

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Amendment to Question

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham) [2.37 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That the house calls on the Premier to —

- (1) explain the true position regarding fraud offence figures in Western Australia;
- (2) explain why the fraud figures were not included in the recently released crime statistics; and —

As opposed to the earlier crime statistics —

- (3) explain who has ministerial responsibility for this matter.

I have moved a motion that is a very serious matter. Before we get to debating the matter and before I express the reasons for moving this very important motion, I seek an indication from the Leader of the House as to whether the government is prepared to allow a suspension of standing orders to debate this matter and allow the Premier to explain the true position of these fraud figures. I am therefore seeking an explanation from the Leader of the House as to whether that is the case or whether I need to go through the arguments.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Just sit down; we will agree.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the House will agree to a suspension of standing orders?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Yes.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Please do not be offensive. Will the Leader of the House explain to me the conditions under which he might agree before I sit down?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No; sit down and I will respond.

Mr M. McGOWAN: All right. I will continue to outline my case, but it is customary for the Leader of the House to say whether it will be debated under the matter of public interest conditions or under other conditions. It is customary for the Leader of the House to indicate across the chamber before I resume my seat.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Did you speak to us beforehand about this?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No; the matter came up in question time. I am just seeking the politeness that is normally accorded to these matters in that the Leader of the House indicates across the house what the conditions will be. All I am seeking before I resume my seat is the ordinary politeness of indicating what the conditions will be.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Politeness means you would have come across here and requested it.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: We indicated our intention during question time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Exactly; thank you, member for Victoria Park. Is the Premier indicating to me that he will agree to a suspension of standing orders on these conditions?

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is that yes?

Mr C.J. Barnett: If you sit down, I'll explain.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will allow the Premier to respond; we will move another motion if necessary.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [2.39 pm]: This issue was raised during question time. It relates to the comparison of crime statistics from 2008–09. The opposition claims that somehow fraud was included in one year's data and not in the others.

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Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is a statistical or technical issue.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Midland!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The behaviour of the opposition has been abysmal today. I doubt I have ever seen anything like this.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Talk about coming back from three months off having done no work and no preparation. It has been appalling.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Speak to the motion!

The SPEAKER: Member for Perth, I do not know that that was absolutely necessary. I formally call you for the first time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This motion to suspend standing orders relates to a technical statistical aspect of the figures released by the Minister for Police and the Attorney General. That is fair enough. Members opposite obviously are questioning the validity of the comparison made of crime statistics. It is my understanding that they are wrong and that the Attorney General and the police minister are happy to correct that. Does that require an hour of debate in this Parliament? I would not have thought so. We are happy to suspend standing orders and we will go along with an MPI-style format so that we can restrict it to one hour, but members opposite are wasting their time. There will be a simple explanation from the Attorney and the police minister, if he chooses to get to his feet, and I assume —

Mr J.R. Quigley: More pork pies.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have been basically accused of lying again without the use of the word “lying”.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: In the past when members have been accused of saying “porky pies” we have all known what it refers to.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I formally call the member for Victoria Park for the third time and the member for Warnbro for the second time. If members want this debate to go ahead, they might observe the rules in this place.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The convention of this house has been that if someone uses rhyming slang or anything that implies that a member is telling lies, the member accused has been asked to withdraw. The member for Mindarie has done that yet again and I ask that he withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mindarie, I ask that you withdraw.

Mr J.R. Quigley: Withdraw.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Stand up and do it; show some respect.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: It’s been accepted by the Speaker.

Mr J.R. Quigley: Withdraw.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It’s disgraceful.

The SPEAKER: There is a tradition, member for Mindarie, of standing.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

The SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Victoria Park, you are on very thin ice at the moment.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Will the Premier take an interjection?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will in a moment. This suspension of standing orders is to answer a statistical technical issue.

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Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: It is challenging the Attorney for saying that the figures are publicly available.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What a joke.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockingham has moved a motion, which the member is endeavouring to address in this place. Some people on both sides of this house are preventing the member from doing that. I presume the member for Rockingham wants the motion to go forward, and I suggest to members on his side that they allow him to follow it through, and to members on the government side that they, likewise, listen to the words of the debate. I give the call back to the Premier.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The government will agree to the suspension of standing orders to debate the motion and it will agree to a matter of public interest–style format. It will be an interesting debate. I am not familiar with the detail of the definition of these statistics, but assuming the Attorney General and the Minister for Police can demonstrate that the comparison is one of apples with apples —

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: I believe the clock is not running.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order at this point, member for Joondalup.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Assuming that the Attorney General and the Minister for Police can clarify the definition and comparison aspects of these statistics, I would hope that members opposite would accept that and we might resume with debate on the Premier’s Statement. It is up to the opposition. The opposition has done no work or preparation for this Parliament. If it wants to waste the time of the house today, it is on its head. This was the opposition’s opportunity to come in with something positive to say in the Parliament. It has not done that. We are well into day two of this session and the best the opposition can do is come up with a comparative statistic debate. How exciting will this debate be of comparing crime statistics? I can hardly wait.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I advise the member for Riverton that we are going to debate statistical definition!

Point of Order

Mr M. McGOWAN: This debate is on whether standing orders should be suspended to debate the proposed motion. The motion should not be debated at this stage. The Premier is getting into the issue. He will have more than enough time—half an hour to debate the actual issue—when standing orders have been suspended.

The SPEAKER: That motion has not been moved yet. I urge the Premier to conclude his remarks.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, I will in four minutes. We question the relevance of a debate on statistical definition questions and whether standing orders should be suspended for that. We will suspend the Parliament of Western Australia to debate statistical definitions. If a debate on statistical definition is the best the Labor Party can come up with, it can have that debate and we will spend an hour debating definitions of statistics. What a fantastic opposition it is!

The SPEAKER: Before I put the motion, I will formally call the member for Warnbro for the third time and the member for West Swan for the first time. Members, we have before us the following motion —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as to allow the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That the house calls on the Premier to —

- (1) explain the true position regarding fraud offence figures in Western Australia;
- (2) explain why the fraud figures were not included in the recently released crime statistics; and
- (3) explain who has ministerial responsibility for this matter.

That is the motion before the house.

Amendment to Motion

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Leader of the House) [2.47 pm]: For the government to agree to what the opposition manager of business wants, an amendment to the motion needs to be moved. I move —

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To insert after “forthwith” —

subject to the time limits for a matter of public interest

Amendment put and passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham) [2.49 pm]: I move —

That the house calls on the Premier to —

- (1) explain the true position regarding fraud offence figures in Western Australia;
- (2) explain why the fraud figures were not included in the recently released crime statistics; and
- (3) explain who has ministerial responsibility for this matter.

This is a very important motion. The Premier down played the significance of this issue a moment ago. It is a very important issue because it goes to the question of when ministers talk to the public of Western Australia, and when ministers and the Premier make speeches in this house. I note that the Premier is leaving the chamber even though he agreed to the wording of the motion that called upon him to explain. How arrogant; how pompous! What an arrogant, pompous little man. It is incredibly important because this motion goes to whether or not ministers tell the truth when they speak to the public of Western Australia and, indeed, when they speak to the Parliament of Western Australia.

The basis of this matter is this: last week the government came out with a press release. The Attorney General and the Minister for Police came out with a quite comprehensive joint press release, of which the Minister for Police denied any understanding during question time. He said that it was not him but the Attorney General, even though the media release bears his photograph. His comments start about 15 paragraphs into the press release, but he does not actually know anything about it! What did the press release say and what was the coverage that the Minister for Police allowed to be publicised around this state? He said —

The State Government has released police statistics that show overall reported crime in Western Australia fell 8.5 per cent in 2009 compared to 2008.

Reported crimes against people and property was down 11.5 per cent in the second half of 2009 as compared to the same period in 2008.

He then went on throughout the press release to indicate what a good result he had had. I heard the Attorney General on talkback radio and I heard it being talked about everywhere. I saw the Premier yesterday stand up in this place and repeat words to that effect. I saw the Attorney General stand up during question time yesterday and repeat words to that effect. We do research, and we have found the figures upon which all the statements in this press release have been based. The document has the figures for 2009–10, with the decline, and it has the figures for 2008–09, when of course it was higher. What do we find? In 2008–09, when of course it was higher, the figures for fraud had their own category. For each month there were 866 offences, 764 offences, 913 offences and so on. There was a category in the document for fraud. I might add that another category for breach of restraint shows 519 offences, 597 offences and so on. In total, between the two of them, roughly 16 000 offences to 17 000 offences in last year’s figures are not in this year’s figures. There is no category in this year’s figures —

Mr C.C. Porter: Are you assuming —

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Attorney General can answer all in good time. He gave the most embarrassing performance I have seen him give during question time.

There are in fact two categories in last year’s figures that are not in this year’s figures. When he went out there and said there had been this massive drop in crime, he was not comparing apples with apples but apples with oranges. What he was doing was misleading the people of Western Australia. We have just heard the embarrassing and embarrassed explanation of the Minister of Police when he said that those figures are not usually included, but they were included in the figures he was comparing them with for last year.

Mr C.C. Porter: They were not.

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Mr M. McGOWAN: They are right here in black and white. The Premier calls it just a statistical blip. He is the same man who says that the misleading of Parliament by the Minister for Police is a matter of no consequence; the same Premier who says of any Liberal Party member that whatever they do is of no consequence and that none of the Liberal Party members does anything wrong. The Premier refuses to stay in here for this debate and refuses to answer these questions. We need to know why the fraud figures were not included in this year's crime statistics, what the true position is, where we can find the fraud figures—I might add, where we can find the breach of restraint figures as well—and who has responsibility. Which minister has responsibility is very relevant because if the Minister for Police has responsibility for this matter and he has again embarrassed the government by once again not telling the truth to the people of Western Australia, another motion might be moved on this and other matters with which he has been involved over a long time. They are the questions that we need answered. Why were last year's fraud and breach-of-restraint figures not included in this year's statistics? Once we get to the bottom of that question, we will know what the future for the Minister for Police is. This is a very serious matter. As I understand it, the Attorney General's argument is that it is not usual for these figures to be included.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Because they are not reliable.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Minister for Police says that it is because they are not reliable. The question therefore is why were they in last year's statistics, which the government was comparing them with? The government does not have an answer to that. The government has told people that the number of offences that have been reported has declined by 18 000, but it has excluded from the latest figures 17 000 offences for fraud and breach of restraint. During my time in this place I have never seen such a misleading press release or such an incompetent performance—deliberate or otherwise—by either an Attorney General or a Minister for Police. That is saying something, because I have seen the Minister for Police do a lot of incompetent things. I have never seen something of this magnitude. The Premier needs to answer these very important questions during this debate.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Mindarie) [2.56 pm]: It was, of course, Queen Victoria's favourite conservative Prime Minister, Disraeli, who categorised lies into three categories: lies, damned lies and statistics. Over the past week, the public of Western Australia has been misled not by the use of lies or damned lies, but by the misuse of statistics, whether intentionally or by incompetence, we do not know. That is a premature judgement to make until we have heard the government's response. What is certain beyond reasonable doubt is that the two million citizens of Western Australia have been misled over the past few days by the Attorney General, the Minister for Police and the Premier. During question time today—this is where I get back to Disraeli's statement of lies, damned lies and statistics—the Attorney General said that the government was looking at the same set of statistics as last year. The leader of opposition business has pointed out that the events of fraud—they encompass a number of offences in the Criminal Code, such as acts with intent to defraud and other acts of fraud—are serious and indictable offences, and they were running at about 800 or 900 offences per month in the previous year. Those offences are completely missing from the statistics presented by the police department this year. Why is that? I have my suspicions. In the past 12 months, we have been labouring under the burden of a global financial crisis. During a global financial crisis, or any time when the economy is struggling, some citizens resort to illegal ways to get money. Prior to the passage through this place of the Criminal Code Amendment (Identity Crime) Bill 2009, theft could be and was categorised as fraud—that is, passing oneself off as another by the use of a false identity. We know that in one scam alone, \$4.25 million was taken from hundreds of people. If this amount was included in the fraud figure, we would not be seeing 800 to 900 offences per month; we would be seeing thousands of offences per month. It would look as though crime was out of control because there would be a spike in a particular offence by international gangs that hit this state with their credit card scams and drove the figures through the roof. The solution is to not tell a damned lie about it but just present a false set of statistics to the chooks, as Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen used to call them, and feed the masses with absolute nonsense.

There has been a huge spike in fraud offences in Western Australia. That has been the subject of repeated publicity over the past 12 months. It is totally missing from the statistics. If we are going to cite statistics with any integrity, we have to alert our audience to the fact that the basis upon which the statistics are being drawn and the conclusions that we are drawing from those statistics have totally changed. Then it is an exercise in honesty. If we remove from the statistics an area of criminality that has gone through the roof, if we take those out, we have a much rosier set of crime figures.

In respect of all the other offences listed in the crime figures released by Western Australia Police, I applaud and celebrate the reduction of crime. I celebrate that reduction of crime along with every other Western Australian. As the Chief Justice of Western Australia has said publicly on more than one occasion, if we examine the true crime figures carefully, we see that they have been in slow decline for 10 years. What has brought about this

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decline? It is not government policy but increased police effort and increased police numbers; most of all it is increased police technology. For example, what has had the biggest impact on the burglary figures? It is the Burglar Beware campaign that highlights to all criminals that if they enter premises, a couple of cells of their DNA will remain. The campaign has increased the clean-up rate of burglary offences and has really deterred people from entering premises. We have seen the number of offences decline. As the message has got out, after the initial big dip, the figures kept going down. It was the same with car theft. A politician did not enter the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia and beat his hairy chest, as the police minister is wont to do—one of these days he will knock himself out doing it—and say that the government has driven this down and has driven that down. What a lot of codswallop! Car theft was out of control and then we introduced fuel immobilisers into Western Australia. From the time that fuel immobilisers —

Mr R.F. Johnson: Who did that?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Parliament of Western Australia.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Not the Parliament of Western Australia.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: So what? I am not claiming this as being party political; I am explaining the figures and the reason behind the figures. It is absolute cant for any political party to come along and solely claim credit for it. Fuel immobilisers were introduced, together with something that happened independent to this Parliament, that is, the vehicle manufacturers started to introduce better security into the vehicles they produced. As the vehicle fleet is turned over, some of the newer cars on the roads and in the car parks are so sensitive that an alarm will go off if one leans on them; one can just tap them as one walks past and the alarm will go off. All these things have collectively contributed to what the Chief Justice—an independent commentator—has recognised as a slow but steady decrease in crime figures. However, there is a big spike in identity crimes that does not appear. Fraud has been taken out as a category; it would be legitimate for the government to remove a particular set of numbers, if it were to alert the public of Western Australia that it is changing the parameters by which it measures crime. If the government is going to remove two categories that, between them, account for nearly 18 000 offences and keep from the public the fact that it is now using a different ruler—that it will now measure in inches rather than centimetres, because there are fewer inches in a foot than there are centimetres—the public will be misled. In fact, depending on whether it was an act of incompetence or was planned, one could go so far as to say that it is a fraud on the public of Western Australia. Not only would it lull the public into a false sense of security, but also it would garner for the government credit beyond that which is due.

Governments from both sides of politics do not approach the issue of law and order with the intention of creating more crime; governments from both major parties in Western Australia, from what I can see after 10 years in Parliament, apply their minds to the reduction of crime. However, what has happened here is that the government has tried to steal a gain by changing the goalposts, and that is quite wrong.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [3.08 pm]: Since this government came to power, it has brought forward a law and order agenda that bears no resemblance to the evidence. The opposition has consistently called for law reform and changes to the legislation based on evidence. This is not a mere statistical anomaly, as the Premier would say; this is about doctoring the evidence. This is about treating the public of Western Australia with contempt. In fact, the Minister for Police is delinquent with accuracy and has a history of having been so for as long as he has been minister. He tells half-truths; he does not tell the whole truth. The fact that he is dismissing this as some minor statistical anomaly is another example of his contempt for the people of Western Australia. Frankly, it is also an affront to all victims of fraud. The minister does not think they count; he does not even include them in the statistics. I think that anyone who has been a victim of fraud has a right to be affronted, because being a victim of fraud is just as legitimate as being a victim of any other sort of crime. However, the minister thinks it is just some minor commercial matter that can be dealt with by the banks.

The government claims that this is something that has never happened before and that it does not know why it has happened. For the benefit of the Premier and perhaps the Attorney General, I go back to the Western Australia Police reported crime statistics for 2004–05; fraud is listed. For 2005–06, fraud is listed; 2006–07, fraud is listed; 2007–08, fraud is listed. Does the Minister for Police get the picture? For 2008–09, fraud is listed; 2009–10, fraud is not listed. If this were some refinement of the way in which the statistics are presented, one would expect some sort of footnote or explanation. But, no, the Attorney General—we all know why the Attorney General has gone out and spoken on this—talks about overall reported time. He does not talk about a selected range of offences until we get to the sixth paragraph of his press release. So, quite willingly, he is conspiring with the Minister for Police to mislead the people of Western Australia by not accurately representing the situation, if it is the case that he has put his mind to the fact that fraud was reduced and he was confident that

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there was some integrity in these figures. These figures were produced by Western Australia Police. It has been handballed to the Attorney General because the government thought he could put the spin on the figures a bit better, and the bottom line is that, under the best case scenario, the figures are inaccurate, or, under the worst case scenario, the government is trying to make the best it can of the available figures by omitting an important category. As the member for Mindarie has said, with the global financial crisis and with advances in technology, fraud is a major problem. In fact, I have had representations that there should be a special, separate category for identity fraud. But in these new statistics, not only is there no reference to identity fraud, but also there is not even a reference to fraud.

This is not some statistical anomaly. Just as a matter of trivia, mathematicians call a statistical anomaly a black swan, so maybe it is appropriate in Western Australia that we should be focusing on statistical anomalies. What we are arguing about is about openness in government. The Minister for Police can fool some of the people some of the time, but, frankly, he is careless when it comes to detail, as is, I might add, the Premier. As late as yesterday, in his statement he talked about the fact that the country police stations have been reopened. Two have been reopened, the government does not intend to reopen three, and the police drop around to another one once a week. It is that lack of frankness, that lack of accuracy and that sin of omission by not telling all the truth that are the hallmark of this government. Just be frank with the people of Western Australia. If fraud is a problem, we are happy to work with the government to try to address it. But sweeping it under the carpet and saying that it is some minor statistical anomaly and that we are on some witch-hunt for no particular reason is just rubbish.

As I said, the press release of the Attorney General's refers virtually all the way through to "overall reported crime". It does not make the distinction or provide the explanation that was referred to by the Minister for Police, belatedly, and also other offences now seem to be omitted. For example, breach of restraint no longer appears. It did in 2008, but it no longer features in 2009–10. Does this government not care about the potential for domestic violence—for assaults occurring in the home situation? Breaches of restraint are serious and potentially lethal, and may lead to tragic circumstances. That also is not included in the statistics.

The government cannot dismiss this as some minor statistical aberration. The government has form in being delinquent with the truth, and this, I believe, is another example of that. I think victims of fraud have every right to be affronted by the fact that the government has discounted them so much that it does not even record the statistics effectively. These statistics are traditionally ones that are tabled by the Minister for Police, and the minister talks about them. The Minister for Police has oversight of the WA Police, which in fact prepares these statistics, but we have a situation in which it is, if one likes, Chinese whispers. The statistics are given to the Attorney General to use his considerable advocacy skills to talk the figures up. But, as we now know, they are not really worth the paper they are written on.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Are you suggesting that we doctor the figures to make the crime figures better or worse?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am suggesting there is a lack of integrity —

Mr R.F. Johnson: Better or worse?

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Show us the fraud figures so we can make the assessment. Where are the fraud figures?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Why don't you look it up on the internet and you'll find them?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: We have.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: We have, but they're not there. Where are the fraud figures?

Dr K.D. Hames: You're saying they're not there and she's saying you haven't got them.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: No; we've got them for that period.

Mr J.R. Quigley: No wonder all the doctors resigned!

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): The member for Girrawheen has the call, members; thank you.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: At the risk of repeating myself, I will not go on much longer. These figures are from the police computer, which is the only place they are publicly available; previously they were tabled by police ministers. We are relying on those. Minister, if they are wrong, I would love for us to be told where we may find the completed figures.

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Mr C.J. Barnett: Do you want a five-minute break so you can have a little team huddle out there and get your act together?

Mr E.S. Ripper: What arrogance! What gall! Your ministers can't explain what they've done and you joke about it! What standards do you have?

Mr C.J. Barnett: What a joke!

