

Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Roger Cook; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Jan Norberger; Mr Nathan Morton; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Eleni Evangel; Mr Ben Wyatt

BARNETT GOVERNMENT — MANAGEMENT

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland): Today I received within the prescribed time, a letter from the Leader of the Opposition in the following terms —

I wish to raise the following as a matter of public interest today.

“That this House condemns the Barnett Government for its chaotic, dysfunctional and dishonest management of Western Australia specifically:

- the loss of the state’s AAA credit rating;
- attacks on education;
- failures to plan for the state’s health needs;
- failures in the energy portfolio; and
- failures in community safety.”

I advise members that standing order 145 relating to a matter of public interest has been considered by successive Speakers to be much more limited than motions that are listed on the notice paper. As the notice period for MPIs is very short and debate time is limited, it is important to not only identify very specifically the issue targeted by the MPI, but also that debate be confined to one matter, not a broad range of different matters. This proposed motion tests the boundaries of what should be allowed as an MPI. On this occasion, I am prepared to allow this motion to proceed, but I advise that future MPIs need to be drafted in a more confined manner.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter can proceed.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [3.02 pm]: I move the motion.

This has been a dysfunctional, dishonest and chaotic government in Western Australia. In question time today we heard from the Premier an interesting insight into his psychology. He said that no-one can trust what a government does two years in the future. Who could believe that? That is an interesting window into the Premier’s psychology. He does not believe in forward estimates and he does not think that anything that happens two years hence is of any value. We saw as well in question time the Premier disowning commitments made in the budget in August. Remember, the rail lines were going to be running in 2019, according to the budget handed down in August. Now, in December, he says that it is all very difficult and that it may not be able to be done. The Premier does not know what he is doing from one day to the next. There is no continuity.

A member interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, if you want to make any comments, go back to your seat. I advise you not to make comments while your leader is speaking.

Mr M. MCGOWAN: There is no continuity and there is no honesty in the promises and commitments made before the election or even in the budget a few months ago. What have been the Premier’s excuses? “People do not take literally what you have to say.” Remember that one? “People do not believe you when you are on FM radio.” That is another one of the excuses. There is also, “People do not read the promises.” Remember that one? Literal interpretations—what is written down—does not count; if it is on FM radio, it does not count; if it is in the budget, it does not count; if it is before the election, it does not count; if it is two years hence, it does not count. What does count? Nothing the Premier says counts, because his government in Western Australia is dishonest, dysfunctional and chaotic.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Are you going to call me a blatant liar again? Are you going to do that?

The SPEAKER: Premier!

Mr M. MCGOWAN: We saw that today as well with the police minister. Remember that? Six weeks ago she was out there promising laws to deal with violent home invaders. She said they would come before the Parliament before the end of this year. That is another broken promise. She said they would come in before the end of this year. Now we find out today that that is another broken promise. This government lives and breathes broken promises. It does not matter whether the promises are made before the election or after the election; that is all the government does. The government says something one day to get through that day and then a few weeks later it pretends it never happened. We saw that with the police minister and those commitments to laws to deal with violent home invaders. That was another example.

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A lot of speakers will go over many issues today, but I want to go over just a few. This government lost the state's AAA credit rating. It was regained by Geoff Gallop in 2003 and lost by Colin Barnett in 2013 despite record revenues. This government blew out the state's debt by 700 per cent—seven-zero-zero—in five years. That is a massive increase in state debt and it is still climbing. This government did not deliver on the tax promises on stamp duty it made to small businesses and the people of Western Australia. No increases in taxation were promised and then we saw land tax go up. This government said that it would keep electricity prices at or about the rate of inflation. What do we find? They were 45 per cent above the rate of inflation in the recent budget and who knows whether prices will go up in the future. This government promised freeway extensions on a certain time frame, but they were not delivered. It committed to rail extensions to the airport and the northern suburbs, and I bet they will not be delivered. We will find out about that in the midyear review, probably just around Christmas Eve. Every indication from the Premier is that that central core issue of the election campaign will not be delivered by this government. This government lost around \$400 million in the Muja power station refurbishment disaster, another \$400 million in the solar rebate scheme and \$200 million in the energy portfolio. It lost \$1 billion—one and nine zeros—inside the energy portfolio.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Something like that!

The defining feature of this government, in order to recover from its appalling financial management, is to attack kids in schools. Next calendar year, \$158 million will be cut out of the budgets of individual schools across Western Australia. Those cuts will target children who have difficulty in reading and numeracy, and Aboriginal kids the length and breadth of Western Australia as well. That is how the government is coping with its poor economic management. In health, there is a hospital, which we will find out about shortly, with no patients for up to a year. How is that possible? The midyear review, which the government will no doubt release around Christmas to try to get out of answering questions about it in Parliament even though it knows the answers, is where we will find out the cost to Western Australia. Before the election, of course, the state government formally promised local government that there would be no forced amalgamations. Now we know that, in the city at least, the number of local governments will be halved. People will lose their jobs and rates will go up across Perth despite the promise the government made to the people before the election.

The Premier—the man himself—claims he is the big project man. Yes, he is the big project man; he is good at losing them. He lost Browse and Oakajee in the course of this year. He promised that he would bring in those two projects for Western Australia, but he came into Parliament and said that he had failed. At least he told the truth that day.

