

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 21 February 2012]

p16a-69a

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tom Stephens; Dr Kim Hames; Ms Rita Saffioti; Deputy Speaker; Mr Paul Papalia; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Presentation

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [3.12 pm]: Mr Speaker, I rise today to outline the Liberal–National government's agenda for this parliamentary year. Today will also mark the final Premier's Statement for this term of government.

On behalf of members on this side of the house, I congratulate the member for Rockingham on his elevation to the position of Leader of the Opposition and wish him well—though I stop short of wishing him success! I also acknowledge the member for Belmont and his contribution to the state and to the Parliament.

No government is perfect and no government should be lulled into complacency by its own achievements. The Liberal–National government is, however, extremely proud of what it has achieved over the past three and a half years. We are determined to do more. Despite being a minority government, this has been a cohesive government. It has also been a good government—one that is characterised by honesty and integrity and, above all, one that has made decisions. Some of those decisions have been hard and some have been unpopular, but all have been made for the right reasons and in the best interests of Western Australians. This is also a government of common sense and pragmatism. We do not implement unnecessary reviews, set up superfluous committees or call for more reports. We accept the responsibility of government to implement good policy and to deal with circumstances as they arise, whether it be introducing a payroll tax rebate to help small businesses through the global financial crisis, the clean-up of pollution in Esperance, financial support following the Toodyay fires, rebuilding the community of Warmun in just three months after devastating floods, promptly establishing an inquiry into allegations of sexual abuse at St Andrew's Hostel at Katanning, dealing directly with Indonesia on Western Australia's live cattle trade, or increasing aerial patrols to protect beachgoers—and, like previous Liberal–National governments, we have proven our ability to think big, get on with major projects, resolve longstanding issues and implement fundamental reform.

This is a defining decade in the state's history. It is an opportunity not to be missed. The government is building both the economic and social infrastructure needed for this and future generations. Right across the state, major projects that will transform the economy are planned and underway—Ord stage 2, the Gorgon and Wheatstone LNG projects, major iron ore expansion, and deepwater ports at Oakajee and Anketell. Other projects will improve our quality of life—Perth City Link, the waterfront, a new children's hospital, a new major stadium and Pilbara Cities. Western Australia's agricultural sector continues to innovate and grow with a record grain harvest of more than 15 million tonnes this year, the completion of the Muchea Livestock Centre, construction underway on the Katanning saleyards and the commercial cultivation of GM canola.

No other state comes close to matching what is happening in Western Australia. We are also leading the nation through significant reform in education and health. At the beginning of this year, 73 more schools became independent public schools, bringing the total to 171. These school principals and local school communities are empowered with more authority to manage their schools and tailor teaching and learning in the best interests of their students. This is a true revolution in education and one that is being copied by other states and the federal government. The four-hour rule, put in place in Western Australian hospital emergency departments by this government, is also now being implemented across the country. A recent independent report showed that 80 lives had been saved in three major Perth hospitals where the four-hour rule was in place. The appointment of Western Australia's first mental health minister, followed by the establishment of Australia's first Mental Health Commission, has at last recognised the needs of this long-neglected area of health care.

The government has also made the very conscious decision to invest in the community sector. In another Australian first, the Liberal–National government is increasing funding to the not-for-profit sector by 25 per cent—a measure of this government's commitment to those most in need in our community. An additional \$604 million is being distributed to around 500 groups such as the Salvation Army, Anglicare, the Autism Association and Rocky Bay, to improve salaries for workers and services to people with a disability, those suffering with physical or mental illnesses, disadvantaged youth and families who are experiencing difficulties.

I am proud of the Liberal–National government's commitment to resolving longstanding native title matters. This month the government made an in-principle offer to resolve all native title claims in Perth and the south west. This settlement offer is unique in that it covers multiple claims over the largest area of land of any other native title negotiation in Australia, but more than that, this agreement will formally acknowledge, in this Parliament, the Nyoongah people as the original inhabitants and traditional owners of the land of the south west of Western Australia. It is a significant step in the reconciliation process. As with the agreement reached with the

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Kimberley Land Council on the development of a gas precinct at James Price Point, this agreement has the potential to give Aboriginal people a real opportunity for economic prosperity, improved health and education outcomes and self-determination. It is disappointing that commonwealth support for this historic initiative now seems unlikely.

The Liberal–National government is honouring its commitment to be a caring and compassionate government, not with grand gestures but with practical responses that make real improvements to people’s lives.

This session’s legislative agenda continues the Liberal–National government’s determination to resolve long-running and sometimes divisive issues and set up the state for the future. Today, the government has given notice of a bill to amend the Retail Trading Hours Act, which will, at last, give Sunday shopping to all the people of Perth. This is expected to apply from August this year. The bill will provide Sunday trading between 11.00 am and 5.00 pm for general retail shops across the metropolitan area. This will include retailers such as Coles, Woolworths, Ikea, Harvey Norman, Target, Kmart and many other chain stores and smaller retailers. Trading hours for all other retailers will not change, including small retail shops such as IGAs, hardware stores, pharmacies, car yards and petrol stations.

The Liberal–National government is committed to ensuring future generations of Western Australians have a legacy from this historic period of economic development, built predominantly on the significant but finite resources available to us at present. The Treasurer will announce details of a future fund as part of the forthcoming state budget and will introduce legislation to establish the fund later this year.

The Integrity (Lobbyists) Bill 2011 will give statutory powers to regulate the activities of lobbyists. This will prevent a repeat of the scandals of past years that so damaged the state’s reputation.

The Prostitution Bill 2011 will give protection to our suburbs and towns, and help stop the exploitation of young women. For many members, this bill will raise both ethical and moral issues. It is for that reason that every member in this Parliament should be free to vote according to their conscience, as members of the Parliamentary Liberal Party are free to do.

The Liberal–National government makes no apologies for its tough law and order agenda and will increase penalties for antisocial and criminal activity that threatens the safety and security of Western Australian communities. As promised, the government will target organised crime this year. The Criminal Organisations Control Bill 2011 will dismantle outlaw bikie gangs that profit from organised criminal activity, particularly in the drug trade. This will complement action we have taken on drugs, including repealing the former Labor government’s soft cannabis laws; tougher penalties for people who sell drugs to children or put them in danger through the manufacture of drugs; and banning synthetic cannabis and the psychoactive drug MDPV—methylenedioxypyrovalerone. The government will also introduce amendments to the Corruption and Crime Commission Act to extend the CCC’s powers to investigate organised crime.

The improvement of services for the mentally ill in our community has been a priority for this government. That will continue with the introduction of a new mental health bill that will significantly strengthen the rights of individual patients in the mental health system and help destigmatise mental illness. Among other things, the bill will enshrine a charter of rights, provide for the more appropriate transport of mental health patients, and ensure involuntary patients are better supported.

This government has also addressed another complex but important issue in the Evidence and Public Interest Disclosure Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Shield laws will provide protection for journalists, whistleblowers and others who deal with confidential information.

As members are aware, Western Australia has experienced a number of natural disasters in recent times, including fires at Toodyay, in the Perth hills and at Margaret River, and floods in the Gascoyne and the Kimberley. As a result of the Perth hills bushfire review undertaken by Mr Mick Keelty, the Liberal–National government will make the biggest change in emergency management since the establishment of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority in 1999. We will introduce legislation to restructure FESA to become a government department and create the position of fire and emergency services commissioner. Later this week I will table Mr Keelty’s report into the Margaret River fires and outline the government’s response to that report.

We will progress a bill to rename Foundation Day as Western Australia Day, which will help broaden the relevance and appeal of the celebration of our state in June each year. The day will still mark the foundation of the Swan River settlement, but it will be more inclusive of all Western Australians, including Aboriginal people and those who have migrated from countries all over the world.

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The purpose of the Liberal–National government’s legislative agenda over the past three and a half years, and again this year, has been simple: to make Western Australia a better, fairer and safer place to live. I believe we have had success, but there is more to do.

In spite of some better economic news out of America, the effects of the global financial crisis of 2008 linger. There is now a renewed crisis of debt and confidence in Europe. The International Monetary Fund is warning of another possible global downturn and expects the Eurozone to go into a mild recession in 2012.

Australia did do better than other nations in weathering the GFC storm, but the options for future action are limited. The state of the federal budget rules out any repeat of the stimulus package of 2008–09, and the capacity of the Reserve Bank to come to the rescue through lower interest rates is not what it used to be. Just two weeks ago we saw anticipation of a cut in official interest rates overwhelmed by market conditions that saw rates actually rise. A quick fix is no longer available, and there is no superficial alternative to improving the fundamental productivity and competitiveness of the Australian economy.

A popular counter view is to put our faith in China and the mining industry. That may work for Western Australia, but it will not work for Australia as a whole, and it will not work for vulnerable industries including manufacturing and retail. Important as China is, it does not provide a solution for the national economy. If anything, it conceals underlying problems, creates a false sense of comfort, and deflects policy away from the real issues. From an Australian perspective, that is the China fallacy.

Already, we have seen hundreds of jobs lost, mostly on the east coast: Pacific Clothing, BlueScope Steel, Heinz, Toyota, Mortein, Qantas, Air Australia and Billabong. Those industries are suffering under the combined influence of global uncertainty, a higher Australian dollar, rising costs, and low consumer confidence. Unfortunately, it is likely that for many Australians, 2012 will be about simply holding onto their jobs. That is why the Liberal–National government rejects the notion of a “boom” and the false expectations such language can lead to. Nevertheless, Western Australia is better placed than the rest of Australia when it comes to jobs. In the last six months, employment in Western Australia has grown by more than 23 000 jobs, while for the rest of Australia jobs growth was less than 2 500. That is not simply a result of luck or good fortune. The state has grasped the opportunity by pushing ahead with major private and public sector projects. The \$138 billion of resource projects committed to or already under construction and the \$169 billion under serious consideration, along with \$27.5 billion of government capital works over the next four years, ensures our immediate future. But this cannot continue as it is. While there are more people in training in Western Australia than ever before as a result of 21 000 additional training places and new training facilities provided by the Liberal–National government, a shortage of skilled labour means that there is a limit to how much construction activity can occur at any one time. It is also difficult for both economic and social infrastructure to keep up, in spite of projects such as Pilbara Cities and the new hospitals being built. This constraint is further compounded by last week’s revised population forecast of an additional 750 000 Western Australians by the middle of the next decade.

Unless something changes, the crunch will come on state government finances. The people of Western Australia know we are being short-changed in the carve-up of goods and services tax revenues. Last year, we received 72c back for every dollar paid in GST. The big states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland all received over 90c in the dollar back. It is a bizarre system that penalises Western Australia for having a successful mining industry, while at the same time it rewards other states for their reliance on gambling revenue. The message is all wrong. State Treasury forecasts that our share of GST revenues will fall below 50c in the dollar by 2013–14, and could be as low as 36c in the dollar by 2014–15. This will see us lose \$12 billion in revenue to 2014–15, or even more if recent reports that our GST share will fall next year to 55c in the dollar are true. The commonwealth just does not care. By anyone’s measure this scenario is unfair, unrealistic and unsustainable. It is forcing the state into an overreliance on debt to fund infrastructure and services. It cannot go on. Despite the fact that Western Australia is clearly the powerhouse driving the nation’s economy—we have the highest forecast growth in the country—rising state debt is the constraint on our economic growth. Western Australia accepts that it can make a net contribution to the other states and asks only for a floor of 75c in the dollar for our share of GST revenues. We are not asking for a special deal; we are asking only for a fair deal. For Western Australia, fixing the GST is the number one issue in federal–state relations.

In spite of this, the Liberal–National government will maintain a disciplined approach to fiscal management to ensure that we stay in the black by maintaining budget surpluses. Since coming to government, we have slowed expenses growth, which peaked at more than 13 per cent under Labor, by placing a cap on the size of the public service, implementing a fair but consistent government wages policy and cutting government spending in areas such as advertising and the government car fleet. The government has also removed hundreds of boards and committees that are no longer relevant, saving taxpayers’ money on member fees and administration, and cutting

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down on regulation. A five per cent efficiency dividend on government trading enterprises has reduced expenditure on consultants and resulted in better management of contracts, which will save more than half a billion dollars over the next four years.

The government is determined to do more to reduce waste and duplication, and to ease the regulatory burden on business and the wider community. We have already approved 333 voluntary redundancies in the public sector; cut planning and environmental approval timeframes, while maintaining the right balance between development and protection of the environment; introduced a lead agency framework for major projects; established development assessment panels to make approvals processes far more consistent and transparent; replaced multiple redevelopment authorities across Perth with the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority; cut red tape for licensees and managers of bars and pubs; and made certification processes for building and renovating houses more efficient, but there is still more to do.

The Liberal–National government will this year introduce Repeal Day, providing an annual opportunity for Parliament to specifically focus on repealing or removing obsolete acts, or irrelevant or superfluous boards and committees created by statute.

Members may be aware of a report released last week showing that Perth was the world's twelfth most expensive city, ahead of cities like New York, London and Hong Kong. The Liberal–National government recognises that living in Western Australia is expensive. When it comes to cost of living, the focus is usually electricity prices. Increasing the price of electricity for households and businesses has been one of the most difficult and probably most unpopular decisions this government has made. The recent increases have been necessary to catch up, after the previous Labor government's irresponsible decision to freeze electricity prices, following the split-up of Western Power.

Even with the increases of past years, the reality is that the cost of delivering electricity in this state is about 30 per cent more than people pay for it. However, electricity is cheaper in Western Australia than in any other state except Queensland. Nevertheless, this government recognises that increases in electricity prices, coupled with other cost-of-living pressures, are being felt by Western Australian households. The state government does provide assistance, rebates and subsidies to assist those people having difficulty paying bills. There are also a range of discounts for seniors on water rates, local government rates, the emergency services levy and drivers' licences. These have been provided by successive governments. But the Liberal–National government has introduced a number of other assistance measures, in particular to assist seniors in the community, many of whom are on fixed incomes and are affected more than most when the cost of food, utilities and transport increases. These include the annual seniors cost-of-living rebate; the Country Age Pension Fuel Card; the security rebate; and free public transport for seniors between 9.00 am and 3.30 pm during the week and all day on weekends and public holidays.

Over 2 000 low to moderate income households will be given a hand getting on to the property ladder over the next two years through the government's shared equity scheme, which will give singles on less than \$70 000 and couples on less than \$90 000 the opportunity to purchase a range of properties through the Department of Housing. To help families, this government has recently introduced the \$10 million KidSport initiative, which pays the fees for those children who would not otherwise be able to join a club to play their favourite sport. This government recognises that families, particularly young families, are the group in the community that is feeling cost-of-living pressures more than most. The Liberal–National government is looking at this issue carefully, with the view to targeting assistance at this group in the forthcoming state budget. The Liberal–National government takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure that the benefits of a strong economy are shared more widely. Of course, there is no more successful illustration of how the benefits of a growing economy can benefit the broader community than the government's royalties for regions program. Across Western Australia, the Liberal–National government is working with local communities to deliver better services and build infrastructure in the regions, where most of the wealth of this state is generated.

As we all know, mining and petroleum is driving the transformation of our economy. The figures speak for themselves: the value of mining and petroleum production exceeds \$100 billion, and almost 20 per cent of the revenue received by the state government comes from mining royalties. This government has made decisions to ensure that the revenue generated by the resources sector is used wisely and in the long-term interests of the state. More than half a billion dollars has already been allocated to the new children's hospital, including \$350 million from BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto as a one-off payment following amendments to state agreements.

Last year's strong budget surplus, driven predominantly by increased revenue from increased mining royalties, also provided the opportunity to set aside \$100 million for the new major stadium at the Burswood peninsula. At the start of the 2018 football season, the Western Australian public will be watching the Eagles or Dockers—or

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both, if we can convince the AFL of a round one western derby—in a world-class stadium. In contrast, members opposite are opposed to the stadium at Burswood and want it at Subiaco or East Perth—a move that would deny Western Australians a new stadium this decade.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is true.

The Liberal–National government has made it a priority that there is a high level of local participation in the contracts flowing from major projects. Since July last year, when the government released its revamped local content policy, more than \$14 billion worth of contracts have been awarded to 63 local companies, to work on resource projects. This will result in thousands of jobs for Western Australians.

Unfortunately, the continued flow of jobs from a growing resources sector faces some risks, in the form of the federal government’s mining and carbon taxes. Western Australians can rest assured that the Liberal–National government will stand firm in its total opposition to both the mining tax, 65 per cent of which will come from Western Australia, and the inefficient carbon tax, which will add to the cost of living for all Western Australians. Both taxes will cost jobs. The mining tax is jeopardising the emergence of the magnetite iron ore industry in Western Australia. Already, Alcoa has shelved its Wagerup refinery expansion plans and the jobs that go with it, citing the uncertainty created by the carbon tax.

Despite the risks created by the commonwealth government and the damage to Australia’s reputation, the Liberal–National government has projected a confident can-do attitude to the world. This was never more evident than at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October last year. While some members opposite derided CHOGM, the Liberal–National government and the Western Australian community embraced this once-in-a-generation opportunity to showcase our state to the world. The direct economic impact of this event was \$80 million additional expenditure, not to mention the global media coverage of CHOGM and the royal visit, the boost to tourism, and the business opportunities that flowed from the commonwealth business forum. In anyone’s estimation, that was a meeting worth hosting. CHOGM also provided us with a great opportunity to further strengthen relationships with the growing economies of Asia and the Indian Ocean rim, to which our economy is so closely tied.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Nothing has changed!

In recognition of our strong links with the region, the government will shortly open a Western Australian Trade Office in Singapore, a country with which Western Australia has a long and special relationship.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Perhaps some members to my right and some members to my left hope to get an opportunity to respond to this statement. I would like to give you that opportunity. When you are on your feet responding, members, I am sure you would like to be heard by everyone. You will not want to be interrupted.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Liberal–National government is using the transformation of our economy to undertake the greatest transformation of Perth since Federation. Unfortunately, the last 100 years has seen the Perth central business district evolve in a fragmented fashion. The time for Perth to mature into a sophisticated city befitting its importance as Australia’s west coast city and gateway to the Asia–Pacific and Indian Ocean rim is now. For too long the city has turned its back on the river. The Perth Waterfront project will bring the river back into the heart of the city. Demolition work, construction of jetties, and work around the freeway on-ramps and William Street will start in April.

Just as the waterfront project will reconnect the southern fringe of the CBD with the river, the Perth City Link project will reconnect the northern side of the CBD with Northbridge—a link that has been severed by the rail line for 100 years. The visual blight of the rail line and the bus station will be removed. Commuters, pedestrians and visitors will have better connection between the city and Northbridge, and be able to enjoy a large city square. Construction of the tunnels is proceeding, as is work aboveground around the Milligan Street area, including landscaping of the public plazas between the Perth Arena and the old Entertainment Centre site. Other projects in Perth include: the redevelopment of the Cultural Centre, including the upgrade of the Art Gallery of Western Australia; a new residential, commercial and retail precinct adjacent to the Western Australian Cricket Association; the creation of a heritage precinct around St George’s Cathedral; the completion of the Perth Arena; geotechnical and master planning for the major stadium; the redevelopment of Perth Oval as a rugby and soccer stadium; and a new state netball centre at the Matthews Netball Centre site will begin later this year.

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One of the more obvious impacts of rapid population growth is the pressure placed on transport systems. In Perth alone, the number of people using public transport will double in the next two decades. The government: is increasing the capacity on the existing rail network through the purchase of new trains; providing an additional 3 000 parking bays at train stations along the Mandurah and Joondalup train lines; has committed to the biggest bus service boost in a decade with a 30 per cent increase in services by 2015–16; and is easing freeway congestion with the widening of the Kwinana Freeway underway and construction of a third lane to the northbound section of the Mitchell Freeway beginning later this year. We will continue to look at ways to address issues affecting freeway users, including the extension of the Mitchell Freeway further north and options for a light rail system that will provide an alternative for the estimated 30 000 people from the central northern suburbs who currently drive west to get onto the freeway.

In regional areas, the Liberal–National government has committed \$104 million to upgrade more than 480 kilometres of road. We are also investing more than \$350 million in the grain freight network, which will lower costs for farmers, as well as take more heavy vehicles off narrow country roads, making them safer. It is a tragic fact that over half the road deaths in this state occur on country roads. While the road toll has reduced since 2008, the Liberal–National government is determined to do all it can to continue to reduce road trauma. That is why this government made the decision to allocate all revenue from speed cameras and red light infringements to the road trauma trust fund. This effectively triples funding for road safety.

I spoke earlier about the government’s decision to provide the not-for-profit sector with a 25 per cent increase in funding. This was a significant social dividend from the state’s growing economy. It acknowledged that not all sectors of the community share the state’s growing prosperity. There will be other important social dividends from this growth this year.

There is no more important a job than ensuring that every child, no matter what their circumstances, can achieve their potential. Education is the key to this. The critical years for learning are the early years. The former coalition government recognised this, providing access for all children to kindergarten and preprimary programs at local primary schools, and changing the school starting age. This government has strengthened the commitment to early childhood education by starting formal literacy and numeracy learning in preprimary, and we will introduce legislation this year to make preprimary compulsory. There is still room for improvement in closing the gap between potential and performance for some children in the early years. We will shortly provide the details of our previously announced plan to co-locate children and family services on school and other community sites, particularly in low socioeconomic areas. These centres will provide services such as immunisation, child health nurses, occupational and speech therapy, and parenting programs in an integrated way, providing local solutions to local problems. Like the successful independent public schools program, there will not be a one-size-fits-all model.

In 2012, the government will also focus on improving facilities at secondary schools throughout Western Australia. Planning for year 7 becoming the first year of secondary schooling is underway, including assessing the requirements for additional facilities at high schools. The implications of this significant reform for every secondary school and its feeder primary schools will be examined in detail, and school communities will be consulted, with an emphasis on support for rural communities. The government is on track to have an additional 115 public schools air-cooled by the middle of this year as part of our commitment to ensure that all schools have air-cooling by 2014. The Liberal–National government has worked hard to improve the standards of government schools across the state. Student numbers at government schools have grown under this government, following no real growth under Labor. Of course, quality teachers are critical to raising standards, and the Liberal–National government has demonstrated that it values our teachers by making them the highest-paid teachers in the country.

This government has embarked upon the biggest hospital capital works program in the state’s history, with more than \$1.5 billion allocated in this year’s state budget. In Perth, the construction of the new children’s hospital is underway, and Fiona Stanley Hospital is proceeding on time and on budget. Joondalup Health Campus is being expanded, and building of the Midland health campus will start by the middle of the year. We are delivering a new Albany health campus, the redevelopment of Kalgoorlie health campus, a new Busselton health campus and upgrades at hospitals in Karratha, Carnarvon and Esperance, and the Exmouth health clinic. Through the government’s royalties for regions program, more than half a billion dollars is being injected into health care in the southern inland region of the state to get more general practitioners into country towns and to upgrade large and small hospitals and nursing posts. Six towns already have access to a doctor following a recruitment campaign as part of the southern inland health initiative. In line with our commitment to the early years of children’s learning and development, and following the valuable report “Invest Now or Pay Later: Securing the Future of Western Australia’s Children” by this house’s Education and Health Standing Committee, the Liberal–

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National government has employed an additional 45 specialists in child therapy services. This initiative is already making a significant difference; that is, waiting times for speech pathology have fallen by 42 per cent, occupational therapy by 46 per cent, physiotherapy by 42 per cent and clinical psychology by 30 per cent.

Arguably, the most important social dividend of this period of economic growth is to ensure the protection of the state's unique environment for future generations. The government has allocated \$63 million to the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, the centrepiece of which is the creation of the state's largest interconnected system of marine and terrestrial parks, including four new marine parks and Prince Regent National Park. In addition, the government has started developing and upgrading camping facilities throughout the Kimberley, including at the Bungle Bungle Range. This will be extended throughout the state to improve access to and facilities in our national parks so that more Western Australians and visitors can enjoy our unique environmental diversity.

The Liberal–National government is committed to ensuring that there is a balance between responsible economic activity and sustainable environmental outcomes. We will be rightly judged on our record. The decision just this month to reject a proposal to build a coalmine near Margaret River demonstrates this commitment. The unique environmental, viticultural and tourism values of the region cannot be compromised, and the government will implement the most stringent planning framework possible to protect it from all forms of high-impact mining.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that members of this house would agree that we are living in difficult times. The global financial crisis has generated a sense of insecurity, now heightened by the economic instability in Europe, and trust in governments and respect for their legitimacy are at fairly low levels, even in Australia. All this makes the task of government that bit harder. Now, more than ever, government has a responsibility to show leadership, stability, decisiveness and confidence. The Liberal–National government is responding to the challenges before us by doing just that. We have steered the economy with a watchful eye and a steady hand through difficult economic times, nationally and internationally. Our strong growth forecasts, positive budget position, low unemployment, massive investment pipeline and AAA credit rating mean that Western Australia is in a much stronger position than most to weather any wider economic downturn, protect jobs and support those who need assistance.

Just as the gold rush years of the 1890s and the development of the Pilbara in the 1960s transformed the state, this moment in our state's history will define our future. The Liberal–National government is committed to making Western Australia a better, fairer and safer place to live. Our work, and the work of all members in this Parliament, is an important part of realising that commitment.

I wish members well for the forthcoming parliamentary year.

Government members: Hear, hear!

[Applause.]

Consideration

The SPEAKER: The question is —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [3.51 pm]: The Premier's Statement is an opportunity for the Premier to outline the government's agenda for the year ahead, and that is exactly what the Premier has done today. However, my advice to him is that he cannot plan for the future until he has dealt with the past. This government and Premier have a matter of unfinished business from the past year that I wish to raise in the house today.

A grave injustice has been done to a group of people who participated in a sporting event in this state last September. I am of course referring to the Kimberley Ultramarathon. The injustice is that the Western Australian government has failed to call an independent inquiry into the event. Let me make it clear: I am not seeking to attribute blame for the outcome of the event itself, but I am attributing blame to the Barnett government for its failure to call an inquiry. The Premier has said that he has a lot that he wishes to achieve this year, and he has listed his priorities. But in my view, his first task should be to cut through the red tape and make a decision to hold an independent inquiry into the Kimberley Ultramarathon.