Ms M.M. QUIRK: All we want the minister to do is cop it sweet and say there was a mistake, and that the government has been misleading Western Australians and that fraud figures will significantly change the content of the Attorney General's and the government's press release. We want it to accept that it is wrong, accept that the government has been less than frank with the people of Western Australia, and undertake to table the figures today.

MR C.C. PORTER (Bateman — Attorney General) [3.17 pm]: Perhaps I can characterise what it seems to me is the opposition's accusation, and if it is satisfied with my characterisation of the accusation, we will proceed from there. I welcome interjections on my characterisation of the accusation.

Ms M.M. Quirk: It's either incompetence or inexperience; we'll settle for either!

Mr C.C. PORTER: It is very hard to talk about statistics to people who will not let me talk about statistics.

Ms M.M. Quirk: It's pearls to swine; you can't do it.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Let him say it.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I will characterise the accusations, which seem to me to be twofold: the first is the statistical accusation in that the opposition is saying that we are not comparing apples with apples. Insofar as the opposition makes that accusation, this is what it says: it says that we have presented a figure that we and the police call "overall reported crime", and that in 2009 we have taken out fraud from that measure, whereas in 2008 it was included. Based on that, we say that there is an 8.5 per cent decrease in overall crime, which translates roughly to about 18 000 fewer incidents of crime. But what the opposition says is that inside that 8.5 per cent figure, and inside that 18 000 figure, is the fact that there was fraud counted for 2008, but not counted in 2009. Is that accusation number one?

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: That is one interpretation.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Is that the opposition's accusation?

Mr C.J. Barnett: It's not an interpretation!

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: We want to know why fraud has come out and how differently the figures would read if it hadn't.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I am trying to pin the opposition down to a question.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Attorney General, if you are going to invite conversation, we will get pretty bogged down. Could you take the floor and respond?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Is anyone willing to say that is a fair summary?

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, the Attorney General has the call; can you please let him talk?

Mr C.C. PORTER: The reason the opposition does not want to say that is the accusation is because it is starting to worry now that maybe the calculator was not quite ticking over the way it thought it was.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: No, no; you tell us why fraud was taken out and where we can find the fraud figures!

Mr C.C. PORTER: I will move on to the second accusation, because I think there are two. The second accusation is, essentially, this: the opposition says that the fraud figures were taken out in our measure from 2008 to 2009, and, as ancillary accusation, it says that we should be counting fraud on any measure—is that correct?

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: We want to know why you don't. The idea that some fraud is not reported —

Several members interjected.

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
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Mr C.C. PORTER: I think the second question is, at least, an interesting question, but the first question is obviously a serious accusation that we have, in effect, doctored figures and that we have purposely compared apples to something else to try to make them look better than they are. The opposition will, now, not even say that is its accusation because it is starting to worry that it is wrong. I put it to the opposition that if I can prove to its satisfaction that it is wrong about that, will it admit that it is wrong about that?

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: We want you to explain why fraud has come out. Surely you don't believe, as the Minister for Police said, that it is because some people don't report fraud, because then you wouldn't have sexual assault in there because a lot of people don't report sexual assault. That is the most pathetic explanation. Why have you taken fraud out?

Mr C.C. PORTER: I will get to that, but that is the second part of the accusation. The serious part of the accusation is that the opposition is saying that fraud was counted in 2008 and not counted in 2009, and that is where we get our great reduction in crime from. That is what the opposition is saying.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: We want to know how you did it!

Mr C.C. PORTER: Let me explain. The member for Armadale is quite wrong on that.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Can you tell us where we can find the fraud figures for July 2009? You have said that they are publicly available. You got up in this place and said they were publicly available!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Attorney, you were asking questions and inviting interjections. I urge you not to invite interjections if you are not prepared to take them.

Mr C.C. PORTER: In 2008, there is a figure that we have described as "overall reported crime". That is what the police describe the figure as.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.C. PORTER: In 2008, there is a figure that is described by the government and the Western Australia Police Service as "overall reported crime". I will come to why they describe it in that way in a moment. I want members opposite to be absolutely satisfied that we are measuring apples with apples. That figure has a range of subcomponents: homicide, sexual assault, assault, threatening behaviour, deprivation of liberty and robbery. They are known as a cluster of offences against a person. Then there is another cluster: burglary, motor vehicle theft, theft, arson, property damage. These are offences against property.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Do you acknowledge that that cluster changed and that cluster used to contain fraud?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, the Attorney has the call, so please let him answer.

Mr C.C. PORTER: In 2008, the offences against the person measured 33 672. In 2009, there was a slight increase in that cluster, and we have acknowledged that assault was the problem, with the number of assaults increasing to 34 228. Then, in offences against property, in 2008 the figure is 176 243. That dropped dramatically—far more than in any of the previous four years—to 157 808. The figure in 2007, which we cite as "total overall reported crime" is 209 915 offences. In 2009, it is 192 036 offences. The difference is 17 879 offences, which is 8.5 per cent. I cited the figure in 2008 of 209 915, and fraud is not included. In the figure that I have cited for 2009, being 192 036, fraud is not included. The difference between those two total amounts is around about 18 000, or 8.5 per cent. Do members opposite accept that? I will table that information for members. Will that help members to accept it?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Will you table it today?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Yes, I will.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Will you tell us why fraud is no longer included?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Let us go back to quantum maths. Would members opposite agree that the difference between 219 915 and 192 036 is about 18 000 and 8.5 per cent?

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: But tell us why you took fraud out?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Would members opposite agree —

Mr E.S. Ripper: Attorney, for clarity on this issue, are you using different source documents to the documents available on the police website? It sounds as though you have a different raw document behind your press

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release, and it would be very helpful to the house, and indeed the public, if you were to table that raw document. What is available to the opposition to back up the Attorney's press release is what is contained on the police website. If the Attorney will let us have a look at his document, we may be able to verify, or otherwise, his argument.

The second point I make is that the Attorney still needs to explain why it is better to have a comparison without fraud, than with fraud. Many members of the public might think that the whole fruit box should be compared with the whole fruit box, not just the fruit that is ripe for you in a particular year!

Mr C.C. PORTER: The Leader of the Opposition's second question is valid. I will table the data I am working from. Obviously, I cannot tell him whether it is formatted in the same way as the data on the police website—the Leader of the Opposition can make that comparison himself. What I can assure the house is that the 18 000 figure and the 8.5 percentage is comparing apples with apples. It is comparing, in 2008, homicide, sexual assault, assault, threatening behaviour, deprivation of liberty, robbery, burglary, motor vehicle theft, theft, arson and property damage to precisely those same offences in 2009.

Mr E.S. Ripper: So it is not like comparing tax rates whereby you leave out stamp duty so the tax comparison is better or something like that.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I would not know about the Leader of the Opposition's previous history on those matters.

However, what I am telling members opposite is that they are wrong in their accusation that we have not made like comparison with like comparison; they are actually quite wrong. I am sure that when members opposite come to see the figures and know that they are wrong, they will admit that they are wrong. Why is it that that is the figure that police use as a citation of overall, or what they know as total, reported crime? Why is it that the police do not include fraud in that cluster of eight or nine offences?

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: But they did; they have changed their view.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I will get to that in a moment, but I understand the police stopped putting fraud in to that cluster of what the police describe as overall or total reported crime in about 2002 or 2003. That is when that offence fell out. That is not to say, member, that those figures do not exist—I will come to that in a moment—but what I am trying to —

Mr E.S. Ripper: Have a look on their website!

Mr C.C. PORTER: I understand that the figures exist; I am not denying the existence of the figures. I am trying to answer the member's secondary question, which I understand asked: why is it that fraud does not appear in the police's measure—which we have adopted because that is the police measure, the police key performance indicator—of overall total reported crime? Why does it not appear? The member asked: when did it stop appearing? It stopped appearing in 2002–03. The reason it does not appear, and, I understand, why it has stopped appearing, is that it was proven to be a historically and inherently inaccurate measure that did not give any help to the police in assessing how overall reported crime trends were going.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: But why does it say on the website —

Mr C.C. PORTER: Let me finish. The member has had a good crack at being wrong; she has had a top crack at being wrong. I am just trying to explain answers to questions. I will tell members why it fell out from this measure in 2002–03—when members opposite were in government —

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: But it is still in here!

Mr C.C. PORTER: I know that it exists! What I am explaining to the member is why it does not exist under the police's banner of overall or total reported crime. The reason —

Mr E.S. Ripper: Total all offences.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Total all offences—there is a range of offences that do not appear in the measure that we have cited of total overall or total reported crime.

Mr E.S. Ripper: So is total reported crime different from total all offences?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Correct. Cyber crime does not appear in total reported crime.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

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Mr C.C. PORTER: Of course. Cyber crime does not appear, receiving does not appear, illegal use does not appear—those categories of offences do not appear. Drug offences do appear —

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Receiving does appear!

Mr C.C. PORTER: Traffic offences do not appear. There is a whole range of offences for which the police have said that if they were included in this measure of total overall reported crime, the measure would make no sense; that it is a statistical lack of efficacy. That started with fraud in 2002–03. Why is it that fraud on a year-to-year comparison is an inherently unreliable measure? The police informed me that fraud is known as a detected crime rather than a reported crime. That is not to say that there is a complete lack of reports of fraud, but generally speaking it is a crime that police go out and detect. That is the first reason that it does not appear in that measure. The second reason it does not appear in that measure is that when it is detected and/or reported, the way in which the offences are structured or reported is something that the police do not control, which creates enormous volatilities from year to year. For instance, one offence on a single credit card whereby \$10 000 goes missing might be reported by a bank as one offence totalling \$10 000 or, depending on the reporting structures in place at the bank, it might appear as 100 offences of \$100. Therefore, that is the reason that nearly six or seven years ago fraud dropped out of that measure that we are using.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: It is still in the published documents right up until June 2009.

Mr C.C. PORTER: It is, but it is not part of this measure. I will get to that. My understanding —

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you base your press releases on a measure that is not published on the police website?

Mr C.C. PORTER: No, I base my statistical assessment on what are generally regarded as important offences that give reliable measurements from year to year, which the police describe as total reported crime.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.C. PORTER: They do so, Leader of the Opposition, pursuant to key performance indicators that were in existence under the previous government and under our government—it is a very reliable measure.

Mr P. Papalia: Which document did you give to Amanda Banks? Is it the one you're quoting from now or the one that we have?

Mr C.C. PORTER: I cannot answer that question. Any journalist has recourse to the same websites.

Mr P. Papalia: No, no; the Attorney General gave her documents for the story.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I cannot answer that question, but it is neither here nor there in terms of what we are trying to do.

Mr P. Papalia: It is, because it is relevant to which figures the Attorney General is quoting from to answer the question.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I will clarify this figure for the member. I have had it brought to me while this debate has been going on. I understand that the difference between reported fraud, or total recorded fraud, in 2008–09 is a difference of about 229.

Mr P. Papalia: Does the Attorney General think the journalist has the same document that he is quoting from?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Let us go back to the beginning.

Mr P. Papalia: Because that is the one the Attorney General released to the media to justify the claim.

Mr C.C. PORTER: The opposition has accused us of doctoring figures by including something in a measurement in 2008 that we did not include in 2009. That is just not true. It is incorrect. If it is accepted we are comparing the same cluster in 2008 to 2009, then the second question is a valid one: why is it that we and the police do not include fraud in either of those two clusters? There is not much point going to that second question unless members opposite accept our explanation of the first. Nevertheless, if the opposition accepts our explanation of the first, that we are comparing apples with apples, why is it —

Mr F.M. Logan: Even if we accept the Attorney General's explanation, how can he provide evidence to the public that his statistics are correct, given the public have access to this information on the website, which is

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completely different? How can the Attorney General assure the public that his statistics are correct? The Attorney General is the only one who has them.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I will table them for members. The statistics are of key performance indicators—reported offences against the person and reported offences against property as a total, compared over two years. There has been a radical reduction.

I will address some points that the member for Mindarie made. It is incorrect that somehow figures have been doctored or that we included something in 2008 that we are not including in 2009. The opposition is wrong. Why is it that fraud does not appear in that measure, which is a very, very good measure; in fact the best measure we have of actual criminal activity in terms of the impact of public policy on that? Why does it not exist in that measure? Why has it not existed in that measure since 2002–03? The police consider it —

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: It has on the website. It said right up until June 2009.

Mr C.C. PORTER: The police consider it unhelpful in determining criminal activity as a total reported measure.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Why has it appeared on the website then? This is what the Attorney General needs to tell us.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Because it exists.

Dr K.D. Hames: All the member has to do is leave out the rest of those things and do the comparison. She will come up with the same number. Delete it yourself, work out what the reduction is for the rest, and the member will find it is the same.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: No; because we do not actually have fraud —

Dr K.D. Hames: That is why fraud is not there. The former minister is sitting right next to you and would have known that in 2003.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: You do not understand. You are not across the facts.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I tabled it. It was included in the police statistics up until last year.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Members, this is not a question and answer session. The Attorney General has the call. Would you please continue, Attorney General.

Mr C.C. PORTER: The comparison is a fair comparison. It is the police comparison—what they consider to be the best measure of tracking reported crime in the state of Western Australia.

I will now briefly refer to some comments that the member for Mindarie raised. I suspect that the member for Mindarie knows these figures are accurate because he has taken the alternative track to try to explain them away. In essence, the member for Mindarie said that crime has always been decreasing, and that is because of changing and advanced policing techniques such as DNA. To an extent, there is truth to that. In some very important categories of offending, particularly burglary, there have been steady declines. What is great and what is interesting, and what proves something about this measure of criminality, is this: over the past four years this is the biggest single drop. Between 2007 and 2008, on the same measure, there was a 1.8 per cent-odd increase in overall recorded crime. Before that, the decrease was very moderate—in the vicinity of 0.9 per cent. What we find suddenly is, without explanation, what would be a quite amazing statistical anomaly—that is, a decrease in overall reported crime of 8.5 per cent. The deniers from the opposition do not believe that has happened. They still believe, after this explanation, that somehow that is a doctored figure. However, let me say that it has happened. It is interesting that the member for Mindarie posits some explanations and places them so broadly that he would like to expunge any public policy setting changes or government policy changes from having a causal effect on that decrease. However, the interesting thing about these figures is that they track back a very accurate measure over the past three to four years. What members must do is ask themselves whether the changes that the member for Mindarie has cited are changes that have occurred over 10 or 15 years or changes that have occurred within the past 18 months. Clearly it is the former. What is it that has turned a 0.9 per cent decrease and a 1.8 per cent increase into an 8.5 per cent decrease? What is it that has caused that?

Mr J.R. Quigley: Statistics!

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Mr C.C. PORTER: We say that there are five or so reasons why that has happened. The first is that there is now no longer an automatic one-third reduction in sentencing. That must have had an effect, whether or not we can qualify that as a moderate or more than moderate increase in the length of sentences of imprisonment. That is number one. Number two is the fact that there are now quite different policy settings in place at the Prisoners Review Board. There are fewer successful applicants for parole. Number three and a very important change—I suggest perhaps even the most important change—that has gone on is the police’s prolific and priority offender programs. That is a relatively new development that is overseen by our police minister.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It was an issue when I was minister. That is when it started, so it’s not new.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I said “relatively new”.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Mark Fyfe was heading up a unit doing it four years ago. That’s when it started.

Mr C.C. PORTER: It has also been enormously successful. What it does is ensure that police resourcing is targeted at offenders who we know through their criminal record prolifically offend. If we are able to incarcerate someone, there is a very significant effect on ensuring that the offender is not in the community offending.

The final aspect I would cite is that in one year we have increased offender programs by 45 per cent. In this year we will increase them by 65 per cent. More people are coming out of jail having completed a program that goes to the heart of their offending. The other statistics show about a 10 per cent reduction in offending rates. Is it, therefore, a fair comparison? Yes. Has fraud been excluded historically? Yes. Is there a reason for that? Of course there is. Is it a valid reason? I would suggest it is. Do these measures tell us something? Of course they do. They tell us that what we as a government are doing is working. Of course there is cost associated with what we are doing because incapacitating more people who repetitiously offend against the community costs money through prison infrastructure and the costs associated with the daily average prisoner population. I will ensure that those figures that I have cited are tabled. No doubt members will see them. If members think that my mathematics are correct and that we are comparing apples with apples, they will acknowledge—being the ladies and gentlemen that they are—that they are incorrect.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Police) [3.37 pm]: I want to show up some of the hypocrisy and nonsense that members opposite have brought forward today. They make out that they know nothing about this change in reporting. However, I will quote an extract from *Hansard* on Friday, 4 June 2004 when the member for Midland was the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. A question was asked by Hon Derrick Tomlinson to Hon Nick Griffiths, who was representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. It states —

I refer the Minister to the page 3 of the Police Crime Statistics for the December quarter 2003, which states that some statistics may not be comparable because of changes to reporting and recording changes, and I ask —

- (1) To which offences have reporting changes been made?
- (2) What are the nature of these changes?
- (3) For each of the offences in (1), did the reporting changes reduce or increase the number of reported offences contained in that document?
- (4) To which offences have recording changes been made?
- (5) What are the nature of these changes?
- (6) For each of the offences in (4), did the recording changes reduce or increase the number of reported offences contained in that document?

This is the response that came back from the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the member for Midland —

- (1)-(3) The Western Australia Police Service have made reporting changes to Fraud and Graffiti offences. The Police Service advise that the reporting of Fraud offences has been affected by policy changes in some sectors of the finance industry. These changes are associated with reporters increasing their value threshold used to determine which offences they report to the Police and generally reduced the number of reported offences.

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There is more to that answer, but I do not want to bore the house with it.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That was from you, my friend. The Attorney General and I are being accused of sending out press releases with incorrect information that deliberately misleads the public. I refer again to when the member for Midland was Minister for Police and Emergency Services and issued a press release dated Friday, 28 January 2005 in which she lauded the government's crime fighting strategy as a winner.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That's great.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: She quoted a lot of different offences but not fraud.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I tabled figures on fraud in the Parliament.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I take her now to another press release by the member for Midland when she was the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, headed "WA's crime rate has fallen to a record low". It was a huge press release espousing the benefits of the Labor Gallop government in reducing crime. She lists all the figures for the crimes under her portfolio control that have decreased. There is not a mention of fraud. I refer also to the WA Police annual report 2005–06, which states —

From late 2002, a number of factors have affected victim reporting and police recording of offences (and therefore the clearance of offences). For example:

- Policy changes in some sectors of the finance industry and recording issues associated with the introduction of the IMS have resulted in a decrease in the number of 'fraud' offences recorded.

That is exactly what we have been saying. I could go on forever. When did fraud figures stop being reported to government? In 2002–03.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Except you have an increase.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is to your benefit, my friend, by reporting all the other offences when there was some reduction. I accept that, but there is not one word about fraud because reporting it had come off the system. It has always been recorded by WA Police because they have to record the figures. They also record them in their annual business plan and on their web site. That is because fraud statistics are not considered a true reflection of the number of fraud offences committed. For example, as my colleague the Attorney General said, there could be 100 000 separate reports of fraud from 20 offenders who commit 5 000 fraudulent transactions each, or 5 000 offenders could commit 20 offences each and still have 100 000 reported offences. What appears worse to the community, members opposite?

Mr J.R. Quigley: I will tell you: hiding the figures.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It was a rhetorical question. I would not ask the member for Mindarie a question in my lifetime.

Consequently, this is not an accurate key performance indicator for police or crime rates. As the Attorney General said, and members opposite know by now—I can see a bit of embarrassment creeping over their faces —

Mr E.S. Ripper: You must be looking in the mirror!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am looking at you, my friend.

My colleague the Attorney General has said and I am saying that we sought to tell the public about the reduction in crime rates in the categories of offences against the person and against property. That is what we did, and I have given the house the reason we have achieved that in the past year. Under the Attorney General's watch there is a tremendous person in charge of the Prisoners Review Board now, who does not let prisoners out willy-nilly. If she thinks they are a danger or of concern to the public, she does not let them out on parole. As a result, they are not able to commit more offences. I want to stress the tremendous work of the police under the prolific and priority offender program. They have done it really well.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Who introduced the PPO?

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
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Mr R.F. JOHNSON: An English policeman who came to work out here introduced it.

Ms M.M. Quirk: What year?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Under his guidance it has spread throughout Western Australia. That operation is catching a lot of criminals. Unlike the shadow Attorney General, we are very proud of our police officers. I am told he has a boot full of T-shirts. When he visits a club he has a T-shirt for every occasion. The only one missing is the one for the police club because that club will not allow him in. I know that one or two other members want to speak to this motion. I think we have discounted the argument put forward by the opposition. Members opposite should apologise to the Attorney General and me.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [3.45 pm]: What we saw with the release of this media statement by the Minister for Police and Attorney General last week was an act of sheer deception. It is a press release designed to deceive. When we received this press release, we looked at the only published statistics available and they are on the WA Police website. Interestingly enough, that website had fraud listed as a category of offence for each year up to last year. That category was published through to the end of June 2009. Yet, mysteriously, on the police website fraud disappears as a category of crime.

