I ask is: is that the best expenditure? People want to know that

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the money being spent on road safety is going to the best spend, if the aim is to prevent death and serious injury on Western Australian roads.

We already know that the allocation for the past few years, since this government changed the law in this regard, has been made by cabinet rather than on the recommendation of the Road Safety Council. This year we saw that all semblance of impartiality or objectivity has gone. There is no way that, a year or two ago, the Road Safety Council would have recommended that \$60 million of the \$110 million be spent on assisting the Main Roads budget. This government changed the law in this regard. A few years ago, there is no way that the council would have recommended that the funding be spent on police wages or that the whole cost of the Office of Road Safety and the future costs of the office of the commissioner of road safety that this government intends to establish would be met out of speed and red-light camera fines. This is a major shift in the way speed and red-light camera money is being spent. It was done without any accountability. There is no mention of it in the budget papers.

I raised the issue of the total committee session being four hours. Police is a big portfolio, road safety is fairly large, and then there is training—and we have four hours. If we spend more than two hours on police, we are effectively left with less than an hour for road safety. We were also required to share that hour with the government backbenchers, some of whom had dorothy dix questions, while others made up their own genuine questions. That leaves very little time, and during that small amount of time we gleaned a few little facts. One of them was that, for the first time, the whole cost of staff, rent and everything else for the Office of Road Safety and the future commissioner of road safety are being met out of speed and red-light camera fines—and that is what the government intends to do in the future. My own take on this is that it is nothing more than a grab by Treasury for those funds. Firstly, it assists the state's general financial position to have \$80 million on deposit that it continues to not spend each year. I looked at the forward estimates, and I see that the government continues to sit on that little pot of gold throughout the forward estimates and will not spend it on road safety initiatives. Secondly, it assists by effectively propping up other agency budgets. Where previously there would have been a consolidated revenue appropriation to Main Roads for some of those projects, to police for the staffing and indeed to the Department of Transport or Main Roads for the staffing costs of the people working in the Office of Road Safety, that is all now directly coming out of the road trauma trust account. This is a major shift in the way the government is handling things. There is no public announcement and there is nothing in the budget papers. It is just a sleight of hand. Basically, the government crosses its fingers behind its back and hopes that the opposition will not ask the relevant questions.

On top of that, when we got the single double-sided A4 piece of paper that listed the general headings and the amounts of the projects, I then asked for a breakdown of what the projects were. In her first response, the minister listed a couple of projects that do not add up to anything near the amount listed for that line item. My response was to then say that it does not actually add up, and to ask for the full list. The minister's next response was to give a fuller list, listing some specific projects and the amount of dollars allocated. Again, that did not add up to the amount of the line item—it fell well short of it—so I asked the minister how the rest of the money was going to be spent. We are talking about tens of millions of dollars here, and the answer was that those projects would be determined in the course of time, or some words to that effect; I am paraphrasing here. Effectively, either the government is going to make it up as it goes along or it is just not advising the opposition because it wants to make some political capital out of future announcements on roads, intersections and the like. In any event, it is just not acceptable. It is not an appropriate way.

I have said in this house many times, both in opposition and in government, that saving lives on our roads should be beyond politics. I will give the former Minister for Road Safety, the member for Hillarys, some credit here. Everyone knows that he has a genuine commitment to road safety. We know that he has some personal circumstances that have affected his views on road safety. Only last year I attended an annual service for victims of road trauma and their families, and anyone who has been directly impacted by a fatality or very serious injury realises the importance of the effective expenditure of road safety funds. Legislative initiatives can be taken and expenditures of money can be more beneficial than others. Two very critical reports have been done on road safety expenditure; one was by the Auditor General a couple of years ago. The Auditor General said there was a total lack of accountability in road safety spending. He highlighted the fact there was no proper evaluation of the expenditure of that money. Peter Browne then undertook a road safety report on behalf of the government. He had previously done a report for government on police and community youth centres. That report contains all the facts. I thought if anything, he was pretty light on in terms of his rhetoric criticising the government. If members read the report, they will see that Mr Browne very plainly points out that Western Australia's road safety record over the last 10 years has gone from one of the better states to one of the worst. I think that last year Tasmania had a worse result than Western Australia. The year before, Western Australia was actually the worst state. Tasmania's statistics bump up and down a bit; it has a small population. A small difference in the number of deaths can make a significant percentage difference. This state cannot be proud of its road safety record. We need to ensure that the government makes the most of our expenditure. This government's only line