In order to demonstrate the magnitude of the injustice that has been visited upon a number of young athletes, I will spend a little time this afternoon talking about a very brave young woman called Kate Sanderson. Kate is a runner who has competed in marathons and ultra-marathons. She once cycled across Cambodia with a friend, and in 2009 was the inaugural winner of the 100 kilometre Great Ocean Walk race. I have here a picture of Kate taken when she was competing in a race a year or so ago—a very bright and vivacious young woman.

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Members in this place should know what occurred on 2 September 2011, and, for those whose recollections might have been dulled over time, let me remind the house of a Hong Kong-based company known as RacingThePlanet. This organisation was founded in 2002 by US investment banker and extreme athlete Mary K. Gadams. The company runs ultra-marathons; that is, extreme races in extreme environments. Every year, it runs four desert races—in the Gobi Desert in China, in the Atacama Desert in Chile, in the Sahara Desert in Egypt, and also in Antarctica. At regular intervals it also runs one-off ultra-marathons in spectacular, if remote, places.

In April 2010, RacingThePlanet ran one such ultra-marathon in the Kimberley, between Kununurra and a location on a large station called El Questro. Normally, the company would visit a different location for each of these races, but for some reason it decided to come back to the Kimberley in September 2011. I have not been able to determine at this stage whether the company was convinced to do so by the success of the first event, or enticed by the prospect of support from the state government. Certainly in August 2011, Minister Waldron in his capacity as Minister for Sport and Recreation, together with Minister Hames as Minister for Tourism and Minister Grylls as Minister for Regional Development, announced —

... the Kimberley Ultramarathon would receive funding through Eventscorp's Regional Events Program, which is funded by Royalties for Regions for the next three years.

And we see their smiling faces on the press release.

Certainly everyone wanted to get in on the act; it was a great coup. Minister Hames is quoted in the media release —

Regional events are important as they provide significant economic, cultural and social benefits to the community, as well as increase the region's profile through media exposure ...

Hosting the Kimberley Ultramarathon is a fantastic opportunity —

That is it; the three ministers said they were hosting it; our state was hosting it —

to showcase our spectacular Kimberley region to the world and will illustrate how unique our vast State is.

I would like the house to note the kinds of claims that were being made by government ministers. I would like the house to note just how eagerly government ministers were lining up to take credit for the announcement and indeed to take credit for the race itself. The joint media release of this little gaggle of government ministers begins —

One of the world's most challenging race series will be staged in Western Australia's Kimberley region and broadcast to a worldwide television audience thanks to a significant funding boost from the State Government's Royalties for Regions program.

It is pretty unequivocal: thanks to the funding, we have both the race and the broadcast. Equally, the implication of course is: no funding, no race, no broadcast. At the same time in Hong Kong, RacingThePlanet thundered in its own release, "Government of Western Australia to join forces with the Kimberley Ultramarathon 2011". That is what was on the RacingThePlanet website.

Thanks apparently to the government the race was to be run on 2 September 2011. In truth, preparations to run this race had commenced long before. The process of recruiting competitors had begun at least nine or 10 months before the event. When recruitment of competitors was in train, the cut-off date was 10 August, by which time entrants had paid their fee, received their medical clearance, provided a passport-sized photograph and signed a legal waiver.

Kate Sanderson was one of these competitors. She arranged with friends to compete in the race, and a small group travelled to Kununurra at the end of August. When she arrived she was informed, along with other competitors, that the direction of the race had changed. The race would commence at El Questro rather than in Kununurra. Competitors and volunteers speculated at the time that this was to provide more spectacular footage for television or documentary cameras. On the evening of 1 September competitors attended a briefing at the Kimberley Grande hotel. They were warned of such dangers as snakes and crocodiles and the need to remain hydrated; that was especially stressed. They were provided with information about the route. They were not warned that there had been a number of bushfires in the area or of any particular fire risk. They certainly were not warned that there was any risk of a fire going anywhere near the course. If they had have been warned of fires in the region, Kate has said she most certainly would have withdrawn from the race.

What is disturbing, too, is to learn from some very credible reports that on the morning of the race some of the pink ribbon that was used to mark the course for the athletes had to be replaced because it had been incinerated by a wildfire. On the morning of the race, those organising it knew that there were wildfires in the area because

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they were out there replacing bits of pink ribbon. Despite this, the race went ahead. For Kate Sanderson, things proceeded as expected for the first two stages. At the second checkpoint she saw her friend Andrew Baker, who was a race volunteer, with event organiser Riitta Hanninen. She also met Turia Pitt, a competitor who left the checkpoint about 10 minutes before Kate did.

At this point I will quote briefly from a statement that Andrew Baker has given to the police —

Before the first competitor arrived the media helicopter landed next to Checkpoint 2. I saw people get out of the helicopter who came over to us being the checkpoint officials and went straight over to Riitta and I overheard some of the conversation. I heard the people from the helicopter say to Riitta, “There’s a bushfire ahead and it’s expected to cross the track in about 1 and a half to 2 hours.” Or words to that effect.

I could see Riitta walking around making phone calls and we waited for the first competitors to arrive. As they arrived the helicopter took off and followed the first few competitors into the gorge. I helped **at the check point** until Riitta wanted to go which was just after Kate (competitor 33) arrived at the checkpoint. At this point it was 11.40 am, I know this to be accurate as I took a photo of her and the properties of that photo show it to be taken at 11:40 am. I don’t recall any further mentions of fire at Checkpoint 2.

Kate then set off for the third stage with her friend Hal Benson. They were aware that this was a more difficult stage routed through a gorge and over difficult stony ground. As a result, they kept a walking pace. It was in the gorge with the cliff to one side and a sharp slope on the other that they encountered the fire.

I will now quote from Kate Sanderson and let her tell the story in her own words. Those words have been given to the Victorian police and, I believe, passed on to the WA Police.

As Hal and I were walking along the floor of the gorge we saw a fire that I guess would have been approximately 200 to 300 metres ahead of us. It looked like the fire had come from the other end of the gorge. At that stage it didn’t look dangerous, however, I could see a lot of smoke and flames and I could hear a slight roar from the fire.

At that point Hal and I stopped. I took out my camera and took some photographs. I could see Turia Pitt up ahead. She would have been about 50 metres ahead of us. She had her head down which you needed to do to watch the ground so that you didn’t trip over or stumble. She had an MP3 player and I presume that she had her earplugs in. There was also another competitor, a male, walking a bit further on ahead of Turia. I thought about yelling out to Turia as I realised that she probably hadn’t noticed the fire ... due to her MP3 player or to see it because she was looking down. However, I realised quickly that there was no point because if she was listening to her MP3 she would be unable to hear me. Even at that stage I didn’t think there was any imminent danger. Nonetheless, it was clear that the fire was heading our way. I then observed the man who had been walking ahead of Turia. He was walking back towards us and in fact had overtaken Turia who was by then following him. Almost at the same time two other competitors arrived from behind us. I think that they were a father and son team. The six of us ended up together. There was a lot of discussion about what we should do. I recall that one of the people suggested that we walk towards the fire and head over towards the left near the cliff to go around it. I thought that was a stupid idea because if the wind changed we would be trapped.

Our other option was to go to the right hand side and up the hill to an area of exposed rock. As the discussion continued the fire kept getting closer. I could hear the roar of the fire getting louder. I immediately said to the group that I was going. I headed off towards the hill on the right hand side with the intention of climbing up the hill to the exposed rocky area. The others followed me. It took about one minute to cover the ground to the base of the hill before we started climbing. By the time we got to the base of the hill the men had overtaken us. We climbed up and got to the rocky outcrop. I recall that one of the male competitors, who had an accent, pointed to a rock crevice and told Turia and I that we could have the “prime spot”. He meant that we could huddle up in the rock crevice which would give us some protection from the flames when the fire went past. At the stage Turia was to the left of me. She started to cry. She said that she was really scared. I tried to reassure her. Everyone then seemed to take off up the hill, including Turia. I started off after them. I was the last to go. I kept climbing up, but I couldn’t see the others ahead of me. I looked behind me and saw that the fire had reached the base of the hill and flames were starting to move quickly up through the grass on the hill. I had only travelled about 5 metres from the rocky outcrop when I made this observation. I feared that if I kept going I would end up running just ahead of the fire and would be badly burned. I thought that the best thing to do was to go back to the rocky outcrop, which I did. I then huddled down in the rocky crevice. This was

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a crevice formed by two rocks forming a “V shape”. I got into the crevice as tightly as I could. By then I had put on a woollen long sleeved sweater that I had been carrying in my backpack.

I was huddled in the crevice. I can recall the roar of the fire. I recall the incredible heat. I recall that the clothing on my right shoulder caught fire and when this happened I immediately stood up to try to put it out.

When I stood up I seemed to be in the fire. I screamed. I remember feeling the flames and the intense pain. I had my hands up to my face and my eyes closed. I thought to myself — “this is what it’s like to die in a fire”. I tried to run. Every time I tried to run I stumbled and fell. Each time I fell I was falling onto hot embers.

I was screaming. I recall hearing Turia screaming about 5 to 10 seconds after the fire got me. At that stage I knew that the fire had also got Turia.

That is the end of Kate’s statement. I note here that the price of Kate putting her hands to her face and saving her face is that her hands are very, very badly burnt. When the fire had gone, and despite their own injuries, the group tried to care for the two massively burnt girls while they waited for help to come. They had no way of contacting race organisers or the authorities. They just hoped that someone would find them. The first to see them were the people in the media helicopter. Although the helicopter could not land, the group felt reassured that they had been seen. This was followed by a gyrocopter. Sometime later a RacingThePlanet doctor hiked in, and I note that it is reported that that doctor did not have medical equipment. Paramedics who were based in Kununurra remained there, unaware of what had occurred. It was only later that they were alerted to a situation and heard that there were tourists somewhere in El Questro, not even realising at first that these were event participants. The paramedics then went to their aid, and there have been quite a number of stories about their heroism. They headed to the first checkpoint and then to the second checkpoint, not knowing where to go, but eventually they got there, and they had some medical equipment with them. The doctor tried, but was unable to insert an intravenous cannula into Turia’s arm because she could not find a vein; she was more successful with Kate. The injured runners were eventually taken by helicopter in circumstances of great difficulty. I note here that that was a considerable feat by the helicopter pilot, who was not someone arranged by RacingThePlanet. He was Heliworks helicopter pilot Paul Cripps, and without his aerial assistance, without him landing in a precarious situation and rescuing these girls, they would have certainly perished.

Both young women are seriously burnt; they have been in hospital ever since. Kate has had at least 15 surgical procedures, including the partial amputation of her left foot. It remains likely that she will lose her entire foot. She has lost parts of her ears and a fingertip. I have photos of those. I met with Kate in hospital just over a week ago, and although I will not illustrate this with all the pictures, I hold here a picture of how burnt Kate’s ear is. Dry gangrene affected her foot. The next photo shows the foot before the amputation, which took place only a couple of weeks ago because it takes a while for that to happen. The photo I am now holding shows the foot as I saw it in the Alfred Hospital. We are now told that that operation has not been successful and more of her foot will be taken. The final photograph that I would like members to see is a photo of one of Kate’s hands. When I saw her, her hands were slightly better than they look in this photo, but they are burnt and clawed in the position shown.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The treatment will continue into the future; she will need a lot more surgery and a lot more rehabilitation. Her life has changed. So has the life of Turia Pitt, who was burnt on over 80 per cent of her body and required extensive facial grafting. Unlike Kate, she did not cover her face in the same way and, as I understand it, she has had a full facial graft. She is a 25-year-old girl who was working as a mining engineer in the north of our state and who was a part-time model. To be sure, it is certainly true to say that the running of an ultra-marathon in a remote location bears inherent risk—indeed, so many risks that it would seem incumbent upon organisers and sponsors to ensure that those risks are minimised by both studious preparation and attention to the circumstances of the day.

I have spoken with a number of people who know quite a lot about these kinds of events. I want to quote here from a man called Andy Hewat, himself a professional race director and ultra-marathon runner, who says in *Trail Run Magazine* —

“When you do a sport that takes place in the wilderness, it’s an inherent risk that events may have to be cancelled. The biggest 100-miler in the world—the Western States 100—was cancelled the day before the race a few years back because of fires. They had 400 runners waiting to go, plus 1000 crew and volunteers, but they pulled the plug because of safety concerns.”

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“That’s the nature of bush-based events—some things are outside your control, but you have to mitigate the risks. Was that done here, or were commercial interests given precedent?”

Again, these are his words —

... When there’s a danger that could clearly be foreseen, like when there’s a fire already burning, then there’s a duty of care that needs to be shown by the organisers to the runners.”

He goes on to make the following comment —

“They had the opportunity to remove the runners when they saw smoke at CP2, but they didn’t. You have to ask yourself, when they had helicopters in the air filming the race, how did they not see the approaching danger and act on it? They had all the infrastructure there to film the event and get publicity for their series, but was this at the expense of runners’ safety? It appears that the helicopters were there filming the front runners, while those nearer the back were left to fend for themselves.”

These observations raise serious questions about the decisions that were made on the day. These observations, and those of others, make it clear that there is a serious issue of justice here. What justice have those young women had? In November, Mr Sanderson met with Minister Hames to ask the same question. As a result of the meeting, the minister undertook to seek advice as to the possibility of an inquiry into the fire. He was not the only one to consider this a necessary response to the tragedy—the police thought it was appropriate; and the St John Ambulance crew, who risked their own lives to evacuate the women, certainly want an inquiry. As late as the middle of December, Minister Hames is reported to have been pushing for an inquiry. One wonders, however, just how sincere the minister was on this point when he said that there was no mechanism for an inquiry. It seems clear that the minister, who was trying to seem so concerned, had already given up on the idea of an inquiry last year. The extent to which the minister has given up is indicated by his reply to me, in which he said that he thought about how he might do that and about what mechanism could be used by a government department that does not sponsor the event itself and does not have responsibility for fire and emergency services and is not the police, but it is very difficult to work out a mechanism to do that and to do it properly. In other words, the minister has put it into the too-hard basket.

Of course the government could respond with a judicial inquiry. I believe that would be appropriate, because a police inquiry in and of itself is not enough. A Public Sector Commission inquiry in and of itself would not be enough either. There are many, many elements here, and I cannot see any way other than a full independent judicial inquiry. Only a few weeks before the minister came to this conclusion, though, government ministers were pushing each other out of the way to claim credit for the race. Now they are running from it like Dracula from a cross.

On 8 December, when Minister Hames was still content to see in media speculation that he was pushing for an inquiry, the minister wrote to Kate Sanderson and said that he was particularly disappointed that he has not been able to find a way for the Western Australian government to conduct a formal inquiry into this matter, because he had sincerely hoped to do so. The minister said also that he understands how incongruous this may seem to her, her family and friends. Can I say “incongruous” is hardly the word, especially after we all witnessed the ease with which Mr Mick Keelty could be given a brief to inquire into the Margaret River fire that burnt out—I quote the Premier—more than 3 400 hectares, principally of crown land, and destroyed 32 house, nine chalets and four sheds. Given the ease with which the Margaret River inquiry could be commissioned, I call upon the government to offer the same courtesy to Kate Sanderson and Turia Pitt as it has to Lyndon Rowe and the other homeowners at Gnarabup and Prevelly. I call upon the government to establish an independent inquiry into the running of the Kimberley Ultramarathon of 2 September 2011.

Among the kinds of questions such an inquiry might address, the following should certainly be included: What role did the state government play in retaining the event in the Kimberley? What assurance did the state government receive regarding safety? Were there concerns about the waiver signed by competitors, invoking the law of the British Virgin Islands apparently, sidelining local jurisdiction? Was the risk assessment completed before any government funding was secured? How extensive was the assessment and how involved were the police, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority and the Department of Environment and Conservation in this process? Was it not important to involve these agencies even though the race was held predominantly on a private pastoral lease? What liability insurance was available? The minister said today that that was a requirement, yet the organiser of the event, which this government signed up with, will not even say who its insurers are. Presumably the minister knows; the minister said he has been assured that the insurance is in place. Perhaps the minister can tell us who they were insured with. How well prepared was RacingThePlanet before the race? Was it aware of the bushfires in the vicinity of the race? Was it aware of the nature of Australian bushfires,

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their speed of movement, the heat they generate and the danger that they pose to life and property? Was there contingency planning for fire?

There are written and photographic reports of fires in the area for up five days beforehand, including an extremely concerning report of course-marking tape needing to be replaced before the start of the race. There are multiple photos of competitors passing through recently burnt, still-smouldering areas, as well as reports of fire on the horizon, just after the race started, by gyrocopter pilot, John Storey, who said that the fire would be approaching runners within two hours. What was the response of the organisers to these issues?

This race had a number of participants spread over a large distance with difficult and inaccessible terrain. What specific medical or safety preparations were made by organisers, including contacting local medical and retrieval services in the preparation phase and how effective was communication between race staff, competitors and these services during the race itself? Only by holding an inquiry will the government move beyond the weasel words of false compassion. Only by holding an inquiry will the government reassure visitors to this state that if they come and compete in an event and are seriously injured, through no fault of their own, that they can have some measure of justice. Only by holding an inquiry will this government protect Western Australia's reputation as a good place to visit. Only by holding an inquiry will the government begin to ensure the integrity of the tourism brand in Western Australia. Only by holding an inquiry will the government begin to act with proper and authentic compassion to two young women whose lives have been so terribly changed and to their families and their friends.

Amendment to Question

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I therefore move to amend the question before the house. I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that this house calls upon the Premier to establish an independent judicial inquiry into the September 2011 Kimberley Ultramarathon. Terms of reference for such an inquiry should include, but not be limited to the following —

- (i) all events and arrangements that were made prior, during and after the event that may have caused, contributed to or worsened the injuries that were sustained by Kate Sanderson, Turia Pitt, Michael Hull, Martin Van Der Merwe and others;
- (ii) the appropriateness of the arrangements or any contract between RacingThePlanet and Eventscorp or WA Tourism or the minister responsible for those agencies;
- (iii) the suitability of RacingThePlanet and its staff to manage such an event;
- (iv) the adequacy or otherwise of safety arrangements for event participants and others;
- (v) the adequacy or otherwise of medical evacuation procedures for the event;
- (vi) the adequacy or otherwise of communications for the event;
- (vii) insurance and civil liability matters; and
- (viii) the role of Western Australian government departments or agencies, including but not limited to, Eventscorp, WA Tourism, the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, WA Police and Health.

In concluding his Premier's Statement last year, the Premier said —

Western Australians can be assured that this government will make decisions for the right reasons—not to appease certain interest groups, not to fit in with the news cycle, and not for political self-interest.

Premier, I call on you to be true to your word and to call an inquiry into this matter.

MR T.G. STEPHENS (Pilbara) [4.20 pm]: I rise to speak in support of the amendment and the arguments that were put very clearly to the house by the member for Midland, the manager of opposition business.

This is a serious matter and it deserves a serious, positive and urgent response from the government. It is serious for all the reasons that have been outlined to the house by the member for Midland. In particular, the seriousness of the circumstances and futures of the victims of this event need to be weighed heavily and carefully by government as it responds to this call. Other considerations, which should not be minor matters, include the good name of the state of Western Australia, the good name of the government of Western Australia and the responsibilities that come with being a government for all the people of Western Australia. We on this side of the house often complain about the government's catchcry or mantra that it is about making decisions. In this case,

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the government appears to be yet again headed towards locking in behind a bad decision—that is, to not hold a proper judicial inquiry into this matter. I urge the Premier to pull back from any temptation that he might have to lock in that poor decision, which would be embodied by refusing to have a judicial inquiry.

I know a couple of regions in this state extremely well—the Pilbara and the Kimberley. I know especially well the area where this fire took place. I mustered in the neighbouring Speewah Valley on a property adjacent to the Dunham River. That property was once owned by my wife's family and I know the danger of fires that go through those valleys, particularly at that time of year. In fact, when my wife's family first came into that region in July 1882, 100 years before I was elected, they were greeted by one of the most savage fires; it nearly took the lives of that settlement party. From settlement all the way through to the present, people have been aware of the enormous horror that fires can represent. In that case, Michael Durack had landed in Cambridge Gulf and was on his way out. He was almost to the adjacent paddocks where this event was conducted. The fire was lit by the Aboriginal people to try to discourage the Duracks from settling. It was a horrific fire and the Duracks escaped it very narrowly on 31 August 1882. Horrific fires can come through that region at that time of year. When there is a lot of fuel burden, as there was on this occasion, the fires can take on an enormous intensity and can be whipped up at speed. Anyone who has looked at the history of this region would know the risks faced by people in the area.

For me it is very worrying to see a set of government ministers, who in the lead-up to this event gave press releases and made efforts to associate themselves with the funding of this event, now running from the house; they are not even present in the house when this motion is being debated. We on this side of the house are regularly critical of the current government because it does one thing quite well—it regularly hides its inaction behind inquiries. What is needed on this occasion is an inquiry. Normally, it seems to be quite good at conducting an inquiry as an excuse for action. But now it is hiding even from an inquiry. I have been around the place long enough to know that the one thing that a government can do quite easily is conduct an inquiry. A judicial inquiry is an extra step that is required on this occasion because of the gravity of the circumstances.

Let us look at some of the comparable inquiries that have been called for or conducted.

Point of Order

Dr A.D. BUTI: Madam Acting Speaker, I was wondering whether you could quieten them.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Yes. Members, can you please keep the background chatter down. This is a very serious subject, and it certainly does not do you justice to have that background chatter.

Debate Resumed

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Each of us in this place will have a memory of various incidents that have occurred in the life of the body politic in Western Australia or in other jurisdictions when comparable or similar sets of circumstances have emerged and when inquiries have been called for and sometimes conducted and sometimes not. Often inquiries have been called for and conducted into issues that are largely to do with a non-government agency's responsibility. Some of these examples are not the best because there are strengths and weaknesses in their comparison. I think of the Western Women issues of the 1980s. The culpability of government at that time was nothing more than a pamphlet that had been left in the front office of a women's referral centre, which pamphlet encouraged people to head towards a particular financial institution. That was enough for the then opposition—the Liberal–Country Party or whatever it was at that point—to call upon the government to conduct an inquiry into its culpability or involvement in channelling people in the direction of a financial disaster. Inquiries were held and culpability was established, and people were then able to draw upon the results of those investigations to access their redress. I cannot help thinking of the inquiry conducted into an aged person's facility. It was not operated by government. It was the Chelmsford inquiry that was conducted in Sydney. Counsel assisting was a friend of mine. He went on to be Judge Christopher Geraghty. It was essentially an inquiry into a private facility. It opened up access for the aggrieved families of the victims of the private facility to legal redress from the owners and operators of the facility. We can think of other issues in Western Australia. Clearly, there was the inquiry into the Varanus Island incident. It had other implications for government responsibility and government regulation, but it also led to opportunities for the private operators of the facility to face their legal responsibilities because of the efforts that eventually resulted in documentation to secure people's appropriate response. The example that has just been given to me by the member for Belmont is the Longford gas inquiry that was called for in Victoria.

Governments regularly conduct inquiries into issues that are not specifically or narrowly the responsibility of the government. In these circumstances, it may well be that the government has no culpability at all in hosting the event that it boasted it was hosting. There may be no responsibility for the three ministers Hames, Grylls and

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Waldron whose photos decorated the press release that emphasised the government funding for this event. I know that if I saw an event was being organised with government funding I would be able to draw upon my knowledge of government to assume that that event will have faced some rigour around its presentation, deployment and preparation. We know that if government funding is involved, typically, government agencies require event organisers to make sure that they adopt all of the rigour to secure the safety of the participants. We have had events on the river, events down at the foreshore and events all over the state for which people sought government funds only to get government funds once they have established to the funding agencies and ultimately to the ministers responsible that they have taken all the appropriate steps and got in place the appropriate insurance and the rigour to secure the safety of the participants and any observers to these events. Therefore, I think that any of the participants who went into this event having seen this press release and knowing of the government's sponsorship of it could quite legitimately claim they had confidence that the event was going to be conducted safely and surely and that if any risk was to arise, the risks would be mitigated and their safety protected. Until there is a judicial inquiry, none of us, whether we be parliamentarians, the wider community, government, or the victims and their families, will have any way of judging whether the organising company or its collaborators in government conducted themselves appropriately to protect the interests of the participants and to protect the wider public interest that is involved.

For me, it would be appalling, from this side of the house, to have to watch a government make a decision to reject an inquiry such as this. I am worried about the way the advisers to this government seem to wait for signals from the government itself as to the nature and shape of the advice that they are to give before they give it. It would appear that there is some reticence on the part of this government about an inquiry being conducted. Maybe the government knows why it has that reticence and it has flagged that reticence to the advisers who are —

Dr K.D. Hames: I have no reticence; I told you that when I answered questions earlier today.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: There is one thing that the minister can be absolutely assured of that he can do; he knows damn well he did this when he was in opposition: he called for and achieved high-level inquiries and his colleagues have achieved judicial inquiries.

Dr K.D. Hames: But you can only have a judicial inquiry into the public sector.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: You can have a judicial inquiry into any matter you choose. If necessary, if it has to, the government could bring a quick bill into this house to give the judicial inquiry any powers that it thinks that it has not got. The government could whip in a bill tomorrow and have it out of this place the next day in order to give the powers to conduct the judicial inquiry, if there was any justification for that reticence that the government had at all. I do not believe there is any justification for assuming that there is no head of power within government to conduct a judicial inquiry.

Dr K.D. Hames: Do you not think Mal Wauchope would be the one to make judgements of whether it is appropriate?

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I am confident that Mal —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Mal has that capacity to look, I am afraid, for the signals from government. If the government said to the Public Sector Commissioner that it wanted an inquiry, he would give the government one tomorrow. If the government shows some reluctance, he will express that reluctance. He is a loyal servant to government.

Dr K.D. Hames: I sent him a letter that said, "I would like to hold an inquiry; tell me what mechanism under which I can do it."

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Is he responsible to you, is he?

Dr K.D. Hames: No. I wrote to him asking him that question.

Mr P. Papalia: You also might be sending him signals!