The opposition referred to the only figures that were publicly available; the figures to which government and opposition have traditionally turned to learn what is happening in crime in this state. When we look at those figures, we see that they do not bear out what the Attorney General has been saying. Having looked at the only source document available, the opposition found that it does not bear out what the Attorney is saying. What he said, because the statistics do not back his account, is that he has secret evidence that he will table today that will bear out his account. Exposed in some of what he said today is the fact that offences against the person have actually increased. He said today that in 2008 total offences against the person were 33 672, and in 2009, they were 34 228. So much for the Liberal–National government being tough on crime and being concerned about crimes against the person, because offences against the person have gone up, not down, a year into its term of office. Nowhere in the press release would we be able to guess that. However, we have now been told that the figure for total offences is a figure known to the Attorney General and his department and he can compare it with a figure that he had for last year. These might be legitimate figures but they are not the figures that were made available publicly. Today is the first time the public has heard from the Attorney General about the real figures that back up his statement.

Another furphy is that somewhere between 2002 and 2005 I, as police minister, actually took out fraud from the statistics. The former member for Albany, Hon Kevin Prince, and I tabled the police statistics every quarter. We did not table a doctored document from somewhere else. We tabled the raw police statistics, which was generally a 40 or 50-page document that broke down the statistics region by region. I not only put out a press release, as every minister is entitled to, but also made a statement on a quarterly basis to the house and tabled a 40 or 50-page document, and in every one of those documents fraud is there as a category of a property offence. To suggest that it is otherwise is a deceit.

I reject the argument put by the Attorney General and Minister for Police, because they can look to the records of this house, the statements I made and the tabled documents. They were not documents doctored by me but documents provided by the police service.

I am guessing that it was in either 2007 or 2008 that the quarterly reports were no longer tabled because the police started uploading those reports on either a monthly or quarterly basis. I was no longer police minister at that time. That is now what happens and that is where people look for the statistics. They do not look for the secret statistics that the Attorney General gave today that show that offences against the person, such as assaults, have gone up, not down, since this government came to office.

MR M.J. COWPER (Murray–Wellington — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.50 pm]: Yesterday I heard in this place a speech that drew to my attention the fact that a member would like to see this Parliament used more productively. I do not believe that what we have seen in the past hour has been productive for the people of Western Australia. In 2002 the police service computer system was changed, the manner in which offences were recorded went online and there were issues with how they were written off—there were a range of issues. Many members want to stand in this place claiming that they have decreased crime. Let me say for the benefit of new members in this place that if they want to rely on statistics, as the member for Mindarie has said about statistics, they can be bent in any which way that people want. We must therefore drill down on the actual numbers as opposed to statistics or percentages. The way crime statistics were reported 20 years ago in comparison with 10

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]
p211a-256a

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years ago or five years ago is different. It is an evolving situation. We are now seeing different crimes come before us; for example, we cannot compare cyber crime today with what it was 20 years ago when it pretty much did not exist. If members opposite want to score points across the chamber on an issue —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr M.J. COWPER: The member had his say. How about his listening for a change, because he is not an expert on law and order? The fact remains that I have had more to do with crime than the member will ever have, by dealing with it, investigating it and locking up offenders. If members do not want to get into trouble, new members in particular, they should be very careful when they cite statistics on crime, because they can be interpreted in any way people want.

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (25)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr M. McGowan	Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr R.H. Cook	Mrs C.A. Martin	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr M.P. Whitley
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr A.P. O’Gorman	Mr T.G. Stephens	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire	
Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.C. Tinley	
Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr A.J. Waddell	

Noes (30)

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

Pair

Ms J.M. Freeman

Mr G.M. Castrilli

Question thus negatived.

Premier’s Statement — Amendment to Question Resumed

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham) [3.56 pm]: Prior to being interrupted by the previous matter that was before the house, I was making a point about the government’s financial mismanagement and what that would potentially do to the costs imposed on ordinary families and businesses. In the past couple of weeks we have heard speculation that there would be an increase in the royalty rates for mining operations in Western Australia. Western Australia has in excess of 400 mines in operation. It is the biggest mining state in Australia. We are a mining economy. The royalty rates imposed on those mines have largely been in place for a long time and different rates apply to different minerals. We support the regularisation of the concessional royalties that have been in place in the iron ore industry in the Pilbara for 60 years. We believe that if there is a requirement to change all the state agreement acts, the standardisation of the royalty rates for Rio Tinto’s and BHP Billiton’s operations in the Pilbara should be part of the discussion and that that standardisation should be put in place. We have said that we agree with that. A couple of years ago, the former Minister for State Development, Hon Alan Carpenter, negotiated an arrangement which was not as extensive as the one that I have just referred to but which would have lifted the royalty rates on the iron ore producers in the Pilbara and removed some of the concessions. That arrangement should be put in place. In any event, we support the removal of the concessions. However, we do not support unilaterally lifting the royalties across the state. That is what the speculation is about. We do not support that proposal primarily because it will impact on employment. I will talk about our other reasons for not supporting that position later.

A document that was published by the Premier shows that the royalty take in 2008–09, which was predominantly during the period of the Liberal–National government, was \$3.239 billion. The royalty take in 2007–08, which was during the last full year of the Labor government, was \$2.296 billion. In other words, the royalty take has increased by almost \$1 billion. That is a 41 per cent increase and is shown in the government’s own document. Through the expansion of the industry, this government has received a \$1 billion increase in royalty revenue

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

during its first year in office, based on the existing scales. That is a 41 per cent increase in the royalty take. That was not the result of a tax rise; it happened because of the increasing volume of production. The government has received virtually a \$1 billion increase in the royalty take through the increase in production and the increase in the number of mines. As I said, during the previous eight years, 170 new mines were developed and the mining industry nearly doubled in size, so of course there was an increase in the royalty take. That is a good thing. The people of this state have received additional revenue from that. That is the benefit we receive for the use of the land and the mining of the minerals. That is the benefit that the state receives.

The biggest benefit of the mining industry to Western Australia is not royalties. If we walked down Hay Street Mall, we might find people who would say that it is the royalties. It is not; it is employment. The biggest benefit of the mining industry to Western Australia is employment and pay packets. We do not need to threaten those jobs in the mining industry. The mining industry is notoriously subject to price fluctuations. The *Mid-year Review of Public Sector Finances* even says that. The document I referred to earlier says that. Various industries go up and down. We have seen what happened with nickel recently. We have to be very careful to ensure we put in place a stable basis to the industry so it knows what its cost pressures are. One of the things it has to factor in is the royalty take that it will pay on the minerals that it mines. When it invests, the mining industry assumes a certain royalty take because it has been in place for a long period. It has never, with perhaps one exception from my recollection, been unilaterally lifted. The gold royalty was imposed on the gold industry in the late 1990s by the now Premier, the then Minister for Resources, despite the promise during the 1996 election campaign not to.

My reasons for saying that we should be very careful about a royalty tax rise—some people say it is not a tax but an impost on business—on the mining industry, however populist it may sound, are as follows. The first reason is the potential impact on employment around Western Australia, because a lot of mining operations are marginal and there are great fluctuations, despite recent booms in the price of some minerals—for example, nickel. Secondly, it is a sovereign risk issue. Mining companies with foreign investors have invested in Western Australia predominantly on the basis of a certain cost base to their operations. Thirdly, as I referred to earlier, the operations in some areas, particularly in the northern Goldfields, are very marginal. They are not the BHPs or the Rios; they are small operators. If we look at a map of Western Australia that displays the operators, we would see that no-one has ever heard of a lot of the mines. Apart from the people who work there, no-one has ever heard of them. There are hundreds of them out there. Many of them are run by small operators. Some employ a dozen people, some employ two dozen people and some employ up to 1 000 in some mine sites. The small operators are often very marginal. They can make some deposits work but the big operators cannot because of their cost structures. If we impose a royalty increase on those operators, people will lose their jobs. That is the consequence.

As I said earlier, there has already been a 41 per cent increase in the royalty take from 2007–08 to 2008–09. During its first year, not through any changes to the law but through the natural course of events, the government had a \$1 billion windfall in royalty takes. It was \$942.9 million—a 41 per cent increase in royalty takes as a consequence of the expansion of the industry and the expansion of mining operations.

My other point is that a lot of mines around Western Australia are covered by state agreement acts. A certain royalty rate is put in place as part of those acts. A lot of foreign investors want them because they want the certainty. The Premier is on record as being an extremely strong supporter of state agreement acts. Foreign investors want the certainty that is provided by an act of Parliament specific to their project. If it has one of those, what does it do if it has another project that does not have one? Does it list the royalty on the other project and leave the state agreement act alone, therefore creating an uneven playing field? How is that situation managed? If the royalty rate is increased on a project covered by a state agreement act, it is again a sovereign risk issue. If the royalty rate is not increased, but the rate is increased on another project that is not covered by a state agreement act, it will create unfairness in the marketplace and a smaller sovereign risk issue. Lastly, the increase in the royalty rate endorses poor financial management. The government inherited a very good budget situation, but by increasing the royalty rate it is saying that it has failed in its financial management.

I have made freedom of information requests and I have received the documents, and I know what the government is proposing and planning for these major operators. The document I have received should send a ripple of fear through every investor in Australia, every international financial institution and every miner that has an interest in coming to Western Australia. It is dated 18 June 2009, and it is a proposal sought by the government from the director of the Department of Treasury and Finance. Basically, it says that if the government agrees to change the state agreement acts for BHP and Rio Tinto and perhaps remove the concessional royalty—which I agree with—the state should seek a premium payment. Members may have seen this in *The West Australian*. This document should be published in every business journal around the world as an

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example of what is potentially under threat in Western Australia. In other words, as a condition of changing the law of Western Australia, one has to pay a fee. The fee, as we know, is somewhere in the vicinity of \$1 billion. That is a fee to change the law.

What does that sound like? Does that sound like a modern liberal democracy that encourages investment? No, it sounds like an African dictatorship. If the government is going to take this course of action, it will undermine the fundamental basis of investment and enterprise in Western Australia. For all those reasons, this plan or idea—which the government will not rule out—of lifting royalty rates has the potential to severely damage the Western Australian economy and business confidence in this state. I urge the government to get its house in order and to not take this course of action, as populist as it may seem, because it will damage investor confidence and will potentially damage employment in Western Australia.

What I have said relates directly to the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition relating to finances and jobs. The member for Victoria Park spoke very strongly about increases in taxes and charges on Western Australians. My concerns about the impact of the government's proposals on business in Western Australia are just as grave.

MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Treasurer) [4.09 pm]: I will deal with only a couple of the issues. As I outlined during question time, when we handed down the budget last year, we made it very clear that our intention was to protect jobs in Western Australia. We said that we would borrow money to support jobs in Western Australia, and we have done that. We said that we would invest in infrastructure to support jobs in Western Australia, and we have done that. We said that we would fix the approvals process so that big projects could get up and running to protect jobs in Western Australia, and we have done that. We said that we would refund small to medium-sized enterprises that paid up to \$3.2 million in tax all or part of their payroll tax, and we will do that. The results speak for themselves. I referred during question time to employment growth in Western Australia. The seasonally adjusted figures from the January jobs data show that 27 300 full-time jobs were created in Western Australia between July 2009 and January 2010. Around Australia, 66 600 full-time jobs have been created, and Western Australia generated 41 per cent of the total growth in full-time jobs in this nation over the past seven months. I think that is a reasonable outcome. That was our focus, and it was the guiding principle within which we framed the budget.

From a broad economic perspective, the state is now through the worst of those difficult times and we are looking to a sustained period of renewed economic activity and growth. I will touch on a couple of the points that have been raised, but I do not intend to go into too much detail as the supposed attack on its financial performance has not really been something that has threatened the government. The facts are that managing the state's finances is difficult at the moment. I will give members an example: the midyear review states that royalty revenue is down about \$500 million from what we anticipated at the time of the budget.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: But revenue, all up, is \$2.5 million higher.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Revenues are moving and expenses are moving. At the end of the November monthly period, revenues were 3.3 per cent lower than at the same time in the previous year; expenses were significantly higher. I will talk about that in a second.

We are trying to manage the state's finances in a dynamic environment with a lot of cost and revenue pressures. As an example, and to compare the 2007–08 financial year with the 2008–09 financial year, stamp duty revenue dropped by \$1 billion. It halved in a year because of the decline in property prices and the decline in activity in the property sector. We had to deal with that. The exchange rate has moved dramatically; we have had to deal with that. It is just part of the dynamic process of managing the state's finances.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: You're dealing with it by spending more.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: We spent to meet demand pressures in some areas; we spent to invest in key infrastructure to protect jobs and other areas. Every single time we do not spend, we are criticised by the opposition; every single time we spend money, we have not spent enough. A classic, but simple, example is that the member for Victoria Park earlier criticised us for a potential blow-out by a supposed extra \$31 million for the cost of the Albany hospital.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Isn't it going to cost \$31 million more?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Yes, \$31 million more; from \$135 million to \$160 million and something.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Is it going to cost that much more?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Of course!

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Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Mr B.S. Wyatt: There you go!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Last week your colleague, the shadow Minister for Health, said that we are not spending enough. I do not know; I think we are spending about the right amount in Albany to deliver that hospital.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Is it going to require any more money?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I suspect that figure will be pretty close to the mark, and I am very pleased with the early contractor model that we have invested in down there.

I will touch on couple of things: firstly, the use of public–private partnerships is something I embrace. I think it is a good step forward for government. It was something that the former government was reluctant to embrace, although I acknowledge that the Perth Central Law Courts’ redevelopment was done under a PPP. If members look at the history of projects delivered in the past five or six years, the Central Law Courts project was one of the only projects delivered on time and on budget. It was a good outcome. I hope that we can deliver similar benefits to the people of Western Australia through a broader application of PPPs. It is not simply a strategy that we are using to try to doctor the state’s balance sheet. The facts are, and advice from Treasury is, that when a PPP is entered into, at the time when, effectively, the key to the door is received, a liability is incurred. The liability is the net present value cash flow of future commitments under that PPP, so it will show up and be captured by the ratings agencies and by us when we report on our total net financial liabilities. There is no attempt to move things off the balance sheet by using PPPs; my advice from Treasury is that it quite simply cannot be done.

Ms R. Saffioti: Can I ask if it depends on the type of lease you enter into?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: That is a really interesting point and we had this discussion at the Treasurers’ conference. My understanding is that it is only when there is a patronage risk that goes across. We are not considering this, but if it is a road we pay for—I had better not use the word because members will think I might have used it—or if it is a 100 per cent patronage risk transfer, then it goes on the balance sheet. That is the advice I have had. We are certainly going forward with the full expectation that the provision of social infrastructure through PPPs will show up on our balance sheet as a liability, which will be captured by the ratings agencies. There is no attempt to move assets and/or debt in or out of the balance sheet through this. Why do we want to do PPPs? Firstly, because we think we will get the projects built in a more timely and cost-effective manner; and, secondly, because we see benefits in engaging the private sector and competitive tensions in the delivery of government services. I believe very strongly in them, and I think they will deliver significant benefits to the people of Western Australia, as they do to people in a range of other jurisdictions around Australia.

I will quickly touch on health. Health is a major challenge for this government. It was a major challenge for the former government. I indicated yesterday that health expenses had been growing at around 12 per cent per annum. That is too high, and we cannot afford it. We have to get health expense growth back to an acceptable level, which is the health cost inflator plus activity growth. We have a long way to go, but we are slowly starting to make steps in the right direction. From what I have seen, the first six months’ figures indicate that things are slowly turning around in health; however, we will wait and see.

The member for Rockingham said that the biggest risk to the state was potential changes to royalties. I do not know about that. I think that the biggest risk to the state is some of the industrial behaviour that we are currently seeing in the Pilbara. The member for Rockingham talked about jobs. I think the biggest risk to the state is that that sort of industrial activity will scare investment offshore.

Mr M. McGowan: Are you confirming royalty rises?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: No, I did not say that at all.

Mr M. McGowan: Are you going to rule it out?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I said I do not agree with the member for Rockingham that the biggest risk to the state is discussion around royalties. There are very few people in Western Australia who do not think that royalties need to go up. Ken Henry thinks that royalties need to go up.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: I thought you disagreed with Ken Henry?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I disagree with him on a lot of things, but not that, and I have said that publicly. I said the only thing I agree with Ken Henry on —

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Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Mr B.S. Wyatt: You said that the business sector understood that was the broadly held view of the government. When was that ever mentioned prior to —

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Broadly held view in government about what?

Mr B.S. Wyatt: I am quoting you—the Treasurer said that royalty rates were too low.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I said there is a general view around Western Australia that royalty rates are too low. That is my view of people's expectations.

Mr M. McGowan: Do you have any idea what the royalty rates are?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Of course I have an idea of what royalties are. Let us move on.

Mr M. McGowan: What is the royalty rate on gold?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: It is 2.5 per cent. The royalty rate on finds under state agreement acts is 3.75 per cent. The mining royalty rate for finds is 5.625 per cent, and the royalty rate on mines is 7.5 per cent. I might know what it is; I might not. I think that is right.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Do you know what it is in Brazil?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I know that Brazil is unlikely to see the sort of industrial activity that we have seen in the Pilbara recently. I know that if Brazil commits to deliver a project in a timely way, it generally delivers in a timely way. I know that potential Japanese investors in Western Australia are very worried. I refer to an article by Steve Lewis that during the week appeared in press around Australia. He quotes Nippon Steel's boss in Australia, Mr Nakata, as saying, basically, that the company wanted assurances that Australia would not return to the wild industrial days of the seventies when Japan was forced to look to Brazil for its supplies. I know that that sort of activity forces investment to Brazil and other places.

Mr B.S. Wyatt interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I have not had anyone ring me up saying they are worried about the government discussing royalties. I have had plenty of feedback from people worried about the industrial behaviour we are seeing in the north.

Mr B.S. Wyatt interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I do not get many phone calls! My phone rarely rings, and it is quite nice. The article continues —

The steel giant was “afraid and very concerned” that an escalation in industrial action would disrupt export markets...

“We are seriously concerned with the stable supply of raw materials, particularly iron ore and coking coal,” ...

He was at an Australian conference and was talking about New South Wales and Western Australia. I know that that sort of industrial behaviour sends a very strong message to potential investors in Western Australia. I also know that investment is required to generate jobs in Western Australia; it always has been.

I have an interesting little anecdote. Recently I was meeting with a Western Australian construction company that is bidding on a component for a major resources group. Their advice from the potential customer has been that it likes their technical solution and their price is okay, but the customer is not sure it will give them the business because it does not think they can deliver on time because it is very nervous about the changing industrial environment in Western Australia. What will happen if that work goes offshore—if it is scared offshore?

Mr W.J. Johnston: What are you doing?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I am doing something.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You are the minister.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Julia Gillard is the minister responsible for industrial relations, my friend. We will get to her in a second. If this goes offshore, who will be the first people who will complain? The very unions whose behaviour sent the job offshore! It will be the very people who voted for the member for Cannington. No, the member was in the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, which is on the right, so the member is

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Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

not that radical. However, those people's behaviour will push investment and jobs offshore. I make that as a simple observation.

I noticed the other week that the member for Rockingham was talking about royalties and bipartisanship. I thought it was a great little interview. He said that the people of Western Australia love bipartisanship, that he was committed to bipartisanship and people like it. I have to say that when I sat on the opposite side of the chamber in a few different spots and I think the member was over here, a lot of people said he was full of a lot of things, but I never sensed a great outpouring of bipartisanship.

Mr M. McGowan: Funny how there's not that much coming from you!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I am happy to engage in bipartisanship! I will tell members what I will do. The next time I meet Julia Gillard and express to her our concerns about the union threat to investment and jobs in Western Australia, I will buy the member a ticket for the plane and he can come with us. Next time I have a meeting with UnionsWA to express my concern —

An opposition member interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I have met with them. The next time I meet with them to express my concerns about the threat of that sort of behaviour to jobs and investment in WA, I will let the member come along. I will even buy him a cup of coffee!

Mr M. McGowan: It is a serious point and I could write to you, if you'd like. My press release was saying that if you want to take a bipartisan approach on the Henry review—the Premier asked us yesterday—I'm happy to come with you.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Did he ask you?

Mr M. McGowan: Yes.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: In his Premier's reply.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: All right, I think I might skip that trip! But anyway —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: That is the problem; you and the Premier don't seem to speak to each other!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: It looks like we all might be bunked in for the weekend!