Across the budget, across the service delivery areas, in economic management—fail, fail, fail! The dishonesty is breathtaking. The Premier squirms and tries to get out of these commitments. The Premier tries to make out as though he never said it or, when it is a literal promise, that it does not matter. He tries to make out that all these things are not broken promises, but the people of Western Australia know that they are.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You're going nowhere.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sorry?

Mr C.J. Barnett: You're going nowhere.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Here is the Premier —

The SPEAKER: Premier, I call you to order for the first time today.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Here he is once again spitting that nastiness and bile that he is known for across the chamber. It is a different world. This is what really annoys the people of Western Australia. In the Premier's self-described "Dixieland" at his new office complex across the road—I am quoting the Premier—the pay rises flow freely. The capital works are on time for the Premier's new office. For everyone else, pay rises are through the floor and capital works have been delayed. There is one rule for the Premier and his staff and another rule for everyone else across Western Australia.

I turn to the government's honesty and credibility. Who knows what is going on with the Kwinana port deal? The Premier was forced to apologise to Parliament about the Synergy–Verve promise. He apologised in this place for misleading the house.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Whip and the member for Perth, do you want to go outside and finish what you are doing? I will wait for you.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 3 December 2013]

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Mr M. McGOWAN: The Kwinana port deal, the Synergy–Verve apology, the inappropriate Chevron call and the compensation payments to Perth Glory all came to light within the last few months. That is another set of dishonesties and dysfunction and chaos by this government. David Brand and Richard Court would be ashamed of this government and its poor financial management; the Premier’s lack of ability, desire or will to deliver on his promises; and the dysfunctional, dishonest and chaotic government that he has offered to the people of Western Australia, especially since March this year.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.13 pm]: This Minister for Health is the recipient of the biggest capital injection of any Minister for Health in Western Australia’s history. The irony of it is that the vast majority of that comes from Labor governments. The previous Labor government provided more than \$1 billion for Fiona Stanley Hospital. The federal Labor government provided \$430 million for the Fiona Stanley and Midland hospitals. This minister should be celebrating the success of our health sector, yet we have a dysfunctional and chaotic mess off the back of a series of mismanagement issues with our health capital works.

Let us look first of all at Fiona Stanley Hospital, which is supposed to be paperless, but is instead patient-less. This minister promised that the hospital would be open in April 2014. He went to the election saying that it would be open in April 2014, on time and on budget. This minister and his director general were living in either a fool’s paradise or a world of lies, because through either constructed ignorance or deliberate deception he went to the people of Western Australia and said that the hospital would be delivered by April 2014. Is it not extraordinary that only six months later we should discover that the hospital will not receive an unplanned admission until at least February 2015, which is almost a year after the minister said it would open? It is unravelling into a chaotic mess. We knew the hospital was about to be opened, so why have we not employed the staff ready to receive patients? The government has not delivered on that. We knew the hospital would be ready in December 2013. Why is it not ready to go? Serco knew it would be open in April 2014, and that is why the meter is running. Because of the minister’s mismanagement of Fiona Stanley Hospital, the state is being put at risk of financial penalties of many millions of dollars from Serco, the private operator, which will essentially be paid for doing nothing. That will be the legacy of this government in health for 2014—a hospital that is ready to receive patients but will not have a patient; a hospital designed to not have any paper, yet will be based on paper records; and a hospital that will be run by a private operator that will essentially be paid for running a hospital with no patients. We are yet to hear the minister explain the extra costs associated with retrofitting cupboards, storage cabinets and whole departments associated with the paper records. All these things add up. We are yet to hear the minister explain the financial penalties from Serco, the extra costs associated with the paperless hospital, and the cost implications for this state of having a major capital asset of about \$1.4 billion sit idle for more than 12 months while this government works out its mess.

Without dwelling too long on the dishonesty associated with the minister declaring that it was on time and on budget prior to the election, we have to look now at the Midland Health Campus, which was partly paid for by the federal Labor government. This was supposed to be a great success story for the government. With true Liberal zealotry, the minister went about privatising that campus. This hospital was to be delivered by a private operator, along the same lines as occurred with the minister’s incarnation, Hon Kevin Prince, and, of course, the situation at Joondalup Health Campus, but the minister forgot to check one thing—that is, whether the private operator of the Midland Health Campus would deliver the public hospital services we require in this state. In this bizarre situation, the government has let a contract and it is being told by the contractor exactly what services will be offered. The government is not saying to the contractor, “We want these services”; the contractor is saying, “No, we’re not going to give those to you because we do not believe in those services.” In this absurd situation, the Minister for Health has to develop a multimillion-dollar clinic outside the hospital to provide those services that people expect. Everyone who goes to a public hospital expects those services to be provided, but they will not be provided at Midland hospital because this minister stuffed up the contract. Such was his zealotry around the privatisation of that hospital, he overlooked the fact that the private operator simply would not provide all the public health services.

Finally, I turn to the ridiculous situation of the new Perth Children’s Hospital. The government is spending \$1.2 billion on a new children’s hospital, which will quite frankly not be big enough to meet the needs of the growing Perth population beyond 2021. Today we saw at the front of this place a group of parents concerned about their children who have mental health issues not being able to be accommodated at that hospital simply because the government mismanaged the hospital. The government had a once-in-a-lifetime historic opportunity to build a hospital that was big enough, but because it lost the AAA credit rating, it could not respond to those needs.

The government has been dishonest about Fiona Stanley Hospital, the Midland Health Campus is in a chaotic mess and we see dysfunction with the new children’s hospital. Therefore, the government should be condemned.