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I put it to the house that if this government showed unity of purpose in the way it considered this matter, all arms of the public sector would find ways for the Minister for Tourism to conduct a judicial inquiry. It would be up and running before the minister could even blink. The one thing the government is capable of is conducting inquiries. It might not be able to act very decisively as a government but it can disguise its inaction behind inquiries. I fear the minister is disguising and hiding culpability by his reticence in reference to an appropriate inquiry. I know the minister's nature. I know that if he were in opposition he would

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have come after us absolutely mercilessly. I can hear the stinging rebuke that he would have given me and my colleagues if we were sitting opposite with a press release like this, with our names on it, and he were on this side of the house. The difference would have been we would not be doing what the Minister for Tourism is now doing. He would not have had the need to badger us in government to hide behind this pretence that a judicial inquiry cannot be conducted. He would have been merciless in his attack on me and my colleagues if we were the authors of a press release like this, an event like that and an outcome like this. He should not try to hide behind this process that somehow or other someone has dropped the minister a note to say, “We can’t find a way through it.” The minister should say that he wants to find a way through it, direct them to find a way through it, and he will have a full judicial inquiry in double-quick time. The only reason he has not got one is he does not want one. I can well understand why he might not want one—his thumb prints are all over it! A sponsored event has gone absolutely pear-shaped. The Minister for Tourism does not want an inquiry that might link him to the disaster that unfolded. Unfortunately, sometimes in office that is exactly what happens.

There are some people on the other side of the house who have adopted an ambition to be “teflon” ministers; that is, they will take no responsibility for anything that goes wrong but will want to absolutely take full responsibility for events that look good or are going well, by bringing out press releases. They will be jumping all over them. There would be ministers clambering onto the government jet to get up north for the opening of a musical toilet or the unveiling of a plastic cow! Ministers fly up to put their names all over everything, but the moment there is a disaster like this in which there is a real sense of a problem—worse than a problem, a personal tragedy —

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I did not hear the member, but maybe that is best!

This is a tragedy. It is a tragedy that should be above any attempt by government to hide itself from this legitimate call for a judicial inquiry that was made by the member for Midland. This is the only call that people on this side of the house should ever make in the circumstances with which we are faced. There is no other way for an opposition to respond to a tragedy like this. There are so many unanswered questions and so many issues that are yet to be pursued legitimately. We need to protect not only the interests of the victims but also the good name of the state of Western Australia. We need to protect good governance in Western Australia and make sure that in future any events conducted in Western Australia, with the support of government, are conducted in a way that the participants can be sure the highest standards of safety are followed, not only of the participants but also the wider community as those events are conducted. Nothing could be more reasonable for this house to demand. That is why this amendment comes before the house, and it should be accepted.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Minister for Tourism) [4.40 pm]: I want to go through the amendment and reiterate some of the things I said in my previous contribution.

I had a meeting, as Madam Acting Speaker knows, with Kate Sanderson’s brother, and talked through the issues. Quite clearly, he was extremely upset —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: He is here today; he is up in the gallery.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Yes, I understand that.

Quite clearly, he was concerned about all the things that had occurred to his sister, and, of course, the other people who were injured in the race, and he put to me that the government should undertake an inquiry. My response was that the information I had been given by Tourism WA—from my previous requests, before I met him—when I said that I would like to see an inquiry into the events that occurred was that one of the difficulties was that the contract with the company involved contained a confidentiality clause. That confidentiality clause could be overturned by me in seeking information, but Tourism WA was not allowed to respond publicly to any issues relating to that event. But, nevertheless, I will remind everyone what happened.

This event had been held in the previous year. This is an international company—the chief executive officer is based in Hong Kong—that holds RacingThePlanet events all over the world. To participate in the event—my understanding is that Kate and others signed it—there is an agreement that states, “I’m responsible for myself if something goes wrong; I will not take action against the company.” But as Mr Sanderson quite rightly pointed out, they did not expect, in signing that document, to be maimed for life, in effect.

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is important to discuss the issue in terms of where we progress from here.

Mr T.G. Stephens: It is policy on the run.

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Mr C.J. Barnett: It is not policy on the run; it is an issue you have raised, and we are trying to respond to it in a sensible way.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is an extraordinarily important issue.

The reality is, as I have said, I would like to have been able to hold an inquiry. I wrote to Mal Wauchope, saying, “That is what I would like to do; please look at this and tell me if there is a way we can do it.” Mr Sanderson actually made the suggestion that one of the people injured was a CEO, so could we use the workers’ compensation act of this state, for example, to proceed with an inquiry. The state government had put in money—I have been through the details of the money before—and there were two components. One component contracted a private company to film footage, and we ended up having to pay about \$80 000 of that because it actually went and did that under contract to us.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What has happened to that footage? Where is that footage now?

Dr K.D. HAMES: In fact, I do not know; I have not even asked. The event, as members know, was cancelled.

A component of those funds—\$100 000-odd—was for part of the administration, promotion, and attraction of high quality people to the event. That component was to go to RacingThePlanet so that it could run a successful event. We never paid those funds because, as members know, the event was cancelled because of the fire. For members’ information, Tourism WA had an option on the event for a further two years; Tourism WA has made the decision that it will not proceed with funding any further events in the future because of concerns, obviously, at what happened, and respect for the injured persons.

One of the key questions for the inquiry is whether any government departments did anything wrong in all of that.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We will not know until you have an inquiry.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I am just saying that I have not seen any evidence to suggest that.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Give me a break! This is a very important issue and I do not need the member to ride me every inch of the way. Let me finish my statement, because this is very important.

I had a meeting with the CEO of the company and asked her why the details of the insurance company had not been made public. We understand that the company has insurance, but in that meeting, on advice from its lawyers, the CEO refused even to confirm whether it had insurance. I know that the company does have insurance because we have confirmation of that.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Do you personally know who the insurers are?

Dr K.D. HAMES: I am about to name the insurance company. That is a critical step forward because one of the main problems is that people affected have not known which insurance company to go to. The contact I have enables me to go to the company and ask it, despite the contract, to tell me who the insurance company is, and it has done that. I have the name here; it has just been passed to me. The insurance company is Jardine Lloyd Thomson. That gives the competitors the ability to go directly to the insurance company. I have no idea why the company would not name the insurance company. It gave me a convoluted argument about not telling people who the insurance company is because then people will claim and the premiums will go up. It is just incredible.

Mr P. Papalia: Kind of like you refusing to hold an inquiry.

Dr K.D. HAMES: As I have told the member, I would like to hold an inquiry. Very shortly we will talk about an alternative option that we have been discussing during the break. Now that I have named the company, that will give the family the opportunity to go directly to the insurer. That is the critical issue. The family is not suggesting that government departments have done anything wrong. There have been some issues about who told who what and who said what when. The Fire and Emergency Services Authority report states clearly that two hours before the competitors were burnt, FESA provided advice to the event organisers that the fire was heading in that direction. The fire had been burning for a considerable time, as fires do all the time in the Kimberley. For those members who do not know, fires are a fact of life in the Kimberley. During the week I was talking to someone about fires in the Kimberley and was told that they occur in multiple places for about six months of the year. Someone asked me why we do not do something for the tourists up there who are at risk. There has never been an event, to our knowledge, of someone in the Kimberley being injured in any way by a fire. It has not happened before, so there is no reason for us to rush out for something that occurs for six months of the year. Some fires burn for weeks and weeks as they slowly spread their way across the countryside. It is

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just a fact of life in the Kimberley that those fires occur. What happened in this tragic event was that the fire happened to converge in a gully. As tends to happen to fires in a gully, the wind increased the fire and whipped it through the gully, just as the competitors were getting to that location. That is what caused the event. I will sit down now because I think I have covered the issues that I have covered previously. The Premier will respond more specifically to the motion before us.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [4.50 pm]: As the Deputy Premier said, this is a tragic event and everyone has great sympathy for the competitors who suffered such severe injuries, particularly the burns and the partial amputation. In looking at this motion, I think that we as a Parliament need to be very conscious about what we think we might be doing, as distinct from what we are actually doing. I do not pretend to be an expert on this matter, but I would like to make some comments. I am not being critical of the opposition, but this matter has been raised and we are trying to understand what might be achieved realistically. I want to make few comments in that regard.

The amendment to the Premier's Statement calls for an independent judicial inquiry; I do not think there is any such thing. Let me explain that. In general terms, there are three forms of inquiry that could be initiated. We could have a royal commission; obviously that would be headed by a judge. I do not think anyone is suggesting that there be a royal commission into this, with all the complexities and costs that would go with it. I do not think that is possible. We could have an inquiry under the Public Sector Management Act; that would require that the terms of reference relate to the public sector in the first instance. The initial advice of the Public Sector Commissioner is that there is not much in this that would seem to relate to the public sector; and, indeed, if it were to be an inquiry under the Public Sector Management Act, the terms of reference, by necessity, would be very narrow, which may not get to the point of what we are aiming at. An inquiry under the Public Sector Management Act might perhaps look at whether the government should have been a sponsor, but it would not get to the prime issues of the conduct of the event, whether there was negligence and, indeed, maybe issues as to whether those injured should receive some form of additional compensation; but we are not going to get to those issues under the Public Sector Management Act. Even if an inquiry were to be set up under the Public Sector Management Act, yes, we could employ a judge to do that, and that is what is often referred to as a judicial inquiry, but it would not be wide ranging like a royal commission. Even if a judge were to be appointed under the Public Sector Management Act to carry out a special inquiry, it would be limited by the Public Sector Management Act. I think the first vehicle, a royal commission, would be over the top and unwarranted. An inquiry—no matter who heads it up—under the Public Sector Management Act is limited to the public sector role, and I do not think that is the main point. I think the point the member is referring to is the injuries to the competitors and the conduct of the event which, as the Deputy Premier has explained, has been a private event on private land, where athletes signed a waiver. I think all of us would share disquiet over the way this event was conducted. So there are limitations.

The third vehicle is to have a parliamentary inquiry, which is not bound by the restrictions of the Public Sector Management Act and is not judicial; it is parliamentary. However, it would also face some other limitations. In particular, if a parliamentary inquiry were to try to subpoena and call witnesses, and those witnesses were outside Australia and not in any way subject to Australian law or jurisdiction, would they be likely to appear and cooperate? Highly unlikely, I would think.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That's not sufficient —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, the member is not listening to what I am saying. That, I think, is highly unlikely, and that would be a limitation on the effectiveness of the inquiry. I am trying to give my layperson's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the different ways of dealing with this.

Without putting words into the mouth of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism, I think it is fair to say that we accept that something went dramatically wrong with this issue. We acknowledge that the state government was a sponsor; the involvement of the state government did not go much beyond that, but people may inquire and question that.

Is the member listening? I am trying to talk to her; I am trying to treat this seriously.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I'm listening to every word you say.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, the member was not, but it does not matter. I am trying to actually respond in a constructive way.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I appreciate that, Premier. I certainly appreciate it.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Okay.

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I am trying to say that there are limitations in whatever way we go, and there are limitations to the ability to call witnesses and demand that they participate and cooperate, given that they may not be in Australia and we have no jurisdiction.

However, this was a tragic event; it went horribly wrong, with dreadful consequences for the athletes concerned. From a government perspective, we will be prepared to support an inquiry. The best view we have in the short time available is that that will probably best be a parliamentary inquiry, if we want to get to issues about the organisation of the event, the activities of the promoters and whatever else. If we go down the path of the Public Sector Management Act, we will be restricted to the roles of public servants and government, and I do not think that is really the main point.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: A parliamentary inquiry is certainly superior to —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: A parliamentary inquiry is possible; how effective it can be in an international theatre, I do not know. That is a limitation. Even if this motion is altered and passed—let us say that we change it to provide that there be a parliamentary inquiry into this matter, and change the terms of reference—it would sit on the notice paper in a dormant way until the whole response to the Premier’s Statement was concluded. It would actually be put on ice for most of the parliamentary year. It would simply sit there as an amendment to the address-in-reply. Nothing can happen until the address-in-reply is completed.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: How does that stop you from taking action? I don’t see that.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If this is the vehicle that is used—an amendment to the address-in-reply—it will sit on the notice paper for the rest of the year until the address-in-reply is concluded. It would go to the Governor, the Governor would respond and then it may happen. I suggest that the member for Midland withdraw this motion or we defeat it on the basis that the government undertakes to conduct an inquiry. Next week, when the address-in-reply is not before the house, the opposition could move a motion—say, a matter of public interest—to propose the inquiry. We would obviously want to have some input into the terms of reference but it would be a parliamentary committee. Some consideration needs to be given to whether this is about the role of government, the role of the sponsors, the management of the event or even compensation or some sort of redress to those injured. I think that needs some discussion. I guess it is now up to the member for Midland. The government would be bound to vote against this because it would simply sit on the notice paper, but next week we would entertain a motion proposing an inquiry. We would like to have some sort of discussion with the opposition about that or suggest that the member for Midland withdraw the amendment, which I think is the best way forward.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We have raised it today and it wouldn’t be our intention to use an MPI for this. If this is a jointly agreed thing, why can’t we have government time?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We will talk about that. The opposition has made the case today.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I do not want to delay the procedures of the house. If you allocate government time to it and we have a discussion, I would be more than happy.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If we can agree on the terms of reference of the committee, the member for Midland should move it in private members’ business and I hope we would come to a quick resolution. That is what private members’ business is for. The government would not delay any debate.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Do I understand that your offer of next week is available whether I withdraw or whether we defeat it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The offer is there.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Premier, you suggested to me that I could withdraw the motion.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think that is a better way of handling it because then the ball stays in the member’s court. It is better for the victims that it is withdrawn, on the understanding that it will come back next week or the week after, otherwise it will just sit on the notice paper for the next 10 months.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I appreciate it and I look forward to your cooperation. Thank you, Premier.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Consideration Resumed

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [4.59 pm]: It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss the Premier’s Statement. I was disappointed with the Premier’s address-in-reply because I did not see a lot of new things in it for the suburbs. I believe the suburbs in Western Australia are missing out. There is a concentration of pet projects in

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the city, be it the “Premier’s Palace” or the Perth Waterfront project. The issues of population growth and congestion cannot be overestimated. They are issues affecting families throughout the suburbs. It is taking longer and longer to do our everyday business and to take our kids to school or to pick up our kids from child care. Whatever we are doing is taking longer and longer because of the massive congestion on our streets. I believe the government does not have a plan to deal with that congestion in the future. It has no plan, no real commitments and no funding to deal with the massive population growth through our suburbs. Generally, I was disappointed in the Premier’s address-in-reply.

The concept of a future fund is interesting but to me it appears more like a government trying to show it has a vision than a government that has a vision. With debt out of control, going from \$3.6 billion in 2008 to around \$17 billion this financial year, it will be interesting to see how this future fund works. Should the focus of the government not be on reducing its debt? I know by implication that a future fund could do that, but it will be an interesting bill that is brought into this place if it shows that it makes economic sense to create a future fund at the same time as debt is spiralling out of control. This government has no plan to control its debt. Its only hope is to get more goods and services tax receipts than are forecast. That is the government’s only hope and its only strategy basically. It has no plan apart from trying to get more GST out of the commonwealth. As I said, the Premier’s speech was disappointing; it has nothing new for the suburbs and has complete disregard for the future planning of our suburbs and for families in our suburbs.

I cannot move on without talking about the cost of living. The government thinks it embarrasses WA Labor when it talks about us having frozen electricity prices for eight years. We are proud that we froze electricity prices for eight years because we ensured that families would not bear the brunt of bad decisions. This government has made bad decisions, and families in Western Australia are paying for them. The massive increases in electricity and water charges are making it harder and harder for families to balance their budgets. Families in suburbs throughout Western Australia are experiencing significant financial pain because of the decisions of this government. I know that the Premier is trying to recreate himself as caring and compassionate, but it is a bit too late. The Premier cannot whack families with massive increases and charges and cut funding for programs such as Redress WA—I remember when the government cut funding for paupers’ funerals for goodness sake!—and then try to recreate himself. The community is suffering under massive increases, and those increases were a direct result of decisions of this government.

I am therefore proud that WA Labor kept the increases in its household charges under the inflation rate over our term of government. It was a significant achievement, given the extraordinary pressures on our budget at the time. No-one can underestimate the difficulty there was in actually implementing that measure and sustaining it over eight years, but we did it. We did it because we knew that families should not bear the brunt of the decisions in such a way. So, as I said, we are proud of freezing those electricity prices. This government could have adopted any strategy it wanted—a 10-year pricing path or anything. It chose to come into this Parliament and announce massive increases in its first budget in the hope that everyone would forget in three or four years. The problem with that is every time people get their electricity, gas or water bill, they realise that this government has made massive increases to their household charges. As I said, the massive increases and charges are impacting on all Western Australians.

I want to move on to other issues in my electorate. I want to of course start with the issue of Ballajura police station. The closure of Ballajura police station was a bad decision by this government. Closing suburban police stations does not make the community feel safer; it actually makes the community feel less safe.

Mr P. Abetz: What about more officers on the road?

Mr T.G. Stephens: You listen to what she has to say. It is a bad decision and you know it!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a very bad decision and I actually think the Premier’s office thought it was a bad decision.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Member for Armadale!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think the issue of closing police stations is something about which the opposite side is a little touchy and a little sensitive, and I can tell members why in a second. Through the freedom of information legislation, I have some great information on just how sensitive this government is about closing police stations. An email from an officer in the Premier’s office and addressed to the Minister for Police’s office states —

Narelle and John have both independently come to me asking about the closure of Ballajura Police Station.

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We realise that policing needs to be both effective and efficient, but are worried at the optics of closing the station.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Well, I would be! The optics were not good!

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Bad optics—very bad optics!

Again, the email continued —

Can you send through the lines that you use when this happens, —

The closure happened in 2009 and this email was sent in 2011. This is a government across the issues in the suburbs —

as well as any options you have investigated for lessening the impact in the local community (installing more security monitoring equipment, more patrols in the area)?

The government closed the police station and at the time put in no alternatives—no more equipment and no extra resources. As I said previously, the decision to close that police station was a very, very bad decision and the community is still very, very angry about it. Of course, the Premier’s office knew that it was “very bad optics” to close a police station. All I can say about the response from the minister’s office is that at least his staff knew the station had been closed! The minister’s officer responded —

Ballajura was closed well over a year ago and while it was the Commissioners decision it had the full support of the Minister.

That is good to know. It is good to know that the minister backed the closing of the Ballajura police station—100 per cent. Of course, the closure of Ballajura police station created some issues. The Deputy Speaker, the member for Mount Lawley, wrote to, I think, the minister’s office. Yes; he wrote to the minister’s office.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Ask him; he is in the chair.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Pardon?

Mr W.J. Johnston: You are not allowed to address the Chair.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: In his letter, the member for Mount Lawley referred to an article about the closure of the Ballajura police station with one line, “Headlines in my local rag?!!” He was referring to the article on the front page of the 26 July edition of the *Eastern Reporter* with the headline, “Bring back our cops”. As a result of the Liberal backbench getting a bit nervous about the closing of police stations, a few meetings were held and a forum was organised by WA Police in Ballajura on 1 December. I attended, and I know that some members opposite attended; it was a very good forum. The key findings that emerged reinforced why it was a bad decision to close the Ballajura police station. WA Police acknowledged that there had been a policing problem in Ballajura and that there needed to be a better police presence in the area. WA Police also acknowledged that response times in Ballajura were below average since the closure of the Ballajura police station. It was a good forum because all that information came out. Around that time, or a few months later, a front-page article mentioned the surplus of police officers following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. I thought that this would be a good chance to get more police officers in Ballajura and wrote to the Minister for Police—as I tend to do, Minister for Police!—asking whether we could have some of the surplus officers assigned to Ballajura. I want to read out the response from the Minister for Police, because I think it an absolute disgrace.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Do you?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, I do.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Well, I think the way that you left Ballajura police station is an absolute disgrace.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: At least it was there!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Order, Minister for Police! The member for West Swan has the call.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Thank you. At least the minister acknowledges that we left a police station in Ballajura.

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Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: And you closed it! You closed it!

Mr R.F. Johnson: I did not close it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You did. You closed it.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: You were 100 per cent behind the decision!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You were 100 per cent behind the decision!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will quote an email from one of the minister's staff members to, I think, a staff member at the Premier's office. The email states —

Ballajura was closed well over a year ago and while it was the Commissioners decision it had the full support of the Minister.

There we go! The minister fully supported the decision.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The minister fully supported the closure of the police station.

A member interjected: It was open!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It was open. It was there. And now it is not there.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Swan Hills sent me a card for my children. I really appreciated that. I want to create a better relationship this year.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not want to argue with the member for Swan Hills.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now that we have ascertained certain points, member for West Swan, continue.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I really appreciated that card; it was very nice. I thank the member.

The police station was there, and then it was gone. Since then, this government has been trying to recreate history. Again, the Liberal backbenchers got a bit nervous. Member for Maylands, was it Bayswater Police Station they referred to?

Ms L.L. Baker: Yes, Bayswater.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: They were very nervous about Bayswater Police Station. But do not worry! There is a commitment to keep it open until May 2013. That is an interesting date. The government will commit to keep it open until May 2013. Do members not think that the people of Maylands and Morley might see something coming? Government members say it will be open until May 2013. That is great! It is a very good long-term commitment!

Mr W.J. Johnston: It depends on who the member is afterwards.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Exactly; the people know that if they want to keep their suburban police stations, they have to vote Labor.

Back to those community meetings I attended—they were great community meetings —

Mr F.A. Alban: That's a good one!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Let us figure this out: the government closes them, and we do not.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

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Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We closed them? Was it us or the police commissioner? Come on; the minister said we closed them. The government closed Ballajura police station.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The government closed Ballajura police station. We have fought some elections since then, but the government closed Ballajura police station and it is going to close Bayswater Police Station in May 2013.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Hansard reporter has no chance of reporting what the member for West Swan is saying, so please let us have some silence and let her complete her speech. The member will address her comments to the Chair.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I go back to those community forums, which were pretty good. The Minister for Police wrote to me after I said to him, “Look, there are all these excess police officers that you are championing on the front page of the paper. Throw some to Ballajura possibly, since you closed the police station.” The minister wrote —

Police advise that at the meeting on 1 September the Commissioner of Police and Assistant Commissioner Budge referred to additional resources, such as the Regional Operations Group or Mounted Police, being made available in Ballajura on an “as-needs” basis, however, it was made clear these were statewide resources and were not solely dedicated to Ballajura.

This whole forum was about placating what was happening in Ballajura, and the government never dedicated more resources. The letter continues —

I understand that at no stage did ... the Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner commit to additional resources being assigned to either Ballajura ... on a permanent basis.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Member for Swan Hills!

The letter also says that the major issues discussed at both meetings were not directly related to policing, which indicated there was little community concern about the numbers and actions of police in the suburb. Therefore, two forums were created to discuss policing, at which all the matters discussed were policing, and then the minister wrote me a letter to say that the issues discussed at that forum had nothing to do with policing and that the community is not concerned about policing in Ballajura. Honestly, I have never seen anything like it.

We have had thousands of signatures on petitions—2 755 on the 2011 petition; 1 653 signatures on the 2009 petition—and over 650 postcards were returned from a survey in 2009. It is a significant issue. Honestly! I cannot believe how the minister has treated the people of Ballajura both in what he did without consultation and how he has treated them since. It is an absolute disgrace. No wonder the other backbenchers are worried. If that is how he goes about treating people in the suburbs, there will be significant issues. He cannot go around closing communities’ police stations without consultation and then say that no-one cares about it, when they definitely do.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Do you have a job realising the truth? You make these statements that you know are not truthful.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Minister for Police has no credibility in the community. Honestly! He had better sit there and not talk because he has no credibility on this issue, absolutely none. In the history of this Parliament I have not seen a minister treat matters of policy with so much contempt.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, direct your comments to the Chair, please.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: On every matter before him he looks only at the politics; he never looks at the policy. Ministers of the Crown have responsibility to sometimes think about the policy; not the politics every time. Everyone in this house knows that this minister deals with every single matter in a political way. He never addresses the substance or the policy of the matter. It is an absolute disgrace.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Again and again he has demonstrated how he deals with the public generally and with us as members representing the views of the people in our electorates—with absolute disdain.

I want to talk about another issue, and that is the Ellenbrook rail line.

Mr F.A. Alban: When are you going to build one?

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Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Please, member for Swan Hills.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Member for Swan Hills, please; you sent me a nice card and I appreciate it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, address your comments to the Chair, please.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Swan Hills sent me a lovely card and I appreciate it. I do not want to get into that type of relationship this year; I really do not.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Let us talk about the Ellenbrook rail line, the biggest broken election commitment of this government. It broke a commitment. The Premier still has not admitted to it, but I am sure we will get there; I am sure that in four and a half years he will admit to something that is as plain as anything—a broken commitment. Of course, we had no apology, but we have a broken commitment. Then of course there was the 2031 public transport plan. Jeez, it was a good document. I was so looking forward to it. I was waiting for that public transport document. Every week I would go in and ask, “Have you got it yet?” Anyway, the public transport document came.

Mr A.J. Waddell: Great reading!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Great reading! I think we got it in October, and since then the minister has had a lot of good press. The document refers to light rail and rail lines going underneath runways to airports. That is a really interesting concept. I cannot wait to see it costed. It contains all these great ideas.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Orrong Road is going to be double storey.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Victoria Park!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Orrong Road will have three tiers. It would be the first three-tiered road in the state’s history. The document contains a lot of good ideas. I was a little bit upset when I read in one of this week’s papers that the Minister for Transport said, “Look, we’re very good at planning.” He said it today also: “We’re very good at planning.” However, when it comes to all the details such as where these systems will go, where the dollars will come from and how much it will cost, we will just have to wait. After waiting three years for a public transport plan for our suburbs, we get it —

Mr P.B. Watson: It’s Barney world—somewhere out there!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Somewhere out there. After three years it is finally released, and there are no details, no commitments and no funding—nothing. As I said, some of the ideas are great. Building a tunnel under runways is a really good concept and I am sure that it would not cost much at all!

Mr P. Papalia: Sarcasm doesn’t translate into *Hansard*.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sorry; yes. In brackets, of course it will cost a lot. There is a great plan, but no timetable, no detail and no funding. Because this government does not allocate funding when it makes commitments; it allocates funding when the Premier thinks so. For instance, when the government made a decision to build a stadium, it did not fund it.