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Can he come?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: What does the member want to do? Does he want us to introduce him to his federal colleagues?

Mr M. McGowan: I know Julia; I was education minister so I know her.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Wayne Swan, who is this? "Ooh, don't know!" Kevin, who is that? It is not Borat! "I don't know!"

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Funny how they all know who you are though, isn't it?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: They do; I know a lot of them!

Mr B.S. Wyatt: They knew who you are, even before you became Treasurer!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: We have a very, very cosy working relationship.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: It must kill you! But we will take the member over and we will introduce him to them if he wants. If the member really wants to meet his federal colleagues we will take him over, in the true spirit of bipartisanship that I sense descending on this house.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: We'll take you up on that! We look forward to the invitation.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: We will go see Julia Gillard.

I want to close just with a quick analysis of the November monthlies. The member for Victoria Park alluded to the fact that expenses have grown in the November monthlies by 15.5 per cent. Some extraordinary items are contained within those expenses. They are all detailed by Treasury, when we take those out, \$540 million, a lot of it is the passing on of the commonwealth stimulus—\$468 million of those expenses basically come in and go out and get counted as expenses on the way through. If we take that out, underlying expense growth is now

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8.5 per cent. We still have more to do to address expense growth but I think we are slowly turning the corner in terms —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Sorry? I said real per capita, my friend.

Anyhow, that is basically where we are at. The state's finances, regrettably, I have to inform you are in sound hands. They are in sound hands investing in jobs —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: But whose hands are they in?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: These hands, my friend! The state's finances are being funnelled into sound investments for the long-term future of Western Australia and protecting Western Australian jobs. What did I say? Forty-one per cent of total fulltime employment generated in Australia has been generated in Western Australia since July of last year. I think that record speaks for itself.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [4.24 pm]: I do not want to spend too much time; I will just be finishing up on this debate and I will be rebutting some of the Treasurer's comments. As the Treasurer outlined today in question time, managing the state's budget is a challenge. At any time it is a challenge but it is particularly a challenge when there is a cabinet around the Treasurer such as he has. He has a Premier who spends and makes announcements every day shooting from the hip. He has the Minister for Regional Development who every day changes the story on royalties for regions. Today in question time we heard that the midyear review is actually incorrect; that \$25 million each year will have to be added back into the state's finances because the midyear review is inconsistent with the legislation that has been passed but not yet proclaimed in this Parliament. Therefore, already the government has lost \$75 million as I count just from today's question time.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I do not think so.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the Treasurer disagree with the Minister for Regional Development?

Mr T.R. Buswell: No; I disagree with you.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Basically, the cabinet, the Treasurer and the Premier cannot control the state's finances. It is clear that within 18 months we have gone from having the state's best set of financial figures to nearly having the worst. There are deficits in the forward estimates and out-of-control debt, with no plan to pay for them. In 18 months the best set of figures we ever had has become probably the worst set of figures we have ever had. There is no sense of management, there is no sense of budget discipline and there is no commitment to budget strategy from cabinet. I have been involved in the budget process over a number of years. I know that managing the state's finances at any time is a difficult task, but when ministers do not know what the budget papers are, have no commitment to the budget plan and no commitment to the budget estimates, and a Premier makes announcements day by day, that is when it becomes impossible.

What is the impact for Western Australia? It means that families are paying more every day for normal living. Electricity prices have gone through the roof, not because of disaggregation but because a subsidy that was in the budget—a subsidy that existed—has been ripped out, and families around Western Australia have to pay for it. This might not mean much for some members on the other side of this house, but for families trying to juggle their day-to-day bills a 77 per cent increase in electricity bills is a major issue. Families are in trouble trying to manage their household budgets. Families should not have to pay, in one hit, hundreds or thousands of dollars extra in their household bills. Labor had a plan to introduce full cost recovery for electricity charges. As the Labor Party cares about families, it was going to be done over a period of time. The Treasurer cannot tell me he cares about families if, in two years, he increases electricity charges by 77 per cent.

Mr T.R. Buswell: We care about lots of people.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, you do not. It is obvious that you do not care about families.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I've got a family. I care about them.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Maybe you care about your own family.

Mr T.R. Buswell: You've got a family; I care about you.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is good that the Treasurer cares about his own family.

Several members interjected

Mr J.R. Quigley: He double-dipped to pay for his house! His family is as sweet as a nut!

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Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
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Mr T.R. Buswell: The same as the members for Albany and Collie–Preston.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Treasurer does not care about families around the state. Who is paying for the reckless cowboy handling of the state's budget? Ordinary families and pensioners around the state are paying every week. The seniors' cost-of-living rebate had to be shifted so that the Treasurer could produce a surplus of \$51 million. Everyone knows the cost-of-living rebate was a balancing item that was shifted from one year to the next to make sure the surplus looked more than \$25 million.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I am not denying that.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So it is a balancing item; that is why the Treasurer does not care about it?

Mr T.R. Buswell: We did not have the money to fund it this year so we moved it back two months.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So another broken election promise!

Mr T.R. Buswell: No; they will still get paid this year, 2010.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr T.R. Buswell: It is not a secret.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a broken election promise. Families around the state are paying for budget mismanagement—the reckless cowboy approach to budgeting in WA! Businesses are paying for the reckless spending of this government. Tax cuts that were scheduled in the state budget in the forward estimates have now been cancelled. Now we know the mining sector will also be paying for the reckless state budget. I see members opposite, like the member for Wanneroo, laughing about families in WA having to pay higher electricity prices.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I did not see that.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I did.

Mr T.R. Buswell: He was laughing at something else—the member for Southern River, a renowned preacher!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Maybe the member for Southern River was laughing at people having to pay higher electricity prices.

Mr T.R. Buswell: No, he was not. I heard it; it was a very funny quip.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I want to touch on another point made about public–private partnerships. The scoping of projects is far more important than the source of funding. One of the reasons PPP was successful in the CBD courts project was because the scoping of the project was done in such detail. The idea that just because it is private sector funding means it is cheaper is absolutely wrong, when government can borrow at lower costs —

Mr T.R. Buswell: I didn't say that. I don't believe that. Actually I think you are right. There are a lot of other benefits from using the private sector early in the construction cycle in terms of innovation in construction and in terms of operation.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not saying we should use the private sector to construct; I am saying that using a proper detailed business case and a detailed analysis of the project is far more important than the source of funding.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Of course we do that.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, the Treasurer does not.

Mr T.R. Buswell: We actually offered last year to participate in the funding of PPP infrastructure.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not have much time left. The last thing I want to talk about is the government's economic growth credentials in some of the claims the Treasurer made today in question time. Can the Treasurer name one project that was under construction in 2009 that his government was responsible for?

Mr T.R. Buswell: In 2009, can I?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Name one project that the government was responsible for, under construction.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Gorgon.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Gorgon was not contributing to the economic growth figures in 2009. The Treasurer is not responsible for it anyway.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I am going out on Tuesday to Howard Porter, which has just sold \$20 million worth of trailers. It has people working there. Go down to the AMC and look at all the bits of stuff going up there.

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]
p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Treasurer knows that Gorgon was well underway under us. The Australian Marine Complex was our project.

Mr T.R. Buswell: It wasn't approved.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It was our project.

Mr T.R. Buswell: The AMC was Henty Cowan's project. Even the "member for Swanbourne" acknowledges that.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So it was not the Treasurer's project.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I said "Gorgon"; we approved Gorgon.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: For the Treasurer to come into this place and claim all the credit for those economic growth figures is basically fraudulent. Of course, the Treasurer must recognise the efforts of the previous government in attaining the economic growth that has helped sustain us through the global financial crisis.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (25)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr M. McGowan	Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr R.H. Cook	Mrs C.A. Martin	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr A.P. O'Gorman	Mr T.G. Stephens	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire	
Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.C. Tinley	
Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr A.J. Waddell	

Noes (30)

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

Pair

Ms J.M. Freeman

Mr G.M. Castrilli

Amendment thus negatived.

Consideration Resumed

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [4.37 pm]: I am pleased to rise today to speak to the Premier's Statement of yesterday when he spoke of his government being compassionate. I hope he is true to his word because my speech today will focus on a great wrong that was allowed to happen in Western Australia and other states and territories across the nation. The period I speak of is the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and even into the 1980s. It involved the taking of babies at birth from young Australian women, many just girls, in hospitals, both state-run and private; in hostels; and in church-run and community-operated facilities in the state. It was a policy and practice sanctioned by governments of the day and it has had an immeasurable impact on literally thousands of women across the country. For many, a deep and lasting scar remains in the hearts and souls of those women, their children and their families. Over the past six months I have been reading documents, personal stories and evidence presented to a New South Wales parliamentary inquiry on the subject. I have also met personally with women and listened to their stories, including one, a constituent of mine, who is here today. Her name is Sue and she is in the Speaker's gallery with her partner, Stewart, along with three other mothers, Heather, Michelle and Carmel. I thank them for being here this afternoon.

To understand this issue and the impact it has had on just one person is best told in her words, so with her permission and in light of her great courage, I am proud to read to this Parliament my constituent Sue's story —

In 1967 I was a shy fifteen year old student at high school sitting for my junior examinations. I was young and vulnerable with little knowledge of human reproduction. I succumbed to a young man of

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

seventeen, lost my virginity and became pregnant. I was so naïve that I did not realize I was pregnant until some 16 weeks into my pregnancy. I was very ill and was hospitalized at Devonleigh Hospital in Cottesloe. This was once a private hospital; however the WA Government purchased the hospital years before my admission, to increase obstetric services to the community and house the W.A. School of Nursing.

Upon recovery, I was sent by my parents to live with distant relatives and then closer to my confinement date, with my married sister. I did have an interview at Ngala but the matron there upset my mother by stating in a vicious tone, that a condition of entry into the home was that I would have to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases. This treatment offended my mother deeply and she decided against sending me there for the last months of my confinement.

Throughout this period I was in contact with the father of my baby and we planned to keep our child and a layette was gradually purchased as he was working. Some weeks before the birth of our baby, my boyfriend stopped visiting. Years later I found out that he had become ill and when he did make contact after the birth of our child he was threatened by my parents and sent away. Adoption was raised by my parents at the time nearing my confinement, but no decision on my part was ever made nor conveyed to **anyone**, I would just avoid the subject as I wanted to keep my baby. My thoughts were that when my baby was born and they saw her, they would change their attitude. Welfare Department records, which I have recently acquired, showed that my father was against me coming home with my child, however, my mother said that she would insist that I be allowed home and that she would help me take care of my baby. In my six months of pregnancy the records also show that the welfare officer involved at that stage, demanded that my parents make me give up my child for adoption and that the father of the baby be sent away. He threatened to take me and my child in front of the courts and have both of us declared neglected, if they did not take very good care of me at home. I am only very recently aware of this information and the pressure that the Department was placing on my parents. My father was not enjoying good health and a year or so after my baby was taken, he passed away from cancer. ...

I only had a few visits with the GP involved, neither information nor instruction was given to me about giving birth and adoption was never, ever discussed with him. There was a veil of silence concerning the whole matter and my family never spoke about it then, nor in the years that followed. I was extremely afraid throughout my pregnancy although I was looking forward to having my child and raising my child with her father when we were allowed to marry. We were to announce our engagement on my sixteenth birthday in April.

On the 15th of July I went into labor and my water broke around 11pm. I stayed at home with my sister until the next morning. I was dropped at Devonleigh Hospital early that morning and left to face what was about to happen to me and my baby **completely deprived** of any person I knew.

Immediately I became afraid to the point of sheer terror. Orders were given to me sternly without kindness or compassion throughout my preparation to give birth and my admittance to the labor ward. My labor pains were strong. After entering the labor ward I endured derogatory comments from staff and I was scolded over bodily functions which I had no control over. "Disgusting!" was the word used. Shamed throughout my pregnancy, my shame reached infinite proportions through this treatment. As the process of labor continued, my terror and shame reached intolerable levels and I now believe my child felt my terror too. Through the administration of drugs I was rendered unconscious and the next memory I have is a room full of complete strangers, my shoulders being raised and being told to push. My legs were in stirrups and there was a doctor attending who was completely unknown to me. I had neither physical pain nor sensation of any kind. I have had two further children and I can assure you that I was fully conscious and I felt everything.

At 9.00pm on the 16th of July my baby was born and that moment has haunted me ever since. It is the subject of recurring nightmares and I am afraid, after having this nightmare to go back to sleep in case I experience it again. My beautiful little baby was born and I heard her terrified cries for me, her mother. Her helpless plea to begin her transition into the world slowly and naturally, via the warmth, knowing and safety of her own mother was inhumanely and deliberately denied her by hospital staff. They covered my face to prevent me seeing her and drugged me into oblivion. As that veil of darkness descended, so a veil of secrecy, shame and toxic humiliation descended on my life. They succeeded in destroying me at that moment and I will never fully recover. (I was informed of the sex of my baby by my mother upon discharge.)

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

I drifted back into consciousness to find not one but two, young doctors busy suturing. I remember feeling intensely ashamed and embarrassed. I had just turned 16 years of age. I succumbed to unconsciousness again and woke up in a room. I was bewildered, shaking uncontrollably and what I realize now in profound shock. I stumbled out of the bed, trying to find my baby. I was standing in a pool of blood. At that moment a member of the nursing staff came in and I asked what was happening to me. I was dealt with harshly and told angrily “you have just had a baby, you silly girl. Get back into bed.” I asked through timid tears “Where is my baby?” The response was a very firm “Gone.” I was then instructed to stay in my room and to shower at night to prevent anyone “seeing me”. I felt totally inhuman, deeply ashamed, worthless and terrified.

I have little recollection of my stay in hospital. I remember babies crying outside my room at times and just being curled up frozen with fear—numb. I remember just one shower—late at night—as per cruel instructions. I stood weeping, sobbing as I looked down at the water running over the sagging, empty sack of my belly. My baby was once inside me, protected; now they had taken her—she was gone. I remember walking down a passage and my parents walking towards me all dressed up. I broke down and begged them to take me home. It was my understanding that my baby had gone and I thought they were allowed to take her and I had no right to stop them. I do not remember any further conversations with hospital staff, my GP nor my parents whilst in hospital. There is a vague recollection of being given drugs in the hospital after the birth and I took drugs after I was discharged. Until six months ago, when I received discharge and admission dates from scant hospital records, I believed I had been in hospital the day my daughter was born and taken home the next day. Records show that I was in hospital for four days. Four days that I have no recollection of other than very fleeting moments. Yet I can remember my previous stay in that hospital at the beginning of my pregnancy, very well indeed. ...

To my knowledge nobody approached me about adoption during my stay in hospital. I was astounded recently to find my admission records were marked ‘Adoption’ and that I was noted as my daughter’s next of kin and mother. It was never explained to me and therefore, not understood by me that I was her legal guardian, nor the implications of that term.

I went home to another cone of silence, and within a couple of days my mother took me by bus to the city to sign some papers. I was very unwell, bleeding heavily, feeling faint and numb all over. Counsellors with the Adoption Research Council tell me that I had been placed into deep trauma. I remember parts of the interview with the social worker telling me the wonderful virtues of the adoptive couple whom I believed already had my baby in their possession. I was then shocked even further to learn she was still at the hospital and she had been left there. They were going to place her in a foster home ... if I did not give consent and this was just too much. My head was reeling having just learnt that she was still at the hospital and no one was loving her and comforting her. I was just sixteen, deeply traumatized by my experience and being told information that was traumatizing me further. I signed a consent not believing I had any power or rights at all. I had just been through a process in the hospital which created such a deep profound belief that I was a nothing, less than human, a body that created a baby for some one else. I had no sense or thought of entitlement to my own child.

Forty one years later my baby’s cries are just as vivid today as they were back then, my empty arms still ache from the inability to respond, to hold and protect her. I live daily with a frozen tension in my body, rising to panic at times at my inability to satisfy my maternal instinct to take care of her and answer her cry. This is in a constant holding pattern together with a profound sense of loss, grief, frustration, depression and anger. I have had years of counseling partly funded by the W.A Government. I asked my counsellor if the welfare department would have known what procedures were in place in the hospitals and she said that they certainly did know.

If this is so, how can consent be taken under such treatment or in fact, be valid. I have to live with what happened and accept that these debilitating emotions and reactions will accompany me for the rest of my life. What I cannot accept is the perpetuation of the lie that my baby was unwanted and given away. This hideous lie, which they thought would never be uncovered because of closed adoption, continues to undermine my life and destroy the very fabric of the life of my grown up daughter. She cannot come to terms with being abandoned. Can you blame her? She is caught up in the deliberately manufactured myth and propaganda of the day, as her adoptive parents are—that unmarried mothers did not want their babies and gave them away to strangers.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

The fact is that she was taken unlawfully at birth from her lawful, natural mother by a conspiracy between my parents (who were placed under duress by the Welfare Officer) the doctor, the hospital and government welfare services. This dark, evil history of past adoption practice was eugenics based and was to save public money. These facts remain conveniently suppressed and hidden from general view. Years later, I asked my mother why she never came to see me during my labor and stay in hospital. It was a lifelong hurt that I cannot forget. Her response was that the hospital told her I was sedated and asleep and not to come. My parents, the doctor, the hospital staff and the Welfare Department were not the legal guardians of my daughter—I was. Did I ask to be sedated for nine or ten hours during my labor and the duration of my subsequent stay in hospital? Did I ask not to see my child? Did I ask for antilactation drugs to dry up my milk? Did I ask to sign adoption papers? Did I ask for a matron or nurse to name my child. I will have to live with the insult of a name I hate on my daughter's original birth certificate—forever. I did not ask for any of the above! All I asked was "Where is my baby" to be told she was gone. What message does that give to a terrified young girl at her most vulnerable? It says that people you trust to look after you and your baby are **so powerful** that they can do anything they want to do, if it suits their purpose and this destroys your trust for ever. All of these actions presumed adoption without consultation with me, her natural mother and sole legal guardian. The Adoption Act did not come into play until the consent was signed. So under what act was my child abducted from me at the moment of her birth and what constitutes duress, which was deemed unlawful under the Adoption Act at that time. I have to deal with a deep mistrust of government departments and having any gynaecological procedure is deeply disturbing to me. I consider myself lucky though, as studies show that a staggering forty percent of women who experienced this never had another child because of the severity of the trauma experienced.

Welfare and hospital practices were extremely uniform around Australia and in the late seventies hospital's were warned by the Health Commission that they risked litigation. In an edition of the Australia Medical Journey a senior obstetrician of that era is quoted as saying "when it comes to unmarried mothers we can ignore the law." Young women were shackled to beds during labor, drugged, bullied, their babies placed in locked nurseries or the mothers were removed by ambulance to hospital annexes to totally separate mother and child. Some were told that their babies had died only to find their adult child turn up on their doorstep years later. Some had their babies taken for adoption ... because they were not perfect in some way. In some instances, grand parents who advocated for their daughter and illegitimate grandchild, were threatened by hospital security. Unmarried mothers' homes were places of incarceration. I can assure you that this happened here in Western Australia, as it did all over Australia.

Last year, the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital publicly apologized to mothers in Queensland The hospital's current Director of Obstetrics was deeply disturbed about these practices and the ongoing severity of the detrimental effects that continue to play out in the lives of women and their children. It is the first hospital in Australia to want to make a difference and I applaud their compassion and honest action. The Archdeacon of Brisbane has apologized for the treatment endured by young women in the Anglican Unmarried Mothers homes.

It is only over the last year, through research and the testimony given at two inquiries into past adoption practice in Australia that I have become aware that this horror took place in hospitals around Australia. The insidious tentacles of secret adoption continued to erode the lives of those who have endured this shocking, dark and cruel time in Australia's History. Duty of care now rests with those who are powerful enough and conscious enough to make a difference by publicly acknowledging and setting right the terrible wrongs of the past. I request this to facilitate our healing. **OUR CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW.** We have lost another one of our mums to suicide. Her two subsequent children born to her after she lost her first born to adoption are now also deprived of their natural mother. I believe the **way** that she chose to end her life held a **desperate and urgent message** to those who have chosen not to listen and acknowledge her trauma and pain resulting from the treatment she received. Just like the time she gave birth to her first born, face veiled, covered, in a black void of drug induced unconsciousness, so she ended her life—veils of plastic wrapped tightly around her head accompanied by a huge overdose of drugs.

Sue finishes with —

When will this carnage cease—Do we still have to suffer under the oppressive hand of a past patriarchal society?