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on road safety is, “We now spend all of the money from speed and red-light cameras on road safety. This is a great initiative; this is what we did; therefore we’re better than anyone else on it.” In looking at the detail, the government is choosing to prop up projects in major government departments, which used to be funded out of the consolidated revenue fund, to the tune of tens of millions of dollars. They are paying wages and salaries out of that road safety spend. Works are being done in a range of agencies that were previously done as mainstream work by those agencies. The question needs to be asked: is there really any more money being spent on road safety in this state? My clear view is that there is not. Although people previously said that only a third of the money is being spent on road safety, that third was spent at the discretion of the Road Safety Council.

Blackspot funding, which largely comes from the commonwealth, was not previously included as part of that spend. Although \$15 million might have been allocated by the Road Safety Council, another \$20 million was spent on blackspot funding but that did not even count. When speed and red-light cameras were bringing in somewhere between \$40 million and \$45 million a year, a third—roughly \$15 million—was being spent by the Road Safety Council and up to another \$20 million was being spent on black spots. In and of itself, that nearly accounted for the entire income from speed and red-light cameras. The cost of the deployment of radar detectors, police booze buses and the like was met out of the police budget; that was not met out of the Road Safety budget. A lot of money is being sucked out into mainstream agencies. I regard it as complete smoke and mirrors. When that money was spent in the mainstream budget areas, there was proper accountability through the estimates process. Now there is no accountability—a piece of flimsy paper is flicked across the chamber at the last minute. That is how this government sees itself as accountable. We still have nothing from the minister that details all the projects the government is spending money on. During estimates, the Minister for Police could not say what a lot of the money was being spent on. She said they were projects yet to be identified. The opposition is supposed to take that on a type of “trust us” basis. We have to trust that Main Roads WA will spend that money on yet-to-be-identified projects that have a real road safety benefit. I do not think that is good enough. My main point is accountability. There fails to be proper accountability for the expenditure of road safety funds and the proper evaluation of that. The Minister for Police says, “Maybe next year it will be properly within the budget papers.” I put it to everyone in this chamber and in this state that it is not good enough to hand over a flimsy bit of paper instead of detailing the \$110 million worth of expenditure within the budget papers.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armada)** [5.34 pm]: I also rise to make a contribution about Estimates Committee B, particularly the morning and evening sessions on the final day, Thursday. The morning session dealt with the very large portfolio of education and the evening dealt with mental health, disability services and child protection. One has to ask whether three hours allocated to mental health, child protection and disabilities is enough. I would say that Education warrants at least four hours, but of course it would have to be scheduled for a morning session because we would not want to be here until 11 o’clock at night, particularly on a Thursday.

I have a couple of things to say about the estimates process. I am not sure whether government members should ask questions. Of course this side will be in government one day; hopefully sooner rather than later. In my view estimates is all about the opposition holding the government to account over very significant issues contained in the budget, and public servants are present to answer specific questions. Most of the time government members ask dorothy dixers—occasionally there is an exception—or prearranged questions, which devalues the process and reduces the time the opposition has to ask very important questions. Of course there is a political process involving the opposition seeking to score points, but in the main most questions asked during estimates are to elicit further information or to clarify budget positions.

I will now talk specifically about Estimates Committee B. The Minister for Police is also the Minister for Women’s Interests. My understanding is that no time was allowed for that and there was no budget line related to women’s interests matters, which is of major interest to at least 51 per cent of the population. It is a concern that women’s interests do not receive an allocated portion of the estimates process. Domestic violence was only raised in the Child Protection session that I attended. There was one little entry related to domestic violence but it did not really seem to carry any other weight in committee B, which is quite alarming when one looks at the number of domestic violence offences in Western Australia. When the estimates process is being prepared in the future, time has to be allocated to the women’s interests portfolio.