Mr W.J. Johnston: There is \$750 million for Roe stage 8.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There is Roe stage 8; there are a lot of unfunded commitments. The pre-election financial statement will be very interesting. Does either side of politics have to fund its commitments under this sort of paradigm?

Mr B.S. Wyatt: That is going to make the costings easy.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The costings will be very easy because, if we use the Premier’s methodology, we do not actually fund when we make a commitment; we fund when we think we are about to start construction—that is pretty much it. Therefore, I cannot see either side of politics needing to provide costing documents at the next election, because that is all so far away; it is only if we win and it might be in a few years’ time. If we used the Premier’s methodology, neither side would need to provide costings documents because funding would only

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actually have to earmarked and shown when the earth was about to be dug up. It is absolutely ridiculous, and in any other state or in the federal arena a government would not get away with it. To have a budget that does not contain key projects for which cabinet decisions must have been made is an absolute disgrace.

As I said, Transport 2031 has a transit way for Ellenbrook, which is interesting, and I am looking forward to seeing the details. Earlier this year I asked when the details for the transit way would be delivered, because I thought it would be good. I am waiting for it; I am waiting for the details and the costing. I am waiting for an answer about whether the transit way goes all the way to Bassendean station or just to Reid Highway—I think it is the latter. For the government to not do anything on our rail system in three and a half years, nearly four years, is an absolute joke. Some more buses have been put on. That is what a government should do. It should fund kids going to school, it should fund hospitals and it should put some buses on; that is what it should do. But how about planning for the future and the issue of congestion in the suburbs? In a recent article in *The West Australian* it was very well put how people in Perth used to always say, “I’ll be there in 20 minutes.” I liked that. Wherever someone was going, they would be there in 20 minutes. Now, that possibility has absolutely gone and that has a huge impact on families throughout the suburbs. There is no funding-committed plan to help us solve this problem. I think it is an absolute disgrace. We can talk about buses all we like; we love buses. But the government is barely keeping up with population growth. There are serious changes happening in our suburbs, serious population growth, and we need a serious, committed public transport plan to fix it and that is absolutely not happening. The only extension the government is currently working on is something that pretty much was a no-brainer and was all planned by the former Labor government. It was basically extending a line a few kilometres north—of course that would be done. Again, the people of Ellenbrook are still waiting for the final plan from the government. The government likes to ask the Labor Party what it will do. The government has been in power for three and a half years; it should tell us what it will do. The Liberal–National coalition is in government and has been for three and a half years, it has spent millions on a plan, so why does it not tell us what it will do? We are in opposition; we will tell the government what we will do soon enough, but the government has been in power for three and a half years with the plans, with the dollars—with the public service developing the plans —

Mr P. Papalia: Ya canna hand a man a granda planna!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, you cannot!

It is quite funny, because the Minister for Transport is very proud of his planning. We heard him today; he is very proud of his planning! He is very proud of the planning for Ocean Reef marina, but again, I wonder whether there are any dollars. I mean, we could all do this: we could all go out and say, “Look, isn’t this a good idea?” Maybe we should do it. We should all go out and say, “Isn’t this a good idea? I might plan for it, but, geez, I don’t know when I am going to be able to fund it!”

Mr W.J. Johnston: The Kimberley canal!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes!

Mr A.J. Waddell: A space station!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: A space station with canal elements to it, member for Cannington!

I have a bit of time left. There are other key issues in my electorate; there are numerous other issues I wish I had more time to speak about, but there is the issue about transport infrastructure throughout the area. The Perth–Darwin highway is another interesting one. The state government says that the federal government has to fund it and I asked whether the state government had done the planning for the federal government to fund it. The answer was, “No; not yet, but the federal government said no.” Of course the federal government would say no if the state government had not actually done the planning. In this case, the Minister for Transport has not done the planning.

When I asked for the business case for the project, I was flatly refused: no. Again, it is worrying that members of Parliament are being treated with such contempt by ministers.

There are a number of other road priority projects in my area—the Gnangara Road duplication, the Reid Highway duplication between West Swan Road and Beechboro, and, of course, Henley Brook Avenue. Henley Brook Avenue is a very important road project. The construction of Henley Brook Avenue will alleviate a lot of the traffic pressure on Lord Street and West Swan Road. It will also take some of the residential traffic off those tourism roads. I believe that is a priority, and I want to see that pre-funded and some contribution made from the state government.

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I want to touch on two other issues to do with my electorate. Another absolutely ridiculous process that this government has put in place is the supposed review of the Swan Valley Planning Act. I asked the Minister for Planning whether he was reviewing the Swan Valley Planning Act, and he said no. I asked him again, and he said, “Well, yes, maybe we are”! A review is being undertaken—I think it is currently with the minister, or somewhere—and, again, it is one of those things that as local members of Parliament we have not been involved in or asked about. This is a significant review, and there is a lot of contention about it in the Swan Valley. I would like to be able to contribute to that review. But, as I have said, the Minister for Planning is unsure whether he is undertaking a review. The future of the Swan Valley is at a critical stage, and we will be putting forward some views on that matter over the next 12 months.

Another issue that I want to raise is the chlorine facility at the Mirrabooka waste water treatment plant. That plant is technically in the electorate of my colleague the member for Nollamara. The buffer for this plant extends into Ballajura, and that is impacting on the size of a proposed aged care facility. I used to get some results from the former Minister for Water, because I believe he cares about getting results for the community. However, the current Minister for Water is basically a post box for the department. He never tries to solve a problem for us. All he does is say “The computer says no” or “The department says no”. The only thing that the Water Corporation needs to do is change the types of chemicals that are used in this waste water treatment plant. That will mean that the size of the buffer can be reduced, and that will enable the aged care facility to be built according to the original idea. That can be done at minimal cost, and I think some agreement could be struck between the City of Swan and the state government to share those costs. But, again, we cannot get anywhere with this Minister for Water, because, as I said, he is just a post box for the department. He does not care about solving problems. He just basically goes through the paperwork.

Another key issue relates to a chicken farm located in my electorate.

Mr P. Papalia: Oh! A sleeper issue for 2012!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a significant issue for 2012.

Mr P. Papalia: A sleeper issue.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a sleeper issue. This issue was meant to go before council two weeks ago but has been deferred until next week. The issue will ultimately come to the Western Australian Planning Commission for final decision, because the chicken farm operates under a specific planning bulletin. All I can say is this is a massive issue for the people who live next door to this chicken farm. There are some real concerns about why and how this chicken farm has been able to operate outside of its licence conditions for a number of years, with a significant impact on the lifestyle of the neighbours. I believe the state government should be proactive in its planning and relocate these chicken farms so that they are not near residential areas and areas earmarked for further residential development. This is an issue that many people in our electorates and in the community are facing. Because this is a statewide issue, and in particular an issue that crosses the outer suburbs, the state government needs to be proactive in relocating these chicken farms through assistance and through other measures. This particular chicken farm at 60 Cheltenham Road is a significant issue that will need a lot of work from the WAPC to ensure that it does not remain at this location in the future.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro) [5.30 pm]: I stood in this place on the corresponding day a year ago and made a speech that I suspect is quite similar to the one I am going to make now. Sadly, I am here to report on the government’s activities in my electorate, specifically the Barnett government’s Golden Bay development which was first announced in September 2010 and which, according to the government, would bring an additional 4 500 people into the suburb of Golden Bay to live in some 2 100 separate homes—I suspect that the population will be much higher than that. That development will have a social housing ratio of one in nine, which is completely out of kilter and inconsistent with surrounding suburbs, but which might possibly be accommodated if the government were undertaking to provide appropriate and relevant services to support the new, growing population. Instead, the responsible minister, Minister Buswell, the Minister for Housing, is refusing not only to provide that support or to acknowledge that support is required but also to meet with any of the concerned citizens—the people who live around this suburb and who will be directly impacted by the development, and who, in fact, are already being impacted by the development. The minister is refusing to acknowledge that they have quite legitimate concerns or to give any indication at all whether he has heard their concerns about the necessity for improved services, including a police station.

I listened with great interest to the member for West Swan and her contribution on the Ballajura police station, because I watched with sadness as her experience with this government replicated my own with regard to police stations in the local community. Unlike the member for West Swan, I am not able to say that there was a police station servicing the requirements of my community when I first won office, but I can say that \$10 million had

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been budgeted to build that police station, that land worth \$3 million had been purchased for that police station, and that when Labor lost office in September 2008, three-and-a-half long years ago, the new Minister for Police, the current Minister for Police, made an undertaking, particularly to the people of southern Rockingham, that the new police station at Secret Harbour would go ahead. Following some inquiries, I suggested that perhaps the incoming government would cancel the police station to be built on land that had been purchased by the previous government. The minister scoffed at that and reported in the local media that the opposition was being fanciful and, of course, the commitment to the new police station would stand. Several months later the minister completely backflipped his commitment, and he cancelled the police station; he shifted the funding for the build of the police station to go towards the Premier's electorate to build a police hub in Cottesloe—that hotbed of crime that is the leafy western suburb of Cottesloe. Cottesloe will be supported by a new police hub partially funded by the \$10 million that was allocated to the police station at Secret Harbour; it will be okay.

The police station at Secret Harbour was cancelled, and, to add insult to injury, the land that had been purchased specifically for that police station was sold. The minister will not reveal where the money from that sale has gone. He has not told us how much he got for the sale of that land. I wonder whether he got the amount it was purchased for. That will be an interesting bit of information for the minister to provide. He can tell the people of Secret Harbour and surrounding suburbs—Golden Bay, Singleton, Warnbro, Port Kennedy, even out to Settlers Hill, and Baldivis and Karnet to the east. All those suburbs would have been serviced by a police station somewhere between Rockingham and Mandurah; instead they have none. There is a desert of police support between Rockingham and Mandurah. That has nothing to do with the efforts of the police, who make valiant efforts to provide support. If truth be told—if they were allowed to tell the truth—they would confirm that geographical separation between those two large police hubs means it is not possible to provide the same degree and level of service to suburbs that are located in the middle of that separation as it is to suburbs that are closer to the police hub. It is just commonsense. It is also the experience of the people who live in those suburbs. They constantly tell me that despite significant levels of antisocial behaviour, the challenges of widely reported violent behaviour—as recently as a week or so ago a poor father was assaulted and glassed when he disturbed a burglar in his own home in Warnbro—and the severity of some of the crimes committed in the southern suburbs of Rockingham and, no doubt, the northern suburbs of Mandurah, it is impossible for the police to provide the same level of response and the same assurance of high level of service to those suburbs because of the distances involved.

I know that advocates of police hubs claim that an adequate number of police operate out of that hub; it is okay because people get a better level of service from bigger hubs because greater numbers are located there. They claim that there is a greater capacity and a wider spread of skills so that the police are able to respond in a better and more appropriate fashion to multiple demands. If that were the case, we would have to assume that those hubs are properly resourced. If a damaged child with a significant number of problems goes to a primary school, holds a knife to his or her throat and threatens other students and teachers in the southern suburbs of Rockingham, we would have to assume that if the principal of that school called for police, they would get a pretty quick response. We would not expect them to be told by the police that their three cars are already allocated and, “Sorry, we cannot come right now.” That has occurred. It did not occur recently; it happened last year. I am in no way critical of the police, but it suggests that there might be a flaw in the argument that consolidating resources in these large hubs somehow provides a better policing service.

If I were to speak to anybody in the southern suburbs of Rockingham or in the eastern suburbs at Settlers Hills, Karnup, Baldivis, or in the northern suburbs of Mandurah, they would say they do not believe that hubs work. They would tell us that we should return to community policing. Maybe we do not have a PhD in policing. Maybe those people who are subjected to antisocial behaviour on a regular basis—almost every weekend—in the outer suburbs, which do not have the services of a police hub, and those people who are subjected to violent crimes and do not get the fast response that they would like, do not have the qualifications that would entitle them to have an opinion about policing. Maybe they should not be allowed to pass commentary on the commissioner and police minister's plans for hubs for the City of Perth and how policing is allocated. Maybe they should be asked to keep quiet and not make any comment. Then again, maybe not! Maybe those people should be allowed to come to their local members of Parliament and let their feelings be known. Maybe if there were adequate representation on the other side of the house, we would have an impact on the Minister for Police. He does not listen to us or the tens of thousands of people whom the Labor Party represents. He might listen to the backbenchers on the government side if they had a voice. I am looking over at the backbenchers now as they all assiduously look at their computers and find it impossible to look up because they are so busy doing whatever they are doing. I reckon they would be hearing the same sorts of comments that we hear; that is, hubs do not work and maybe consideration should be given to returning to a more localised and responsive police service and

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to a police service in which the local copper knows the ratbags and knows which ones they have to see when they have a suspicion about who did a crime, rather than having people located a 40-minute drive away.

Mr P.T. Miles: Rubbish!

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member for Wanneroo does not believe me. He does not think that the people in his seat want localised policing. He thinks that hubs are the only way to go. That is fine; that is his opinion. If that is what his constituents are telling him, that is fine; I am glad he is representing their views, but that does not reflect the views of the people in the communities that I represent. It is not just policing in Golden Bay; it is not just that an additional 4 500 people are being crammed into Golden Bay by the Barnett government with very little planning and very little consideration of the services they will require; it is also public transport. I note today that the Minister for Transport bragged that he had bought some buses. I share the member for West Swan's scepticism. I believe that purchasing new buses and replacing old buses is just part of government. That is just normal behaviour, as is extending railway lines throughout the suburbs. In this case, the entire contribution to public transport by the Liberal and National Parties in the past three decades has been an extension of the line to Butler. How long is that track, member for Ocean Reef? How much additional railway line has the Liberal Party laid in three decades?

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Eight kilometres; is that what it was, or am I exaggerating? On the day that the southern railway line to Mandurah opened—the member for South Perth and I were on the train—the metropolitan rail network doubled in length. Did the member for South Perth notice that it was electrified? That was because a Labor government built it. Previous Labor governments electrified the northern line, too. They built the line and then electrified it.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Charlie Court's contribution was to shut the Fremantle line. Labor opened it again. There is no way that anyone in Western Australia is going to be convinced by Hon Troy Buswell that the Liberal and National Parties have anything in the way of a commitment to public transport. I am sorry; they have zero credibility—none at all. It is not going to happen. He can make as many jokes as he wants.

Ms L.L. Baker: He is a joke!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I find the member for Vasse quite humorous. I enjoy the member for Vasse's contributions. I find him much more entertaining than some other ministers, and I enjoy his presence in the chamber. Nevertheless, no matter how many jokes he tells, it will not improve the credibility of members on that side of the house on public transport. The sad fact of the matter is that the government actually has to do things. It has to make a demonstrable change and improvement in its approach to public transport if it ever wants to get any credibility in that field of endeavour. There is none of it in my electorate. I heard about all the things that were going on in the seat of Wanneroo. I heard some of my backbenchers —

Mr M.P. Whitely: Your backbenchers!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I knew the member for Bassendean would say that.

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do beg your pardon. The esteemed member for Bassendean is right.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I retract that statement!

I heard many of my colleagues on this side of the house suggest that the amount of work going into bus services in Wanneroo must indicate some fairly dire polling. It must be an indication of some fairly atrocious polling for the member for Wanneroo!

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Wanneroo is an outer metropolitan growth electorate. The mirror image at the other end of the metropolitan area is my seat. We have similar growth and the same people go there; the people who come for the boom go to the outer metropolitan growth areas such as Wanneroo and the seat of Warnbro. The suburbs of Singleton, Golden Bay, Secret Harbour, Settlers Hills, Baldivis, Karnup, Warnbro and Port Kennedy down in that part of the world have massive growth as a direct result of the boom that does not exist, according to Colin

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Barnett. That is why we are sending out hundreds of letters every month to welcome new electors to the electorate. There is no boom on, so I do not know what it is, but they just keep coming! People are coming into that electorate, but the electorate does not receive the attention to public transport by the Minister for Transport that Wanneroo is receiving. That is what I got from that contribution today. All that gloating about the new services that the member for Wanneroo's electorate had received is in stark contrast with the minister's response to my representations on behalf of the people in the southern suburbs of Rockingham. I can tell members that I have written directly to the minister about the Golden Bay development because he is doing this.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The minister responsible for the Golden Bay development is the Minister for Housing, who just coincidentally happens to be the Minister for Transport, which would be a happy circumstance, a happy coincidence —

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, that is not the word I was searching for; I was grasping for a different word! That aside, it would have been nice if, given his dual role, the Minister for Housing, in cramming 4 500 people into the suburb, had turned to his other role of transport and considered whether those people—one in nine of those households will be in Homeswest public housing—might benefit from improved public transport.

At the moment, Baldvis and the southern suburbs of Rockingham are acknowledged as gaps in the public transport system. The minister acknowledges it, his planning documentation acknowledges it and his department acknowledges it. The minister reluctantly revealed, via an FOI document that the opposition managed to obtain, that his own department had advised him that the next station on the southern suburbs line should be the Karnup station, for which land at Paganoni Road has been allocated. Karnup station would be halfway between the Warnbro and Mandurah stations and would service the northern suburbs of Mandurah and the southern suburbs of Rockingham, including the future Golden Bay development. The minister has refused to make a decision about that. He is advised by his department—not only the housing department, but also the transport department—that the station should be built in advance of any development, including the future Keralup development, whether it comes or not, and, obviously, developments of the scale of Golden Bay. That would promote a transport-oriented development and also provide public transport for the additional people coming into the region. The minister said that he was not going to make a decision about that. Worse than that, when the locals began to get anxious about what this Barnett government was doing in its development at Golden Bay, they had a public meeting and requested the presence of the government, but all they got were the developers who had won the development contract. The developers are just acting on behalf of the government; the developers are not going to make a huge amount of money out of this. They are making enough, obviously, to make it a viable development, but the actual profit from this development is going to the Department of Housing. I know that because the minister has told me. At least \$200 million profit from the development, once it is all sold, will go to the Department of Housing.

Two hundred million! That is after the developers' money. That is more or less around \$25 million, but it is not \$200 million. A significant amount of money will go into the government's coffers. By the sound of it, it is probably going to Wanneroo to pay for extra buses around the "threatened" member for Wanneroo's seat! The polling must be so bad they want to do as much as they can. They have gone into overdrive up there. It is desperate times! Have we preselected an opponent? Have we got someone up there yet? We have not even preselected an opponent and they are in panic mode! I hope it does not go like Bunbury.

Mr D.A. Templeman: My mum is very keen!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I had better return to the subject!

When the locals became concerned about the Golden Bay development, they called a meeting with the government. All they got was the developers. The developers did their best but whenever there was a question about services such as police, public transport, schools and education, there was no answer because the developers are about putting the roads in and landscaping; they have nothing to do with government services. The people who should have been there should have been from the minister's office. I let the minister know about that. I thought it might have been an oversight—he is a busy man; he is flat out. He has lots to do.

Dr A.D. Buti: Riding bikes!

Mr P. PAPALIA: He is picking up portfolios at the rate of one a month! Perhaps it is oversight. I wrote to the Minister for Transport on 29 July last year, a couple of days after the meeting I attended. This public meeting was noteworthy. It was in the middle of winter and it was a horrendous night, pouring with rain, fierce winds, yet

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more than 200 people showed up to express concerns and seek information. I wrote to the minister along the lines that there was a lot of concern, particularly relating to the significant increase in density in the proposed development as a result of the amendment to the City of Rockingham town planning scheme. The high ratio of social housing flagged for the development exceeds that of the surrounding suburbs. Other key criticisms related to the lack of public infrastructure to support the intended increase in population. Notably, the meeting discussed the need for a local police station, a Golden Bay primary school, a train station at Karnup, and enhanced sport and recreational facilities. I wrote to the minister, whom I get on well with and quite like. His chief of staff wrote back confirming my letter had been received and letting me know it was not their problem. That is a precis of the letter. There was no hope. It was suggested that if I wanted any of the \$200 million-plus profit that will come from this development to be allocated to the local area, I had to go through the council and ask for a regional contribution scheme to allocate some of the funds.

Very late in the year—8 December 2011—people were concerned about the minister's response to our first request, and their concerns grew. They forced a special meeting of council. A petition containing 500 signatures forced the City of Rockingham to hold a special meeting to address the issue of the Golden Bay development. I went along to that meeting. They ran out of room in the council offices. They had to shift all the tables to the back of the room to fit people in. Well over 300 people attended that meeting, at which the exact same concerns were expressed. It became very evident that people were getting very frustrated. Council acknowledged the concerns of the community. The council undertook to notify the WA Planning Commission that it will not support the current plan for the Golden Bay development. It will be interesting to see what the Planning Commission does and, subsequently, what the minister does. The community has effectively said the way this development is planned now is not appropriate. I share the community's concerns about the clustering. The proposal is for a higher density in the middle of the development, going out to a lower density as it approaches the surrounding suburbs. I suspect because of that higher density there will be a clustering of social housing in the centre. It starts to raise concerns as to the suitability of that location and the design of that public development if there are no such things as additional recreational facilities.

It is going to be high density; there is going to be very little backyard for kids to play in. Currently, no money has been allocated for additional recreational facilities in this area. Just up the road there is a regional sporting facility where they could pay for a couple of Aussie rules grounds from the \$200 million profit, but the minister refuses to make that contribution.

Mr J.E. McGrath: I thought the developers were required to put in some open space.

Mr P. PAPALIA: They are; the developers are incorporating the 10 per cent public open space requirement. There is already a small Australian football/cricket ground in the development, and that is part of the 10 per cent public open space allocation so they are not going to take that away, but that is inadequate.

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The club that uses it, which the member for Murray–Wellington would be very familiar with, is the Secret Harbour Dockers, which is growing rapidly. It had 500 members the last time I checked, and it now has an adult team—it started off with just children. The ground that club uses is inappropriate; it is not big enough, for starters. The club is already split between two grounds—the Secret Harbour Primary School and that ground, which shifts and is dangerous and people have been injured on it. Land has been allocated in the Lark Hill sporting complex for two full-size Australian football grounds and clubrooms, and that is what I want. If they are going to cram 4 500 people into Golden Bay, I would like a family friendly clubroom facility to be provided in Lark Hill for the prime sporting club in the area so that as the children get older, they will stay in that club and be mentored and supported by responsible adults, which this club does very well, in an appropriate facility. They cannot do it where they are; no matter what the council tries to do, it is not appropriate. That covers the sporting and recreation facilities.

Also, public transport is totally inadequate; it does not meet the requirements of the current population, let alone another 4 500 people. As I have outlined, there is no police station. Land is available for a Golden Bay primary school, and I hope that the Minister for Education will announce the building of a Golden Bay primary school in this budget, because if she does not, it will condemn the population of the southern suburbs of Rockingham to even more overcrowding in primary schools for the next three years. If she does not allocate it in this budget, it will not be built the following year, and then it will not open the year after that. It is essential that a Golden Bay primary school be built. Comet Bay Primary School, which is adjacent to this development, opened this year with 1 040 children on two campuses. Secret Harbour Primary School, which is within almost a stone's throw—within a kilometre—of Comet Bay school has well in excess of 600 pupils, and Singleton Primary School, as far as I know, has in the high 700s. All of those schools are in excess of their capacity by an enormous number.

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Right in the middle of them is Comet Bay College, which is the only high school and which is going to have year 7s in the not-too-distant future; it is already nearing student capacity. There is a lot of concern about putting another 4 500 people in this area, and the community does not have any sense of concern from the minister and the government.

Mr P.T. Miles: How many buildings is that, do you know?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is 2 100 households. Stage 1 is going ahead already—that is 150—and then the rest. But the issue is that this is not an accidental development; it did not just fall off the back of a truck. The government did not take this on from a previous government; it has undertaken it itself, in the full knowledge that it is going to put that many people into such a confined space in the near future. The housing minister who is involved in it is also the transport minister, and he could talk to the police minister, who is not far away. Education and other associated services for a large increase in social housing and the general population in the southern suburbs should be talked about. We are an outer metropolitan area, and, like Wanneroo, we need the services. I am concerned that it sounds like it is a bit targeted; I look forward to hearing what the Minister for Transport promises the seat of Warnbro in the near future, particularly those suburbs around the Golden Bay development. I look forward to him standing and bragging—boasting—to the house about how many more buses they will be getting, how many more trains will be on the southern line, and how he is going to contribute to the new station, because the reality is that there is nothing between Mandurah and Warnbro.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [6.00 pm]: I have a lot of time, I gather! It is great to have the opportunity to respond to the Premier's Statement. I am the member for Armadale, and the majority of my speech, if not all, will be devoted to addressing the needs of Armadale.

In my maiden speech in October 2010, I mentioned what the Attorney General referred to as the imaginary Mason–Dixon line over the Narrows Bridge; as I said, I do not think it is imaginary, especially if we look at the south east metropolitan corridor.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is such a privilege to have you in the chair, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson). I am glad you are here to listen to my response to the Premier's Statement.

I mentioned before the break that the imaginary Mason–Dixon line that bisects the Narrows Bridge is more than imaginary in Armadale because we do not seem to have the same level of care or services that other electorates get under this government. Armadale is a regional city. It is the gateway to the south west and the entrance to the metropolitan region from the south west. If it is to be a major regional centre, it needs to be afforded the services that a regional centre in the metropolitan area requires. To be a significant and major regional metropolitan centre, the area needs significant financial, commercial, infrastructure and human investment. Unfortunately, nothing in today's Premier's Statement gives me any confidence that the government's treatment of the Armadale electorate for the past three years will change in its final year in office before it is hopefully defeated at the polls in the second week of March next year. There is nothing in the Premier's Statement for health or transport. I will talk about transport shortly. The "Public Transport Plan for Perth 2031" blueprint that the Minister for Transport very proudly espouses as being a great strategy for the future development of transport in the metropolitan area has zilch in it for the south east metropolitan area. That is alarming when we look at the growth of Armadale and the surrounding regions.