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

I admire my constituent, Sue. I admire the many other women in this country who live with a great pain that must be healed. Sue's story is only one story but there are thousands just like her. For too long these women's voices have not been heard. I hope that from today in Western Australia that will change. It is my firm view that it is time for this Parliament and the government to formally and publicly acknowledge that this practice occurred and that it has had an enduring impact on many children, mothers and families in Western Australia, just as it has across Australia.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is now time to give these women a voice to ensure that they are heard and consulted about a formal acknowledgement and apology to them, their children and their families. That apology should come from the government and the Parliament of Western Australia. It is time that we do not simply dismiss this as a social moray of the day, which is a common belief. That is wrong. What happened was wrong. It involved the removal of babies from their natural mothers at birth, in many cases by illegal means, and also through threats, coercion, intimidation and the use of drugs. When I met Sue last year, I could not help but be moved by her story. I was also moved by the stories of many others. With Sue's help, I set about ensuring that I gained as much information about and understanding of what happened in not only Western Australia, but also the other states. As Sue mentioned in her statement, only late last year the director of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital formally acknowledged and apologised on behalf of the hospital for the practices and policies that existed. It is important that these women and their children hear this acknowledgement. I really want to stress that. It is not just for the women; it is for the many thousands of children, many of them from Western Australia, who suffered this great tragedy.

I believe that this Parliament has a role in such matters. Earlier last year we saw the apology to the stolen generation, and then subsequently to the forgotten Australians, in the federal Parliament. Federally, preliminary discussions took place to see whether the women and children I am talking about should be included in the apology for the forgotten Australians. For a variety of reasons, that did not take place. It still may take place. I understand that the federal minister is engaging a formal review to see if that would be an outcome.

I think that we in Western Australia should show some leadership. We should acknowledge that there was a period in our history that saw babies taken from their mothers. That has created a great hurt for them, for their families and for their children. For many, it has caused irreparable damage. As part of the healing process, surely we know in our hearts that there is a reason such an apology and acknowledgement should take place.

It is my intention to talk to members about this issue over the coming weeks and months. I want to talk about how we can move forward towards a formal acknowledgement in this place of those practices and policies and a formal apology to those women, children and families, many of whom have a deep scar that remains forever in their hearts. I hope that members in this place will support that move. If they have not already been contacted by women and children, many of whom would be adults now, who are part of this, I ask them to listen to their story if they come to their offices and understand the deep hurt that many of them have and continue to carry. I think that is what Parliaments are for. They are for the banter that we saw before this speech, they are for questions and they are for keeping people, governments and oppositions accountable. They are also for us to reflect on our history and the occurrences that have a deep and lasting impact on our citizens. If we as a Parliament and ultimately as a government can make moves to help in that healing, it should happen.

The unfortunate outcome of the New South Wales inquiry 10 years ago is that very few of the recommendations made were implemented, including an apology. It may be appropriate that this Parliament recognises the need for a formal inquiry at some time in the future. My focus is on acknowledgement and an apology because that is what the women, their children and their families tell me they want and need for them to heal.

I want to pay tribute to Sue, Heather, Michelle and Carmel. I cannot imagine what it was like. I do not know; they know. Many thousands of women know, and they live with this every single day of their lives. Many have taken it to their graves. I appeal to all members in this place to work towards what I hope we can achieve, and that Western Australia can be one of the first, if not the first, state in Australia to formally acknowledge what happened, to formally say sorry and to aid in the healing process that is so important for these women, these children and these families. I hope members will support me.

MR P.T. MILES (Wanneroo) [5.02 pm]: I rise to support the government's agenda for the coming year, as outlined by the Premier. Since the state election in 2008, this government has already delivered on a number of promises and commitments in my electorate of Wanneroo. I am pleased to report that the Minister for Planning, Hon John Day, has acted quickly on our election commitment to ensure zoning certainty for east Wanneroo residents, with the release of the east Wanneroo draft structure plan on 2 November 2009. The draft plan has

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
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been very well received by the majority of east Wanneroo residents, with a tremendous response to the call for public submissions. In the first week of the draft plan's release, my office was swamped with requests for the report. The initial closing date for public comment was 16 December 2009; however, due to the high level of public interest, I approached the Department of Planning and asked it to extend the closing date to 29 January 2010, to which it agreed.

I am not surprised at the high level of interest in the issue; for the past eight years, the previous government made many promises to east Wanneroo residents about zoning certainty, but did nothing in all that time. The lack of certainty affected residents' ability to forward plan, particularly in respect of issues such as superannuation and retirement. It has been a cause of considerable anxiety for many east Wanneroo families. They have not been able to start new ventures on their properties, redevelop existing properties, or even, in some cases, sell up, because of the previous government's dithering on the issue. I am extremely pleased that this government has acted quickly on this. The Department of Planning deserves congratulations for recognising the importance of the draft plan for east Wanneroo by holding open clinics for the affected residents over several days. The department is now looking at several hundred submissions to take local residents' views into consideration before the final plan is compiled.

Another recent government initiative is the introduction of independent public schools. This will allow principals to have greater responsibility and flexibility in the recruitment of teachers and other school staff. It encourages schools to ensure that students have the best possible learning opportunities and outcomes. Several schools in my electorate were amongst the first to receive independent public school status and form a cluster. Those schools include Madeley Primary School, Ashdale Primary School and Landsdale Primary School, which is actually in the neighbouring electorate of West Swan. They also include Ashdale Secondary College, for which those three primary schools are feeder schools. Ashdale Secondary College opened in mid-2009 and is another of the government's recent achievements in Wanneroo. The school's facilities are state-of-the-art, and the teaching staff, under the leadership of the principal, Carol Strauss, are committed to excellence. I have been most impressed with every aspect of the school to date, and take this opportunity to recognise the fine work being done there to educate and equip these students.

While I am speaking about Wanneroo schools, I should also mention the establishment of a new K-2 school on the Springhill campus of Tapping Primary School. Tapping and the adjoining suburb of Carramar are among the fastest growing suburbs in my electorate, with a high proportion of home buyers with young children. Tapping Primary School currently has enrolments of more than 800 children, which, understandably, has put an enormous strain on the school's resources. I am pleased that the government has moved to accommodate the large number of young children in the area in the kindy to two-year-old age group.

The re-emergence of the north west mining boom has meant flow-on jobs to some local firms in Wangara, which is very good news for local employment. Last November I hosted a visit from Hon Donna Faragher, Minister for Environment, to Ertech Ltd in Wangara. The minister was able to see firsthand how the company was meticulously undertaking the cleaning and packaging of large-scale mining equipment such as D9 excavators and dump trucks prior to them being transported to Barrow Island. I am delighted that the benefits of the Gorgon project are already flowing through to this wholly employee-owned local firm and others similar to it.

Wanneroo has been host to three major events in the past few months. The first was the centenary of the Wanneroo Agricultural Society show last November, which was an outstanding success in every way. The president of Wanneroo Agricultural Society, Mr Mike Aspinall, and his committee worked extremely hard to ensure that the 2009 show was a memorable occasion for everyone who attended. I would also like to thank the Premier for taking time out from his particularly hectic schedule to come to Wanneroo that day to visit the show and meet with many exhibitors, competitors and local people.

The Premier was also in attendance at the Australia Day celebrations at the Kingsway Sporting Reserve in Madeley, when more than 2 600 people became Australian citizens in what was the biggest ceremony of its kind ever held in Australia. It was a wonderful occasion that was, this year, hosted by the City of Wanneroo, in conjunction with the City of Joondalup and the City of Stirling. The City of Wanneroo, I might add, did the best job of all out of the three Australian citizenships ceremonies!

Mr A.P. Jacob: It was an Australian record.

Mr P.T. MILES: Yes, it was an Australian record, and it demonstrated the huge population growth in the northern suburbs.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

The third major event in Wanneroo was the Vietnamese new year Tet Festival that was held last Friday; this is the year of the tiger. Wanneroo Showgrounds was attended by thousands of people from the Vietnamese community; in fact, there was a huge traffic problem to and from the showgrounds, which we do not normally experience even for the agricultural show. I would like to thank the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Hon John Castrilli, for attending this event for the second year, and he has certainly sent a strong message to the Vietnamese community that they are important and valued members of the multicultural family in Western Australia.

Main Roads Western Australia has almost completed the “dualling” of a section of Wanneroo Road north of the town site between Joondalup Drive and Wallawa Street. When completed, this will help ease traffic congestion in the north of the Wanneroo town site quite dramatically. Again, the government has gotten on and done the job.

A project which received \$670 000 in funding from the state government and which was an election commitment was the rebuilding of the Wanneroo Showgrounds clubrooms for the football and the cricket clubs. Members can recall that the original clubrooms were burnt down in 2008 in an act of wanton vandalism. I have been involved in the meetings of the clubrooms’ reconstruction working group at the City of Wanneroo, and I am pleased to report that agreement on the design and technical aspects of the new clubrooms has now been reached. The project will be referred to the city’s full council meeting in March, with a recommendation to proceed to tender, so hopefully we will get on with the job and some laying of bricks and mortar will start to happen. I want to also thank the players and officials from the Wanneroo Football Club and the Wanneroo District Cricket Club for their patience during this time and this process. I am sure that the rebuilt clubrooms will be a vast improvement on the old ones, and that the local community will be pleased with the end result.

Finally, I want to mention the outcome for almost 100 residents of the Kingsway Tourist Park in my electorate who were served with an eviction notice during 2008. These mainly elderly residents were given a year’s notice to quit their long-stay tenancies, remove their park home or caravan from the Kingsway site and find alternative housing. For many, this became an overwhelming and expensive task, and I was happy to be able to provide some practical assistance and support to those folk during that difficult and emotional time. I want to record my thanks to the staff of the Department of Housing, who acted so quickly when the eviction notices were served to ensure that all eligible Kingsway residents were listed for public housing, and to the Minister for Mental Health, Dr Graham Jacobs, and his ministerial staff, particularly Keith Wilkinson, for the professional service and assistance offered to extremely distressed individuals at that time. I also thank the Minister for Housing and Works, Troy Buswell, and his adviser, Ben O’Rourke, and the government for providing the act-of-grace payment to eligible residents to help with the relocation. The assistance offered by everyone concerned made a huge difference to the Kingsway residents in their hour of need.

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [5.10 pm]: First of all, I welcome the member for Willagee to Parliament. He gave a very inspiring speech yesterday. I am sure he will be a great asset, not only to the Labor Party in Parliament but to the whole Parliament. I congratulate the member for Mandurah on his speech. One of my constituents in Albany is Lexie Valentine. She is working very hard at the moment to get compensation under the Redress scheme. She is dying. She is not a materialistic person, but she wants to make sure that her family benefits. She had two brothers, who did not apply to Redress. They had the same degenerative disease as Lexie, and both have died. I will be doing everything I can for Lexie and her family. She was not included in the first 600 payments that went out. She has sent in doctors’ certificates verifying that she is dying, but I hope that my raising her situation in Parliament will push it along.

While talking about children being taken away from their parents, I am reminded how lucky I am to have been able to see my brand-new grandson here in Parliament House. I realise how lucky I am to have my children and to know my grandchildren and not have to worry that they will be taken away. As a member of Parliament, I realise the importance of our young ones. As some people tell me, my grandson’s only flaw is that three hours after he was born I made him a Collingwood Football Club member! I have been accused of child abuse, and my daughter and son-in-law are not very impressed, but every time I say “Go the Pies!” he gets a big smile on his face. He is another member of the Collingwood army. Seeing my grandson reminds me how important our job is. We come in here and talk across the chamber and have a crack at each other, but we are all here to make a better life for our young people. I was interested when the member for Willagee mentioned our reactions and getting things done. We have a plan for the overall future of our children and grandchildren. I know it is easy to get into a reactionary mode in Parliament when the press puts the pressure on, but we have to remember what we are here for, which is to make WA a better place for everyone.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

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I have just been to India, and I saw all sides of society there, from the very, very poor to the very, very rich. One thing I noticed was that the people are all happy. The people there believe in karma and that if we get through this life, we will have a better life next time. When I saw the conditions experienced by people in India, I wondered how they could all be happy. Part of the Australian psyche is to whinge a bit, but if more people realised how those people are living and how in such adverse conditions they can still be happy, I think we would all be in a better place.

I wish to mention a few things about my constituency. Once again Graham Harvey and his team at the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry showcased the quality of business in Albany and the region with the annual ACCI business awards. The ACCI has over 400 members. They hosted 300 guests on the gala night. I would like to congratulate the winners and runners-up. The Wignalls Wines Award for Micro Businesses went to Cape Howe Cottages, which is a tremendous bed and breakfast establishment, and the runner-up was Camping World Albany—Opposite Lock Albany. The Australia Post Award for Businesses with five to 10 employees was won by The Lake House, and the runner-up was the Great Southern Distilling Company—that is where members will find a good Scotch. I know the member for Ocean Reef had a taste there; he is a great Scotch man. The Lincolns Award for Businesses with 11 to 20 employees went to Western Mineral Fertilisers and the runner-up was Merrifield Real Estate. The South Coast Natural Resource Management Award for Businesses with more than 20 employees went to Skill Hire and the runner-up was Fletcher International. Fletcher International is a very big abattoir in Albany; it employs a lot of people in our region. The Skywest Tourism Award went to Cape Howe Cottages. Again, the runner-up was the Great Southern Distilling Company—it obviously did not get a free scotch! The GWN Award for the Best Franchise Business went to the Dome cafe in Albany. The Dome cafe is a great little business in the old Albany primary school and it has retained the heritage. It is on Albany Highway and it has great atmosphere and is a great coffee place. The runner-up was Battery World Albany. The AusIndustry Industry Development Award went to Cape Howe Cottages again—they must have had a great night! Western Mineral Fertilisers was the runner-up. The Great Southern Development Commission Export Award went to Wignalls Wines. Rob and the family win international awards for their great wines and it is great to see them being awarded. The runner-up was Fletcher International. The Albany Port Authority Agribusiness Award went to Western Mineral Fertilisers and the runner-up was Florescence. The Bendigo Bank Community Business Award went to the Great Southern Community Housing Association, which is tremendous because the people there do a tremendous job for people who have special needs in housing. Small Business Centre Great Southern was the runner-up. The Small Business Development Corporation Home Based Business Award went to Stirling Valuations and the runner-up was Virtual Synchronicity. The Small Business Centre Great Southern Business Achiever Award went to Florescence and the runner-up was Camping World Albany—Opposite Lock Albany. The *Albany and Great Southern Weekender* Customer Service Business of the Year Award went to Albany Dyno-Tune Centre. The joint runners-up were Albany World of Cars and Camping World Albany—Opposite Lock Albany. The Telstra Country Wide Business Person of the Year was Vicki Brown from the Small Business Centre Great Southern.

Mr T.R. Buswell: It was a very good night!

Mr P.B. WATSON: Vicki Brown is one of the real characters of the region. Vicki ran against me as a National Party representative, I think it was two elections ago, and she does a tremendous amount of work for small business —

Mr T.R. Buswell: She ran against, I think, the member for Blackwood—Stirling as well!

Mr P.B. WATSON: Yes, I could tell a story there, but I do not think she likes him very much. She is not alone in the region.

Mr T.R. Buswell: She was very friendly to him on Friday.

Mr P.B. WATSON: She must be telling me something different.

The HHG Legal Group Business of the Year Award joint winners were Cape Howe Cottages and Western Mineral Fertilisers.

Cruise ships have been a great asset to Albany. It is becoming an increasingly popular stop for cruise liners with 11 cruise ships due to dock in Albany this year. Each ship will bring hundreds of passengers to Albany with a chance to experience all that amazing Albany has to offer. The Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry does a great job in promoting the cruise ships among the local business centres and the Albany visitor centre ensures that volunteers are on hand to meet the passengers throughout the central business district to provide any assistance. Passengers can have bus trips and they can go to the Alison Hartman Gardens where local people

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have stalls. Some of our local authors such as Jon Doust and Dianne Wolfer sell their latest books, which are bestsellers, there. It is a tremendous bonus for our region.

Did the Treasurer see any of the PIAF when he was down there?

Mr T.R. Buswell: Sorry?

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is a bit artistic for him! PIAF is the Perth International Arts Festival. Rod Vervest organises the festival in Albany and every act that has played down there has been sold out. Rod and his group do a tremendous job. I think Hon Tom Stephens was the minister when the festival first went to regional areas. Rod took hold of it and has made it into one of the most outstanding arts festivals in Australia. It has had everything from Russian dancers to Polish comedians—anything members can name it has—foreign films; it is tremendous. It is the only regional arts festival in Australia of such duration and with a wide range of world-class acts not offered before in regional areas. Hopefully, PIAF will be able to use the new entertainment centre and I know there are talks—I was talking to the chief executive officer of the City of Albany about it today. I know that the arts festival can have 650 people come to some of its acts because everything sold out in the first week. I now refer to Albany's entertainment centre. The Treasurer has been to Albany and rattled the chain a bit. I think it is good that something like that has been done.

Mr T.R. Buswell: That is very subtle.

Mr P.B. WATSON: We are very lucky in Albany—we are the first city to get a complete entertainment centre paid for.

Mr T.R. Buswell: It is a fantastic building.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is. I hoped it would be called the Peter Watson building but obviously that will not happen anymore!

Mr T.R. Buswell: It could be called the Leon Watt building!

Mr P.B. WATSON: I received abusive emails, people rang me up and there were stalls in the street to get rid of me, but people will see the fantastic end job. To the City of Albany, to the Great Southern Development Commission, to everyone involved, it is a fantastic building. When people visit Albany, it will be like when people visit Sydney and talk about the Sydney Opera House; it will be something. It probably cost as much as the Sydney Opera House —

Mr T.R. Buswell: It cost more.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Yes; \$67 million. It is something that Albany will be proud of and I hope that the state will be proud of too. If we get professional people in there to run it, it will be tremendous. Not only will Albany benefit from it, the whole region will. People will come from places such as Katanning, Mt Barker, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup and Borden. When people cannot get into acts in Perth, they will come to Albany. It will be a huge bonus. It might run at a loss in figures but what it will bring to the town in employment is another thing. The Treasurer said it is a magnificent building. There is so much steel in there. One can see why it has cost so much. It is something that will last for a long time.

Albany has a central business district plan. The City of Albany has given the go-ahead to revamp Albany with the release of its Albany city area master plan. It is a 20-year vision for the future growth of the city centre with the vision being that Albany's central area will be the most vibrant, safe, accessible, liveable and commercially successful neighbourhood in regional Western Australia. It is something we are really looking forward to.

We have a sock protest in Albany in relation to the former Esplanade Hotel site. I have never been called a terrorist before, but the other day, as I was tying my sock to the fence, I was called a "sock terrorist". I am proud of it. Four summers ago the Esplanade Hotel was demolished, depriving visitors to Albany of top-class accommodation and visitors and locals of a bar and restaurant overlooking Albany's premier beach. The frustration of locals, who have heard nothing but hollow promises from the developers of the vacant site, has resulted in a new form of protest called "sock bombing". It started as a public art protest by the "urban sock bombers" to get the message through to developers that the vacant site stinks and that they should pull their socks up and get on with building a new hotel! The protest has grown to a wall of socks covering the cyclone fence that surrounds the site. This wall of socks has become a talking point for visitors and locals, with many people pinning a sock to the fence to add their protest and brighten up the ugly vacant site. We have the most expensive sandpit in Australia. If we went to Thailand or Singapore, or wherever these developers come from, and knocked their prime real estate down and did not put anything up for three years, we would be thrown in jail! I do not know what we can do; I do not know what the legal side of it is. There are all sorts of rumours

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

going around that the money came from the Cayman Islands to pay for it just before the business bought the other business. They bought it at a reduced rate —

Mr T.R. Buswell: The sock fence could be listed as a heritage site! Albany would never get anything.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I am not sure what the smell would be like if it stays there too long! It is a disgrace. The developers should be ashamed of themselves. We do not know what they are doing. The City of Albany does not know what they are doing. The developers, every once in a while, will come down. The last time they came down we found out that they were not even the developers anyway!

The Ulysses Motorcycle Club is meeting in Albany this weekend. People should not travel to Albany this weekend as they will not get a place to stay. The club has 120 branches throughout Australia and each year club members from around Australia and overseas travel to a designated location for their annual general meeting. Albany is the venue for the AGM this year. The club is expecting upwards of 5 000 members and their motorbikes to visit Albany and the Great Southern region this weekend, with many members planning to stay and ride around the region for up to eight weeks. The event will inject as much as \$10 million into our community, so it is a tremendous asset. Actually, Mr Speaker, it is a bit like walking across the road in Bangalore with all those motorbikes on the road! It will be a week-long event, incorporating a grand parade through York Street and several nights of entertainment, social gatherings, organised bike rides, and official meetings and ceremonies. It will also provide a great opportunity for local businesses and community groups to provide a range of products and services that the 5 000 visitors will need during their stay.