In the morning session I had the pleasure of the Leader of the House, Hon John Day, representing the Minister for Education. The estimates process suffers when the minister responsible is not present. The Leader of the House is a very competent person, but of course he will not have the same level of knowledge in a portfolio that is not his. In the evening session, a parliamentary secretary led the massive portfolios of mental health, child protection and disabilities. I know that there is nothing we can really do about that when we have estimates committee hearings in the lower and upper houses and ministers in both houses, but I think it is better to have the minister there to ask questions. The ministers—even more so when they are not the minister responsible for the portfolio—rely on the public servants in attendance to provide most of the answers. Because there is limited

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time, I wonder whether it is necessary, especially in education when there is a flotilla or armada of public servants, to go through and name each public servant. Maybe they could just have a name tag and if they need to be referred to in the estimates committee process, that can be referred to. Many of the public servants there for the education division did not actually contribute an oral answer. I think it would quicken up the process if the director general or head of department and maybe one or two other people were named, but I am not sure that everyone needs to be named.

The estimates committee process is interesting. I was not in Parliament when our side was in government and this is my fourth year of estimates committee hearings. It is like living in a parallel universe, because we relay or pick up on things that are of major concern, but it always seems to be rosy on the other side of the chamber and everything seems to be fine. Of course, the public servants have one hand tied behind their backs—probably actually two hands tied behind their backs—and they have to be loyal to the government of the day and they cannot criticise the government. In regards to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support portfolio there has been a 22 per cent increase in the number of children in the care of the department in the Armadale region from November 2011 to February 2015, but there has been a reduction in full-time equivalent staff in the district. That has to have had some impact. When that question was asked, the parliamentary secretary handed it over to the department head and this is the answer that was given. I asked about how the department could adequately service a 22 per cent increase in the number of children in the care of the department in the Armadale district over a period of four years, and I received this answer —

The Armadale district, like all our service delivery officers, manages matters of workload through our workload management tools—an industrial order. Through a supervision process led by the senior management of the district, we look and relook at priorities whereby necessarily cases are reallocated in accordance with priority.

Sir Humphrey Appleby would be very proud of that answer. I am not seeking to criticise the public service because they are there to defend the government line, but it is really difficult because they have their duty to the government and so I do not think we always get clear answers. Maybe the opposition could be criticised sometimes for not providing brief questions—actually the questions are usually quite brief, it is just the lead-up to the questions that is the problem. It would also assist if the answers were direct and were without the need to engage in doublespeak, which I think is a major problem.

Interestingly, in the first part of the evening session, which dealt with Mental Health, there was the case of a public servant who was a bit more open, and that was the Mental Health Commissioner, Tim Marney. When we raised the issue of the police commissioner mentioning that he was looking at giving nurses special police powers to deal with mental health patients and queried the parliamentary secretary on that, she had no details of it, but Mr Marney mentioned that there were no details. Even though the police commissioner had announced to a media presser that special police powers were to be given to mental health nurses, the Minister for Mental Health in an interview following on in the same segment of *ABC News* on that Sunday night agreed with the police commissioner's announcement but was unable to provide any detail of what those special powers would be or how they would be utilised. Tim Marney was very interested in the commissioner's statement. He basically said that after the police commissioner's announcement, he had a meeting with him in which he informed him that there would be no need for mental health nurses to have any special police powers. He also said that it was quite unfortunate that the police commissioner had made that announcement without first seeking to —

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** It was on the day he was under pressure on police response times. It was just a diversion.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Of course it was a diversion, member for Midland. By the sounds of it he had not been in contact with the Mental Health Commissioner or the minister. The Mental Health Commissioner basically told the police commissioner—from what he said in the estimates committee hearing—that it was a matter that came under his jurisdiction, not under the police commissioner's jurisdiction. The point is that the Minister for Mental Health went on television and agreed with the police commissioner's announcement but could not provide details of those powers, and then we find out later in an estimates committee hearing that there will be no special powers granted to mental health nurses. One would have thought that the Minister for Mental Health would have stated on television that this matter had not come before her or that she had not discussed it with the Mental Health Commissioner. It is interesting how the government operates. Although, as Mr Marney said, the police commissioner is not the government and it was police commissioner who made that announcement. The government did not make that announcement, but the Minister for Mental Health went on TV and agreed with the police commissioner that special powers would be awarded.