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MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [3.19 pm]: No area of government shows more dysfunction and dishonest mismanagement than the area of community safety. We have seen a litany of errors and broken promises in this area. This government has been a serial offender when it comes to breaking promises on policing. In 2008, the government promised 500 additional police and 200 public servants; it said it was matching our 2008 promise. Those 200 public servants were supposed to be the kind of professionals that the Commissioner of Police is now asking for—the level 6s, 7s and 8s; the people who could do the forensics, statistics and all the other requirements. However, not only did this government not employ those 200 public servants to assist police, but also those they did employ were employed at levels 1 and 2, to do basic clerical work. The government did not fulfil that commitment of 2008 for 500 additional police. It immediately redefined it as 350 police and 150 auxiliaries. This year, the government went to the election basically admitting that it had failed to meet that promise by 170 officers in total.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Shame, shame, shame, minister!

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The government said 550 more staff: 400 police, 150 auxiliaries—a total of 550. But hang on a minute! The government says, let us add another 170 to that! Let us go out at this election to say that we are promising 720. The only problem is that 170 of the 720 the government is promising are people who had not been delivered from the previous time. Not only that, but also earlier this year the government said that 16-year-old cadets will count as auxiliary officers. That is how the government is getting up its numbers. Then there is the Workforce Reform Bill 2013. What a debacle we saw last week! The minister did not even know that police officers were covered by the bill. Then there was the mandatory sentencing. The minister could say she promised it next March, but she had the member for Forrestfield ask her a dorothy dixer question on 15 October, and the minister said, “I’ll bring that legislation in by the end of the year.” Guess what? She has not done it. Members should look at the *Hansard* record.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It was a dorothy dixer and the legislation was not delivered. Then we had the blood test legislation for offenders who assault police and other emergency services workers. Last October I asked the Minister for Police when she would be bringing that in. She said probably not before the end of this year, but it would be her priority for next year. Guess what? She does not care; does not care. We asked for the Ballajura police station two or three years in a row. Every week we heard the member for West Swan table a petition and request more information. The government promised a 24-hour police station during the election, given that it was under pressure. Guess what? A 24-hour Ballajura police station will not be delivered by this government. The Morley Police Station expansion was supposed to be delivered in May of this year. According to this minister, there should be 80 officers there. That is what the government promised; it has not been delivered in Morley.

Then last week we saw the farce of the budget cuts. The answer to the question about where the Commissioner of Police will get the \$37 million to fund the voluntary severances of 196 officers is that he is finding it down the back of the couch! This minister will not deign to tell the public, if she knows, where the commissioner is cutting that money from. He has to cut that \$37 million in addition to the \$37 million efficiency dividend. The police budget is not worth the paper it is written on, because \$74 million has to be cut out right across the board. One final point—because there is such a litany, and I know other people want to speak about other failures in government—where is the criminal penalty infringement notices legislation? Why is the CPIN legislation not operating? That was legislation we passed in this house; it was urgent back in 2010. It was proclaimed two and a half years ago, and still the government has not got its act together.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [3.23 pm]: This government is just a shambles. I want to remind people about \$1.0592 billion of losses in the energy portfolio. I do not agree with the member for Midland when she says the Minister for Police has the most chaotic portfolio in the government, because she is forgetting about the Minister for Energy and the Muja power station and the solar feed-in tariff. Let me just remind people what happened with the solar feed-in tariff this year. On 24 June, the minister agreed to abolish the solar feed-in tariff for people who had signed contracts. On 23 July, he was advised of the risks of cancelling those contracts in a document that is on *The West Australian* newspaper’s website. On 8 August, the budget came down and we saw the minister and all government members and backbenchers clap and applaud the decision to abolish the solar feed-in tariff. According to the minister, that day, 8 August, was the first time he thought the government had a

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problem, and he sought additional advice—not advice in writing, not detailed advice, but verbal advice. Four days later the government backflipped. I just urge members to read the minister’s comments on 13 August in the matter of public interest debate, when he continued to complain that hospitals, schools and electricity consumers are paying for the feed-in tariff that this government signed a solemn contract to uphold.

Then there is the Verve–Synergy policy. The Premier was just wrong on his characterisation of the letter from Verve and Synergy’s chairman. It is a friendless policy. There is no plan and no costings; it is a shambles. The minister’s performance in question time every day is an embarrassment to the people of this state. He is the only person in the chamber who thinks he is a tough guy who can match wits across the chamber. Nobody else in the chamber thinks that. This is an embarrassment in this chamber. The minister needs to start understanding. An answer was given on his behalf in the upper house on Wednesday, and then he came into this chamber on Thursday and contradicted it. The minister has to get the idea that he has obligations to this chamber and to the people of this state, which he has totally failed to meet.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [3.26 pm]: The shambolic, mean-spirited nature of this government is no more reflected than in the education cuts. Every time we bring this matter to the attention of the government, it talks about 2015. Today, in answer to the Gonski question, the Premier said that the important year is 2014. In 2014, in the state funding of education, there will be a \$158 million cut to the education budget for public schooling in Western Australia. Every time we bring this up, the government talks about 2015. I have a letter from Neerigen Brook Primary School that was given to every parent. It is reflective of all schools in my area and I am sure it is the case in the member for Balcatta’s electorate, too. He should not go on about 2015. This letter refers to 2014 cuts; namely, \$20 300 out of its school grant to meet the long-service leave levy,, and \$111 765 cut from support program resources. It states —