A number of speakers before me today and tonight have talked about police stations. I will not break that cycle; I will also talk about police stations. As I said, Armadale is a major centre. It is the last city in the metropolitan area before people head to the rural regions of the south west. Therefore, we would expect there to be a police station that has public access 24/7. I am not denying that the police station is operational 24/7. I wrote to the Minister for Police on 5 January 2012 and he kindly responded in a prompt manner. I congratulate him for responding to me by letter on 23 January. Unfortunately, I was not happy with the minister's response. The minister's philosophical argument is that public access to a police station is not needed 24/7 because that will tie up police in the police station rather than those police being on the beat. Of course, that argument can be made. Unfortunately, from my experience, the people who come through my door in my electorate office in Armadale tell me that there are not enough police. Even if we grant the government's wish to not have a 24/7 public access police station, the fact is that there are not enough police on the road.

I take a case in point: during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, we had many extra police to protect the dignitaries from various commonwealth countries. Of course that had to happen, but the government's main responsibility is to the citizens of Western Australia. Where are those police today? It is quite good that you are in the chair, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson), as a former champion runner; as you

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know, I like to run—never at the speeds you used to run, but maybe I run longer distances than you do! I regularly run very early in the morning, when it is still dark, and on my run along Albany Highway on a weekend, I would be lucky to see one police van between Kelmscott and Gosnells; maybe just one. But on the last day of CHOGM, I saw four police vans driving towards Armadale. I am not sure whether any dignitaries came out to Armadale from CHOGM that day; I do not think so. It just shows that there is capacity for the state government to provide a larger number of police. I would like to know what happened to the extra police who were engaged for the three-day CHOGM event. I actually do not accept the philosophy that we do not need a 24/7 police station, and neither do my electors. There is bipartisan support on this issue; the member for Darling Range and the federal member for Canning both support a 24/7 public access police station.

I have a petition that is being circulated in the Armadale electorate; it has been in circulation for only about three weeks, and I have more than 1 000 signatures. There is also another petition that has been in circulation for about four or five months and it was instigated by a local resident who had been assaulted. He went to see Don Randall and Don Randall assisted in the drawing up of the petition. I am led to believe—although I have not confirmed this directly—that the member for Darling Range will be submitting that petition in this place. That does not necessarily mean that the member for Darling Range agrees with the petition; he will, of course, have to follow the duty we have as parliamentarians to submit petitions. However, going by the local media, it would seem that there is bipartisan support for this. I refer to an article in *Comment News* of Tuesday, 31 January 2012. There is a photograph of the member for Darling Range, the federal member for Canning, and Mr Ian Officer, who was the instigator of that petition. According to the article, the petition has more than 5 000 signatures. The article also talks about the member for Armadale being supportive of a 24/7 police station. I refer also to an article in another local newspaper, the *Examiner*, of 26 January 2012, headlined “Bipartisan support for 24-hr police station in Armadale”. The fact remains that the local residents of Armadale want a 24/7 police station. When I say “24/7”, I do not want to mislead the house; I mean a 24/7 public access police station, because there is already a 24/7 operational police station. The member for Darling Range wants that, as does the federal member for Canning. Of course we all want that; the local politicians in our area want it, because we have people coming through their front door demanding it.

Not long after I became a member of this house, I brought a grievance to the Minister for Police, who listened very intently and promised action on the matter. It related to the burglary of a house inhabited by an intellectually disabled young adult male. He reported the burglary, but the police did not come around. He rang the after-hours number; he was not even redirected to Cannington Police Station, he was redirected to Mirrabooka! Mirrabooka is not very close to Armadale; Cannington is not very close to Armadale! The only 24/7 public access police station in the south eastern corridor is Cannington Police Station. That is a real problem for Armadale, but it is also a problem for the member for Darling Range; Byford is growing exponentially. I am not sure where the nearest 24/7 police station is for Byford.

Mr A.J. Simpson interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mandurah?

In the south eastern corridor, we have Cannington and then we have Mandurah. Then there is Fremantle and I think there is going to be a 24/7 station in Cockburn. We need a police station that can be accessed by the public 24/7.

Someone contacted my office to say that they had had a car accident. It was not a severe car accident. The individual did have some injuries but not to the extent that an ambulance was required. They were very shaken. They had to report that accident to Cannington Police Station. It happened in Armadale. The husband had the accident. His wife’s car was at home. His wife was not home. He had to get into the other car and drive to Cannington after the accident. There are times when people need to visit —

Mr R.F. Johnson: Was somebody injured in that accident?

Dr A.D. BUTI: He was injured but they were very minor injuries.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Did he go to hospital?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, he did not go to hospital. It was not a major accident, but he was shaken.

Mr R.F. Johnson: He could have done it online.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is the point. Not everyone has access to computers. He did not have a computer at home. It is not always possible to go online. Granted, most people can go online.

Mr P. Abetz: He could have done it the next day.

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Dr A.D. BUTI: He did not want to wait until the next day. He had an accident and he wanted to report it. Why should he have to wait until the next day? He should have been able to report it then. I had an accident in Kelmscott 20-odd years ago and I just went to Armadale Police Station. It took two minutes to drive there. It took this man about 20 minutes to drive to Cannington. That is not a step forward in this day and age. He should be able to go to the local police station. We are a major regional centre and we do not have a 24/7 police station.

The local residents also say that they feel safer—of course, it is only a perception—if they can go to a police station at any time of the day or night. I would argue that if a police station is not open to the public 24/7, there is no chance that the public will be more closely connected to the police community. I would also argue that the closer the connection is between the public and the police, the greater the chance that we can prevent crime. The police do rely on intelligence from the public. The people in Armadale have no connection to Cannington Police Station; it could be in Timbuktu or Mirrabooka. The fact is that we need to have police stations in close proximity. We can argue that we do not want to hold up police officers in police stations; we want them to be on the road. The fact is that if we do have a 24/7 police station, we would not require that many police there—maybe two or three. Even people who are not police officers—they could be clerical staff—can do some of the work. It will not hold up the police. The police can still be on the road. Two petitions will be presented to this house. There will be one from me and I think one will be submitted by the member for Darling Range in due course.

Another thing that is related to police stations that we need out in Armadale is a new courthouse. Simply put, our courthouse is out of date; in fact, it is atrocious. I visited it last year with one of the local journalists, someone from the justice department and the clerk of courts in Armadale. What did I see? I saw a courthouse in which solicitors were advising and interacting with clients in the corridor. So much for client–solicitor confidentiality! There was none. There was nowhere else for them to go; they had to stand in the corridor and receive instructions. I was also told during that tour that a recent trial held in Armadale Courthouse involved the transportation of 17 prisoners from Hakea Prison to the courthouse for the trial but there are only three holding cells in Armadale. That was great for security! Three holding cells held 17 prisoners.

Armadale Courthouse has been there for I do not know how long—numerous years—and the population of Armadale has grown exponentially. But, of course, Armadale Courthouse services not only the people of Armadale, but also the whole south east metropolitan corridor. As far as I am aware, the nearest courthouse is Perth. There are courthouses in Perth, Midland, Armadale, Joondalup and Fremantle, as far as I am aware.

A government member: And Rockingham!

Dr A.D. BUTI: And Rockingham and Mandurah, but I am talking about the metropolitan region. There is therefore the need for a new courthouse.

The Attorney General is fully aware of the need for a courthouse. He actually paid a visit back in 2009 with the federal member for Canning, Don Randall; the Mayor of Armadale at the time, Linton Reynolds; and the CEO of the city, Ray Tame. A report in *Comment News* on Tuesday, 14 July 2009, states —

A NEW Armadale courthouse and police complex is the top priority construction project in the justice portfolio for the metropolitan area, Attorney-General Christian Porter said last week.

The announcement follows a meeting between Mr Porter ... Don Randall ...

And so on. The report continues —

A statement from Mr Porter said he would work towards its future inclusion in “a State Budget”.

...

Mr Randall said he was pleased with the outcomes of the meeting and welcomed Mr Porter’s commitment to finding a long-term solution.

Another report of 24 May 2011, with the headline “We were robbed: City”, states —

The State Budget failed to provide money for a much-needed new courthouse in Armadale, despite being labelled a high priority by Attorney General and Treasurer Christian Porter back in 2009.

Of course, back in 2009 the Attorney General was not the Treasurer, but he was certainly the Treasurer when the budget came down last year. Therefore, even though Mr Porter happens to be the Treasurer—and therefore has control of the purse strings—and the Attorney General, and in his role as Attorney General has said that a new Armadale courthouse remained the highest priority for a metropolitan courthouse, we have seen no movement and nothing in any budget.

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[Member's time extended.]

Dr A.D. BUTI: We therefore await this year's budget. I am hopeful that the Attorney General will find the necessary commitment for a new courthouse at Armadale. All members need do is visit that courthouse and I would dare any one of them on the other side of the house to argue that it should not be the highest priority. The Attorney General has stated that it is the highest priority. It was stated in my tour with the justice official and the clerk of courts that it is the highest priority. It would therefore be very surprising if this year's budget does not provide the necessary funding for the courthouse. There is insufficient security; there is insufficient space for clients and solicitors to meet; the parking situation is atrocious; and the extension at the front of the courthouse for domestic violence and restraining order proceedings is an absolute disgrace. It is appalling that a female who has been subjected to domestic violence and who has to get a restraining order has to endure that environment.

I will move on to the development at Champion Lakes, of which the people of Armadale are very proud. We hope that it will be an iconic feature of our region and of the surrounding regions. Even the electorate of the member for Southern River backs onto Champion Lakes.

Mr P. Abetz: Yes, across the road.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The development at Champion Lakes basically came about due to the advocacy and ministerial responsibilities of the former member for Armadale, Hon Alannah MacTiernan. In 2002, it came under the responsibility of the Armadale Redevelopment Authority. The rowing facility, which can be used also for canoeing and dragon boat racing, is of international standard. It is a 55 hectare watercourse, purpose-built for rowing that can, as I have said, be used for these other sports. It is only the second facility in Australia capable of staging national and international rowing events. A couple of years ago when representatives of the international rowing federation viewed Champion Lakes, they said that it had the potential to be one of the greatest courses in the world. The people of Armadale should be very proud of the facility. We just love it when the people of the western suburbs have to head out to Armadale and Champion Lakes to view the rowing and the head of the river because they are then able to take in other areas of Armadale and their view of the region may change. Unfortunately, there are problems. We have a water sports course, a weather station has been installed at the Champion Lakes establishment and an Aboriginal interpretive centre was opened by the Minister for Planning in 2010. A residential area under the jurisdiction of LandCorp, was billed as "exclusive living by the lake". Unfortunately, the people who have bought land and built their homes at Champion Lakes are not very happy at all. Last year, I received correspondence from a resident of Champion Lakes complaining about vandalism. The letter informed me that the resident had written to LandCorp, the City of Armadale and the Armadale Redevelopment Authority, and that no-one was prepared to take responsibility for the problem. I then wrote to LandCorp and I must say that the response I received was not overly positive. After that, I sent out a survey to the residents of Champion Lakes estate. I sent out 50 surveys and received 24 back—basically, nearly 50 per cent. I must say that the responses were alarming. I then wrote a letter to Mr Monty House, the chair of LandCorp. I cc-ed that letter to the Minister for Lands, Hon Brendon Grylls, who has responsibility for LandCorp, and to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Minister for Planning, as well as to the City of Armadale, LandCorp and the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority. In that letter, I summarised some of the responses received from and comments made by local residents. I will quote from that letter, which is dated 15 February 2012 —

The feedback I received from residents is nothing short of alarming. A sample of the feedback and comments include:

- (1) Feel deserted by Landcorp and the Armadale Redevelopment Authority.
- (2) Having second thoughts about being at the estate long-term;
- (3) Feel betrayed by the lack of security and lack of development in the commercial area (white water Park, business centre, restaurants).
- (4) Whole area is poorly maintained, weeds, dirty barbeques, lights not working;
- (5) The crime and poor condition of the estate has resulted in a huge disappointment.
- (6) Strong discontent that promised development, ongoing security and maintenance has not been provided;
- (7) Motorbikes and scooters using the sites as a bike track;
- (8) Insufficient landscaping and bins through the residential areas and around the lake.

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(9) Tardy response to promised landscaping on new buildings.

In my last paragraph, I wrote—

I urge you to treat the matter of security and future development of the Champion Lakes estate with utmost urgency and priority. I suggest a meeting at Champion Lakes between relevant stakeholders, including residents, the Lancorp Board and officers, Ministers or their representatives, and councillors and officers from the City of Armadale. I am keen to be involved in such a meeting.

I am led to believe that late this afternoon Mr House contacted my office to say that he had drafted a letter and that I should receive it shortly. One of the responsible ministers—the Minister for Sport and Recreation—is present in the chamber. I know that he has been to Champion Lakes a number of times and he is always very keen to ensure that we have high-class sporting facilities. I urge the Minister for Sport and Recreation to correspond with the other ministers responsible for the area to consider the future development of the area. Unfortunately, it is an iconic recreational area that is not being properly kept.

Mr T.K. Waldron: Member, just be aware that the money that we have spent on the upgrades to support the new buildings at Champion Lakes are on course.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for Kingsley represented the minister at the opening of the new boatshed on a very hot Australia Day.

That is fine; the buildings there are fantastic, but it is just the general upkeep. There is a security issue in the residential area, and there are other issues. It is a matter that needs to be addressed very quickly. As one local developer told me, “If we get Champion Lakes wrong, it’s going to put Armadale and the Armadale region back many, many years, so we have to get it right.”

I have very little time left, but I would like to now move on to the issue of the closure of the Bickley ward at the Armadale–Kelmscott Memorial Hospital in October last year. This was raised as a matter of public importance last year. The situation is that the Bickley ward, which is the private ward at Armadale–Kelmscott Memorial Hospital, was closed down last October. People had only two weeks’ notice. It was like groundhog day, because the government sought to close down the Bickley ward in 2009, but the Premier reversed that position and the ward was kept open, but unfortunately last year it was closed.

We were able to organise a petition. In just over a week 850 signatures were collected, and that was brought before this house. On 19 October last year we raised it as a matter of public interest in this chamber. We asked that the Minister for Health and the Premier reverse that retrograde step. In the minister’s response to that MPI he basically stated that he thought it was not good enough that in the whole south east metropolitan area not only do we have just one 24/7 public access police station but there is not the ability for any mother who has private health insurance to have a baby in a private facility. It is an absolute disgrace for a government that is a champion of private enterprise to close down the private ward in the Armadale region. Does it think that the people in Armadale may not want private health insurance or that they are not good enough? Maybe the economic situation in Armadale does not allow some people to have private health insurance. It is an absolute disgrace that expecting mothers in Armadale have no facility to enjoy the benefits of a private birthing centre. The minister said he would be doing his best to ensure that the staff were employed so that that ward could be reopened. I challenge the minister to come before this house to tell us what he is doing to ensure that the birthing centre will be reopened sooner rather than later.

What is also a disgrace is what the Minister for Mental Health did. She wrote to the 850 people who signed the petition. What did she write to them about? She did not advocate for the reversal of the decision or for the re-establishment of the private ward. She wrote to them and gave them a potted history—may I say, a very edited history—of why the ward was closed. She blamed the Labor Party, she blamed Jim McGinty and she blamed Alannah MacTiernan. Rather than work towards the reopening of the ward, all she could do was look backwards and provide a selected history. These 850 petitioners signed the petition in good faith, hoping to have the Bickley ward decision reversed, and all they received from the Minister for Mental Health was a letter. It did not say that the decision was bad—remember that the minister has responsibility in the upper house for that area. All she could do was recall the history of the closure, and may I say she would have failed the history lesson of that sad saga. That is all she did. She did not advocate; she did not promise that she would work with the Minister for Health. At least the Minister for Health said he would work towards getting the Bickley ward reopened, but, no, not the Minister for Mental Health, who has geographical jurisdiction over that area. All she could do was talk about its history. As I said, the history was very clouded and very edited.

Unfortunately, there are other issues that I want to raise. One very important issue I want to mention in the last minute I have is the time taken for children to be assessed for disability in the Armadale region public health

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service. A child must be assessed as disabled to receive additional resources from the Department of Education. People have been waiting for more than two years—more than two years—for their children to be assessed. During that period they cannot draw on the expertise and assistance that the education department can provide. That has to change. Much greater resources —

Mr P. Abetz: It has changed.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for Southern River may say it has changed but it has not changed in Armadale. People have come into my office who have been waiting for more than two years.

MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee) [7.30 pm]: Thank you for the opportunity to present to the house my reply to the Premier's Statement. Typically, I would focus on portfolio responsibilities that have been expanded to include planning and, probably more formally, housing, which has been an issue of mine, given more than 33 per cent of the population in my electorate are in public housing. I have been acutely aware of all the issues that relate to housing, so it is a happy opportunity to look at it in a wider Western Australian and deeper policy context than just the wanton waste due to privatisation of the maintenance, the waste of empty houses or the dysfunction of the department under the leadership of this minister and the previous minister.

Before I go into portfolio areas, I have been caught out before with timing and been unable to address some of the issues I think are worthwhile bringing to the chamber in relation to particular interests in the seat of Willagee. For the benefit of members who probably do not find themselves in the seat of Willagee, as I said in my inaugural speech, it is a typical suburban patch. I think it is worthy of talking about some of the things that happen inside these suburbs because they are educational, particularly, more often than not, for members on the other side of the chamber who do not necessarily get exposed to the challenges that beset a seat such as mine, which has great opportunity as well as great disadvantage in patches.

The principal area of interest in this seat for me is the schooling system. I firmly believe that the opportunities to influence social policy and social or human services delivery come through the primary school system. I have often been on my feet advocating that. There is a primary school in virtually every suburb. When we couple that with a zero to eight policy framework—I pick up the member for Armadale's point about speech pathology and other matters—we really do see a great missed opportunity. A couple of schools of particular interest in my seat are great success stories. One of them is Caralee Community School. It is a great success story because the former member for Willagee and former Premier Alan Carpenter was a great champion of the amalgamation of two old, tired and rundown schools, within which there was a great deal of dysfunction, to make sure that the built form matched the aspiration of the quality of education delivered through that school. That is clearly the case today. One of the good examples is the amalgamation of Carawatha and Willagee Primary Schools. Before the amalgamation they suffered an inordinate amount of vandalism and graffiti damage. Interestingly, moving to an amalgamated school in a central location that would better service the demographic, we found that in what must be nearly six years since that school has been open there has not been one incident of graffiti or vandalism. The nature of the school, which has fencing only around the administration area for security, is to engage with and incorporate itself into the community as opposed to being an isolated island within the community.

The older schools, though, are particularly interesting and Hilton Primary School is one example. It was on a downward slide. There were fewer than 200 kids, but I am told it was actually built for nearly 900 kids. Along came the new principal in the form of Aaron Thomas. Aaron was a breath of fresh air and a complete dynamo in the school. I want to pay particular regard to him. He was only the acting principal. He came from Secret Harbour, so he was particularly keen to get back to his district or his locale and he applied for a position. Such is the system of the recruitment of principals within the Department of Education that he did not find out until a week after he went on holidays that he had actually picked up a school in the member for Warnbro's patch—which I cannot recall—but the member for Warnbro has picked up a real winner there.

A member interjected.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: Aaron Thomas.

Similarly, this highlighted a problem that I did not previously know about that other members may well have experienced—that is, the effect of the principal management system within our schools by which everyone is acting with a permanent position somewhere else, sometimes way across the city or across the state. A level 4 principal needs to apply for another level 4 or level 5 job if they are looking for a promotion, but can only ever be acting in that position, therefore there is a daisy chain of temporary positions about which people do not know and about which they cannot get any certainty. If someone who has a particular energy or drive to deliver change in a school has no certainty, the teaching staff have no certainty. That is something I have been alerted to. In the case of Hilton Primary School we have been particularly lucky to receive at short notice Mrs Julie Loader, who

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came from Queens Park. She is a local resident and it is always good to have someone local working at these schools. Aaron Thomas's achievements can easily be listed, not least of which is a series of scholarships won through the WA Education Awards. Indeed, Hilton Primary School went from being a really tough school on the brink of closure, or certainly some special attention within the Department of Education's particular categories—an at-risk school—to coming fourth in the education awards in one year. That is a remarkable turnaround. Of course he did not do it alone; the staff are very committed. The school has one of the lowest levels of turnover of staff in the school education system because they are committed local residents working in their profession, in their school and in their local community. To achieve that result is just a great testimony to Aaron Thomas and the staff, and the P&C association, which it was one of his initiatives to restart. A P&C association that is effective and dynamic is an essential component of any school community. But they have challenges. The school is older. They integrate a community group such as the Hilton Harvest group, which runs a local community garden that uses parts of the school grounds. It has established a great little facility there. Again, it is an open school; there is no fence. This is a good example of engaging the community in a school-based project. There are 50 to 60 square metres of vegetable crops and other things with lots of equipment and stuff in there and not one thing is touched; there has not been one incident of vandalism or theft. I think a few of the passionfruit go wandering from time to time, but they are sought after.

The other issue with Hilton Primary School—I focus on it because it is emblematic of the primary schools in my electorate, where they do struggle—is that it has to compete with other private schools and independent public schools to attract kids there. I think one of the great opportunities that Hilton has over any other school though is that 47 per cent of the kids who go to Hilton Primary School are Aboriginal kids. That is a large proportion of the school and this provides unique opportunities to engage those kids.

East Hamilton Hill Primary School, which is in the next suburb along, under the guidance and leadership of Geoff Miller, has done an outstanding job in improving the quality of teaching using the limited and meagre resources it has. Again, an active P&C association has allowed it to pick up corporate sponsorship, which is a great innovation on behalf of Geoff, and it gets sponsorship for a range of projects such as art and science that it would not otherwise ordinarily have; therefore the school is going great. These two schools are adjacent to each other, effectively. They are one suburb apart, in what are very small suburbs. Hilton backs onto a precinct that provides a really good example of how we can integrate the built form environment with the community. On the western boundary of Hilton Primary School is Fremantle PCYC. That is my PCYC. I went there and did basketball and boxing and all the things that PCYCs offered traditionally. In fact, it was from there that I was ushered and guided into the Army by the sergeant who ran the PCYC, on the basis that the road I was going down was a road more well-travelled by my peers. In fact, that was my saving grace, and it is a really good example of community policing.

Hilton has lost its police station, and the residents of Hilton are rightly aggrieved by that. Many members have stood up in this place and said that they are particularly concerned about the centralisation of police services under the banner of efficiency. I am not so sure about effectiveness. The jury is out on that. I have lived in corporate organisations such as the Army that go through habitual cycles of invention and reinvention, centralisation and decentralisation and amalgamation, and on it goes, all in the name of efficiency. But effectiveness seems to be the casualty of those sorts of things.

The Hilton PCYC as I know it is a shining light, really, of what can be done. The PCYC attracted over \$3 million worth of federal Labor money, and it is a fantastic facility. The doubling of the physical size of the facility has enabled it to increase its programming fourfold. Gymnastics now has its own space, there are air rifle competitions, there is an arts space, and there are tennis courts. It is a fantastic use of public moneys. But it, too, is under threat. It is under threat under the idea of efficiency. For some reason, we think that we need to pull out the uniformed sworn officers, who have long held the role of running and being present and being the contiguous link between the administration, the volunteers, the committee and the kids—because it is all about the kids. Senior Constable Ian Abercrombie, and Ian Hill—the two Ians—have been there for a while, and they are absolutely fit for purpose. There is not a kid who walks down Paget Street, Hilton whom they do not know the name of. When I went there and said to Ian that we wanted to promote a particular Indigenous basketball event that we were doing, and was there any chance that he could round up any Aboriginal kids, he said, “Yes; give me 30 minutes”, and he went along the street and came back with 20—that was over a weekend, too, so it was not as though he went to the school and got them.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You can't beat that.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: No, you cannot, and I will be a full-throated, four-square advocate for ensuring that the Hilton PCYC and others like it are well supported by those authority figures in our community whom our kids

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look up to. But we need to break down the barriers. Sometimes the only time these kids see a copper is when the lights are on and the cop car is screaming past them or is coming for them. That is not a good environment. We need to expose kids to the human side of policing. The coppers have fantastic skills in doing that; not all of them are suited for it, but the vast majority, I would suggest, are suited for it. We could have a centralised arrangement between Fremantle and Cockburn, and if we cannot get enough full-time sworn officers, we could see whether we can get sworn officers who have exited and been separated from the force for all good, normal reasons, who live in Hilton, Melville, Willagee and Hamilton Hill, and who are prepared to give up some time—obviously paid time—in a reserve capacity to come back in, put on the uniform and assist in community policing.

Mr M.J. Cowper: You will be pleased to know that that has actually happened today in my electorate at PCYC Camp Mornington, where a group of former police officers, who are actually on the board of the PCYC, met, and they are looking at rotating those people to other PCYCs.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: That is good. I know this is a random thought, because I have not had the time to look at the costing of that, and no doubt all these things have a budgetary implication, but if we want to get the best of both worlds and have a community policing approach with the integration of uniformed officers within the community—certainly our kids are the ones they can influence—what about giving the thousands and thousands of police officers who have gone through that academy and given good and honest service to this state the opportunity to put the uniform back on? Obviously there need to be checks and balances and all those sorts of issues in there. However, the Army Reserve forces have worked very well in the federal sphere as a very strong component of the full force structure of the Defence Force, and they are actually deployed to all sorts of places: Timor, the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, and Iraq when it was going. I am not suggesting a cut-and-paste model. I am suggesting that we have a great resource out there of former police officers who are ready, willing and able to make a great contribution.

Also, if they are police officers who might be on long-term rehabilitation that would otherwise see them separated from the force, I wonder if there is not a medical grade that would accommodate their continued employment in policing inside the community policing environment. This side of the house is not just about negativity; we are clearly about promoting ideas that we think are worthwhile, and I promote that idea to the government when considering its attitude to police and citizens youth centres. One of the things that we do know about the PCYC, apart from the salary cost of the police officers, which is not insignificant when we multiply it out at two police officers per site, is that it does not receive any state funding. The PCYC is a great tradition and it has not grown; it needs to grow. If members talk to the PCYC's Freddie Tan and his committee, they will tell them that the PCYC has a business plan for which a modest investment of around \$3 million a year will grow the PCYC over time. I would have thought that for that outcome, \$3 million is certainly modest. I urge the responsible minister to take it up as a potential legacy of his service to this state. I am sure that amongst the minister's other many achievements, he would like to list establishing certainty for the PCYC recurrent funding to allow them to grow and not just survive, which is where the PCYC is at the moment.