There are other content matters, but I think I will leave them to my contribution to the third reading debate. I do not think it would be a brave government but I think it would be a sensible government that would look at the issue of government members asking questions. I have to say that this year in the two estimates hearings that

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I was involved with government members were actually quite reasonable and did not ask too many questions or questions that went on for too long, but in previous years that has not been the case.

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan)** [5.46 pm]: I sat in on Estimates Committees A and B for quite a bit of estimates week. I think I was there every night until 10 o'clock.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** You enjoyed it.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Yes, even though I had the flu, I enjoyed it.

On Wednesday, I sat in Estimates Committee B for Treasury and then the Water Corporation and Sport and Recreation that evening. On Thursday, I sat in on the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and Planning and some other Estimates Committee A hearings.

Like some of my colleagues in this place, I thought most of the estimates hearings functioned very well this year compared with previous years. I think the opposition was given the ability to ask questions in a fair way. I note what the member for Armadale said about dorothy dixers, which are really not necessary, particularly in areas in which there is not much time. Once there has been one question and a few follow-up questions, the time goes. In relation to committee A, I think the member for Victoria Park said that when there is an hour or half an hour on a particular subject and there are two or three dorothys, the committee does not work that well. As I said, moreover, I think the estimates committees worked better this year than they have on previous years. I think the Chairs did a pretty good job controlling the hearings and ensuring that there was fair opportunity for opposition members to ask questions.

I want to go through my experiences in each of the sessions I attended. I was really disappointed with the government's performance on some of the Treasury matters, particularly questions on the cost of the Perth Stadium. Frankly, I think the information given by Treasury in that session was one of the worst performances I have seen by Treasury in relation to an estimates program. That we could not find the full cost of the stadium in the budget papers and that no-one could give us an answer during that process was a disgrace, particularly as it is a contract. We now know there is an obligation to the state of \$1.7 billion, which is a massive commitment, and Treasury was not able to provide the information. In fact, Treasury did everything to try to confuse it, quite frankly. I was very, very disappointed. As I said, the supplementary information we have now is that the cost is around \$1.7 billion and that does not include, for example, some other issues such as the actual cost over 25 years. The \$1.2 billion is the net present value of the payments of the design, build, finance and maintain contract; that does not include the actual cost, which the head of the office of strategic projects said on radio could be over \$2 billion. I am very, very disappointed. On the other hand, on the evening when the Department of Sport and Recreation was in the chamber we asked a straight question and we got a straight answer, although the answer had to be clarified later by the minister. However, there was an attempt to provide some clarity about the total cost of the stadium. It was the third time we had asked the question. We asked it in Estimates Committee A, of Treasury in Estimates Committee B and finally the Department of Sport and Recreation gave some further information that helped us to understand the nature of the finances behind the stadium. Frankly, nowhere in the budget papers produced by Treasury are all the components of the cost of the stadium shown. It was not an outstanding performance on that front.

The hearing with the Department of Planning was done in a productive manner. We have received some of the supplementary answers back, but again, there is a lack of clarity about land put aside for Elizabeth Quay for commercial buildings and whether it is progressing at the rate it should be. Again, further information was provided about Elizabeth Quay and some of those projects, again showing that some the very optimistic assumptions underlying those projects will not be fulfilled.

I wanted to make those few points. As I said, I am very disappointed about the stadium costings. We are now getting to the bottom of it—\$1.7 billion—but it has taken a series of questions both through this house and the upper house, three sets of questions in the estimates process, supplementary information and further questions in the upper house estimates process, to try to get an accurate picture of the total obligation that this stadium will put on the finances of this state.

**MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park)** [5.52 pm]: In the debate on Estimates Committee A, before I transition to Estimates Committee B, I was making some points to the Deputy Premier, who unfortunately is no longer in the chamber. I think we had four hours with the Treasurer, so it was not an issue when dorothy dixers were asked by government members. They generally do not ask very many during the Treasury division, which allowed the opposition to explore the issues it wanted to. However, a number of agencies were allocated only short periods; for example, the Public Utilities Office was given only half an hour and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was given only 45 minutes. At that time, a government member asked a number of dorothy dixer questions about issues that simply did not need to be explored and when there are only 45 minutes for entire area, that is problematic. I think most members on this side of house have made the point that there was not generally

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a problem with dorothy dixers, but when there is less than an hour, there perhaps needs to be better recognition from government to allow the opposition to take that time. I was saying to the Deputy Premier and to the member for Geraldton, who was in the chair at the time, that when there was two minutes left of the time allocated, I was down the list a bit, and the member for Geraldton and the Deputy Premier were good enough to bump me up so I could get in a last question, which I think was good sportsmanship, let me say that.

Ultimately, members on the government side will understand this in due course because at some point they will move across to the opposition side of the chamber; hopefully in about March 2017. They will then understand that although the Premier does not like estimates, and the Premier's petulant, childish behaviour during this year shows he has perhaps had a gutful of it, for the opposition and for accountability, the estimates is a very, very important process. The member for West Swan just outlined the difficulty we had during the Treasury division. The member for West Swan basically had to cart herself around from hearing to hearing, from this department to that department, from Treasury, to Sport and Recreation, to Premier and Cabinet, to try to find out what the stadium will cost. At no point in the budget is it set out what the stadium costs. In light of the fact that not a week goes by when there is not some minister out there on location with a hard hat and a shovel, it would be thought that somewhere it could be clearly found what the stadium costs. When the member for West Swan put the question to the Premier, he carried on like a pork chop, personally offended that the question was asked. I get that Premiers perhaps get disgruntled with the estimates process. I get that they do not like having to sit there and answer question after question from members of Parliament, but that is how the system works. It is only through that process that we found out that the cost of the stadium is somewhere around \$1.7 billion. We still do not know the make-up of that and how much the monthly payments are, but what I found stark was that Treasury officials did not know what the cost was, and there was this incredible situation of the Treasurer referring the question of the member for West Swan to the Under Treasurer who in turn spoke to Richard Mann behind him, who I think is the head of strategic projects. They were fossicking through papers trying to work out where it was all laid out and what it all meant, and they did not know. That was despite the fact that one of those public servants was on the radio and defending it, because not a minister could be found to defend a figure of \$1.7 billion—I think it was \$1.6 billion then, from memory. The public servant who could not tell Labor members of Parliament could suddenly explain it to the media the day after. If the estimates process is to be treated as the Premier did, with contempt, everything will start to fall apart.

As I said in my short contribution on Estimates Committee A, I think the Treasurer enjoys the conversation. When Troy Buswell was Treasurer, he enjoyed the conversation, as I think did Christian Porter, because there is a genuine dialogue. To the Treasurer's credit, I even got a letter from him yesterday providing me with confidential information as a result of the estimates. That is how it should work—so all members of Parliament can use a process to get a better understanding of what public money is being used for, where it is going and where it is accounted for in the budget. As I said, the performance from the Premier was unbelievable. It was something I would expect to see in preprimary from my youngest daughter. That is the way he carried on. The Premier may not like the process, but that is the role of estimates—that is the role of the question and answer process. As I said, all the ministers I dealt with in estimates, whether the Treasurer, the Minister for Planning or the Deputy Premier representing the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, were all very good. They sought to answer the questions in a courteous way, understanding the role of estimates. The Minister for Planning is an old fox who has been around the traps a long time. He did a spell over here in opposition, so he understands the importance of estimates for opposition members. Although he occasionally becomes somewhat evasive, as he is inclined to do, he will endeavour to answer the questions. I say to the Leader of the House and the Treasurer, because I think they did a good job in estimates, that they could perhaps take the Premier aside and tell him that he needs to understand that estimates is an important part of the accountability process.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** Snap out of it!