This year we have used the money to:

- Lower the student numbers in our classes to assist those students having difficulties with their learning
- Providing in-school assistance for those students having difficulties with their learning
- Subsidising the employment of a education assistant to assist those students having difficulties with their learning in English and Mathematics

Also, it refers to cuts for the early year students in good learning strategies, and behaviour management assistance. Level 3 teachers have been used to improve curriculum and professional learning in the school; that has been abolished. The number of early year educational assistants has been reduced. Aboriginal student funding has been reduced by \$8 336. Other educational assistance has been affected. In regard to the support program resources, there has been a reduced funding allocation for support programs. In 2014, Neerigen Brook Primary School, in one of the most disadvantaged areas in Armadale, will receive a reduction of \$33 031 in one year. What a disgrace! The government should not go on about 2015. As the Premier said, 2014 is the important year in school funding education. He has failed.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [3.28 pm]: What a miserable lot opposite; it is all doom. The opposition had a dreadful start to the year; it had the worst electoral result for the Labor Party in 90 years. It is having a spectacularly bad end to this year. It has not had anything original to bring into this chamber in the last seven weeks. Its motions are repeat after repeat; its question time is repeat after repeat. I am just going to —

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mr Speaker, I am being interjected upon!

The SPEAKER: When the opposition was speaking, you had just about 100 per cent silence. I expect the same courtesy to be extended the other way.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: A number of members on this side intend to speak on this debate so I will be brief. I will give a brief overview of this place, Western Australia, which opposition members seem to portray as such a dismal, backward, under-performing place. We are proud of Western Australia and proud of this government, and I want to tell members why.

Under this government, Western Australia’s economy has had the highest growth rate and the lowest unemployment rate in Australia. I refer to regional development—look at it! The Ord River scheme was delayed for 40 years. What about Pilbara Cities? I was up there last weekend with the Minister for Regional Development. It is a magnificent redevelopment of Port Hedland and Karratha. I refer also to the

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Gorgon project, the Wheatstone project, the expansion of iron ore and the renegotiation of royalties. There are new facilities right throughout Western Australia, such that have never been seen before.

The City of Perth is going through a once-in-a-hundred-year transformation with the sinking of the railway, the Elizabeth Quay redevelopment, the riverside development and a new stadium that will be under construction by this time next year, all of which are fantastic things for the people of Perth. In the area of education, our independent public schools are leading the nation, our teachers are the highest paid in the nation and our schools are the best funded in the nation by a big margin. There has been a rebuilding of our health system in Albany, Kalgoorlie and Busselton. Did the member for Albany hear that? His government could not do that in Albany, but we have done it. In Perth there is Fiona Stanley Hospital, our achievement at Midland, and Perth Children's Hospital. Those were things that Labor talked about but could not achieve.

I refer to our extraordinary achievements in sport, with a new state facility for netball underway at Matthews Netball Centre, the nib Stadium redevelopment and the stadium on which construction is about to start. There has been a fantastic focus on arts and development —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I refer to the environment. When we came to government, we had to fix up the lead pollution mess that Labor left in Esperance. We spent \$30 million to fix—and fix it, we did—the worst environmental catastrophe since Wittenoom. We did it and we did it straightaway. We did not hesitate to fix something that the Labor Party left as part of its legacy in government. We made it very clear in the lead-up to the 2008 election that the biggest environmental issue for this state was to ensure the long-term protection of the Kimberley as one of the world's great wildernesses. We have spent \$63 million, or committed that amount, to create four new marine parks and a major terrestrial park and to train Aboriginal people to become rangers. All Labor did was talk about the Kimberley; it did nothing about it in its eight years in government.

I refer to social justice. Members opposite refer to social justice, but this government has committed \$604 million over four years to the most disadvantaged people in Western Australia. The opposition can cry and carry on, but for a left-wing party it did very little in the area of social justice. It has been the right-wing parties, the conservative parties, that have helped people in need in this state. No other government, federal or state, has come anywhere near it. In the public sector —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Warnbro is on three calls.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I refer to the work that is going on in the agricultural portfolio and in heritage. Two weeks ago, we opened the magnificently restored court house in Carnarvon.

Ms M.M. Quirk: How is the Guildford Hotel?

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, that is a very good question. I call you to order for the second time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I refer to the public service. The government employs about 140 000 people in this state in critical areas of government, utilities, public service and administration. One of the things of which I am most proud after the disastrous Labor governments from the Brian Burke era —

Ms M.M. Quirk: Get into this century, Premier!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Brian Burke was.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the third time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This government has shown great respect for the public service. One of our first acts in government was to establish a Public Sector Commissioner to oversee and, essentially, be the employer and head of the public service. That has been important. Unlike Labor governments, we have not interfered in the public sector. There was massive interference during the Burke and Dowding governments, particularly the Burke government, and there was also massive interference in the public sector during the Gallop and Carpenter governments, particularly the Gallop government.