The other area that is of interest to me personally that I would like to raise—I am glad that the Premier is in this place to hear this from me—is this state's great and growing problem in the mental health area. The particular mental health area I am talking about is veterans. The Returned and Services League has finally agreed to the Special Air Service being incorporated in the State War Memorial Cenotaph in this state, which I personally think is fitting and appropriate, although I know there was some controversy around this. Those veterans will be a growing group over the next 10 to 20-year time horizon. The SAS has carried out the majority of operational service in Afghanistan and Iraq.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.C. TINLEY: We have guys down there, Western Australians, who have seen six and seven tours of Afghanistan. For the benefit of members, a tour in Afghanistan these days—not when I went; we were in the first push through when it was just cold and unpleasant—means a lot of hard work and risk. They are in a fight virtually every day that they go out into the field. The implications of that sustained and prolonged exposure to risk is that a man's bottle fills up. It is as simple as that: your bottle fills. We have found through the studies of Vietnam veterans who have separated that those men will have prolonged duress stress disorder and post-service issues—emotional and other things that come out—that are aligned with physical disabilities they sometimes inherit, which do not present until the 10 or 20-year mark. We will have some man in his late fifties or early sixties who works a five-acre block down at Margaret River, York or somewhere who is enjoying himself and who all of a sudden will have a massive breakdown, an issue with alcohol, violence or temper and that ugly Hydra of mental illness which presents in so many different ways. One of the things we might say is, "That's a federal matter; a Department of Veterans' Affairs issue", and it is. But when these guys separate and they do not present with these issues until much later in life, they present first to the state mental health architecture. The

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state mental health area is the one that, at least initially, collects them. A lot of work could be done to tie up the Department of Veterans' Affairs service delivery in mental health areas, and state mental health. I believe that state mental health, although it needs a lot of work, can and does deliver a better service than is delivered federally. The standard sort of cookie-cutter approach of the Department of Veterans' Affairs is that people do an 18-week course and if someone does not fit in that course, they do not get looked after.

I ask the Premier to consider the establishment of a veteran's advisory committee or group of some description—I think he has already seen some application for it—to provide people with a direct linkage to the veterans' community, which is a growing group of constituents. I might stand corrected, but I believe this would be the last state to not have a state-based veterans' advisory committee. With the commitment that is made through the defence presence at the naval base at Garden Island and, of course, Swanbourne, I would have thought it would be a very good opportunity for this state to make a statement, modest as it is, that we support our defence community here; we want more of it, not less of it, and we want to support those men and women who do what they do in the service of this country. I would be negligent, I suppose, with my background to not be at least an advocate for their needs. I will be an ongoing advocate. A veterans' advisory group would not just talk about what sort of discounts we can give veterans on public transport and on the onerous costs of living in Western Australia. It would also be a very real opportunity for some qualified input into things such as mental health, which will be a significant issue. I believe that we will end up with issues in the thousands over a forward time frame of about 10 to 20 years. I urge the government to look at not only mental health generally, but also how we can best look after Western Australian veterans, because there will be more to come.

I have gone once around the electorate, and in my remaining 10 minutes I would like to say a few more things to again champion the little causes that we look after. The FIFO phenomenon, as we like to term it, is resident in most electorates. Some people have it more than others. We have a large number of people who do fly in, fly out work, so much so that it is now part of pollsters' research. Pollsters look at that demographic grouping and ask whether someone is a FIFO worker. I am sure it is something quite unique to Western Australia. They do their research and they find those clusters, which is particularly interesting. One of the things that resonated with me is that with FIFO families there is a separation in the normal swings of the four and one roster, or whatever someone is doing; predominantly the male partner goes away for four weeks and comes back. The family disruption that is caused by the departure and return of that person is not insignificant, not to mention the isolation of the family left in the suburbs of Western Australia toiling away on the job. There is a great initiative by Nicole Ashby, a young mum in Hilton who lives this lifestyle as a partner to someone in the resources sector. She did not just sit by and look at the problems and keep bemoaning them; she started her own group, which is called FIFO Families. They have now got three or four different sites and about 700 members. They have an activist approach in supporting FIFO families. Parallels resonated with me, of course, because members of the Defence Force go away for extended times and a lot of emotional, practical and logistical adjustments need to be made. For the benefit of any member of this chamber, I urge them to google "FIFO Families". Nicole will be more than happy to talk to members about what she knows about FIFO Families in their patches and what can be done from members' offices to support FIFO workers and show at least moral support, if not actual support. The group is not asking for money. It gets its money from corporate sources. It is just asking for awareness and support, so I promote the group to members on that basis.

I could not go past my patch without talking about one of my favourite schools—I hope that does not get out—Hamilton Senior High School. Hamilton Senior High School is a great success story, principally because of the leadership shown by an activist principal, Donna McDonald, and her staff. Again, I am told that it has one of the lowest turnover rates of staff in any school in the state. People have been there for 15, 20 and 25 years, which is a fantastic statement about what they believe in at their school. Hamilton Senior High School is trying to adjust its vocational education and training programs to make sure that it produces horizons for the kids who come from dysfunctional backgrounds or who are just not working in the mass education system. I find that that particularly resonates with me because I left school at 15 years of age because the mass education system just did not work for me on a range of issues and in a range of ways. Donna and her team and Jeanette Sealy have done a fantastic job of getting the vocational education and training system going. Just this week, the school did a straight tie-up with Chevron Corporation. Last Thursday it launched its corporate sponsorship of the school. Despite what we might say about Chevron's attention to local content, I give it complete credit where credit is due. It has shown an activist approach to see whether it can organically grow its skilled workforce by reaching down into year 10 and offering 14 and 15-year-olds a horizon that is bigger than the particular circumstances that those kids might find themselves in, be it their family dysfunction or their general lack of ambition. Chevron certainly does it well. Hamilton Senior High School gets a big tick and there is more to come.

I think our independent public schools approach, which Labor supports, is at the wrong end of the scale. I get completely that schools such as Melville Senior High School need to compete in a demographic. It has to

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compete with the schools at the other end of my electorate, including the private schools Santa Maria College and Christian Brothers College Fremantle, John Curtin College of the Arts, which is a state select school, and Applecross Senior High School on the other side. It is bookended and surrounded by a great deal of choice. The IPS system is a natural fit in marketing it, but IPS is just that—a marketing tool that says that somehow if we apply this magic wand called IPS, the school will be a better school, will be better catered for and will have more flexibility. I do not particularly subscribe to that view. I think that we should reverse the IPS system and say that the most disadvantaged schools, those at the other end of the socioeconomic index spectrum and those that are in most need of additional resources and support should be the target of a more flexible approach to education delivery than we are currently seeing. Something might be needed for schools such as Melville Senior High School. Phil White, who is the principal, has to negotiate in a tough market to attract students to make sure that he has a growing school. Hamilton Senior High School, which is probably at the other end of the SEI catchment, needs more resources and it needs those resources to be delinked from the number of students. It needs an establishment strength that is agreed to and it should be funded to that strength to ensure that there is never any variation in the services it can provide. I understand that in making a statement such as that, there is a whole bunch of other checks and balances to make sure that the school is working on attendance and on the issues of truancy and how the kids are being engaged. This is where training and education really do meet. We have devalued manual arts for so long and we have elevated the idea that if students do not aspire to a white-collar career—this is a result of the rise of the tertiary sector throughout the 1970s and 1980s—anything else they choose is inferior or beneath the average Australian. We need to build a skilled services sector; we need to move away from smokestack industries. We all know that. I have talked about it in the local content debate and the Premier has talked about it. But what practical steps are we taking to ensure that we grow the skilled services sector that we need in this state on the 20 and 30-year horizon, because right now in my patch we have nearly 24 per cent youth unemployment. I thought it was just Kwinana and Rockingham, which have 26 per cent youth unemployment. One in four kids between the age of 15 and 19 years is not at school, not in full-time work and not in training. If we do not capture them, that whole cohort is gone to us. That is a whole cohort that is unskilled and will have all the other potential social disadvantage from not being trained, not being in a full-time job and certainly not staying at school. Twenty-three per cent is a particularly big number for me and a particular area of focus. Places such as Hamilton Senior High School need those additional resources and need all that support that they can get.

In conclusion, that is the once-over around Willagee. There are plenty more stories where that came from. There are plenty of things that I could have said in a negative context about housing maintenance, antisocial behaviour, waste and waiting lists in the housing sector, the lack of affordability and the lack of infill, but I will save that for another day.

MR T.G. STEPHENS (Pilbara) [8.01 pm]: The opportunity to speak on the Premier's Statement obviously gives us the chance to speak about a broad range of issues. For me, this year, which by choice is to be my final year in Parliament, gives me the opportunity to think back as well as thinking forward for the community of which I have been a part for such a long time. Now in this final 12 months I will think back over some of the work that we have done together and some of the opportunities that still face that community.

It strikes me as rather strange, however, to be yet again here in Parliament when so many people around the world have the opportunity of celebrating this day, famed for being called Fat Tuesday, the Mardi Gras, as the French say, the day before Lent starts tomorrow, and we engage in the great fast of the Christian calendar. When people would be out tonight celebrating and sinning before the repentance starts tomorrow, we seem to be starting our repentance today by listening to one another's tortuous speeches. I hope that I can make mine not too tortuous tonight.

The fact that Easter is soon upon us reminds me that my first Easter spent here in Western Australia was in the remote Aboriginal community of Balgo. It was back in 1977 when I first came into Western Australia and I had the opportunity of going down to what was then the Balgo Mission, which was run at that time by the mission superintendent, Father Ray Hevern. I am reminded of that visit not least of all because today on my desk a letter arrived from Father Ray Hevern. He has a rather quixotic name, but behind that name is a wonderfully substantial individual—a leader of his small group of Pallottine priests who have done great work here in Western Australia, in the Kimberley and in places such as Tardun. I thought Father Hevern's letter to me raised some very legitimate issues indeed. He was prompted to write to me and send me a copy of a letter that he has sent on to the minister with responsibility for corrective services in which he makes the point that he had been pressed to call on two prisons, Acacia and Bandyup. These are visits that he does not do in the normal course of his work—he is not a prison chaplain—but was pressed to do so by members of the Aboriginal community that he served historically back in Balgo. I think it is nearly 30 years ago that he left Balgo. In more recent times

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Father Hevern worked in the wheatbelt and became connected to wheatbelt Aboriginal families. Two quite separate families had been in contact with him to ask him to meet people in two different prisons. Father Hevern wrote —

This morning, having been asked by aboriginal people [from Balgo]—through a chaplain—to visit, and having made a prior phone call to Acacia, I was immediately approved as apparently my name was on a computer record of approved pastoral visitors.

This afternoon, having been requested to call by an aboriginal woman —

Who was associated with his work at Tardun —

... again through a chaplain—I was refused entry to Bandyup. This despite a previous phone call in which I was approved and given a visit time ... Apparently that permission came from someone new on staff who did not have authority ... In discussing the refusal with an officer I referred to the Acacia situation earlier in the day. I was told that, because the institutions are run by different authorities [SERCO and DCS], they do not share an approved list of pastoral visitors! I was given a new 14 page application.

He makes the point —

This strikes me as somewhat of an anomaly. At a time when visitation of aboriginal detainees is strongly encouraged [the Balgo men claimed that they had not received a visitor since arriving in Perth!] one is turned away by a seemingly arbitrary obstacle.

Father Hevern makes the point —

Can I suggest that this situation be reviewed, and ask that some form of official approval be offered to people like myself that applies to ALL prisons/detention centres throughout WA?

That is a perfectly reasonable request. I take the opportunity to put that on the record during this debate in the hope that the Premier's processes will have that issue looked at by way of a government response. It seems to me this situation affects not only people who might be pastoral visitors in the category of a priest, but also others who are occasionally called to visit various prisons. In my role as an MP I receive calls from prisoners who are constituents, or who are connected to constituents, who want me to visit them suddenly in prison. I have to go through the rigmarole because I am not necessarily appropriately approved to gain access to the prison. There must be some easier way to ensure that people responding to the human call for help to access appropriate personnel can be authorised and available to prisoners, whether prisons are run on behalf of the community or on behalf of the government—either by an agency that is a government department or by a private organisation such as Serco. Surely an appropriate approvals system can be put in place.

Being reminded of the Balgo mission of which Father Hevern was previously the superintendent, I cannot help but think of my own reflections. For me, that connection with Balgo is relatively recent. It is not yet 40 years ago that I had my first connection to it. In more recent times I am very pleased that my young son Ben Stephens, upon graduating from university with an economics degree, took off to Balgo and spent seven or eight months undertaking volunteer work with the local community aimed at trying to support the literacy ambitions of the community through their school, by supporting and reinforcing the literacy strategies of the school. This was great work that renewed my links to that community through his work. I gained an insight through his observations of that community. He has gone on from that work to head toward a career with Deloitte Access Economics in Melbourne, but I am pleased to see that his links with that community have led him on to some solid work through that private sector organisation around Indigenous employment. Now, through that work, he is up at the Cape York Institute, working with Noel Pearson on a secondment around strategies for triggering the movement of the long-term unemployed in remote communities into employment, and to try to better understand the data on the impediments around this flatline in the remote communities of Australia as they interface with the employment opportunities that should be theirs.

The Balgo community has a longer association with another person who is very important to me and my life in Western Australia, and important to the life of this Parliament. When I recently visited the Balgo Mission, I looked at the baptismal register and found the name of the very first person baptised at that mission, back in 1938: Ernest Francis Bridge. He was the very first person baptised at the mission, at least as it appears on the baptismal register. When I think about it further, I see that what in fact would have happened is that the mission priest at the time, when visiting the neighbouring station where Ernie Bridge's parents, Ernie and Sarah, were living, would have offered baptism to the children of one of his flock. Ernie would have been a couple of years old at that stage, but he was given the opportunity of being baptised, and he appears on the register at that time.

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When I arrived in Western Australia in 1977, it was when Ernie was first running for election to the state Parliament. Ernie had already by this time worked with his family in building up businesses—stations and ancillary businesses, such as the butcher shop at Halls Creek and the bakery run by his brother, Benny Bridge. There was also the shop in town and he built up a roadhouse and a picture theatre. He had successfully set up a whole network of various enterprises associated with his family that were very profitable businesses indeed and helped support his growing family after his marriage to the late Mavis. He produced some wonderful kids in Beverley, Cheryl, Kim and Noel. These youngsters were looked after well through the businesses that Ernie was able to develop.

Ernie's father died when Ernie was quite a young man; I think he was aged about 21, and he suddenly found himself press-ganged into local government. His father was the shire president, and suddenly Ernie was running for local government. He soon found himself the youngest ever elected shire president in the state, and spent 21 years in local government before I turned up and found him, towards the end of those 21 years, running for election to the state Parliament in the Kimberley, under very contested circumstances. He was put through the mill in Halls Creek, with challenges from the conservative establishment about his legitimacy, as to whether he was entitled to run—as if that were a basis for being able to run for office. His legitimacy was checked out via telegrams from the north of the state to the south, and it was established that his mum and dad were married at the time of his birth, but even if they had not been, he would still be absolutely entitled to take his place in local government, and he eventually took his place and distinguished himself with a wonderful career in local government. After the huge and awful state election contest of February 1977, that local government career eventually translated into a state parliamentary career. He was opposed by the forces of the Liberal Party of Western Australia. I am pleased to say that the then Liberal Party was a different beast from the Liberal Party of today. It was an awful phenomenon; the Liberal Party used every trick in the book to prevent Ernie being elected to Parliament and employed activities that were deliberately aimed at attacking the Aboriginal opportunity to vote. The Liberal Party deployed lawyers around the polling booths to stop Aboriginal people obtaining their votes. It is not just me saying that; Justice Smith overturned that first result in the Court of Disputed Returns, which produced a by-election in which the Aboriginal people who had had this awful experience declined to turn up in large numbers the second time around. Ernie and I spent the next couple of years working together to make sure that the Aboriginal community was more confident in approaching the polling booths in 1980. This is despite the huge efforts that were made, including the inquiry into the Aboriginal franchise. Amendments were made to acts in this place to make it more difficult for Aboriginal people to vote. Despite all those efforts, Ernie was elected to Parliament in 1980. For the efforts of me and my colleagues in trying to assist him in getting into Parliament, five of us were thrown into the police stations in the region. I was locked up in the Kununurra lockup and eventually carted off to Wyndham Regional Prison. Steve Hawke was arrested in his bed in Fitzroy Crossing by the constabulary that had come out of Perth and charged us with various offences. The long and the short of it is that we effectively secured the election of the first Aboriginal member of this Parliament. The charges related to persuading and inducing people to apply for postal votes. They were eventually thrown out of court. That collaboration developed friendships between people such as me and my colleagues with Ernie Bridge that were profoundly cemented in the blood, sweat and tears of those campaigns.

Ernie went on to have an extraordinarily successful career, with another 21 years in Parliament after having served 21 years in local government. He became the first Indigenous cabinet minister in the commonwealth, taking up with distinction the portfolios of agriculture, water and Indigenous affairs. In those three portfolios we still came across the superb legacy of his quality work and his contribution to the hopes and ambitions of remote communities and towns from one end of this state to the other. People were looking for basics such as a reliable water supply, support for agricultural programs and, in the Indigenous communities, the opportunity to access land. Ernie not only was engaged in these processes during his career, but also was a royal commissioner following the awful events in 1974, I think, when he was engaged as a royal commissioner following the Skull Creek incident out near Warburton. He served with distinction in that royal commission. It brought down findings that created the long-term legacy of recruiting Indigenous people into the police force as police aides. In his later life Ernie went on to see the full cycle of that work. Following his retirement from Parliament, he went on to work with colleagues to establish an organisation called the Unity of First People of Australia. That work focused on a range of activities, including trying to secure pathways for Indigenous employment in the public sector and in the wider community as well as other areas of work.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Ernie's work in that area also focused on his interest and preoccupations with the challenges facing the Aboriginal community around diabetes. He discovered that he had diabetes later in life. It was a huge shock to him. He saw how widespread diabetes was in the wider Aboriginal community. Being the

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practical person that he is, he rapidly engaged in putting together strategies with the best advice of people such as Dr Michael Gracey and various collaborators, including members of his very distinguished family, such as John Bridge, and very experienced people from the Aboriginal world who were able to bring some of their expertise and attract the support of the non-government sector in the first instance, philanthropic organisations, charities and Caritas Australia, the Catholic organisation. Then eventually in dribs and drabs he was able to attract the support of government. I am pleased to observe that in recent times this current government has supported some of that work associated with the diabetes programs being rolled out by the Unity of First People of Australia in regional and remote areas of Western Australia.

In my life here in Western Australia I have come across some very significant people by any standards—people who leave extraordinary legacies in the work that they do. In Ernie's case it is a legacy that is alive in this ongoing work by him, his family and his colleagues with the UFPA. This work has been built on in almost two or three previous lives. He has had a dedicated life in local government, a dedicated life in public service around the royal commission and a dedicated life in building up the business and enterprise of his families around Halls Creek. Then he has had a whole life of 21 years of service to the community in this chamber, at the end of which the honours secretariat of the Order of Australia Association had the good sense to award him the Order of Australia in recognition of an extraordinary contribution to that point.

Now, down the track, he has not just retired from Parliament, but also gone on in a voluntary way to harness all of his efforts and do even further work that, by itself, would call for recognition in the wider community and amongst those who have the opportunity, and indeed the obligation, to identify people who have contributed significantly in responding to the needs of our community. In my view—I put this view to those who should be listening—it is time that Ernie Bridge's additional work and efforts be even further recognised and honoured. Ernie started off his political contribution in this place as a Labor parliamentarian. He finished as an Independent, against my advice. He did not always listen to my advice. He left us as an outfit —

Mr M.P. Whitely: I took your advice.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Ha, ha!

I have learnt a lot of things but Ernie chose a pathway of independence that did not attract my support. However, it did not earn me any enmity with Ernie, even though we diverged in our views on the way to finish a political career in this place. I can see how he was able to deploy that independence away from the partisan political context to make sure that his work beyond Parliament had bipartisan support, and he has garnered that support and has put it to enormous benefit for the communities he has served. At places I visit, such as the Warmun community that he and I hold dear to our hearts, he has motivated people living in those communities around exercise and diet. He has modelled that activity in places such as Noonkanbah working with the likes of Dickie Cox—or Dickie Skinner—an old friend of both of us. Again, these are friendships that were forged and tested in the cauldrons of fire associated with the Noonkanbah crisis of 1978. At that time Dickie was the young leader of the Noonkanbah people, with whom we stood shoulder to shoulder as we tried to protect the sites at risk of the drilling program that was unleashed upon their sacred site by the then government of the day of Sir Charles Court. Ernie has in that community secured an ongoing partnership that focuses on the school and the local store and on building programs around good foods on offer through the store and at the school. Partnerships have also been forged with the remarkable skills that this bloke brings to places such as Looma. In my case I know that I have very few of those same skills. I have watched Ernie walk into those rooms, where there has been great fire and controversy, angst and anger at times. Ernie has been able to walk in and pacify the audience. They would be eating out of his hands as he listened to the issues at hand, made sure that the issues resonated and were heard, and then championed those issues in ways that effectively gave them a megaphone into the wider community.

I very rarely identify people along my own journey in this place who have been significant and for whom I am grateful for the roles they have played in my life of endeavouring to deliver service to the peoples of regional and remote Western Australia and the Indigenous community. Ernie is one of those people who have taught me much. I am sure I have taught him a few things as well. Ernie has a whole other career in country music. Back in 1978 we were together mustering at the station I was speaking about earlier today, Dunham River station. We were wrestling with steers and bulls, which were very difficult to bring into the stockyards. They were impossible to muster on horse; we tried. We secured the services of a bloke called Stuie Skoglund. He was one of those American farmers in the Ord Valley who was a returned American serviceman, a helicopter pilot, from Korea. He had helicopter skills that he deployed innovatively in the pastoral industry. We had him working at Dunham River station, mustering the property very successfully and getting these awfully large, wild steers and bulls off the place.

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While we were doing that, we were aided by the lyrics that were composed at our request by another friend who was a mentor. I will speak about him another time. He is a bloke called Peter Willis, who in fact delivered the invitation to me to come to Western Australia. Back when I first met him in 1976, when I was working with the Redfern Aboriginal community in Sydney, Peter Willis was a Catholic priest, a mate of the priest with whom I was working in Sydney, a bloke called Father Ted Kennedy. At that time Peter was another one of the famous Pallottine priests. On this occasion he was working in the Kimberley. He is a great personality in his own right. He appears in the book called *Bulls and Boabs* by Athol Thomas, which captures some of the flavour of Peter. He was a controversial character. He has remained a friend—one of those friends with whom I spend more time talking by email these days rather than having the opportunity to sit around the campfire. A quick request to Peter from Ernie and me said we were looking for some words to describe the work of Stue Skoglund. That delivered for us the lyrics of a great song that became *The Helicopter Ringer*, a huge anthem for Ernie. Ernie was able to pick up these lyrics, adjust the melody from the folk type music that Peter Willis had put it to and translate it into a country music theme. He went and put on some utterly exceptional guitar work that captured the whole throb and engine sound of the chopper. I think it was the song that Ernie performed when he was completing his term here in this place. Certainly it is a song that is very important to his fans, of which I am one, and the wider community that we are both a part of. It is very important to Ernie and his connection to the pastoral industry and the Indigenous community. He probably wrote the song as a bit of a protest about the movement of technology to displace the stockmen of the pastoral industry. Ernie, I think, converted it more into a celebration of the role of the new breed of helicopter ringer who had moved into the pastoral industry. That was an experience in which the Aboriginal stock people were able to enjoy the song if not the experience of being significantly displaced yet again from the pastoral industry by technology that reduced the number of employees needed.

I hope, as the year unfolds, I will get the chance to speak about other people who have been and continue to be of enormous significance to the state of Western Australia in its past, its present and its future. But on this occasion, I wanted to place on record my own debt of gratitude to that friendship and those links with Ernie Bridge and his wider family and to his lifetime of work that is shared with me and for the opportunities that he has opened up for many people. I am looking forward to continuing that association for as long as is humanly possible.

MR A.J. WADDELL (Forrestfield) [8.30 pm]: It is a pleasure to be back here on my feet again. Over the past few months many of us have been working diligently in our electorates and have no doubt come into contact with many constituents who had a range of things to tell us about how we personally, how the government or how the nation are in fact travelling. I have spent a fair bit of time reflecting on that. My attention was tweaked by something the Premier said in his statement earlier today. I think he said, “And trust in governments and respect for their legitimacy are at fairly low levels, even in Western Australia”. I think we would all agree that politics is not held in particularly high regard in Australia. The practice of politics itself is often a fairly dirty business and people seem to sometimes lose sight of the fact that the majority of us are here trying to deliver to our own communities. We are doing everything we can to ensure that our best foot is put forward to allow us to deliver on services that are demanded of us, but in doing so it sometimes gets a little bit grubby. Every time it gets a little bit grubby, our ratings go down that little bit more and people become more and more cynical of politics and start to disengage from the process more and more.

I have been reflecting on how we reverse that process. How do we re-engage the community and how do we excite people about what can be achieved in politics? There is no real easy answer to that question. I think sometimes we need to look at it, not as a single thing, but rather as a series of things we can do. I think what is most needed in our political system is common sense. Common sense seems to have gone out the window.

I had an opportunity over the break to travel to India with you, Mr Speaker. India is a very interesting country. Its population is 1.2 billion people; it is the largest democracy in the world and it is a place of incredible contrasts. It is a place also of incredible poverty and at the same time incredible prosperity for some people. It is full of contradictions. There is one thing we certainly share with India. It seems that in India also there is cynicism about politics. There is cynicism in India because they believe their system to be corrupt—that there is a great deal of corruption within government systems and so forth. I was quite proud to say, “We have no corruption in Australia.” I was quite proud to say that, in all my years and all the things I did as a public servant, in politics and in involvement with all sorts of people, I have never even sniffed the slightest scent of corruption.