Enid Home, the Freeman of the City of Albany, has been promoting the idea of an entrance statement on each of the three major roads into Albany—South Coast Highway, Chester Pass Road and Albany Highway. These entrance statements would capture the essence of Albany through three different works. It is a good idea and could be taken to other towns and cities in regional Western Australia that do not have an entry statement, with funding made available through royalties for regions. When we were in government and Alan Carpenter was education minister, Hon Terry Redman and I went around the region of Albany and provided, I think, \$25 000 for education. I think each school was given \$1 000 to upgrade the entrance statement to its school. The program was a tremendous success. I think one of the schools in Albany, Mount Lockyer Primary School, won it or finished second. The teachers, staff and parents did all the work to do up the schools. As there is so much money in the royalties for regions fund at the moment, entrance statements to other towns could be done in a similar way as that schoolyard blitz. It would be a benefit for those local governments that are lacking the funds to brighten up the entrance to their towns.

I will now refer to the Forest Products Commission. The government's crazy idea of selling off the FPC is showing the ugly reality of the government's privatisation agenda. This is the first attempt by the government to forcibly sell off a group of workers who plant and manage trees, with no right to redeployment or redundancy. If they do not accept a similar job with a private operator at as little as 80 per cent of their current salary, it will become a disciplinary matter and they will be sacked. I am sure the minister would not like someone to come in and say to him, "We're going to take away 80 per cent of your job and we're shifting you from Denmark and you've got to go and live in Broome, otherwise we'll sack you." The FPC has more than 600 farms—with another 120 signed to start this winter—planted with trees in an integrated way that ensures farmers can carry on running stock or cropping around them, and not planted fence line to fence line, as we have seen with the woodchip industry. These trees are grown to meet the future needs of the hardwood timber industry in a sustainable way. They take the pressure off our native forests and support jobs in small businesses in regional communities such as farms, forestry, sawmills, furniture making and other allied industries. They also make an important contribution to soil and water quality.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.B. WATSON: The Minister for Forestry wants to sell them off, but to my knowledge there is no private operator that does similar work in Western Australia. To me the solution to the short-term problems that have happened to the FPC would be for the \$10 million to \$15 million available in the royalties for regions fund to be invested with the FPC to get it through the short term so as to not end up with a stranded resource. What happens if the FPC cannot be sold? Is the minister willing to accept any price to satisfy his privatisation desire? Who will compensate the farmers? What will happen to the trees if the FPC is forced to shut its doors? Local farmers have said to me that they like the security and the integrated planting approach that sharefarming with the FPC gives them. Some have been burnt by private operators in the woodchip industry and many do not like the way these companies take control of leased land and plant it fence to fence with trees. Sharefarmers are feeling betrayed

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

and say that the minister is unable to see past the short-term problems—caused in part by the global financial crisis—to the long-term vision of establishing a viable, sustainable hardwood plantation timber industry.

Albany Racing Club is a very important part of our region; all racing is. However, we have a real problem with Albany Racing Club. The jockeys' room was built probably 50 years ago and has not been maintained. There was a race event there recently at which the jockeys would not race because a jockey in the first race slipped on the home bend. The jockeys said that usually the track would be graded a bit and they would race but they were protesting because their conditions are the worst in Western Australia. They have applied for, I think, \$500 000 through royalties for regions. I think Racing and Wagering Western Australia should also be looking after regional racing. From the way it looks after regional trotting clubs, I believe it has a hidden agenda to get rid of trotting in those areas. All the money goes to racing in Perth.

Mr A.J. Simpson: You're on the right committee to deal with that.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I am on the right committee, all right; I have a few people lined up. RWWA was set up to look after all racing codes in WA. It mainly props up Perth racing, which is fair enough; it has to do that, but it does not look after anything in the regions past perhaps Pinjarra. Clubs further out, especially trotting clubs, are being severely disadvantaged. They have to hold their own extra races. RWWA has taken races from them and will not give them access to Sky Channel. We are very disappointed about that.

One of the promises the government made in the election campaign was to progress the gas pipeline. We are very disappointed that nothing has happened. My opponent said that the gas pipeline would be built and that it would cost a certain amount of money. It was a Liberal Party promise, but I notice that over the next three out years—I do not know whether the out years will be shown any more—\$10 million has been allocated each year for royalties for regions. I am interested in royalties for regions. The Liberal Party promised \$130 million for Albany Regional Hospital. After the election the royalties for regions policy was introduced and the Treasurer said he would provide \$30 million for royalties for regions. The regional development minister then said that that will be \$30 million off the hospital costs. Hold on a minute! The National Party did not promise a brand-new hospital; it was the Liberal Party. They went to the election as separate entities. It amounts to cost shifting. The same applies to the gas pipeline.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You're being cheated.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Yes; we are being cheated. People in regional areas are starting to realise that. The journos are printing stories about it and when people ask what royalties for regions is, I say, "Well it's another label for what we used to get under the regional development fund and all the other funds we put into Albany." We put a lot of money into Albany in the seven and a half years we were in government. We could have announced that under the Country Labor badge and looked really good. However, royalties for regions is not providing Albany with any more money. People are starting to realise that. Every time they come to see me I tell them to go to the development commission and ask for royalties for regions money. Scores of people are doing that, and they are being disappointed all the time. I think royalties for regions was a tremendous concept when it was first introduced, and I still support it, but I do not think it is providing us with any more money. It is a big con job and I think it will be shown to be so at the end of three years.

Dredging in our harbour is a real issue. Grange Resources wanted to dredge the Princess Royal Harbour to allow bigger ships to use it. It is a huge issue. I have called for compensation for the businesses that will be affected, but the environment minister said that nothing would happen. We have seen how the silt plume occurred at Fremantle harbour as a result of dredging there. In Albany there are fishermen, whale-watching boats and aquaculture farms, which all want to know where they stand. I hear that it might be three years before that work gets off the ground. The government will have to do something about the impacts of the dredging when it happens.

I refer now to the new firearms licensing process. It was reported on the front page of one of our newspapers that people are complaining about losing business because people are not buying firearms. Sports Power, the retailer that sells all the firearms in Albany, says that sales have dropped 90 per cent since November because people are getting sick of waiting. They used to be able to go to the shop, get their licence from the police station and then go back to the shop. Although the government is going to look at it, it is a huge issue in a country town because firearms are used not only on farms but also for —

Mr A.J. Simpson interjected.

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Mr P.B. WATSON: Yes; for shooting foxes, kangaroos, politicians—anything. They use them all the time. Neither maiden names nor the amount of time it takes to be notified is being recognised. I hope that when this issue is investigated, it can be fixed up really quickly.

I refer now to wave power. Obviously the Premier thinks it is better for his government's fortunes to throw millions of dollars at a project in Perth rather than follow through with the planning of a wave power project in Albany. According to the joint press release put out by the environment and energy ministers, the change of location was the request of the wave power company. It was considered that the new location was the lower risk option for the demonstration facility. That is very funny because representatives from Carnegie Corporation said on their visit to Albany that Albany was the ideal place for such a project. They said it was a far better location than Perth. All of a sudden, the government is saying that a lower risk option is involved. I would like to know where the risk lies in putting a wave power plant in Albany. It means that Albany can now kiss goodbye to its hopes of becoming the first ever 100 per cent renewable energy city in Australia, which is something the opposition promised Albany at the last election. It is another example of the government kowtowing to big business interests without any thought to the opportunity that Albany had of becoming a renewable energy city.

We have seen the Premier doing the bidding of big monopoly retailers over trading hours, opening up uranium mining to benefit multinational corporations and foisting GM crops on to the public at the behest of Monsanto. This government would be better off doing what people expect governments to do; that is, improving our schools, hospitals, roads and environment and not doing the bidding of the big end of town.

I will come back to stop-and-search laws in a moment.

At the recent country state surfing championships the Albany Surf Life Saving Club had its best result, bringing home 46 medals. The highlight of the championships for Albany was that both the male and female surf boat crews won their divisions, which gave them the chance to compete in the Western Australian state championships, which will be held next week.

Congratulations go to Charlie Moir, who came first in the under-11 male surf race; Jenna Brown, third, under-11 female surf race; Charles Moir, first, under-11 iron man; Noah Symmans, third, under-12 male surf race; Devon Stoner, first, under-12 female surf race; Noah Symmans, third, under-12 iron man; Devon Stoner, third, under-12 iron woman; Devon Stoner, third, under-12 female beach sprint; Daniel Goodliffe, third, under-13 male board race; Sully Stone, second, under-14 male surf race; Ella Bird, third under-14 female board race; Sully Stoner, second, under-14 iron man; Sam Moir, third, under-14 male surf race; Sam Doyle, Nikki Doyle, Sam Moir and Jemma Goodliffe, second, under-14 mixed surf teams; Stuart Jose, first, under-17 male tube race; Stuart Jose, second, under-17 male surf race; Stuart Jose, first and Jarrad Parsons, third, under-17 iron man; Eden-Marie Neilson-Bishop, third, under-17 female beach sprint; Marie Caramia, Stuart Jose, Justine Damm and Jarrad Parsons, third, under-17 mixed surf teams; Jarrad Parsons, Evan Martin, Stuart Jose and Eden-Marie Neilson-Bishop, third, under-17 mixed beach relay; Katelyn Jose, Devon Stoner, Eliza Moir and Hayley Williamson, third, all age female beach relay; Justine Damm, Beth Hearle, Eden-Marie Neilson-Bishop and Marie Caramia, third, open female beach relay; Jane Bird, Patrice Hines, Dani Lynch—what a legend and she is one of the Fairy Slappers in Albany—Lyn Baron and Peter Gray, first, open female surf boat race —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Who are the Fairy Slappers?

Mr P.B. WATSON: The Fairy Slappers is a group of women in Albany who lost one of their friends to cancer. I am the only male in the group. The group has raised \$25 000, \$30 000 and \$35 000 over three years. They are a tremendous group of ladies.

To continue with the winners of the championships, Byron Bird, Stuart Baron, Ashley Determes, Peter Gray and Mark Burnes, first, open male surf boat race. The reason I mention these surf club people is that each weekend in summer they give up their time. The Albany surf club comprises members from the age of five or six to 80 years old. It is a tremendous club that benefits the community and it probably does not get the kudos it should. The members of the club are available every weekend and I am so proud to be the patron of the surf club.

Darren McCaulife, a young guy from Albany, is a horseracing trainer. He went to Perth and when he came back to my constituency, he won the Mungerup Sprint, which is a \$90 000 race. Darren has had a few big wins in Perth, and I wish him all the best for the future.

My electorate of Albany is going very well at the moment with the entertainment centre and a waterfront development. The Mayor of Gallipoli and the Mayor of Peronne—our two sister cities—will be visiting Albany for Anzac Day, in a very important lead-up to 2014, which will be the centenary of the Anzacs leaving for Gallipoli. We are trying to get the Prime Minister there. It will be a tremendous day, the opening of the Anzac

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Peace Park, which the federal government, our previous government and this government have put money into to ensure the permanent memory of some very important events.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, I give you the call with some trepidation, knowing your association with the Scarboro Surf Life Saving Club.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough) [5.42 pm]: I think a few scores will be settled on the weekend, Mr Speaker.

It is with great pleasure that I rise today in response to the Premier's Statement. Back in January of last year the Treasurer announced a number of initiatives that the state government was implementing to finally take on the excessive regulatory burden in Western Australia. They included setting up a regulatory gatekeeping unit, where government departments can refer specific legislation that requires updating or simplification; implementation of a best-practice system of review for existing, new and amended regulatory instruments, through measures such as regulatory impact statements, which will document the effect of regulation prior to its implementation; and the establishment of the Red Tape Reduction Group that I have the pleasure of co-chairing with Hon Ken Baston.

These initiatives drew a line in the sand and clearly indicated that the government was no longer going to accept regulation that places unreasonable burdens on Western Australians. It has provided an initial way forward through the gatekeeping unit and an identification process for the most significant red-tape issues through the consultative Red Tape Reduction Group. The report of the Red Tape Reduction Group, aptly named "Reducing the Burden", was released and tabled by the Treasurer today. It contains a significant number of recommendations to reduce the cost of red tape to all Western Australians.

Before I go on to some of the key recommendations, I feel it is important to reiterate that the cost of red tape affects all Western Australians. It costs us jobs from the numerous developments that are delayed; it costs us when we go to a restaurant that had to fork out thousands of dollars in cash in lieu for parking bays that, frustratingly, may never be built or thousands of dollars for consultants required to navigate the complexities of the application process for a liquor licence; and it even costs us when we go to the hairdresser—thankfully, this should soon come to an end—who has had to pay for a registration board that provides little, if any, benefits to consumers. Furthermore, a regulatory environment that promotes barriers to entry to the market will result in significantly less competition. Less competition means higher prices.

In Western Australia, red tape comes in the form of 844 acts and 761 statutory rules, representing approximately 63 500 pages of regulations. This excludes the quasi-regulations made up of policies, rulings and department directives that are often not publicly available, frustrating and delaying the processes involved with doing business in our state. The Red Tape Reduction Group undertook extensive consultation with country and metropolitan Western Australia to identify areas where the regulatory framework was causing significant problems. Members on the other side of the house mocked our consultation program, as if travelling to country centres across Western Australia to hear firsthand stories of red-tape frustration was pointless. However, the reality is that these face-to-face meetings brought forward some significant issues that regional businesses face when dealing with government. We were met in some places with a fair degree of cynicism. Many contributors said that they had been through a similar process with the previous government with no resulting report or constructive changes to processing occurring or, worse, with further regulation being introduced as a solution to the problems raised. Cultural problems within the public sector were identified by country and metropolitan contributors alike. There were common frustrations in government agencies over a number of performance issues, the most significant of which were a perceived lack of transparency and an unwillingness to be an active facilitator rather than simply act as an assessor that ticks and crosses boxes. The perceived lack of transparency stems from the agencies' creation of quasi-regulations, which are the policies, procedures and rules developed by agencies to go about their business in assessing applications. These quasi-regulations are often unpublished in the wider community, which results in some businesses not knowing what the rules of the game are. Further, there is a perception that the rules sometimes apply to some people and not to others. These issues are further highlighted by the lack of transparency in the time some applications take to be processed. This can result in frustration for the advocate who is navigating through the red tape and can also be unfair to the agency that might be waiting for further information from a third party. These issues are addressed by the "themes" chapter in the report's recommendations, which along with the recommendations for future regulatory reform make up the overarching general recommended changes. These are followed by specific regulatory issues that were identified during the consultation period.

I will now briefly highlight what I consider to be some of the key recommendations of the Red Tape Reduction Group. The group has recommended the introduction of a lead agency framework for multi-agency decision-

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making processes. This change would significantly reduce the burden on businesses and individuals as they would have a one-stop shop for their decisions. It would also allow the agency to take ownership of and drive the process rather than rely on the applicants to work their way through the bureaucracy. In order to improve transparency, the group has recommended a number of initiatives. These include publishing the internal policies and guidelines used in the decision-making process and requiring government agencies to develop target time frames for decision-making processes and to report against those publicly. The report should include the calendar days taken to make a decision; the calendar days taken during stop-the-clock periods; the calendar days taken by other departments to deal with the referral of the application; and also the calendar days taken by the proponents to respond to information requests, including the reason why the clock was stopped. One of the problems that we identified was that the clock would start when a government agency processed an application but if the agency got to a point in the application process at which it discovered that it needed a referral from another agency, it would stop the clock and even though the referral or report from another agency could take three or six months, the clock would start again only when the report was sent to the original agency, which recorded that the application process at that stage had taken only seven days when it had in fact taken seven days and six months. That is an example of the kind of frustration businesses have said they want to stop.

The initiatives mentioned previously would significantly improve the accountability of government departments and identify the highest level at which problems with the existing processes exist. It is important to note that these time-reporting mechanisms would go a long way towards protecting the public servants who are charged with the administrative processes. We found during our consultation process that there was significant frustration also from well-intentioned public servants who are bearing the brunt of the blame for the time delays. Some of the time delays are the result of applicants being slow to provide the additional information required from government agencies. Some applicants have complained to an agency about the time it has taken to process something when the applicants have been at fault by not providing the agency with what was required.

The group believes that future regulatory reform options include the need for the government to significantly improve the processes at the agency level to reduce the burden on Western Australians. To do this, the group has recommended the introduction of state and individual agency targets for reducing the existing regulatory burdens in Western Australia. It has also recommended that chief executive officers and directors general be made accountable for achieving regulatory reform within their agencies through conditions in their performance contracts, and the introduction of an incentive program to reward public sector employees for identifying areas of regulation and processes for reform. Some of those initiatives have been successful in other jurisdictions in helping government agencies get on top of their own regulatory mechanisms.

In total, the report makes 107 recommendations for cutting red tape in Western Australia—a testament to the hard work of the group’s secretariat and the significant consultation that occurred across the state. As the co-chair of the Red Tape Reduction Group, I pass on my sincerest thanks to those who assisted in the preparation of the report. Most importantly, I thank those who took time away from their businesses and personal lives to contribute during the public consultation period. I look forward to many of the recommendations being addressed by the government.

Closer to home, the next 12 months are going to be quite an exciting time for the Scarborough electorate, after we win at the seniors’ surf-lifesaving event.

Just recently I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Education, Dr Elizabeth Constable; the principal of Deanmore Primary School, Mrs Jeanette Metcalf; and student councillors Emily Kirton, Rory Bradshaw, Kara Plummer and Joe Taylor in turning the first sod at the construction site of the new school. The new school will be the end of the Deanmore tale of how a school was allowed by the previous government to fall into disrepair, with a whole wing of Deanmore Primary School having to be closed for occupational health and safety reasons. Not surprisingly, on the eve of calling the election, the previous government said that it would build a new school at Deanmore. Yet even less surprisingly, it failed to fund it, with it not rating a mention in the “Post-Budget Policy Decisions Affecting Spending” of the *Pre-election Financial Projection Statement*. Luckily for the community, the Liberal–National government won the election, and it is very pleasing to be delivering the school in our first term of government.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You saved the day for Deanmore. Well done!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The government saved the day.

Similarly, in Innaloo, at the local Sportsmen’s Club, work is already underway for the state’s first covered bowling green. The cover has been partially funded by the community sporting and recreation facilities fund,

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
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Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

thanks to the significant increase in annual funding to the program by the Liberal–National government. The club and local community are most excited about this development, and I look forward to joining them under the shade when the facility opens later this year.

Works will also commence later this year on nearly doubling the size of the Stirling train station car park. The new parking bays to be built on the northern side of Cedric Street will provide parking for 468 cars as part of the Liberal Party's election commitment to provide an additional 3 000 bays on the Joondalup and Mandurah train lines. Many local residents have expressed to me their desire to catch a train to work. However, they are unable to get a car park after 7.30 in the morning. These new bays should go some way to alleviating that problem, as well as taking 468 cars out of peak-hour traffic.

Two thousand and ten is the year when Scarborough begins to revitalise. Already this year has seen a flurry of activity in my electorate. I am happy to advise that the derelict Surfside building was demolished recently, ready to make way for a development that does not detract from the local beauty of Western Australia's best beach.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Second best.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: With respect, Premier, best beach.

With a number of approved developments on the cards, the near completion of Cevue and the impending redevelopment of Observation City, the community and I are looking forward to the area improving its amenity and sense of place.

As Scarborough revitalises, it is important that local residents and visitors feel safe and secure at the beach and the surrounding area. That is why the Liberal–National government is committed to providing \$257 000 for additional closed-circuit television facilities for the Scarborough Beach foreshore. As well as CCTV, locals are looking forward to the introduction of the stop-and-search rule for events at Scarborough Beach. Already, through increased police resources, early intervention and good police work, assaults in Scarborough have dropped from 133 reported offences to 94 reported offences in 2009. Such a significant drop is a testament to the law and order policies of the Liberal–National government and the enthusiasm of our police officers to embrace those policies, knowing that they will be better protected while undertaking their duties.

This year will be the second year of my school and church community events fund. In 2009, the City of Stirling decided to no longer fund school and church events from its cultural development fund. As the local member, I was happy to step in and fill the void, recognising the importance of school and church-run events in building community spirit. In 2009 the fund gave grants to a number of local community events, including the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations of Scarborough Primary School, Deanmore Primary School's celebration walk, Yuluma Primary School's toddler fun day and Scarborough Baptist Church's carols by candlelight. Shortly, part proceeds of that community grants funding will go towards St John's St Patrick's Day fair, which will be happening in my community, an event looked forward to by the local community. This year I am looking forward to another year of enriching community events made possible by the tireless efforts of the enthusiastic and worthy grants recipients who are living in and contributing to my electorate of Scarborough.