I will finish on the following point about the public sector. In last week's debate on the Workforce Reform Bill, I tabled a document detailing the 59 public servants who were forced out, principally under the Gallop

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government, but to some extent also under the Carpenter government. They were given what was described as “management-initiated redundancies”; that is, they were basically sacked and told to leave. Yesterday, members opposite said how great Labor was with the public service. A Labor government sacked 59 public servants, including long-term career public servants who had spent their entire career, or most of it, in the public service. I refer to heads of major agencies and highly respected citizens of this state. The Labor government tramped them. Last week during debate we finally received confirmation of that. The document tabled was not disputed. Some of the 59 people were not so upset about leaving but others were very upset about being forced out. When I referred to that during debate on the Workforce Reform Bill and tabled the names and positions of the 59 people, many of whom were heads of agencies, chief executive officers and directors general who were forced out in the early period of the Gallop government, members opposite protested, but they could not dispute the names because it was there in black and white. Management-initiated redundancies were given to 59 public servants, many of them career public servants—and good people—at a cost of \$8 million. During that debate, confirmation was given by the member for Girrawheen, who was a minister during the Labor government. When I argued the point, the member for Girrawheen said —

We had all these Liberal stooges we had to get rid of ...

I will repeat it. She said —

We had all these Liberal stooges we had to get rid of ...

That is confirmation from a former minister in a former and disgraced government that it had to get rid of the stooges! The 59 people did not say they would move on; rather, the vast majority of them were forced out because they were thought to be Liberal stooges. They were not Liberal stooges; rather, they were respectable government employees who had served successive governments over many years. What the member for Girrawheen said was a disgrace. I will give her one point, though—at least she was honest and admitted that senior public servants were shown the door under the Gallop government. The opposition should not come in here and tell us to treat the public service with fairness. I am proud of the record of this government, particularly when it is compared with the record of the Gallop, Carpenter, Burke, Dowding and Lawrence governments. We will stand on our record against the lot opposite any day!

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Suspension of Member

The SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Warnbro, standing order 48 reads —

A member whose conduct has made it necessary for the Speaker to formally call that member to order more than three times in the course of one sitting for a significant breach of the rules may, by order and at the discretion of the Speaker, be suspended from the service of the Assembly until the adjournment of that sitting.

Member for Warnbro, please leave the house. I do not want to hear anything further until the member for Warnbro has left the chamber.

[The member for Warnbro left the chamber.]

Debate Resumed

MR J. NORBERGER (Joondalup) [3.38 pm]: Premier, based on today’s matter of public interest, we must be doing a good job! As I came into the last week of parliamentary sittings in what has been my first year in Parliament, I wondered what the opposition would raise in its last MPI. I wondered what the public is interested in. Perhaps it was wishful thinking, but I thought the opposition might congratulate us on our successful negotiation on education funding and on the extra railcars to expand the train fleet. Perhaps it would congratulate us on the great work we are doing in land clearing, because that is interesting to the public. But no, the opposition rehashed its poorly thought through MPIs from 2013. We are seeing a highlight reel of the mediocrity that it tried on in this place throughout the year. It got absolutely nowhere with it and all it can do in the last week, rather than coming up with anything original, is go back to its old notes, stick them together and rehash them. The opposition is nothing but a broken record.

The opposition has run out of steam. It has no new ideas or policies; in fact, it has nothing to offer the WA public at all. It is not fair to blame all members opposite. I blame the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is leading this rabble. In the contest of leaders of the two sides, the Leader of the Opposition has been found very much wanting. No-one is listening to him anymore. The public is not listening to him; even the press

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gallery is not listening to him anymore. For almost the entirety of the Leader of the Opposition's address, there was not a single person in the press gallery.

Dr A.D. Buti: They have come back for you!

Mr J. NORBERGER: Even I, as a humble backbencher, have the great privilege of having Mr Gareth Parker listening to me. He didn't even give the Leader of the Opposition the same privilege; he walked out and had his lunch! No-one is listening to the Leader of the Opposition anymore. By the looks of it, not even opposition members care about this matter of public interest. Where are the Leader of the Opposition's colleagues? It is just him and just a rehash.

About two weeks ago, my good colleague the member for Bateman yelled out across the chamber and called the Leader of the Opposition "you little ripper". I am happy to say that I do not agree with that. I think that that does an injustice to Hon Eric Ripper. Hon Eric Ripper was a better Leader of the Opposition than this one will ever be. No wonder there is a whole plethora of members circling him, waiting to roll him and take over the leadership. The member for Bassendean cannot wait to get into the Leader of the Opposition's seat. Then there are the members for Midland, Victoria Park and Kwinana all doing the numbers behind his back. Frankly, members on this side of the house cannot wait. We are hanging out for a half-decent Leader of the Opposition. What a shame that this is the best thing he can do to round off the year! I have simply set the scene and will leave it to my colleagues to go into more detail on what we have got into. Shame! Shame! Shame!

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [3.42 pm]: I am drying the tears from my eyes after that entertaining contribution from the member for Joondalup. I did not intend to speak about education this time. Speaking for a sixth time about education on a matter of public interest might be repetitive—a bit like the Labor Party's matters of public interest.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Armadale to order for the first time.

Mr N.W. MORTON: I would like to make some comments around the Gonski debate. I cast members' memories back to April 2013 when the then Gillard government made an offer of \$300 million over six years across government and non-government schools—\$183 million of that from the commonwealth and \$117 million from the state. That would have delivered \$45 million for government schools over the first four years. I draw members' attention to some of the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and I quote a few sentences of a transcript made by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's Media Monitoring Unit of a radio interview between Paul Murray and Mark McGowan. Paul Murray said in that interview —

But if you were going to that meeting on Friday with the situation as it is now would you be signing up to Gonski?

The Leader of the Opposition replies —

I would certainly be...