I was quite proud to say that we do not have a corrupt system. Then I reflected on our system and thought, “Well, perhaps it is not quite as squeaky clean as I thought.” We do have corruption in our system, and that is corruption of information. We do not have perfect information flow. People do not know what is going on. We say that we have a great deal of transparency, but in that transparency we build the huge edifices of audits and all sorts of ways of appearing to be transparent, but actually bury people in the detail, to the point that the majority

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of people switch off. They grab their view of politics in a five-minute grab that is on television, and that five-minute grab is affected by the journalist who put it together and their editors, and they are influenced by their owners. Their owners are the billionaires in our country and those billionaires increasingly have their own agendas. Therefore, there is corruption in our system. That corruption comes from the fact that the wealthiest in our society are buying their influence by accepting the fact that the majority of people are probably not that engaged and leading them by the nose to particular positions. Again, it behoves us to do everything we can to simplify things to get that information out to help people through.

I was reflecting on some of the things that happened in my electorate over the last couple of months and I thought I would come up with some examples in which ordinary people seem to be facing unbelievable odds trying to change a system that is incomprehensible to them. One of my constituents, a woman by the name of Patricia Svenson, came to see me early in January. She was a lovely woman in her 60s who was very well spoken and very well presented and she said, “Andrew, I’ve got a problem.” I asked her what her problem was and she said that she had had a terminal cancer. I told her I was terribly sorry to hear that. She said that it was a type of bowel cancer that essentially means there is a 95 per cent chance that she will not survive this year. I asked her what we could do to assist her, and she replied that an operation was available that had a 95 per cent chance of resulting in a five-year survival. I told her that that was terrific and asked her what she needed to do to get that surgery and whether there was a waiting list. She replied that that was the problem. She told me that this operation was in fact carried out here in Western Australia a couple of years ago, but the bureaucracy caved in on the surgeon who was carrying it out. The bureaucracy made it difficult for him to continue. The funding was on and off, and eventually her surgeon got so sick of it that he went over to New South Wales to teach people how to perform that surgery. Only about 20 people suffer from this form of cancer, and he was directing them over to New South Wales to have the surgery because he could not navigate the bureaucracy here in Western Australia. I asked whether she needed help getting to New South Wales. She replied that New South Wales would not take anyone from Western Australia anymore because it was tired of Western Australia leaching off the New South Wales health system, and until WA paid its fair share, that surgery would not be allowed in New South Wales for Western Australians.

I could break off into an argument that clearly Western Australia pays its fair share, and I would endorse the comments that the Premier made earlier today about us not getting our fair cut of the GST. I think there would not be a person in this Parliament who would not agree with that argument, but let us leave it on the surface. Here is a woman who has no ability to affect how commonwealth grants are carved out, and if one bureaucracy says that she will not get the surgery that she needs to save her life because we do not pay our fair share, it is only fair and proper that she come and speak to her local member of Parliament.

What do we do with a circumstance like this? I have to say that as tragic as the situation was, sometimes these circumstances drive me to stay in this job. This is the time when I really honestly say that I have an opportunity to make a substantial difference in someone’s life and I will throw every ounce of my ability at and do everything I can to try to fix this particular problem. I do not care if it does not result in one extra vote; I do not care if no-one knows about it. This is the work I came here to do. I wrote to the minister explaining that. After a little back and forth the minister agreed that the patient assisted travel scheme could be used and that the arrangements would be made with New South Wales for her to travel. Unfortunately, there is a very small window of time in which this operation can occur, and to keep that window open for as long as possible, she was on a rather aggressive bout of chemotherapy. Her surgeon said that it was now too late and she could not travel. Therefore, that window was closing.

The argument then moved on to whether it would be possible for the surgery to be performed here in Western Australia. Again, after a bit of argy-bargy, it came down to yes, it would. The surgeon wanted to perform the operation at Joondalup hospital. The Department of Health wanted him to do the surgery at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Again, this woman was sitting there going, “I do not really care where it is done; you can do it in my back shed if need be; I just want the surgery”, and there was a bit of an impasse. Eventually the surgeon agreed to do the surgery at Sir Charles Gairdner, only to find out that he was not registered or authorised or cleared to perform surgery at that hospital, and we hit another roadblock. After a few more weeks of back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, we have finally found a solution, because the surgeon is able to perform the surgery at Fremantle Hospital. I understand that Patricia Svenson is likely to have that surgery in the next three weeks. If everything goes well, she will still be alive at Christmas; if everything goes well, she will still be alive in five years. This is a woman who is fighting hard for her life, and I was happy to help her in any way I could. She was truly grateful for the help that we were able to get for her to navigate the system.

I suppose that from time to time everyone here meets constituents who are at the end of their tether. But it does make me pause and think: What would happen if we were not there? What would have been the consequences

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for this woman if we were not there? The answer is quite simply that the system would have failed this woman entirely and she would have been left to die. That should make us ask: how can we, in a state as wealthy as Western Australia, in a country that is doing as well as Australia, get to a situation in which people are literally left to die because a bureaucrat cannot apply common sense and change the rules a bit?

I was recently told a story about a person who was having treatment for anaphylaxis. The treatment involved checking whether the person had any allergic reactions. There is a rule that says that if the person has an allergic reaction—which of course is a possible outcome—an ambulance must be used to transfer the person to hospital. The problem was that this person was right next door to a hospital. But the rule was still that an ambulance had to be used to take the person across the road to the hospital. However, when the ambulance did arrive, they refused to take the person to hospital because he had already been provided with an EpiPen. Clearly, everyone is scratching their heads and saying, “This rule does not mesh with this rule which does not mesh with this rule; what can we do? It is all too hard”. Probably part of the reason for the cynicism that has managed to inject itself into politics in Australia is that we have created these robust systems whereby we occasionally cannot see the trees for the forest.

Over the last few months I have had to deal with a couple of issues. One of those issues is hoons. I was contacted by some people, and had some street meetings, about a huge hoon problem that is occurring in front of a new skate park that has been constructed in High Wycombe. The residents were quite concerned about it and wanted to know what could be done about it. I invited the local government to the meeting, because it is located on a road that it is responsible for, and they were helpful and talked about some things they could put in place that might arrest the hoon behaviour. I undertook to write to the Minister for Police to see whether we could put some surveillance in place to try to catch the hoons in the act. About five weeks later, I got a phone call from a constituent who lived in that street to say that his house had been broken into and he had gone to the police to try to get the pictures from the camera. When I asked what camera, he said that a camera had been put across the road. I said, okay, that must be the one that I asked the police to put in to catch the hoons, and he said yes, but the trouble is that the police told him that they could not get a picture from the camera, because it does not work at night, and it takes a picture only once every five minutes. It was quite a shocking revelation to me that the police would go to the trouble of erecting a camera to catch something and then put those limitations around it.

A couple of weeks later I received a letter from the minister telling me that they had erected this camera and that it had been there from just after Christmas until the new year and had found no evidence whatsoever of hoon activity. That is not a surprise if the camera does not take pictures at night, and if pictures are taken only once every five minutes. Naturally, everyone in the street was fairly incensed about this idea and the people on Wittenoom Road said to me, “What are you going to do about it?” Again, I went back to the minister and asked him to please explain why that happened and what we could do to catch the hoons in the act. In the meantime, on Australia Day another hoon tore down the road, did some burnouts, skipped the verge, ended up in someone’s front yard, blew a couple of tyres and then tore down the road. Apparently the hoon was completely drunk at the time. It was only a matter of luck that when that happened a child was not playing in the front yard or that someone was not greatly hurt. I asked the people in the street what they did about it. They said, “Well, what do you do? By the time you call the police, they will not get here.” I said, “Well, you still called in?” One woman said, “Yes, but I got stuck on a call centre and they weren’t any help.” Others said they called the police and the police eventually came. The people provided the police with the licence plate number and all the details. I asked them what the outcome was and they said that they did not know. The system sort of works; they got through to the call centre and they got the police out there eventually, but they had no sense of safety or immediacy. They did not know who the police were; they spoke to some call centre out in Midland and someone allegedly did something. They do not know whether a person was arrested or charged or what happened. Naturally, the community becomes quite cynical when people pour information into the system and the system acts in a cold, callous way and does its job as the lumbering machine that it is, but does not provide any information back to the community. I have now got a street of people asking, “What can we do? What is the point? Really, we need to take things into our own hands if we are going to deal with this particular problem.” Of course, I told them not to do that.

Mr P. Abetz: Don’t you have e-Watch?

Mr A.J. WADDELL: No.

That is another example of, again, large collective systems that can fail people. Even though they might work, they create a sense of failure among the people involved. While I am on the issue of policing, I want to talk briefly about speed cameras. I think speed cameras are a very useful tool in combatting speeding drivers and if we can reduce the overall speed on the roads, we will obviously end up with safer streets.

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[Member's time extended.]

Mr A.J. WADDELL: However, every time we allow a speed camera to be used in a way that is most definitely, clearly and without any question revenue-raising, we undermine the credibility of that useful tool within the community. At the end of Kalamunda Road is the Great Eastern Highway Bypass. Drivers come off Kalamunda Road at 70 kilometres an hour, move on to the Great Eastern Highway Bypass at 90 kilometres an hour and travel for about 600 metres up that road before it switches into Great Eastern Highway and becomes a 60-kilometre-an-hour zone. Every four or five days there is a police presence on that corner with radar guns or a Multanova pinging people coming out of the 90-kilometre-an-hour zone and into the 60-kilometre-an-hour zone. I have never in my 45 years seen an accident in the area. There are no pedestrians in the area. It is an industrial area and everyone who comes around that corner goes, "There is Robin Hood again doing his highway robbery." It undermines our system. That is the sort of thing I am talking about. We need to create credibility within the community.

Other problems that I have within my area concern transport issues. We have a big problem on Berkshire Road as it comes off Roe Highway. That intersection was poorly designed. I have no idea who designed it, but it is a bit of a dogleg.

Big trucks try to enter onto Roe Highway and, as many people will know, Roe Highway can become quite busy. Trucks and cars travel along Roe Highway at between 80 kilometres an hour at the intersection and 100 kilometres an hour. In order for a truck to cross this dogleg at Berkshire Road, it almost has to park up right in the middle of the highway before it can make it all the way around, because whoever designed the intersection did not align it properly. A phenomenal number of people have said to me that it is only a matter of time before there is a major collision there that costs people's lives. I have written to the minister about it and I have been told that it is a lower priority, although I note that as it gets closer to the election, it becomes a slightly higher priority because the Minister for Transport is starting to turn some attention to my electorate and to some of the problems that exist, which is absolutely refreshing.

Up to now people in the eastern part of Perth have been entirely ignored. I have come many a time to this theme of how little there is in the eastern part of Perth. Let us take the 2031 transport plan that was announced late last year. There was barely a mention of anything in my electorate. We were not looking at trains. We were not looking at buses. We were not looking at anything. In fact, the minister recently suggested in the media that he thought that a train through Forrestfield would be a wonderful idea. Of course, when he was pressed on the idea, it turned out to be a rather insubstantial thought bubble. It became quite clear that we would not see anything inside the period of the 2031 plan; in fact, it would not even start to be considered until after 2031, and, given the nature of rail, another 10 to 15 years of planning can be added on top of that. Perhaps the minister is saying that maybe in 2045 we can expect something through the area of Forrestfield. I do not know whether we can plan that far out for rail because, frankly, in the 35 years between now and then, populations will shift majorly and technology will change a great deal. Seriously, the promise is worth virtually nothing. We need solutions, and we need them now.

The current health facility that services the area, Swan District Hospital, has had a massive rise in ramping. The amount of ramping that has been occurring has almost doubled. Everyone says that the solution to this will be when the Midland health campus goes online in 2015. People in the area have been waiting for a hospital for a long time. It has been promised by many different governments. All we have seen so far is an area of land that has been put aside and successive signs with different government logos on them saying, "Coming soon". Again, this feeds into the cynicism of people. They do not want signs; they want real buildings. It will happen. I know it will happen, because there is money in the budget, unlike the situation for many other things. One of the problems I have is that the major health facility is being built without even a thought for how people will use it or for the transport infrastructure that is needed for people to get to the hospital. We must keep in mind that a lot of people who will use a facility such as the new Midland health campus will be elderly people who may not have access to a private vehicle. If people want to access public transport to get to the new Midland health campus, they can count on up to a two-hour bus trip to get there because there are no regular services going in that direction. That is a ridiculous situation. It is just absurd. We need to acknowledge the need for public transport in the area. Again, I wrote to the minister about the public transport that is necessary for the area. I was told that the bureaucrats measure this and that, and they say that the demand for it is not there. Of course demand for it is not there. If it is not there now, people have made other arrangements. They are not all standing at the side of the road waiting for us to build the railway. They are not standing at the side of the road waiting for a non-existent bus to turn up. They are making alternative arrangements. It is only when we provide the infrastructure that people will change their behaviour and start using these things; otherwise, we are in this constant state of crisis. It is about planning, planning, planning; we need to actually be thinking forward, not

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always reacting, reacting, reacting. Today the minister in response to a dorothy dixer about transport in Wanneroo told us that it is raining buses in Wanneroo! I do not know what sort of umbrella people need for that, but I can tell members about raining in buses. My electorate officer regularly uses a bus that comes past my office in High Wycombe and has told me stories of when they have been on the bus and it has been raining inside the bus! We get the second-rate leaky buses because there is a need to use diesel buses as there is no gas at the Kalamunda bus depot. As a consequence, we get second-rate service that is irregular and ask ourselves why there is no demand for public transport. If that is the way we treat people who use public transport, and if we are going to tell them they can have an infrequent bus and not to expect to stay dry on it, we should not expect huge demand for it.

Whilst I am on the subject of transport, again I return to the Maddington and Kenwick train stations. I recently did a midnight train ride up and down the length of the train to watch what was happening on it. I was joined by several other members on that ride. It was an interesting night. It was very safe for us because we were all cocooned amongst ourselves and I think the head of Transperth security was shadowing us or something like that, so I do not think that at any point we were at any real risk. However, in my attempt to catch the train—I kept missing it so I was driving alongside the track step-by-step to try to catch up with the train I was going to be on—at one stage I was delayed by some 15 police cars that surrounded, I think, the Maddington train station because there had been a little bit of a riot there. There is no doubt that the Armadale line is one of the most dangerous lines in Australia and needs some serious rehabilitation. It needs investment in decent stations. It needs investment at Maddington and Kenwick. Disabled people should not ever try to use those stations because they are not compliant; they are just not up to speed.

I have been talking to a number of people. The other day I was at Arcadia Waters in Maddington, which is a retirement village area. A lot of people there are very concerned about the ongoing delay in changes being made to the Retirement Villages Act. A lot of people do not understand that if for whatever reason someone needs to move out of a retirement village—let us say that they require higher care, which, with the increase in Alzheimer’s disease, is a more common occurrence—that person’s house in the retirement village, which they may have invested a substantial amount of money in, is still subject to operating costs. I think that at Arcadia Waters people are looking at somewhere in the range of \$320 a month for operating costs. If that house becomes vacant, it is usually up to the village itself to find someone else. The village markets the house to get somebody else to move in. Whilst the village is in that process, the person continues to pay the monthly cost, so people who can usually ill afford to pay money have to continue paying. Of course, it also happens that if suddenly the occupier is deceased, their estate has to keep paying the operating costs. There is absolutely no incentive whatsoever for the village that is responsible for onselling the house to actually go through the onselling process when it continues to receive the monthly operating costs for it. Depending on the contract, this can go on for six, 12, 18 or 36 months. The people at Arcadia Waters—in particular I have been speaking to Eric Pamment—have been telling me that there is a huge demand for us to modify the act to deal with that problem. I think he has a very good point on that topic. It is like the long-stay caravan park thing—I have been here for three and a half years, and every year it comes back. Every year we stand here and say we need to do it but it does not happen.

The community sees question time and they see the game playing that go on in here. They see us do things such as pass a bill to change Foundation Day to WA Day. I do not have a problem with that. Frankly, it is a piece of legislation we should be able to pass in 10 minutes and get on with business. The community sees that sort of thing and asks, “Why can’t you guys deal with the substantive issues? Why can’t you do the things that are bothering us?” When we do not, and when they see games being played, they become cynical. They disengage from the process. As they disengage from the process, we allow others to get in and manipulate it. That is the real fear. That is the corruption that is inherent in our system. We are responsible, the media are responsible, and people are responsible. I do not know who it was, but an American President once said that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. When people turn off, that vigilance disappears. That is when the cracks start to form.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [9.01 pm]: I would like to make a contribution in reply to the Premier’s Statement. I start off by addressing some of the issues the Premier raised. Reading his speech and listening to him this afternoon reminded me of that Jim Carrey movie *Liar Liar* because I am looking for the truth in this speech. For example, the Premier said —

Since coming to government, we have slowed expenses growth, which peaked at more than 13 per cent under Labor ...

I actually have in my hand the *2011–12 Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*; a government publication. In it, the government explains how its expenditure is going. I would like to show the Acting Speaker (Mr A.P. O’Gorman) this little chart. It shows that the only occasion when there has been 13 per cent expenses

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growth was under the Barnett Liberal government. In fact, there was only double-digit growth once under the previous Labor administration. There has been double-digit growth every year under the Barnett Liberal government. When the Premier comes into this chamber and says that growth peaked at more than 13 per cent under Labor and he is going to moderate that growth, he should tell the truth. It should be as simple as that. It is outrageous for the Premier to come in here and say something that simply is not true in his own speech laying out the government agenda for the year. I would think the Premier had an obligation to be honest with the people of Western Australia and this chamber. The budget projections go on in this chart, as members can see. This reminds me of the old saying, “Lord give me patience, just not right now!” The government says that expenses growth for 2012–13 will be two per cent, after this year being four times higher than that. We need some honesty from the Premier of this state. One of the problems we need to attack is the spin and dishonesty that comes out of the government.

I draw members’ attention to the recent announcement on the stadium that was generated on the front page of *The West Australian*. It was simply an announcement of a tender for a consultant to give advice to the government. It was not in fact anything to do with the construction of the stadium. The government still does not know where the stadium will be built. It says somewhere on the Burswood peninsula, somewhere close to the freeway going past, but it still does not know where it will be built. It does not know the design or the cost. The fact that the government does not know the cost of the stadium is very interesting because the Premier has already told us that it will cost \$700 million. That is what he said—\$700 million for the stadium. Even the Premier knows that that statement is not true. At his press conference in December to announce the issuing of a tender for a consultant to help develop the business case for the stadium, the Premier admitted that he had actually made up that figure of \$700 million and that he had had no basis for saying that. He said that he had made up that \$700 million figure because he was asked, when he made his midyear announcement of his intention to build a stadium at Burswood, to give a figure to journalists. So what did he say? He said that it was going to cost \$700 million. He had no basis for that claim and there is not a single document available to support it. I asked the Minister for Sport and Recreation a detailed question regarding that issue, and the reply is in *Hansard* to show that the Premier has no idea how much the stadium is going to cost.

The Premier has just walked into the chamber; I will offer him a bet. I will offer him \$10 that the stadium will cost more than \$700 million, because we all know that that is what is going to happen.

It is interesting that the Minister for Sport and Recreation went on a world tour to see a number of stadiums as examples of what might be built on the Burswood peninsula. If we google all those stadiums, we find that every one of them had massive cost blow-outs. Not only that, but five of the six stadiums the minister visited are privately owned. Only one of them has government money in it, and that was a local government in America that funded the \$350 million blow-out by issuing a bond paid for by a bed tax on the hotels in the area, and by an increase in property taxes.

One of the things we know from what the Minister for Sport and Recreation has told us about those stadiums is that every single one had a cost blow-out. It is going to be really amusing to see the Premier come back in here and explain why the \$700 million stadium costs \$1 billion, \$1.5 billion—who knows? Not a single person in this chamber knows how much that stadium will cost. In fact, not a single person outside this chamber knows how much it will cost, because the Premier junked the proper processes for making a decision on behalf of the people of Western Australia.

I recently met with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and the point was made to me that it has for some years said that we need to have a state infrastructure strategy. I know that the Premier rejects that, and that is fine; he is allowed to do that. But I say it is not appropriate to not have any process around making an infrastructure decision. How much is it going to cost? How much interest is going to be paid?

I asked a simple question of the Minister for Sport and Recreation before Christmas: how far will a person have to walk from East Perth to the stadium gate? He does not know. I asked him: have you held discussions with the operators of Burswood Casino about people going to the stadium using the casino car park? There has been a lot of play by the government that the stadium will not have a car park because everybody will come on public transport. There is a massive car park right next door at the casino. I asked: what discussions have you had with the operators of the Burswood Casino regarding patrons of the stadium using Burswood’s car park? He said that it was too preliminary a stage for the government to have those discussions. Too preliminary a stage! The government is investing perhaps \$2 billion in this project—\$1.5 billion for the stadium, and up to \$500 million for the transport infrastructure.

I also asked the Minister for Sport and Recreation a very simple question: will people be able to get on a train at the Burswood stadium train station and get off in Joondalup? He said that he did not know. I asked him: can you

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get on a train at the stadium station and get off in Mandurah? He said that he did not know. I will tell members why this is such an important issue. I also asked the minister how long it would take 42 000 people—which is three quarters of the stadium's capacity—to get on a train. The government has said on a number of occasions that it expects three out of four people to use the train to get to the stadium. I asked: how long will it take—how many hours, minutes, whatever—from the end of a match to the last train departing the special station? That is a pretty simple question, one would think; the answer was, "Dunno". That is the answer from the government.

There is an important issue here. Unless the government is going to build massive additional infrastructure in the CBD, we cannot get a train from the Armadale line to the Joondalup line. It is impossible, unless we back the train around. What is going to have to happen? Everyone will have to get on the train at Burswood, get into the city, get off again, and then get on another train, because we cannot turn the train around; there is no right-hand turn from the Armadale line. If I am wrong, why does the minister not answer the questions I have asked? I asked those specific questions and they were not answered. I asked whether the cost of building the bridge across the Swan River was part of the government's \$700 million plan to build the stadium. It does not know whether the bridge is part of the \$700 million or whether it is extra to the \$700 million. What sort of amateur show is being run here? What sort of second-rate government is being delivered to the people of Western Australia?

I turn to another issue. Today the Premier said —

The government has also removed hundreds of boards and committees that are no longer relevant, saving taxpayers' money on member fees and administration, and cutting down on regulation.

That is a very interesting comment from the Premier. I have asked the Premier to provide the detail upon which he says there are now fewer boards today than there were before he came to government. He does not know why. He cannot answer that question. He says that about half the boards that he says no longer exist no longer exist because he changed what a board is. The Premier has indignantly stood in this chamber on a number of occasions and said that the former government did not even know what a board was. Obviously the Premier did because he stood in the chamber and said there were 1 300 boards. I asked what happened to them. He does not know, because half of them still exist. He just said that they are not boards any more. That is the sort of dishonest thing that we constantly get from this government.

There is another clanger in this speech. The Premier said —

The Treasurer will announce details of a future fund as part of the forthcoming state budget and will introduce legislation to establish the fund later this year.

Again, that is very interesting. If we look at the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* and any of the charts showing the liabilities of the government—I draw members' attention to the one on page 20—they show that borrowings will increase over the forward estimates period. There is a specific comment about that need for official borrowings by the Under Treasurer in his document regarding what is happening with the government's financial position. He says that the government is spending more money than it receives and that is why it is borrowing money. It is doing that because it says it is investing all this money in infrastructure. If a future fund is introduced while borrowing money, we borrow money to put into the future fund. That is exactly what happens. There can be no other way of looking at it. Unless we reduce borrowings and have a smaller debt, it means we are borrowing money to put into the future fund. That is like borrowing money on our bankcard to stick into our savings account. It does not make sense to ordinary people and it does not make sense to a state government, but the state government fixes that. In the last two years of the forward estimates it says that the interest it receives on deposits will be higher than the interest it paid on borrowings. In other words, the government says it will be better off borrowing more money. That is patently ridiculous. It is cooking the books. It is worth about \$400 million over the forward estimates. That is why this is a crock. This government is basing its financial projections on false positioning. There is absolutely no doubt about that. All one has to do is read the documentation. I know that many people in our community are too busy to read documents but I encourage everyone to do it because every time we look at the facts around this government, we see that they are full of spin and dishonesty and there needs to be a change.

On page 2 of today's speech by the Premier, he said —

I am proud of the Liberal-National government's commitment to resolving longstanding native title matters. This month the government made an in-principle offer to resolve all native title claims in Perth and the south west.

That is really interesting, because of course the Premier of this state of Western Australia voted to abolish native title in Western Australia. He voted to say that there was no native title in Western Australia. It was the High Court of Australia that overturned that law. That is the reason we are allowed to continue to have native title in

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Western Australia. If the Premier of this state had got his way, there would be no native title at all in Western Australia, and that would be a tragedy for every single person in this state. I encourage the government to come to a proper resolution of the Nyoongar native title claim, but let us not have more dishonesty in that process. The Liberal Party campaigned for decades against land rights in this state. Everybody remembers the television ads. Everybody remembers the Premier of this state, the member for Churchlands and the member for Darling Range standing in this place to vote against native title. That is what happened. Let us not re-write history. Let us be honest with the people of Western Australia.

I want to go on to a couple of other issues. I want to go to the question of the strategic energy initiative. It is very interesting to read some of the comments in the strategic energy initiative discussion paper. It will be interesting to see whether the report will ever be completed. The Minister for Energy is running out of time. I know that he does not like to produce any real work. The last time he put out a media release on the energy portfolio was December 2011. He has not yet responded to the Economic Regulation Authority report of December 2011 and he has not responded to the report of the Trenorden committee. Those reports set out in detail why Western Power is a failure under the minister's leadership and why Western Power is endangering Western Australians. However, let us go on to the strategic energy initiative discussion paper, which at page 13 states —

Western Australia's dependence on petroleum products is similar to the rest of Australia.

That is true. It continues —

Western Australia has only one petroleum refinery (BP at Kwinana) and relies heavily on imported oil, as does the rest of Australia.

I will make a point there. What is the government's plan to ensure that the BP refinery continues? At the moment Caltex is considering shutting its two facilities in South Australia and Queensland. What is the state government doing to discuss with BP its future plans for that facility? If it shuts, we will be entirely vulnerable to imported oil in emergencies. The discussion paper continues —

The Devil Creek gas processing plant is one example of an alternative, with the project intended to produce liquid fuels using a gas condensate feedstock.