In summary, I am looking forward to the 2010 parliamentary year. I am looking forward to the government's response to the Red Tape Reduction Group, which will see significant savings delivered for the government and the private sector alike. I am also looking forward to the delivery of the Liberal–National government's commitments in my electorate of Scarborough and to continuing to work with my local community on its issues and concerns.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [5.57 pm]: I am pleased to rise today to speak on a number of issues related to my electorate. I will start with an observation that I draw from the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* with respect to the Premier's pet project, the Oakajee port project. I was very interested to see that page 101 shows that not one cent is being allocated to this project in 2009–10, 2010–11 or 2011–12. It is such an important project that for three financial years in a row the state government is not allocating a single dollar to the project. During the former Labor government's term work had already started on building a deepwater port for the expanding Mid West. There is a note in the government's midyear statement that reads —

The mid-year review assumes a single payment toward the end of the construction period.

That is a unique process. I would love to be able to build a house and only make a payment when it is finished. It is just an extraordinary position. The government sees this as such a crucial project that it does not want to spend any money on it. It expects the construction contractor to receive payment from the commonwealth but no money is coming from the state until the project is finished. It is bizarre and clearly will not happen.

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
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Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

I want to talk about the electorate of Cannington.

Mr I.C. Blayney: It will happen, actually.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It will not happen in the way the budget papers present. One cannot build a project and not pay for it until it is finished. It will not happen that way. If the project is going to be built, payments will be made by the state government in advance. The numbers in the protection statement are fiction. They are nonsense. No-one who knows anything about this project can expect the construction contractors to do the work without payment from the government. It cannot happen.

I want to talk about the electorate of Cannington. The Cannington community is what in economic terms is called a key worker area; that is, people who live in that area fill those key roles that are needed to keep any society functioning. School cleaners, gardeners, shop assistants, new arrivals in this country and people who have worked their whole life and are now retired live in my electorate. It is a good cross-section of ordinary people that makes Western Australia such a great place to live. It is an area where people are proud to live. It is an area where people are pleased that they have the facilities that are available to them. But they expect things to continue to improve. They do not like being seen as something they are not. They do not like being seen as trouble or being accused of certain things by people. When people say, for example, that the Carousel shopping centre is not a safe place to shop, it annoys them. This is a great community and the spirit of the people makes it a tremendous place to live. Examples of investment in the area by the former Labor government and the City of Canning to upgrade the local community include the Bannister Creek Primary School, the upgrade of Lambertia Creek Park and the Wellington Street, Queens Park vacant land. It is probably true that for many years the City of Canning neglected the section of the city north of the Canning River, but under the new leadership of mayor Joe Delle Donne and chief executive officer Mark Dacombe, the City of Canning is paying attention to the needs of the local community. Local community people—like City of Canning citizen of the year for 2010 Russell Gorton, who is the convenor of the Wilson Wetlands Action Group Inc—are the sort of people who are making this a great community for people to live in, raise families and grow old.

There are a couple of matters I need to raise on behalf of constituents in my community. The first matter relates to the hoon laws that have proved so embarrassing to the Liberal government. A constituent of mine by the name of Tony Moisley came to see me late last year. He runs a business with a number of trucks, and he had loaned one of the trucks to his brother Nick, who also runs a business. His brother hired a third man to drive the truck, and had insisted on checking the employee's driver's licence. It was clear that the employee was validly licensed for a period into the future. What was not known to either Tony Moisley or his brother Nick was that the employee's licence had been suspended because of loss of demerit points. There is actually no way for an employer to check that because of privacy arrangements. An employer cannot ring up and ask, "Has this person lost too many points?" They innocently allowed this gentleman to drive their vehicle. On 8 December the vehicle was stopped because the driver had failed to wear a seatbelt. The police checked the employee's driver's licence, and because the licence was suspended, the vehicle was seized. The police also issued a yellow sticker for the vehicle. That left Mr Moisley in an interesting position, because he had only 14 days to rectify the defects in the vehicle before the licence was cancelled; however, the vehicle had been seized for 28 days and he therefore did not have access to it.

The member for Scarborough talked about red tape; this is a classic example of red tape. Mr Moisley needed the truck for his business; it was the only flatbed truck he had to fulfil his contracts, so he applied to have the truck returned. The police refused to return the truck because the case did not constitute "exceptional hardship". If that is not exceptional hardship for a small businessman, I do not know what is, other than not being able to conduct business. Mr Moisley ended up losing his truck for a month, which directly impacted on his ability to conduct his business. I will read part of the letter sent to me by the Minister for Police on this matter. It states in part —

I am also advised that Mr Moisley is the registered owner of 11 other vehicles, including a Mitsubishi Truck ... Therefore, the Property Management Division determined that an application submitted by Mr Moisley did not constitute Exceptional Hardship under the *Road Traffic Act 1974*.

It is natural that my constituent has a number of vehicles because he is running a business, and each of those vehicles is required for the operation of his business. Alternatively, he also has cars that are not capable of performing the duties of a flatbed truck. Clearly, this was a ridiculous situation. It is further interesting to note that Mr Moisley was overseas when the vehicle was to be released, and despite the fact that it was not a requirement of the law, the police would not allow the vehicle to be released from impoundment until a particular form was signed. I intervened and resolved that issue, because although the police insisted on that procedure, it is not reflected in any legal instrument. The member for Scarborough talked about red tape: that

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

was clearly red tape not related to the law. But also, because there was a delay in the release of the vehicle, the charges that Mr Moisley had to pay to get his truck back were increased, even though he had been guilty of no impropriety or offence. That is another demonstration of the ham-fisted nature of the legislation introduced by the Liberal government so that it can say that it is tough on crime.

I have written to the Minister for Lands about the next issue I raise, which is that of a block of land at the corner of Nicholson Road and Albany Highway that the state government has put on the market. That creates a problem for the residents of the western side of Nicholson Road in the City of Canning. At some time long in the past, a new alignment for a new dual carriageway was put in at Nicholson Road, and the three houses on the corner come off the slip-road. The block of land the state government intends to sell is on the other side of the slip-road, and it is being sold so that retail premises can be built. The problem then is not only that the traffic problems experienced by the three houses will be exacerbated, but also that the houses will not be able to be seen from the road because there will be a block of retail units in front of them, and so they will potentially be subject to crime.

This is a ridiculous situation. It is interesting that the families involved were not consulted about the rezoning of the public open space to allow for the development of retail space. That is because they are on the western side of Nicholson Road, and classed as being in the City of Canning. When the City of Gosnells was considering the rezoning, it consulted only the residents of the City of Gosnells, on the other side of the road. This is a classic example of residents only becoming aware of the problem because the “for sale” signs went up on the block of land. I have written to the Minister for Lands, and I am hopeful—no more than that—of perhaps getting the project delayed, because this has been public open space for a long time and it would be a direct negative for the local community, particularly these three families, to lose that open space in front of them.

The next thing I raise is about a gentleman who came to see me about Redress WA. I will not mention his name, because obviously these things are personal. I have said in this place that I do not understand the government’s approach to Redress WA. The information provided by Hon Robyn McSweeney on the implementation of the government’s decision on Redress WA is just bizarre. I have already stated that I did not understand why the new government did not just say that not enough money had been allocated by the former government, and that that was a demonstration of its incompetence, and that it would put in the extra money. Instead of taking a political approach and blaming the former government or whatever, the current government is reducing the benefits available to these people who have suffered, and that is not fair.

This particular gentleman—my constituent—has suffered in the same way that we have heard about in all these tragic circumstances. He had submitted his application by 30 April 2009, which was a long time ago, and when he came to see me in January, he was confused about why he had had no further information from Redress WA.

The response from the Minister for Child Protection about this gentleman reads —

As ... application is not accorded priority status on health grounds, I am unable to inform him of when he can expect an offer. When his file is selected for processing, he will be contacted by Redress WA to allow him the final opportunity to add or clarify any detail that can further support his claim.

It is interesting that the minister uses this term “is selected”. This is a bizarre decision! Redress WA is dealing with the cases it considers to be urgent, but otherwise it is selecting randomly 100 applications at a time and processing those applications. This minister honestly thinks it is acceptable that these payments will not be made until the middle of 2011! This gentleman made his application in April 2009, and potentially he will not receive a payment from the state government—a reduced payment—until next year. The Premier talked about compassion in his statement yesterday. Western Australia cannot be a compassionate state, if the richest state in the country, a state with a booming economy, treats people who were subject to these horrific situations in their life in this way. That is not compassion. I urge the government to treat these citizens in a much better way. If the Premier wants to, he can blame the opposition, as he has done for so many other things. The Premier can say that it was our fault, if he does not want to accept responsibility for government in this state and to pay the appropriate amounts to these people.

I will comment now on the potential development of the Kinlock school site. I support entirely the Department of Housing developing that site. Obviously, residents are very concerned and do not want overdevelopment of social housing on one site and, of course, neither do I. It is not a contemporary arrangement to build large groups of social housing. That is not the way contemporary design and planning practices operate. I tell residents that I do not believe that the government would intend to do that. I am sure that it will not. But it would be good to start some proper consultation with the local residents over that Kinlock development. It is an exciting opportunity to perhaps provide for some increased density and some good public facilities for that part of

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Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Ferndale. I very much look forward to the new state government properly consulting the local residents about that site, in the same way as the balance of the Karri Way school site has not been sold to Damla College.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I look forward to proper consultation. The Karri Way site is much smaller and I am very keen to protect the bushland on that site. I raised this with the Minister for Education in the estimates hearings. The Kinlock development has a higher profile, and I am looking forward to consultation on both sites, but particularly on the Kinlock development.

My community is the most directly affected by airport noise in Western Australia. I note that the state government has finally made an application to Infrastructure Australia to finance the upgrading of the roads around the airport. I made particular mention of this in my speech on the budget last year. I will not go over all of that speech, but I will say again that this is an opportunity for the state government to leverage the necessary infrastructure around the airport to get the airport operators to treat their neighbours much better than they do now. Clearly the airport operators—I have told them directly—need to be a good neighbour and to directly assist the communities to the south of the airport in the areas I represent by noise abatement in the suburbs. I accept that the airport is not going to move. It would be a multibillion draw on the taxpayers of this state and Australia to move the airport. That is simply not going to happen—I understand that—but the airport should be a good neighbour.

I note that the state government appears to be withdrawing funding for an education officer at the Canning River Eco Education Centre at the Kent Street Weir. That would be a tragedy. The former state government invested \$2 million in building the centre. It is a great community facility. We are very lucky, again, that the City of Canning has taken on and is meeting the actual day-to-day operational costs of the centre, and that is to its credit. Many other local governments would not have taken on that role, but the City of Canning has, so it would be a tragedy if the education officer were withdrawn as that officer is used by local schools to help them interpret the local environment. I note that the state government is continuing a program of the former Labor government to cut down the amount of phosphorus in the Canning River. It is ridiculous on one hand to carry out that program to reduce phosphorus levels and at the same time withdraw the education officer from the Eco Education Centre. It does not seem sensible. The cost is only \$80 000, and I cannot believe that the richest state in the country does not have that money available to support my local community.

On that issue of education, I note the hard work done by local principals in our area. I note, too, the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy results that have been published on the My School website. I was very interested to go through and look at the socioeconomic index number for each of the schools in my community. Those numbers demonstrate the social need of people in our area and the need for continuing investment. I was recently talking to the principal at Cannington Community College, which is a K–10 school. He provided me with very interesting statistics. Only one-third of the kids who enter kindergarten get to year 10 at that one school—in other words, two-thirds of the kids change schools during their schooling—yet of course his school is held accountable for the work of other schools. Therefore, I can understand the position he put to me that there really needs to be proper investment in these schools to ensure that they can deal with the problems they have because of the nature of the students who come to the school. He also pointed out that 39 per cent of the students have English as a second language, so out of 535 enrolled students in his K–10 school, 208 are from an ESL background. Indeed, he has 49 students whose parents are 457 visa holders. I spoke on the tabling of the fourth report of the Education and Health Standing Committee last year, which demonstrates the severe situation that many of the local schools are in. That is just one example; there are many other examples of students needing that additional support.

The next topic I will go on to is the Queens Park Train Station. As a new member, I wrote to the Minister for Transport, Hon Simon O'Brien, on 24 November 2008, just two months after I was elected. I asked him what his plans were for the Queens Park Train Station. He wrote back to me on 27 January 2009 and committed to a minor upgrade of the train station in, I think, the second quarter of 2009. Therefore, I was very interested to write to him on 25 August 2009 to ask how the work on the train station was going, because it had not started. I wrote to him again on 9 November 2009 to ask him what was happening. He wrote back to me on 10 December 2009 to say that the works will start in March 2010. I drove past the train station this morning. As we are only a couple days away from March, I hope the fact that there is no sign of anything happening is not an indication that nothing will happen, because we are very much looking forward to that upgrade. It is a very important train station for commuters as well as students from St Norbert College.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

I spoke about Beckenham Train Station on 19 November last year so I will not go into it at length. However, I received a letter from the minister dated 4 February saying that some time in the next seven years there might be a minor upgrade of Beckenham Train Station. Quite frankly, that is totally inadequate; we really need to get that station upgraded in a more significant way and we need to deal with the grade separation of William Street.

I received a very strong response from the people in Beckenham when I talked to them in November about that issue. Sixty or 70 people have written to me on the topic. I will continue to campaign for an upgrade of that spot.

I also note that I received a briefing from Main Roads Western Australia regarding Albany Highway through Cannington. I was particularly interested in the section from Kenwick Link to Shepperton Road. Main Roads spoke about a lot of work it intends to do over the next 10 years. The member for Victoria Park will be excited—between Leach Highway and Shepperton Road, which is in his electorate, Main Roads' view is that apart from some very, very minor works, Albany Highway through Cannington is at its final stage.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Albany Highway through Cannington?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes; no more work. The problem with that is that Albany Highway past Carousel Shopping Centre simply does not work. It does not work because Carousel Shopping Centre draws so much traffic that the left lane becomes a car park all the time, even on weekends. On the other hand, as motorists travel out of the city, the right-hand lane becomes choked because of Nicholson Road. Not only that, buses that stop at Station Street in front of the Cannington Showgrounds have to cross over three lanes of traffic to join the queue of cars travelling to Nicholson Road. It does not work. Main Roads will have to have another look at that area.

I move to the topic of public housing. It is the responsibility of the state to provide public housing. I was always very interested in the comments of the former Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, now Treasurer, on his position on housing costs. I note that in the past 12 months, the cost of established houses in Perth has gone up by 14.3 per cent. Rents in Perth have gone up—I cannot see the figure. It is not acceptable. The cost of land in Perth has gone up 21 per cent. After all the grandiose promises that were made in opposition, we see that despite the problems with the economy over the past 12 months the price of houses is going up at an exponential rate. On 12 September 2006, the then Deputy Leader of the Opposition put out a press release headed "Housing crisis exacerbates skills shortage". At that time the median price of a house in Perth was \$400 000. Now it is \$480 000. It will be interesting to see the gap between the rhetoric and the delivery.

I will finish with some budget issues. I note that over the forward estimates the government is planning to increase taxes by one-third. It is expecting an increase of 20 per cent on the income that the state will enjoy.

Mr P. Abetz: Is that tax or —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: A 33 per cent increase in tax and a 20 per cent increase in overall revenue. This is a state with rivers of gold. There has never been a government in Western Australia's history that has taxed as highly as this government does. There has never been a government in this state that has had as much money available to it. These unprecedented levels of income need to deliver a benefit to the community. We should expect better as the richest state in the country.

I note that on 18 October 2008 the then Deputy Leader of the Opposition put out a press release entitled "Ripper's assault on WA taxpayers continues".

He went on to say that the figures showed that the government had collected \$468 million of taxation revenue in the month of July. This year the Treasurer is planning to collect \$634 million on average in taxes each month. That is 135 per cent of the level of taxes that was Ripper's assault on WA taxpayers; 135 per cent of that will now be collected by the Treasurer. Where is the gap? We can see the gap between the rhetoric in opposition and the delivery in government. I do not have the figure right in front of me, but \$500 million-odd in extra taxes has been put back into the budget by this government. A government that promised to cut taxes has actually increased taxes and will continue to increase taxes every year. This of course goes back to the history of Liberal governments. The last time a Liberal government was in power, it had five deficits in eight years and booming tax revenues. It will therefore be interesting to see how this unprecedented level of income flows through to ordinary communities. For example, \$80 000 is not a lot of money for an education officer at Canning River Eco Education Centre. Do not cut the funding for schools, as happened in last year's budget. Give some extra money to schools.

MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills) [6.25 pm]: It has been a successful year in my electorate, and I take this opportunity to provide an update on some of the projects we have achieved so far. The Ellenbrook community scored a win with a commitment by the Insurance Commission of Western Australia that no commercial

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
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Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

property of 300 square metres or less would be subject to the Ellenbrook restrictive covenant. Further undertakings by ICWA to the Premier have also been made regarding the time line for the construction of stage 2 of The Shops at Ellenbrook, which will ensure that 60 extra shops will open on time. The story of the covenant in Ellenbrook is very similar to some of the Disney animated movies I watch with my kids. The story starts like this: and a darkness fell upon the land. For the past three or four years very little as far as business has happened in Ellenbrook. However, that darkness has lifted.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Sounds like the book was *The Lord of the Rings*.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: No, I think it happened in *Snow White*, which I watched with my little girl.

The Dome coffee shop complex, which includes the Bendigo Bank and a much-fought-for toy shop—can members imagine having to fight for a toy shop in a place like Ellenbrook?—has kick-started the Ellenbrook business district and has become the new social centre for our community; and the tavern, much anticipated for seven years, is finally under construction.

Numerous inquiries regarding setting up new businesses have been received, which is evidence of the turnaround of confidence in the Ellenbrook precinct. I am happy to say that all the empty commercial premises are slowly being filled. Construction is well underway on the senior school buildings at Ellenbrook Secondary College for completion in 2011. This has been further complemented by the opening of two private secondary schools—Holy Cross College and Swan Valley Anglican Community School—which means that this part of my electorate is well serviced by excellent schools, both public and private.

The new career Fire and Rescue Service of Western Australia station in Ellenbrook is currently under construction and should be completed soon. In the aftermath of the recent fires in Millendon and Brigadoon, this will be a welcome addition to the capacity of our fire services. Our recently built police station is now fully manned. On our roads, in our streets, in our homes and in our shopping precincts the Liberal–National government is doing what it promised: dealing with law and order issues. We the people of Western Australia have the right to feel safe and to go about our business without being threatened by a minority of people who believe they have more rights than anyone else. I also publicly congratulate our police minister for the legislation he has introduced despite the eternal whinging by a minority.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Thank you.

Mr P. Papalia: Do you want me to draw attention to the fact that you're reading?

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Does that look like something I am reading from?

Mr P. Papalia: Yes.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: This legislation is finally having a positive effect on the lifestyle of my community.

In the same vein I support WA Police in achieving the difficult job of turning the tide on antisocial behaviour, which has become entrenched in our society. These are important issues in my electorate.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Warnbro.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Throughout my electorate, as in the other electorates of Western Australia, the Liberal–National government is going about its business, making a real difference to our people not only with the large projects in the north that the Premier spoke about but all the smaller projects that were largely ignored by the former government. Can I say that we are doing this with far less revenue at our disposal.

The construction of the Reid Highway dual carriageway from West Swan Road to Great Northern Highway is well advanced and completion is planned this year. Upgrades to Great Northern Highway include the installation of flashing light-emitting diode lights and speed restrictions on the road alongside Upper Swan Primary School, which was a stretch of road with a huge safety risk. Parents have told me that they had been campaigning for some 15 years for this. Also, LED lights have been installed on Toodyay Road alongside Gidgegannup Primary School, as has occurred on Chittering Road near Bullsbrook District High School. This has improved the safety for parents and children in those school communities. The installation of traffic lights at the intersection of West Swan Road and Great Northern Highway has been completed. This has resulted in a saving for motorists of 20 minutes at this intersection in peak times. The Minister for Transport recently announced his support for the installation of pedestrian crossings on the very busy and dangerous Great Eastern Highway where it dissects the

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Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita
Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

town of Mundaring. This will be of great benefit to the elderly. It is also a timely safety consideration in light of increased tourist participation in this popular country town.

Despite all the successes my electorate has experienced, there are still areas of concern that affect the most vulnerable of my constituents, the children. I am aware that a number of primary schools within my electorate, particularly Ellen Stirling Primary School, do not have air conditioning in their classrooms. In light of the state's prevailing prosperity and past boom times, it seems highly inappropriate to expect our primary school children to endure classrooms without air conditioning particularly in the long, hot summers, based on an indefensible policy dating back to 1974. This is the most interesting part: apparently the instruction to these schools is that when the temperature reaches 37° or 38°—or the 42° that is to occur shortly—they are to open the windows and turn on the fans and that will cool them down. It does not work for me. Even though this might appear to be a minor issue, as the father of a six-year-old daughter who is at school, but not in my electorate, I will allocate as much time as necessary to achieve a satisfactory solution to this issue. The most disturbing aspect is that this policy affects the most underprivileged schools in my community. It widens the gap between kids' education in private versus public schools. How many members would accept not having air conditioning in their offices?