Mr T.R. Buswell: Read it again?

Mr N.W. MORTON: Did members miss that? For the purposes of *Hansard*, I will read the transcript again.

Mr M. McGowan: This guy is misleading the house.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Right! Paul Murray asks the Leader of the Opposition —

But if you were going to that meeting on Friday with the situation as it is now would you be signing up to Gonski?

The Leader of the Opposition's response was —

I would certainly be...

He would certainly be signing up. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition did not go to the trouble of reading the detail of the Australian Education Act, which passed through the federal Parliament.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington!

Mr N.W. MORTON: The Leader of the Opposition also said in that interview —

But at the end of the day, I do not accept the argument that the Commonwealth is trying to take over our state school system. They would not be mad enough to do that.

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Mr M. McGowan: I don't.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition did not take the time to read the Australian Education Act. It goes on to state in this very riveting transcript of interview —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I do not want to hear from you again.

Mr N.W. MORTON: The Leader of the Opposition is reported as stating in the same radio interview transcript with Paul Murray —

And what we need to do is seek a good deal for the State —

I totally agree. It continues —

but this is more money than we're currently getting from the Commonwealth and you have to build on that.

They are very wise words, Leader of the Opposition. We need to seek a good deal for the state.

I now turn to the Leader of the Opposition's website, in which Hon Sue Ellery, shadow Minister for Education, stated on Sunday, 21 April 2013 —

Mr Barnett's behaviour is further evidence that his rejection of the Federal funding is purely for his own political reasons and not in the interests of Western Australian children.

We all know what the Leader of the Opposition thinks of his colleagues in the upper house! I draw members' attention now to the offer that is currently on the table for Western Australia and our children at school.

Mr D.J. Kelly: With a bit more energy, please, member for Forrestfield.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Thanks for that insightful interjection, member for Bassendean!

I take members now to the offer which came out on 2 December 2013 from the federal education minister Christopher Pyne, which offers \$120 million for government schools over the first four years and \$31 million in 2014—all from the commonwealth and no matching funding from the state. I would say that in the scheme of things, I am very glad that the member for Cottesloe is the Premier and not the Leader of the Opposition; but I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will not have to worry about that in the future.

In summarising the debate about Gonski, the proof is in the pudding that this Liberal–National government and Premier stood fast for the interests of education in this state and the people of Western Australia, and now our schools and our system will reap the rewards from a Premier who does not make populist decisions for the people of the day but has the interests of the state at heart.

Furthermore, I would like to talk about community safety. We went to the public of Western Australia in March this year and the people of Western Australia emphatically gave us a big tick for our record and vision for this state, so much so that people like the member for Midland, who inherited safe Labor seats, are now clutching onto their seats with slender margins of 24 votes. This Liberal–National government is proud of its record on community safety and law and order. In fact, the easiest thing to do is to look at —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr N.W. MORTON: As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, the easiest thing to do is to look at the crime rate in Western Australia. Since 2008 Western Australia's population has grown by about 15 per cent, yet at the same time, the overall crime rate in Western Australia has declined by about six per cent. That is clear evidence that supports the fact that this Liberal–National government is tough on crime and tough on criminals; it always will be and it will always be tougher than a Labor government.

I could continue to talk about some of the achievements of the Liberal–National government since being re-elected in March, such as the increase in state budget funding for law and order to \$2.6 billion across WA Police, the Department of Corrective Services and the Department of the Attorney General. As the Minister for Police alluded to in question time today, the government is delivering on its commitment for nine new police dogs and handlers, three of whom graduated from the WA Police Academy on Friday. In the first 12 months since the police pursuit legislation passed Parliament, 113 offenders have received a minimum mandatory gaol term of six months. That means there are 113 fewer dangerous drivers on Western Australian roads. I think that is a good result for the vast majority of law-abiding citizens in Western Australia and the safety of our community.

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I could go on, but I will leave it to my colleagues to further demonstrate the great work that this Liberal–National government has continued to do.

MRS G.J. GODFREY (Belmont) [3.49 pm]: I do not support this motion and I wish to raise a few positive projects that the government has been involved in since I have been elected to this Parliament.

The first is infrastructure. One of the first things I had to do as the member for Belmont was to open the improvements to Great Eastern Highway. This is an amazing project, jointly funded by the federal and state governments.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: I appreciate the effect that Great Eastern Highway has on the people who live in Belmont. The second is the Gateway project. Anyone going to the airport needs safe and fast passage to the airport. The work being done on Tonkin Highway between Great Eastern and Roe Highways is moving along at a rapid pace, and that is to do with this government.

The Forster Park community centre is a facility that I had the pleasure of part-opening last month. This community facility has been funded by the government and is very much appreciated because it has a community hall and a community meeting room that are very much needed in Belmont.

My next point is on the issue of law and order. Last month we had the privilege of Minister Francis coming to the police forum that was chaired by the Commissioner of Police, Karl O’Callaghan. He outlined the effect of the new community policing initiative that is being rolled out in the south east area. Community policing is a fantastic initiative —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: It was very well received by the more than 100 people who attended the community forum.

The next issue I raise is on governance. Since being elected to this place, I have been on the Public Accounts Committee. Members of both sides of the house on the committee inherited a backlog to 2011. We have now completed up to the end of 2012. These are the Auditor General’s reports, and I feel that is a positive outcome for this current government.