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Snap out of it! He is a cranky man at the moment. I do not get the impression that he is enjoying the job anymore and I think that is disappointing for all players. I do not think government members want to sit there and watch their Premier carry on like a two-year-old having a tantrum, which is what he did. I think it is important that all members understand, particularly those on the government side who have not yet done any time in opposition.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Most of them.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Which is most of them; that is what happens when a party goes into government. In opposition they will in due course come to rely on estimates as an important information gathering process, and in doing that they should not be treated with the contempt the Premier treated us with—a belligerent, cranky man berating them and assaulting them for daring to ask questions. They should not be treated like that. I do not think a Labor Premier should treat an opposition like that and members should not put up with their Premier

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treating members of Parliament that way. There was nothing unreasonable in any of the questions being put to the Premier, many of which—we start to work out there is form—have been put to the Premier in previous years.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I will pick up from where I left off. I think I was still venting about the performance of the Premier during the estimates process, but perhaps I had moved on from that. As I was saying, the estimates process is a very important part of the budget process, particularly for the opposition, and it should not be denigrated by a belligerent Premier who soaks over the fact that he has to be here during that time. As members will find out—I know the member for Vasse cannot wait; she will eventually be sitting over here —

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** He was there.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** No, I mean the current member for Vasse. I know that she will see off those National Party people year after year and, in due course, that she will be over here asking questions of a future Labor government. When she is, she will want to be treated with the sort of regard that I referred to previously.

I find that Treasury tends to come under Estimates Committee B. I do not know why that is and whether it is a demotion or a promotion; I guess it depends on which chamber one sits in. The issues around the budget have been fairly well ventilated simply because the week-long delay to the budget delivery delayed everything else by a couple of weeks. That one-week delay pushed into a two-week recess, so we are debating the budget in the lower house very late in the financial year, and certainly later than we otherwise would expect to do. What is perhaps unusual during the estimates process that is different from other processes is that the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* generates most of the questions, as opposed to a particular line item in budget paper No 2. Budget paper No 3 has all the really interesting information. I refer my colleagues time and again to the statement of risks and the various assumptions on which the budget is based. I note, and I have said this before to the Treasurer, that we are now finally starting to see some conservative assumptions in the government's budget. That is certainly the case with iron ore, which has that predicted deficit of \$2.708 billion. I dare say the Treasurer will be able to rein that in from where we are now just because of those conservative assumptions. It is always easier to recover from a base of conservative assumptions as opposed to bullish, aggressive assumptions around revenue, under which all the expected revenue is allocated. Something that also got some analysis was the actual cost of the various exemptions. Appendix 10 on page 309 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* sets out the cost of things to the budget, such as the payroll tax tax-free threshold and the gold royalty-free threshold, which I thought would be a more significant cost to the budget than it actually is. One finds all sorts of interesting bits and pieces during the estimates process, which is of course important for the accountability process.

With those words I will conclude. I want to emphasise that the Premier should perhaps reflect on the time that he sat on this side of the house, and that rather than behaving in a petulant and belligerent way he return to having a proper dialogue around the finances. It might then be a process that he starts to enjoy again and that certainly everybody else could enjoy and learn from.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [7.05 pm]: I want to make a few comments about the Estimates Committee B session on 9 June. I think the time was 9.50 am when Mr Acting Speaker, who was in the chair, almost kicked me out of here.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton):** I do recall.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** He almost kicked me out of the regional development division.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Don't take it personally.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** No. Actually, I thought the Chair was very lenient. When I was quizzing the Minister for Regional Development on royalties for regions funding to the Peel region, it was an animated and lively exchange. I was asking the minister about the regional development portfolio and, in particular, the allocation of royalties for regions funding to the Peel—I have asked similar questions during previous estimates hearings. The royalties for regions program has been operating for six years; it is in its seventh financial year. I asked the minister to provide me with a table comparing the amount of money spent from the royalties for regions fund for the financial years 2008–09, 2009–10, 2010–11, 2011–12, 2012–13 and 2013–14, and for the 2014–15 financial year to 31 March. I asked the minister to highlight the expenditure per region from the royalties for regions program and to overlay that information with the population of each region; in other words, I wanted to know how much was spent per person in each of the regions for each of those financial years. I did that because it is no secret that the Peel region has been the poor cousin in terms of royalties for regions expenditure, despite having a significant need and a significantly growing population. The table that was presented as part of supplementary information B1 provided a breakdown of royalties for regions expenditure.