The most pressing issue in my electorate is jobs. Every year, hundreds of kids graduate and hundreds of families move into Ellenbrook, but there are no jobs. The residents of Ellenbrook were promised 75 per cent local employment, which is obviously a pipedream because that has not eventuated. There is an opportunity north of Ellenbrook to develop a commercial precinct on a total of 2 000 hectares of vacant land. Led by a consortium of developers, this development, if it proceeds, would provide a much-needed employment boost to my electorate. It will have the flow-on effect of not only servicing the area but also encouraging the establishment of additional businesses that would cater for those in that precinct.

This site abuts very important transport arteries, including the Perth to Geraldton freight railway and the Perth to Darwin highway. This infrastructure will allow for the establishment of strong intermodal links between road and rail, which would significantly reduce the number of truck movements throughout the metropolitan area and take traffic off Great Northern Highway. The north Ellenbrook landowner group, many of whom live and work on their properties, will be lodging a submission to the Department of Planning's industrial land strategy to point out the benefit of its initiative. This project has my full support.

I feel privileged to have been elected the member for Swan Hills and look forward to the completion of these and future projects proposed by the Liberal–National government.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [6.36 pm]: I take this opportunity to give my contribution to the debate on the Premier's Statement. Before I do, I would like to congratulate the member for Willagee on his first speech in this place yesterday. It was an exceptional speech and I welcome him and wish him well on what, no doubt, will be a successful political career as the member for Willagee.

I did have plans earlier to use this opportunity to launch a stinging attack on the government's finances and to bring it to its knees. However, I will not do that this evening. I have found that in a shadow ministerial role it is very rare to get the chance to reflect on my electorate. Most of the debate in this place tends to be taken up with issues of state financial importance.

I would like to commence by thanking a couple of people who ordinarily get a quick by-line at the end of a speech. First, I refer to my two electorate officers who have been with me since the day I was elected. From what I can gather it is most unusual to have electorate officers stay with a member for his or her term in office.

I mention Rose Sheridan. Rose was with Geoff Gallop, the previous member for Victoria Park, for the five years he was Premier. Rose is still with me and has been for the four years that I have been the member for Victoria Park. Rose has had a troublesome 18 months with breast cancer. It has again returned and she has taken six months leave without pay from my office to spend that time fighting and, hopefully, conquering that cancer once and for all. I mention Rose because she is an experienced electorate officer. The member for Willagee will no doubt find out that members elected in by-elections come into this place on their own and are left to sink or swim to a certain extent. The member for Warnbro would also know what it is like. Members elected in by-elections rely on strong, sturdy and capable electorate officers to see them through that period. Rose has certainly been that. I employed Alison fresh out of university. Alison was mentored by Rose and has become a wonderful electorate officer who has learnt so much under Rose. While Rose takes six months off Alison will certainly have carriage of my electorate office. As members know, we do not spend much time in our electorate offices. Therefore, the capacity and capability of our electorate officers is vitally important for our success as members

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
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Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

of Parliament. I acknowledge Rose and wish her the very best during the six months she is away from my office. I certainly hope that she conquers her battle with cancer and returns ever the vigorous, cheeky electorate officer that she has been in the four years she has been my electorate officer to date.

We do not do this enough: I want to make a quick mention of my wife Vivianne, who has spent basically the past three years pregnant. Thankfully that will be it and she will not be pregnant again. I want to thank her for what has been a challenging three years for us. We have two wonderful little daughters as a result of that. I want to acknowledge the work she does at home for me and for my little girls when I am not there, which is a lot of the time. Certainly, without her at home supporting me I could not do my job at all. I want to put that on the record straight up in making my comments tonight.

If I may just reflect on Victoria Park for a minute, it is a very interesting electorate. It is an inner-city electorate and a wealthy electorate. I call it a wealthy electorate in comparison with many others. It is an electorate that has undergone a fundamental change over the past 20 years. When I first moved into the area in year 9, into Lathlain, there were not many people around my age. There were a lot more seniors around and not a lot of younger people of my age or a lot of babies. I did not see the prams that I can see around now. I remember when we lived there that Christina's Restaurant opened on the Albany Highway strip. It was the very first restaurant on the strip, which is now a bustling cafe strip. Christina's is still there, and it is there because it has won award after award. Christina's continues to provide wonderful meals and wonderful service to all of Perth. I am very lucky because Christina's Restaurant is just across the road from my office, so I frequent Christina's.

I did make this comparison during my first speech in this place. I was working at Clarke's Liquor Store in Carlisle for a number of years. How much it has changed from when I was working there during my university days compared with now. When I was working there we sold lots and lots of cases of Emu Export, lots and lots of cases of Victoria Bitter and lots and lots of cases of the standard, locally produced lagers and, not so much, but an occasional wine selection. It was very focused on, and I guess really reflected, the electorate at the time. I was in Clarke's Liquor Store the other day buying some wine. The change in what that liquor store sells is tremendous. Its vast selection of wine and boutique beer reflects the changing demographics of my electorate. The average age in my electorate has plummeted significantly. The amount of disposable income has increased dramatically, as has the number of prams at the weekend. The electorate is jammed with people pushing prams, which I partake in now at the weekend when I try to find a little spot in a cafe on a Sunday or Saturday morning, where we need to pull up with a double pram that cost more than my first car. We try to get in there around a little table to find a place where we can order a flat white, and desperately hope that the kids either stay asleep or behave themselves just while we have a cup of coffee and, hopefully, chat with a few of the constituents who pass by.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Can I expect it to come across the border into Belmont?

Mr B.S. WYATT: The Leader of the Opposition should be very aware that this is creeping dramatically across into Belmont, and I think it is an unstoppable force. All those inner-city electorates have changed incredibly. The old saying about Vic Park was that it was knock shops and car yards; that was what was down in Vic Park. Yes, there are still car yards and there are still brothels—quite a number of brothels actually. However, the change in Victoria Park in the past 20 years is quite wonderful. I daresay that in the next 10 to 20 years there will be a lot more to come. I think there will always be an increasing growth of young couples and young families in my electorate. What is also interesting is how many of those people have a connection somehow to Victoria Park. They may be lawyers and accountants working in the central business district and on the Terrace. However, more often than not there is a link back to Victoria Park. Either they have spent time at school there or their grandparents lived there or continue to live there. So despite the rapidly changing demographics in the community, it still has a very strong community feel. It is really quite wonderful to be the local member for a dynamically changing area such as Victoria Park.

One person whom I would like to mention in particular is Tracy Huggins. Tracy is the head of the parents and citizens association at Bentley Primary School. Thankfully, that primary school has received some federal government money that is being spent on some wonderful things. However, the school has struggled over the past 10 years to secure its own resources and develop a sense of community. There have been a lot of transient families and there has been a massive increase in the number of English as a second language children who attend the school. In the past, the school did not receive the funding required to ensure that those children got the support that they needed. The school has a high Aboriginal population and there are some wonderful Aboriginal children there. They are not only Nyoongah children, but also Aboriginal children from all over the state. Until recently the school has suffered from regular vandalism, graffiti attacks and break-ins into the cafeteria, which

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Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

have caused great distress. Tracy Huggins, whose children attend the school, took over the presidency of the P&C and has done an absolutely wonderful job of ensuring that the community has got behind what the P&C is doing.

I am glad that the Minister for Education is in the chamber because I want to commend her. I wrote to the minister about building a fence at Bentley Primary School. I do not like the idea of fencing schools, but it is a sad reality that sometimes we must consider that option. Bentley Primary School had been attacked regularly and that had resulted in a considerable amount of damage. I wrote to the minister. Initially she gave me the type of response that I expected to get. I was told what the requirements were and to get in line. However, thankfully there was an error in the letter. Obviously it was not the minister's error, but someone in her department had made an error about a previous application by the school. I pursued the matter further and now a fence is being built, and that will have a very positive impact on the school.

Dr E. Constable: All's well that ends well.

Mr B.S. WYATT: All's well that ends well.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What a great minister.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I am commending the minister for addressing the bureaucratic response that I initially received and pursued. She altered the department's initial response and the primary school and the P&C are very pleased with that.

Dr E. Constable: I must visit it.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Please do. The minister is more than welcome. It is a strongly multicultural school that is doing wonderful things.

Rod Beresford is the principal of Kent Street High School, which went through a difficult period when it had a number of different principals. The school did not have consistent leadership and lost its morale. Neither the teachers nor the students were happy and, as a result, the school was not performing as well as it should have been. Rod has provided incredible leadership at the school. That is now reflected in the quality of the teachers and in the new-found pride of the students. It is a huge public high school and is now bursting at the seams. There is a real sense of direction and ownership of the school by the children and the teachers. I commend Rod Beresford for what he has done in a very short time as the principal of Kent Street High School.

While I am on the topic of education, I note a very disturbing occurrence that has taken place in a couple of primary schools in my electorate. I am not seeking to blame a particular government about this because it is just a reality. There has been a very aggressive campaign by independent private schools to target children in public primary schools and get them to go to the independent schools. In a couple of my schools—not all of them—the number of students in years 6 and 7 has dropped dramatically.

Dr E. Constable: It is a huge issue.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I am glad that the minister said that.

Dr E. Constable: We are spending a lot of time on it.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I will go through some statistics because when these sorts of movements occur in a small primary school class of 30, it has a big impact on the school. I will not mention the name of the school at this stage because I do not need to; it is just a good example. In 2008, the public school lost to private schools three year 3 students who were progressing to year 4; six year 4 students who were progressing to year 5; seven year 5 students who were progressing to year 6; and nine year 6 students who were progressing to year 7. This has been exacerbated now for 2010. It is really that 6–7 year, minister. Of the students who were in year 6 and who are now in year 7, the school lost 17. That is to a range of schools from Ursula Frayne Catholic College to Penrhos College, Wesley College, All Saints' College, John XXIII College, Santa Maria College and Mercedes College. Of those 17 students, two ended up going overseas. So there are 15 students, and it has gutted year 7 at the school. Obviously, the private independent schools are targeting students, so those parents who for whatever reason have lost confidence in the public high school system or are worried that they will not get their children in —

Dr E. Constable: Maybe they like the idea of year 7s being in high school.

Mr B.S. WYATT: That may be the case.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 24 February 2010]

p211a-256a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Acting Speaker; Mr Christian Porter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Troy Buswell; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Dr E. Constable: Some do. All the metropolitan Catholic schools that have made that change have surveyed their parents, and they have a high proportion who are extremely happy about the education the students are getting. So these are the things we are examining.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Absolutely. However, the worry is that we will end up with a whole swag of public primary schools that have a very narrow band of kids there, usually from the lower socio-economic groups, and they do not have the better performing kids. As we know, a school needs to have the better performing kids because —

Dr E. Constable: Last week the Queensland government announced that it was changing its system and that year 7s would go to high school. So there are only two jurisdictions now where year 7s are in primary school—Western Australia and South Australia.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What is the cost?

Dr E. Constable: There is a cost; we know that. But with the national curriculum and a whole lot of other changes, these issues need to be looked at very seriously.

Mr B.S. WYATT: They do, minister. This is one school in particular. I am happy to tell the minister afterwards which school it is, because the principal is very concerned by the dramatic drop in the number of students in primary school because they are being taken out to high schools. I am running out of time. I will move on from that issue.

There is one other person in my electorate I would specifically like to mention. The member for Cannington may have come across this gentleman, who has since passed away. He was a wonderful Nyoongah man by the name of Harry Thorne. For many years Harry and his wife, Shirley, ran the Maamba Aboriginal Corporation in Queens Park, which was in my electorate until the last redistribution and election. When as the local member I first visited them, they were still driving a van that my dad had provided to them when he was running the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, and the van was still in amazing condition and running beautifully. Harry, in particular, used to do a number of things. One thing he used to do was go to Cannington Community College and to Sevenoaks Senior College—he would go to a bunch of schools—and pick up the local Nyoongah kids whom he knew to make sure that they got from school to home, and in the morning from home to school. He was a wonderful contributor to Aboriginal education in his own way.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr B.S. WYATT: We lost him last year and I miss him terribly and his presence at the many functions that I hold in the community. Again, I offer my sincere condolences to Shirley, his wife.

One other group I would like to mention before going on to a couple of different issues is Wanslea Family Services and its Grandcare program, which operates from a location just up the road from my electorate office. This program provides a support service to people who are looking after their grandchildren, which is an ever-increasing occurrence in my area, and I am sure it is in lots of different electorates. I have certainly been very aware of this in Aboriginal communities for years and years. It is nothing unusual. However, I go along regularly to the Wanslea Grandcare program's morning teas. The room is full of grandparents who tell terrible stories of their children who may have terrible drug problems or may be in jail. They have all sorts of terrible backgrounds and life circumstances. They had children and had no capacity to look after them, so the grandparents had to step in—not because it is out of anything other than love—to take on that parenting role. Certainly, the grandparents in my electorate who are looking after these children do not have the resources to bring them up, particularly when they are in those early school years that are quite expensive. I wanted to mention the Wanslea Grandcare program because it has provided a wonderful service. It won my community service award, which I presented to it last Christmas. I would like to draw the government's attention to the Wiluna regional partnership agreement. Wiluna is a town that most people in this room are familiar with, whether they have visited it or heard about it. It has gone through some shocking times, experiencing poverty and alcohol abuse. The school received some notoriety when the Governor-General visited Wiluna some years ago. However, there is a real opportunity in Wiluna. I hope that the Deputy Premier, who is the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, and the Premier are aware of this. A number of significant mining operations are opening up around Wiluna. At the moment a regional partnership agreement is being coordinated by Alan Stewart. He is very aware of the importance of bringing all the government resources together to ensure that Wiluna does not suffer like some other communities have suffered with a surge of economic activity. We need to ensure that Wiluna grows and incorporates the local people in a meaningful way so that the significant economic development that will be taking place around Wiluna captures those people, mainly Aboriginal people, and brings them along as well. I look forward to

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
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Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

meeting with Alan Stewart regularly through the Wiluna RPA. The Minister for Indigenous Affairs needs to be very aware of, spend a lot of time in and give consideration to Wiluna.

Being a member of Parliament has wonderful privileges. One of the things I have enjoyed the most about being the member for Victoria Park is that I have the opportunity to travel around the state and see many wonderful people, not just in my own little patch but all over Western Australia. Since moving to this side of the chamber and becoming shadow Treasurer, I have had a great excuse and an obligation to get out and about all over the state. I would like to thank the member for Pilbara for a couple of trips that he organised last year that involved the member for Rockingham and the member for Warnbro. I went on a trip with the member for Pilbara through his electorate, taking a wonderful drive through the Pilbara. We spent a number of nights in the area, including one very cold night at Karijini National Park. The member for Pilbara was good enough to organise a trip for me, the member for Warnbro, the member for Rockingham and the US Consul-General, Ken Chern. We went to the Kimberley, and visited James Price Point and Fitzroy Crossing, which, without doubt, opened the eyes of the US Consul-General. He absolutely loved the trip. The Kimberley Land Council was good enough to invite us to its annual general meeting at One Arm Point. It was one of the best weeks I had last year. It was a trip I will always remember.

Mr T.G. Stephens: It was very good fun. You were great company, as was my colleague the member for Warnbro.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I thank the member for Pilbara. I was waiting for that interjection. If I was going to preen him, I was expecting a little bit back.

This is one of the advantages we have as a state member of Parliament. We do not have the burden of travelling to Canberra week in and week out. It is important that we get out of our electorates and see this enormous state. It is really quite exceptional. To see what is happening from Esperance to Kununurra and the different activities highlights and regularly opens my eyes to the wonderful privileges of this job. Often we can get bogged down by the argy-bargy of what occurs in this chamber. The daily media cycle can often be depressing and fraught with antagonism. It is always wonderful to have a regular trip in my diary to get out of Perth and the metropolitan area to the regional parts of our state.

I want to make some comments on royalties for regions. I said this to the minister during the debate on the Royalties for Regions Bill. Royalties for regions is a wonderful opportunity for regional Western Australia and for Western Australia generally. Regardless of what happens and regardless of political persuasion, regional WA is quite rightly at the centre of the political debate. We can fight over where royalties for regions money is going et cetera but it is right in the centre of the debate and it will be for a number of electoral cycles to come. In a state that is a third of our nation's land mass, that is exactly where it should be. I am a little biased; I spent some time living in regional Western Australia. I think it is great for the National Party to have gained the balance of power. I do not think it chose its partner wisely, but one of the great outcomes is that both major political parties, whether we like it or not, now have to place regional Western Australia at the centre of our considerations when we talk about the policies we will pursue in election campaigns.

There is something that has always surprised me about Western Australian senators who go to Canberra to represent us. Recently I had a—let us say—run-in with a senate office. I will not name anyone; I will not even suggest that it was a Labor senator. However, one thing I have noticed is the distance between our senators' offices and the general post office. I will run through the distances for all 12 Western Australian senators: 3.2 kilometres; 0.4 kilometres; 5.9 kilometres; 3.1 kilometres; 1.8 kilometres; 5.5 kilometres; 3.4 kilometres; 6.8 kilometres; 24 kilometres; two kilometres; 0.7 kilometres and 23.7 kilometres.

Several members interjected.

Mr B.S. WYATT: That was all 12 of them, I think.

I know that Minister Ludwig is looking at the Commonwealth Electoral Act, and I must say that Western Australia is not Robinson Crusoe on this matter. In a lot of states, senators are effectively based in the central business district. Queensland, to its credit, is reasonably spread; but then, its population is a bit more spread than ours.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler interjected.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Since the late Senator Peter Cook, there has not been a senate office in regional Western Australia.

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Rob Johnson; Speaker; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk;
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Saffioti; Mr David Templeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Peter Watson; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Frank
Alban; Mr Ben Wyatt

Mr J.J.M. Bowler interjected.

Mr B.S. WYATT: He did. If 12 senators are to be representing Western Australia, and since it does not seem to be working under the current operation, maybe we should start mandating that a certain number be from other parts of the state. I am not criticising any one senator, but when we look at the figures we rapidly realise that Northbridge, West Perth and East Perth are the best represented parts of Western Australia in our democratic system. I make that point because I think it is something that we need to consider when thinking about what we expect from our federal members of Parliament representing us in Canberra.

I want to note the government's final Economic Audit Committee report, which has a huge range of recommendations. I am not really sure what some of them mean; some may have quite considerable implications and we will have to wait to see what the government is going to do with these recommendations. I daresay that some of them will appear and some of them will be completely ignored; that is the right of the government in the upcoming budget. In my recent media release, I offered broad support if the government needs to go through the process of looking at itself and working out how to deliver efficiencies. I have gone through it; there are some that will cause controversy, and no doubt we will oppose them. However, overall, it is always a good outcome for Western Australians to have a government that looks at itself and an opposition that can provide assistance in doing so.

One of the privileges we have as members of Parliament is the opportunity to travel around Western Australia and, where appropriate, internationally. I know that many members have been to China and Japan; it is particularly important for members of the Western Australian Parliament to travel to some of these places. I note that on Friday I travel to the United States on the International Visitor Leadership Program, a program through which a number of members of Parliament from both sides of the house have travelled to the United States courtesy of the United States State Department.

Mr T.G. Stephens: The Treasurer will be able to take a holiday!

Mr B.S. WYATT: We were invited by the American Department of State. The title of the trip was "Global Interdependence", and six of us travelled to America, being one other Australian, a Malay, a Filipino, a Chinese, and a —

Mr T.G. Stephens: Taiwanese.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Yes, a Taiwanese person; I thank the member.

The purpose of the trip was to look at America's role in the Asia-Pacific region, and to visit some of the states in America that have suffered some shocking impacts as a result of the global financial crisis.

In conclusion, as highlighted by the member for Willagee in this place, it does not always have to be that I get to my feet as shadow Treasurer and attack the government for its terrible financial management —

Mr T.G. Stephens: It will be about 95 per cent of the time!

Mr B.S. WYATT: — although 95 per cent of my speeches will do that! It is important that we take the opportunity, as members of Parliament, to reflect on the fact that we do have enormous privilege and enormous opportunity in this role. In 2010 I look forward to ensuring that I spend a lot of time with the member for Pilbara again, both in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, getting to know those parts of the state that most of the constituents in my electorate do not get to see. That is something I intend to pursue with great vigour in 2010.

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

House adjourned at 7.06 pm