The next issue is on the environment. Minister Jacob was at the Swan River for a restoration of where the embankment is falling into the river. This is a positive outcome. This is actually doing something; it is not just talking about it and making a lot of noise about the administration of the Swan River Trust, but about getting down there and doing some work on the foreshore. It was in partnership with the local government, so it was a good outcome.

The next issue is health and the health nurses who have been provided to our primary schools. I am very pleased with that. I get good feedback, because there are children from preschool who come into primary school with rotten teeth because they have not been taught how to clean their teeth. So, they have their teeth taken out and they have speech problems. This issue was picked up by health nurses through our primary schools.

Minister Waldron came to Peet Park to launch the sports grants for children. I had been told by an Aboriginal mother that she was very pleased with this grant because her son had self-harmed. What does self-harm mean? He had actually tried to hang himself. These projects happening on the ground are actually doing something; they are not talking about a lot of administration. Last week, I was with Minister Simpson for the grandparents’ grants launch. I have in my electorate a great-grandparent who has two great-grandchildren in their teenage years in her care. She was very welcoming of the money that she can get as her great-grandchildren start high school.

I would like to close on this last project, which I helped subsidise—namely, the Blue Light disco with the police and community youth centre. The police were very supportive of this. We ran that disco in Belmont and it was highly successful. We will be running more of them, which I have spoken about before in this place, because there are mostly Aboriginal grandmothers who mind children and they say that there is not enough for them to do. The member can laugh—I am talking. The Blue Light disco, I think, is a wonderful thing that we can have.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove) [3.54 pm]: I would just like to add to my colleagues’ contributions. This debate is just like the budget reply; it is quite shambolic. The opposition is prosecuting two arguments once more —

Several members interjected.

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The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.C. NALDER: Members opposite are prosecuting an argument that we are not tight enough fiscally and are running up too much debt, yet we are also too harsh if we cut X or spend on Y. Just play back the member for Midland's speech and listen to it!

Something fascinating is occurring on the other side and I have watched it in a few debates now. Members opposite jump straight from an allegation to a conclusion without substantiating it in the middle. It was interesting to listen to the member for Cannington, who said that we had lost a billion dollars. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say the same thing. They both claimed that it had been lost on Muja power station. I might need to check with my colleagues, but when I last looked, Muja power station was operating; I did not think it was lost at all! Therefore, I am not sure where it has been lost.

Anyway, there are further allegations like that. Members opposite talked about the loss of the AAA credit rating and I just want to spend a couple of minutes of my time —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, member for Cannington; I call you to order for the first time. Member for Bassendean, I have made a mistake. I actually have called you to order on two occasions, so I do not really want to hear from you again.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I will take my time to touch on the AAA credit rating. I will put it into context because the opposition makes such a big issue of it. The loss of the AAA credit rating has an effect of \$21 million a year on our budget bottom line. I would like to draw people's attention to the fact that the exchange rate has moved 16c in the last 12 months. The impact on our budget from the exchange rate movement is \$1.2 billion. I will not claim the whole \$1.2 billion because I will take a median point, but that is \$600 million. The iron ore price has moved between \$US114 and \$US133 over the last 12 months. The impact on the budget bottom line of those movements is \$855 million. The effect on the budget across those two lines is over \$2 billion, yet the AAA impact —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington!

Mr D.C. NALDER: The impact of the loss of the AAA credit rating is \$21 million. As a government, we are not shying away from the fact that we want to restore the AAA credit rating, but I think it is important to understand the context of it. We have made massive investment in health, education and transport infrastructure and in infrastructure that is transforming the City of Perth and regional communities the length and breadth of Western Australia. We make no apology for the fact that the government has to borrow money and make a conscious decision to invest in this infrastructure. We will deal with the issue that Standard and Poor's identified; we will deal with the state debt.

MS E. EVANGEL (Perth) [3.57 pm]: I speak in opposition of this matter of public interest because it is a farce. It just goes to show that for all the public opinions and displays of interest in my electorate, members opposite have absolutely no idea what is going on in Perth. I suggest that they take the time to go into the city and see for themselves the amazing investment that this Liberal-National government has made in the City of Perth, of which I am extremely proud.

There has been a \$300 million investment in education in the 2013-14 budget. I am happy to say that schools in the Perth electorate have benefited from that and we are fulfilling our election promises. There is \$1.25 million for Mount Hawthorn Primary School to build a brand-new undercover area to house all the students, to re-lay all the bitumen for four tennis courts and two basketball courts and to provide brand-new bitumen for the parking area at the school. I am really proud of that \$1.25 million commitment and I look forward to seeing it come to fruition in the very near future. North Perth Primary School for years battled to get a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone on View Street but it just was not happening. However, I thank this police minister and Minister for Road Safety because she came out to my electorate, had a look at the area and within moments it all came to fruition. Now I can proudly say that there is a very safe crossing at View Street for the North Perth Primary School community. Additionally, there are wigwags for Charles Street; that is a commitment to road safety and the safety of our children in my electorate and I am extremely proud of that.

I move on to urban infrastructure. We have completely redeveloped the inner city. Everywhere I go within my electorate—I am proud to say that I live and work in my electorate—people constantly come up to me and say how fantastic and vibrant the city looks. Much to the opposition's disdain—members opposite cannot stand it—we are in fact rebuilding this capital city and it will be a city of national and international significance.