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It is very clear from that table that throughout all those years, the Peel has consistently received the lowest amount of funding, except in the first year when it was just a few hundred thousand above the Gascoyne.

As I have said in this place before, I do not begrudge the spending of funds in other regions at all and I do not begrudge spending where it is needed. However, one thing we need to remember is that the royalties for regions program was launched with a blitz of publicity that it would return royalties funding back to the regions that deliver royalties to the state. One thing that has been forgotten by the Minister for Regional Development is that the Peel region is the third highest generator of royalties for the state. It is, of course, below the two big royalties generators—the Pilbara and the goldfields regions—but the Peel is third, yet it has consistently received the lowest amount of funding per capita. Per capita comparisons over the period indicate that the Peel's highest per capita amount was \$361 per person in 2013–14. Comparing the same period, the Gascoyne received \$9 000 per person, the Pilbara received nearly \$5 000 per person, and the wheatbelt that received nearly \$2 000 per person. This indicates a significant imbalance. That is the point I was trying to make and it is a point that I will continue to make in terms of expenditure. The Peel region will be required through the Perth–Peel 2051 document to take a significant portion of the growth in population in future, so the need for royalties for regions to be invested in Peel becomes even more apparent and more urgent. I will be making this plea right through to the next election, and indeed will be highlighting how the Peel has been treated very poorly by National Party ministers who have been administering the royalties for regions allocation. Both the member for Pilbara when he was the minister and now the Leader of the National Party as the minister in charge of the program have said in this place that they think the distribution has been fair. It is statistically and blatantly clear that it has not been fair to the people of the Peel, and I will keep fighting to ensure that we get our fair share into the future. When Labor is returned to the government benches in the 2017 election, there will be a much fairer distribution of funding to the Peel in my view, and that is what I will be arguing for in the lead-up to the next election.

**MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton)** [7.11 pm]: I want to speak briefly on the Estimates Committee reports. As members know, I am in only in the Speaker's chair during estimates; I do not do it at any other time. I found this year's estimates to be the easiest I have done since I have been here. To me it seemed to be a very fair estimates. I thought that both sides approached it with the right attitude. The process is to draw out information, and that worked out well. I wanted to give a fair bit of credit to the Deputy Speaker who brought in a number of changes this year. One was to rate following questions the same as questions, which was very fair and reasonable. I can remember the first time I was ever in estimates when the then member for Armadale got the first question, and then proceeded to ask question after question and occupied the first half-hour of that session, which was Transport from memory. We have put a stop to that. The other change was for some Chairs to keep a record of timing. Once again, we were given the guideline to allow 80 per cent of time for questions and follow-on questions to the opposition. We kept pretty rigidly to that time frame. I take note of the comments of the member for Victoria Park. I think I chaired the division on Aboriginal affairs. I thought the opposition had a pretty reasonable go, but I take the member's point. I think I hardly ever gave a follow-on question to a government member —

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** I was not going to name you, member, because you were not doing it out of spite.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I know. But it is a point worth making back into the system: if the member thinks a particular issue did not get enough time, the times can be adjusted—and I think they should be adjusted.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** I will make that point again because we do get to give some feedback.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Yes. As I said before, the Deputy Speaker did a very good job of organising things this year. I thought those changes were quite notable and made it work a lot better. I managed to score two of the four hours of the Premier's time in estimates. When I saw the timetable, I thought that that will be fun, but I felt the Premier was quite relaxed this year. Maybe we were looking at different things or we came to it with a different mindset —

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** Do you mean he was not in previous years?

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** There seemed to be a bit less spark this year than in other years. I thought it all went very well. As I said, I would like most of the credit for that to go to the Deputy Speaker because she did a very good job of organising estimates. Quite often, if something goes well, people do not realise someone has done the work behind the scenes to run it properly. It was pretty obvious this year; they had listened, they had thought about it, they had gone over it after the last estimates and before this estimates, and, at the end of day, the whole process worked very well.

Question put and passed.