That is very interesting. But of course gas condensate, as the Premier knows well, is a common by-product of the gas fields in the north of Australia, so it is not actually anything particularly new. It is obviously welcome, but it is not something new.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is very interesting to note that the discussion paper states —

Increased investment in generation following the establishment of the Western Australia Wholesale Electricity Market (WEM) has reduced the State's dependence on liquid fuels for electricity generation other than in remote communities.

This is the discussion paper issued by the Office of Energy on behalf of the Minister for Energy. It is saying that there has been increased investment in Western Australia because of disaggregation. That is what it says. It says there in black and white that the Western Australian wholesale electricity market is what was created by disaggregation. I have referred previously in this place to ERA reports that show that the price of electricity in the short-term trading market has halved since disaggregation—halved! The government makes it clear that investment by the private sector in generating capacity in this state has directly led to a lower wholesale price in the service delivery model. That is very important when we have, as we do, a large level of over-capacity of baseload power. It allows us to have a very low price, and I have gone through that in very great detail in the past. That is why the government of Western Australia, led by the Premier of this state, has a policy position of rejecting the amalgamation of Verve and Synergy. That is the policy of the government of Western Australia. Therefore, it is always interesting to listen to the Premier on radio, every time he gets a curly question from a journalist, coming up with the nonsense about re-amalgamation, because the policy position—not the spin of the Premier when he is under pressure, but the truth—is that the rejection of re-amalgamation is the position of the government of Western Australia. It is as interesting when we do not hear an interjection from the Premier as when we do.

We heard some more spin today in question time. The honourable Minister for Transport talked about the great investments in roads that the government is making. In the 2008–09 financial year, the Western Australia own-source investment in infrastructure and roads was \$662.489 million. In the 2011–12, it had gone down by nearly 50 per cent to \$367.623 million. The problem for the government, if it wanted to be honest, is that it would have to admit that most of the projects are funded by the commonwealth. Those are just the facts.

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A member interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Minister for Transport interjects from out of his seat that that is not true. I am sorry to tell him that it is true. This is out of his budget papers; these are the facts that he has presented to this chamber. He can sit there and say anything he likes, but these are the facts.

We have to get away from government spin, and we have to get to the facts. We also have to look at the question of sovereign risk. The biggest sovereign risk in the energy sector in Western Australia is the Premier of this state. We have had such significant investment in private sector energy capacity that that investment is now being put at risk by the Premier's continual activity on radio stations. He does not make the policy decision to reverse the government's position to reject re-amalgamation, because that is the policy decision of the government, but he goes on radio and makes comments that undermine the interests of the private sector that have invested in this state. I have been told by owners of generators that they are selling out of their investments in Western Australia because of the risk that has been presented by the Premier of this state. They are the facts about this government.

I go to another bit of spin about the foreshore. We have all seen pictures in *The West Australian* of a foreshore development covered in buildings. There is a cable car to Kings Park and an Indigenous museum. Unfortunately, that is not what the government is building. The government is building an inlet and 11 vacant building sites. That is what the government is doing. For \$450 million, it is building 11 vacant sites and an inlet, and it will cause traffic chaos for anybody like me who lives in the eastern suburbs and for the people I represent in the seat of Cannington. As I understand it, 30 000 cars a day use Riverside Drive. This is why the member for South Perth calls for a tunnel to be built on Riverside Drive. I do not know how much that would cost. I will tell members what could be done that would not cost that much—that is, the formation of a proper plan for the foreshore project that is not about building 11 vacant sites.

It is always interesting to go to this question of spin, which the government loves to use. I asked two simple questions of the Minister for Planning: when is it expected that the first coffee shop will open in the foreshore project? Does the Premier know?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Sorry; I was not listening.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: When will the first coffee shop open in the Perth Foreshore development?

Mr C.J. Barnett: As if I'd know.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is 2016. When will the last building be built? It is 2022.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Is there anything in this state that you actually support?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Absolutely.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Is there anything you have a positive thought about?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Unlike you, Premier, I do not come in here and say things that are other than the truth.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You have just been prattling on in the most negative speech for the last 20 minutes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is very interesting that the Premier makes those comments. He is not prepared to interject on the facts I raised. He is prepared only to spin; he is interested only in spin. The Premier can be really exciting and not tell the truth or he can stand in the chamber as I do and tell the truth. I have spoken the truth tonight and he has not once interjected on me because he knows everything I have said is based on facts. Everything I have said tonight about the ridiculous spin and rubbish that come from the Premier's office is the truth. He cannot interject because I am telling the truth. Now, he can go back to sleep. I saw him sleeping this afternoon. That is all right; I do not mind that. He is allowed to sleep in here if he wants.

Dr K.D. Hames: You make comments like that and I see people on your side in a similar position, and no comments are made.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sorry, the Premier goes on like this all the time and wonders why things happen. Give me a break, Minister for Health. If the Premier would tell the truth in public, that would be helpful. He should go on radio and the next time Paul Murray asks him about re-amalgamation why does he not say, "Well, the policy position of the state government is not to re-amalgamate. We spent a quarter of a million dollars on a review. We hired a person whom I am friends with and he told me not to do it, and that was the decision of cabinet." That would be telling the truth. I am sorry that the Premier is not able to do that.

I want to get on to a couple of issues which do not relate to government spin but which relate to my electorate. Schools have restarted. It is really good when we go to the schools and see a lot of new infrastructure in them.

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Every school in my electorate has had Building the Education Revolution improvements, and they are fabulous. Not a single school community in the electorate of Cannington has anything but praise for the additional facilities that have been put in by the commonwealth government through the Building the Education Revolution. Things like the new library and art room at Queens Park school have been built. The new trade centre and year 7 centre at St Norbert College and the new arts centre and early years' facilities at Cannington Community College are just fabulous. They are all very welcome additions to the schools. St Joseph's Primary School in Queens Park has been able to use BER money, plus some borrowings that were subsidised by the state and some capital grants to completely rebuild the school. It had just raised funds itself to build half the school, and by combining the BER money with all that other money, it has been able to completely finish the second half of the school. It is therefore effectively a brand-new school in Queens Park, and that is fabulous. I always make the joke when I go to St Joseph's that I went to St Joseph's, just not the one in Queens Park.

Another thing that has happened in the local area is that a couple of our schools have been given independent public school status. One of them is Lynwood Senior High School, which is just across the road in the electorate of the member for Riverton but which services Lynwood, Ferndale and Langford in my electorate, Bannister Creek Primary School in Lynwood and Beckenham Primary School in Beckenham have all been given independent public school status. I think parents want to have more control over their own lives. That includes more control over their schools and other services. What I do say is that the government cannot use this as an excuse to cut off schools. It still needs to provide support to schools so that principals and teachers have that support built around them to enable them to continue to focus on their job of teaching our children in the classroom and not get distracted by other issues.

I want to raise the question of community safety. I have some particular problems in the suburb of Thornlie. About one-third of the suburb of Thornlie is in my electorate, member for Gosnells, and it has particular problems. I continue to raise those with the local police, who are very responsive when I raise issues with them. But I want to put on record, for the benefit of the community in Thornlie, that I understand the issues they are raising with me and I will continue to talk to the local police service about what we can do about them. Likewise, in Langford, the police acknowledge that there has been an increase in problems in that part of the electorate, and I will continue to talk to the local police to see what can be done to improve the lot for people in those two suburbs in particular, but, generally, across the area.

I just want to also make a comment that the government has instituted an inquiry into the City of Canning. I am not aware of the reasons for which the government has instituted that inquiry other than those I have read about in a media release in the newspaper, but I say that the inquiry has to be done in an open and transparent manner. The people of the City of Canning need to know exactly what is being investigated; they need to be able to trust that the investigation will come to a conclusion and that they will get to know what those conclusions are. I do not think anyone wants to see an inquiry being done in which those issues are not all ventilated. I do not know that there are problems because the inquiry has only just begun, but whatever the reason for the inquiry, it is clearly not the ratepayers' fault that the inquiry has been called, particularly because it is not an inquiry into the councillors but rather the administration. Therefore, I say the government should really be meeting those expenses and not handing them on to the ratepayers of the City of Canning. We will have to see how that all goes, but I know ratepayers would not be happy to be given a bill at the end of the inquiry, particularly if it is not conducted in an open and transparent way. I would say that at this stage it cannot be considered open or transparent because there has not been a detailing of the allegations.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [9.32 pm]: I am very pleased to make this contribution to the debate in response to the Premier's Statement. I would like to begin by touching on a transport-related issue: a roundabout located just on the edge of my electorate that adjoins the electorate of Southern River. The roundabout has three main roads coming into it: Nicholson Road, Yale Road and Garden Street. This roundabout becomes very heavily congested in peak-hour traffic. Thanks to work I was able to do, design plans were drawn up for the City of Gosnells by Main Roads and a good design has been put forward. The design uses a system that is quite innovative; it is called metering. This is rather like having traffic lights on a roundabout, but they are not traffic lights, they simply halt the flow of traffic. When there is a constant flow of traffic coming down one road there is then the problem that on the other roads the cars are stuck; they are not able to get onto the roundabout. I agree with comments that I know the minister has made that this system of metering is somewhat innovative. We do not see it on many roundabouts in Western Australia. It is, of course, seen elsewhere.

Mr T.R. Buswell: We're putting them in at Eelup in Bunbury.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Right, so it is something that has come in. It is good news that we are getting this system already in Western Australia; no longer is it something totally new. But where I am particularly disappointed, and I am glad the minister is engaging on this point, is that the problem seems to be that the

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\$1.5 million required to build the traffic lights/metering lights and also provide two slip roads to alleviate congestion—something that is a real nuisance for people coming through —

Mr T.R. Buswell: Sorry to interrupt you, but it is a matter that the member for Southern River has brought to my attention extensively and I am moderately confident that we will be able to address that in the not-too-distant future, all thanks to the efforts of the member for Southern River.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: We have been hearing about that and I am sure the minister is aware that it was my efforts that probably instigated the Main Roads people to do the design plan in the first place.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I've never had a comment from you in relation to that intersection.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I think the minister has, and he has certainly seen plenty of media comment on it. This is not the first time I have raised the issue and, in fact, the last I heard was that the minister was not able to provide \$1.5 million out of the black spot funding because it was an innovative project and he was not able to alter the rules that would enable access to \$1.5 million to fix this problem. It is a very simple problem and I know that his federal parliamentary colleagues have endeavoured to intervene on this as well.

Several members interjected.

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

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I have certainly heard comment made by the member for Hasluck, the federal member for Swan and the federal member for Tangney; they have all been urging the minister. He has certainly had plenty of pressure put on him to fix this at last fix, so I think we will be very pleased.

Mr P. Abetz interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River!

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I acknowledge that the member for Southern River, too, has been involved, but I know they took my initiative to ensure that we have the design plans done.

Mr T.R. Buswell interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Therefore, at long last I gathered from the —

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mr Acting Speaker, as is normal with any speech, if a speaker invites interjections, that is normally allowed. It is very clear that the member for Gosnells is not entertaining the pathetic interjections from the minister, and I ask you to call him to order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Thank you, member for Mandurah. Members, I am sure you all know that it is unparliamentary to interject in this place. Three members on the right-hand side have been interjecting on the member for Gosnells, who has continued to try to speak through those interjections. I ask that you hold back on your interjections and allow the member for Gosnells to deliver his speech in silence.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

I will conclude on this point by saying that these works are urgently needed. The communities of Gosnells and Southern River desperately need this major bottleneck to be resolved so that they can go about their duties and get home in a quick and efficient way. So I look forward to those works being done very soon.

Another issue that is of grave concern to people in my electorate is the slowness of landowners to develop their properties. Some owners are inclined to sit on land in prime locations and not develop it. These people seem to lack entrepreneurial flair. For one reason or another, they seem to be incapable of using land that is in a prime location to its best effect, with the net result that the community has to suffer derelict buildings and the eyesore and insecurity that comes from that. Over the last couple of years I have had a number of interchanges with the Minister for Planning on this very point, and the minister has assured me that he will investigate this matter. I await some real action. Perhaps the newly convened Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority will be able to use its powers to define an area for redevelopment, and perhaps that could include these blocks of real estate, which are beautifully located straight across from Gosnells train station, into which the state has put many millions of dollars, and also into other developments around the place. But there is a missing link. That is the problem of this undeveloped private land, and the problem of owners who do not seem to have the ability or the inspiration to develop this land. One option would be a development that includes a mix of commercial and retail on the ground floor, and on the first floor there could be residential accommodation. The developer could quickly sell

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off the residential accommodation and recoup the capital costs, and the developer would then have the ongoing cash flow from the rental that would be gathered from the commercial and retail tenancies on the ground floor. There are plenty of ideas around. But unfortunately we have landowners who do not have the necessary flair to do this. They do not have the confidence to enter into the financing arrangements to ensure that the work is done. They seem to lack something.

I think this is where the state has to step in, and this is where the powers of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority could be used effectively. A number of these parcels of land are owned by different landholders, so there are difficulties when small parcels of land need to be formed into a larger holding. This is also where the MRA could be used very effectively. I think this would reassure the community that the work of the MRA is not just about major projects. I was concerned to hear at one stage that the MRA would be so absorbed in developing the Perth Waterfront project that it would not be able to do any work out in the suburbs. I think if that was the case people would, in addition to the rising scepticism about the design plans for the Perth Waterfront project, feel furious that they were not getting the benefits in the suburbs from the powers of that authority. So, clearly, we need to use the planning powers that we have. Perhaps the Planning and Development Act is a more appropriate mechanism for bringing about this development. But it is something that needs to happen in the near future.

To turn to another local issue, the Thornlie train station is working well, but its patronage is such that it is very obvious that we need to extend that train line to Nicholson Road. I know that this is another area on which the member for Southern River and I strongly agree. We would both desperately like to see that train line extended. There are varying estimates of the cost of the train line extension. A couple of years ago the City of Gosnells commissioned MacroPlan Australia to do a detailed study of the costs and came up with a figure of only \$20 million. In response, when Hon Simon O'Brien was Minister for Transport, the government commissioned its own study. It commissioned the consultancy firm Syme Marmion and Co to do the study and came up with a figure of, from memory, \$60 million to \$80 million to extend the train line. I will ask the government through the questions on notice process what the latest estimate is for that development. It is very important that the community knows so that we can properly assess where the government's transport priorities are.

Having said all that, it is incredibly disappointing to see that there is no commitment in the latest transport plan, which the government put out in the middle of last year, towards an extension of the train line to Nicholson Road. There is no real commitment to development of the transport network in the south-eastern corridor. I am encouraged that the RAC has spotted this serious flaw in the government's transport plan and highlighted it. Therefore, it is not only local members—the members for Southern River, Armadale and Forrestfield and I—who are making this criticism and highlighting this lack of vision for the south-eastern corridor of Perth in the transport plan, but also bodies that are very well resourced and very capable in their ability to analyse transport planning. The RAC is certainly paramount among those sorts of bodies and has done a good job of analysing things and seeing this deficiency.

I would like to move on to another local issue—electronic school zone signs, which are sometimes known as electronic speed limit signs. I am pleased that a few schools in my electorate have received those, but I am very disappointed that some schools on very busy roads have not received them yet. I am sure that the minister will recall correspondence from me regarding Yale Primary School on very busy Yale Road. It is still waiting for the ESZs. It is frightening when we see young children crossing the road. The crosswalk attendant does his best to get people across safely, but the traffic comes up a slight rise in the road and suddenly comes upon the crosswalk, so people are caught out and it is quite frightening. We really need the minister to provide a clear explanation of the criteria used to assess which schools should be made a priority for these electronic school zone signs. At the moment the decision-making on the criteria is opaque. I am aware of some schools that are on fairly quiet side roads, such as Thornlie Christian College, and have electronic school zone signs. I am very pleased that Thornlie Christian College has electronic school zone signs, but I do not think that it is on a very busy road.

Mr T.R. Buswell: It is on a very busy road. I have been there. I stood out the front —

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: If the minister wants to produce the statistics on the traffic volumes on Yale Road compared with —

Mr T.R. Buswell: You should be ashamed for attacking that school.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I am not attacking it, minister. I have said that I am pleased for all schools to get electronic speed zone signs. I am questioning the criteria used to determine the level of priority. I would like the minister to present clearly those criteria that he uses to determine the priority —

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Mr T.R. Buswell: You go and tell the principal at that school and the kids and the parents of the kids.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: No, I am happy for the school to have them. Is the minister prepared to present the criteria?

Mr T.R. Buswell: You go down and explain the statement you just made.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Has the minister got criteria? I take it from his failure to respond to my question that he has no criteria.

Mr T.R. Buswell: You are a disgrace. It is a brilliant school; it is an absolutely brilliant school.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: That is the truth of it. There are no criteria when it comes to —

Mr T.R. Buswell: There are criteria and you know there are criteria.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Present them or send them to me. Next time I write to the minister on this issue, will he send them to me?

Mr T.R. Buswell: They are public.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Where are they?

Mr T.R. Buswell: The criteria are public. I have discussed them. The member for Balcatta has read them out in this place.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The minister has never sent them to me. I have written to the minister about this a number of times but he has not sent them to me. The minister has failed to send them to me. I look forward to receiving those criteria.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.A. Templeman: You'll have your chance. Stand up if you want to. You've been bleating on all evening. Call him to order, Mr Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Member for Mandurah, I cannot call him to order when I cannot get my voice heard. I call both you, member for Mandurah, and the Minister for Transport to order.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I look forward to receiving a copy of the criteria that the minister used to determine the priorities for the electronic school zone sign installations. I think each school requires a budget of \$40 000 for these signs to make it safer—\$40 000 to make sure that the lives of children are improved.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Why did the former government put none in?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Because, minister, I should imagine that the technology has come a long way in the past few years. It is clear that these signs have become much more readily available in the past three and a half years. Previously, they were not as affordable as they are now.

I will move on to another local issue relating to our planning process in Western Australia. I have been receiving submissions from a number of constituents in my electorate and in the member for Southern River's electorate regarding a McDonald's that is proposed for an area of Thornlie. People are concerned that the McDonald's fast-food chain can put forward a development proposal and if the City of Gosnells knocks back that proposal, the McDonald's fast-food outlet can appeal to the State Administrative Tribunal. But should the City of Gosnells approve the development application by McDonald's, the local residents have no right of appeal. There is an inequity. It is a concern that in our planning process we have such an inequity. We do not treat all stakeholders equally. That is something that needs to be resolved. I will certainly seek to assist those constituents who live near this proposed McDonald's outlet and advise them on how they can best use the local government development approval process to have their views heard. I will encourage them to participate in that as fully as possible. We should not just leave this issue to local government; we should make sure that the system is improved so that all people have an equal voice in decision making on development applications in their areas.

I would like to move on to some broader issues. One in particular relates to electricity prices. People in my electorate, like those in many electorates, are very concerned about this issue. I was pleased when I heard the Minister for Energy announce that he was conducting a tariff and concession framework review. The review was to look at some of the things that could be done to make the price of electricity more affordable for people and to look at different mechanisms, such as a system called inclining block tariffs. That system would enable people to

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have an allocation of electricity which they would pay for, but at a cheaper rate, and which would meet their basic needs.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: We have an inclining block tariff system for water. We recognise that a certain amount of water usage is essential for people's needs, and therefore it should be priced differently from the water they consume above the normal standard requirements of a household. There are all sorts of complexities around this and I fear that perhaps this is why we have not had a response from government, any further announcement, on the tariff and concession framework review. Yes, I acknowledge there are complexities, such as what we do with large households, but I am sure that we can find a way around those complexities. What do we do if we have an allocation that, say, allows people to consume 30 units a day, which would be a fairly adequate amount for a family of four, but suddenly the family has six people because relatives arrived at their place and therefore the household was consuming more electricity? If we are talking about low-income earners, that sort of thing can really hit people's budgets hard. I am sure there are ways around those things and that is why the government, with the Western Australian Council of Social Service I understand, reviewed this issue. I am waiting to hear what the outcome of it all has been. I note, though, that in the whole process of the tariff and concession framework review some excellent submissions about electricity tariffs were made to the government. I am particularly thankful to the Gosnells Community Legal Centre for its submission. It is very telling; it outlines the fact that over the past two years it has seen a huge increase in customers seeking assistance with electricity, gas and water accounts. I note that earlier today the Premier admitted there has been a 57 per cent increase in electricity prices. He then said that the carbon price with its seven per cent increase in electricity prices will have a huge impact on our society. Fifty-seven per cent is a lot more than seven per cent, obviously, but the fact is that people are struggling to meet their electricity bills so mechanisms to assist them have to be looked at. I think that things such as inclining block tariffs should be explored as an option. It will not nullify the impacts of those dramatic price increases, but it could be a way forward.

The Gosnells Community Legal Centre provides a financial counselling service and when people access the HUGS program that we hear a lot about—the hardship utility grant scheme—they are given financial advice that can sometimes help them. One of the things identified through the scheme is that people in some cases lack the education and knowledge about energy conservation. There is also recognition that seasonal factors sometimes account for those very high utility bills. The legal centre notes that many people have to access emergency relief funding because they have overdue utility bills.

In passing, I would like to raise that many people are big electricity consumers but they might also be very big gas consumers if their hot water and heating is provided by gas, which in winter would definitely be the case. However, to my knowledge, Alinta is not part of the steering and oversight committee that looks after the hardship utility grant scheme. That is a serious deficiency in our system. It means that Alinta is unaware of the extent of the difficulties that people face and what the situation is with its own price hikes. Therefore, that is a concern.

In the Gosnells and Maddington areas there have been some 562 hardship utility grant scheme applications since February 2010. The total value of those has been some \$202 000—a large amount. The majority of the financial counselling is not for what I think it is intended, which is to help people work out how they can reorganise their budgets to not get into these terrible situations again; a lot of the time the financial counsellors spend is around negotiating with the utilities. They have to be the go-between, between householders and the utility, to make sure services are not cut off and that delays in paying bills can be managed and other arrangements made. This whole issue of how we structure electricity tariffs is one that needs to be addressed urgently by the government. As I say, I was optimistic when I heard the Minister for Energy initially talk about this and I thought there was hope, but so far we have not seen progress.

One further issue I would like to touch on is reforms to the Strata Titles Act. Members might be aware that a growing percentage of our population live in strata title premises. In fact, I have a statistic here that of the 860 000-odd homes in Western Australia, there are around 250 000 registered strata title or survey strata lots. That is a large percentage of our population. I think the figure of 250 000 needs to be reduced somewhat because that might include some premises that are not strictly residential premises. Nevertheless, a growing percentage of our population is involved in strata titles. We have a Strata Titles Act that desperately needs review. I would like to hear from the government about that. I will use the question on notice mechanisms to find out where the government is at with the review and reforms of the act. I am particularly interested in making sure a section of the act that is termed the by-laws of the act are revised in a way that allows decisions of a body corporate to be made when there is a majority view. We presently have a situation in which an almost unanimous view is required before a decision can be supported. This is really annoying for people who want to install photovoltaic

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panels on their roofs in a strata title complex. They cannot do it if one person in a strata title complex says they do not agree with the idea. Clearly, we need to improve our Strata Titles Act. It has perhaps served us well but it needs to evolve to be in keeping with the large number of people who now live in strata title circumstances. We need to give those people confidence that their investment in real estate is one they can build up and improve, and is in keeping with their hopes and aspirations.

Before resuming my seat, I would like to quickly touch on a visit I made to the United Kingdom as part of the Public Accounts Committee to investigate the public–private partnerships that the UK government has developed, particularly the private financing initiatives being used for the development of major hospitals. This is of course something that the committee will report on as part of its process; I will not breach any committee procedure. I would like to quickly outline to the house that the situation in the United Kingdom is so very different from what we face that it would be completely wrong for us to look upon the arrangements that the United Kingdom government has made with PFI consortiums as some sort of model to use when engaging Serco to be the facilities manager at Fiona Stanley Hospital. It is a totally different situation. There has been a lack of investment in good hospital facilities in the United Kingdom. There was a spate of building in Victorian times resulting in places known as Victorian infirmaries. Hospitals that have not really received any maintenance effort since those times are crumbling. People desperately need new hospitals. We visited a new hospital between Glasgow and Edinburgh, the Forth Valley Royal Hospital, which replaced the Victorian-era hospitals in Stirling and Falkirk. It is a beautiful state-of-the-art hospital. It has been built using one of these consortium arrangements, but that is very different to what we are entering into with Serco. Yes, Serco is the facilities manager at the Forth Valley Royal Hospital but its role in this consortium with a financing agency, with a construction firm, and now as the facilities manager, is very different from the contract we are entering into.

I note that the government insists on describing the arrangements that we have with Serco as being a public–private partnership. I think, from what I have read in academic papers, that there is just no way one could describe it as a public–private partnership; it is a contracting-out arrangement. That would be a far more accurate way of describing it. However, we are locked in. We have still managed to gather some of the inconveniences and problems that go with a private finance initiative arrangement. Specifically, with the Serco arrangement at Fiona Stanley Hospital, we have managed to pretend that Serco is going to take the risk. For example, if there is an outbreak of legionella at the hospital, who is going to pick up the cost of bringing the hospital back up to the standard necessary to eliminate that legionella outbreak? It will be the state; it will not be the company. It is completely wrong to say that there is any transfer of risk when we enter into these types of arrangements.

The other comment that I would like to quickly make is that I do not believe there is enough constraint on companies such as Serco when it comes to contract variation. If there is something in the future that the company identifies as needing to be modified to improve the quality of service—it could be something as simple as modifying the extent of the catering service, how meals are monitored, and how they check that someone is eating the whole of the meal they have been served—the company will dramatically increase the price of their contract; they will cash in on any contract variation.

I realise that that is an ongoing issue. As I say, the Public Accounts Committee will be reporting on that issue in full in due course. I hope the government will heed the advice that we come back with, because the \$4.3 billion contract that we have entered into with Serco—10 years plus five years plus five years—is an absolutely enormous contract and is just too much of a financial commitment by this state for us to get it wrong.

I conclude my remarks there and I look forward to hearing other presentations to the house in response to the Premier's Statement.

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

House adjourned at 10.02 pm