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Testament to that was the front page of yesterday's newspaper and the article about how the median house price has risen to about \$530 000, if I recall correctly. Why? It is the inner-city residential pull that is increasing these prices. Why is that? It is because of this Liberal–National government's investment in our capital city. The Perth City Link is a once-in-a-hundred-year lifetime opportunity that we are taking to link Northbridge with the city. Within the next 12 to 18 months we will see public spaces at the waterfront in operation. That will be well and truly beyond any of the private spaces that will be operating. These are two major projects that are revamping our city and making it the place where everyone wants to live, work and play.

Our commitment to safety in the city includes \$93 million for a brand-new police complex. I congratulate the Minister for Police for that; I have just had a tour of the police complex and it is absolutely magnificent. It is outstanding and an amazing outcome for Northbridge. We have seen a decrease in criminal activity in Northbridge in the last five years that is all due to the good work of this Liberal–National government. The police complex houses 500 officers and support staff and is open to the public 24 hours a day. The watch house can hold 72 people overnight.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [4.00 pm]: There is nothing more ad hoc, reactive, chaotic and dysfunctional than this government's management of the state's finances. Members opposite have all stood today and gushed about what the government has been doing for them, but I note that the Treasurer did not get up to defend the Premier today. The question time performance from the Premier gives me some indication of why the AAA credit rating was lost under the watch of the Liberal–National government. The Premier stood and said, "Now that we are looking at the rail line to the airport, we have discovered that there is a river that we have to cross". They discovered that a river has to be crossed. I must admit that the Premier said that with some surprise! I would have thought that when he said "fully funded, fully costed", at some point he might have costed a bridge. At some point he would have thought, "Well, if we're going to make this commitment and say it's fully funded and fully costed, let's go and have a look to see if we need to cross the Swan River." Then the Premier got up and said, "It's okay. Member for Forrestfield, I have stood fast against the Gillard–Rudd government and I have stood fast so well that I have a worse deal under Abbott. I am getting less money out of Abbott, but I am getting more money next year." That echoes the Premier; he has never believed in the forward estimates, and then he explains why our net debt is going up and up for the next 10 years. I have said this before: if people do not know where they are going across the forward estimates, this is where they end up—the AAA credit rating lost by a reactive and dysfunctional government.

Ministers tell us all the time that they do not know what is going on because the Premier's office has to tell them. The Leader of the House says he does not know what is going on today because he has to wait for the Premier to get here and tell him. When people react like that, there is not only poor management of the house, but also poor management of projects—Oakajee, gone, and Browse, gone. All these projects that the Premier stuck his reputation to are gone. To slightly reverse the words of the Premier, it may be that it is always progressive or left-wing governments that have to manage the finances responsibly. We understand that as much as it is great to open schools and other new things, the finances actually have to be managed. When those opposite all leave this place, as they all will do—except for the Leader of the House; he will be here forever—they have to make sure that the finances are still in some shape for the next generations of Western Australians. That is what they have failed to do. They have completely destroyed the next 10 to 15 years of financial capacity to respond to the financial circumstances that may arise. If we had another global financial crisis, how much flexibility is left in the state's finances to respond to that? None!

The member for Alfred Cove said that it is okay; we can go down to junk status as long as the Aussie dollar is working all right. That was the member for Alfred Cove's response.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr B.S. WYATT: His response was that we can go down to junk status, and as long as we are all okay on the Aussie dollar, we will all be right. It comes back, Premier—he did not address this during question time. "Fully funded, fully costed" was the great Liberal lie of the last election campaign. With a conservative mob, one would think that when it emerges that the fully funded component was about a third party paying for its election commitments, it would prioritise. It would say, "Well, let's do this and that." But in the August budget—just in August, members—it is doing the lot, apparently. The revenue projections have not changed. The revenue is holding up, but I have not yet seen any prioritisation, or any saying to this fella here, "It's all up to you guys to do it. We do need to leave the state's finances in some form of order or array so that the next group of Western Australian members of Parliament can have the flexibility to manage those finances." That is why the AAA rating is important, member for Alfred Cove. Ultimately, it is the independent third party assessment of how the

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government manages the finances. Hung around the government's neck is the reality that it is the Liberal Party that lost the AAA credit rating. Labor is here to restore it, and I know that is what we are going to have to do when we get back into power. As a result of the dysfunction and the fact that that guy there in the front seat does not trust any of that lot to make any decisions, they are left with this situation in which none of them knows what is going on. Minister after minister confirms that to us and they all know it is true. The fact is that the Leader of the House still comes in here every single day and makes the point that he does not know what we are dealing with today and we will have to wait until the Premier arrives. At some point, Premier, there is a little Liberal Party disease going on, which we are seeing play out at the federal level as well. There is no connection between what it says in an election campaign and how it governs. Ultimately, it is not sustainable.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J. Farrer
Mr W.J. Johnston

Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Mr M.P. Murray
Ms M.M. Quirk

Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr P.B. Watson

Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (35)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr T.R. Buswell
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Mr V.A. Catania
Mr M.J. Cowper

Ms M.J. Davies
Mr J.H.D. Day
Ms W.M. Duncan
Mr J.M. Francis
Mrs G.J. Godfrey
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr C.D. Hatton

Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr R.F. Johnson
Mr S.K. L'Estrange
Mr R.S. Love
Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr J.E. McGrath
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Mr N.W. Morton

Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr J. Norberger
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Pairs

Ms J.M. Freeman
Ms S.F. McGurk

Mr P.T. Miles
Ms E. Evangel

Question thus negatived.