

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

## PREMIER’S STATEMENT

### *Consideration*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR M.P. WHITELEY (Bassendean)** [10.44 am]: Last year in the 2011 Premier’s Statement response I outlined 16 issues. Four of these affected my electorate directly and 12 were general issues. I am going to go back and touch on the progress of those issues, where they are going and how many have been resolved. Before I do that, I want to talk briefly about another three issues that I either have had some involvement in over the last year or intend to in the coming year. The first one is the issue of prescription drug abuse, on which I made quite a few statements and on which there was quite a bit of media commentary in the lead-up to Christmas. Since then, on 12 February 2012, Tanya Plibersek, the federal Minister for Health, issued a media release in which she outlined a new system to crack down on prescription painkiller abuse and referred to fast-tracking the introduction of the electronic recording and reporting of controlled drugs system. That is a good thing. She identified in her press release that —

“Following calls from coroners, law enforcers and consumer groups for greater control over distribution of the drugs, the Gillard Government is pleased to be making this electronic system available.”

I have not been able to get full details from the minister’s office yet, but it does say in this media release that the drugs that will be monitored on the system are schedule 8 drugs. That sounds as though it is going towards what I have been calling for, which is real-time sharing of information about divertible drugs and abusable drugs when they are dispensed by pharmacists, so that sounds as though it is addressing the problem. I do have some outstanding issues that I will seek to resolve through the federal minister’s office. Does the range of drugs include all schedule 8 drugs? In addition, I have a concern that some schedule 4 drugs may also be part of the problem of prescription drug abuse and I want to know whether this move will capture those. So that is an issue that I will be following up on. However, it looks as though the feds have heard the call and done something about it. Unfortunately for the Gillard government, I think there is a demonstration of a problem, which accounts for why it is not travelling terribly well politically. When it issued the press release, it managed to generate a tiny article, which appeared on about page 37 of *The Sunday Times*, on what was really a significant initiative and a significant issue. Frankly, it has done a great thing here, and it should have put more effort into selling the message to the public.

The second issue I want to talk about at length if I have time at the end of this speech is the mental health bill 2011 that has been put out for public consultation. I have some real problems with this bill. I think all members of this Parliament have a duty to get interested in this bill, because it transfers some extraordinary powers to authorised mental health practitioners, and I will detail those a little later.

The other thing I want to do at the end of this speech is restate and elaborate on my call for Professor Ian Hickie to either stand down or be stood down as a national mental health commissioner. That issue received some media coverage on Monday last week, on page 3 of *The Australian*, in relation to a controversy that is rolling around Professor Hickie’s publication of an article in *The Lancet* and criticisms that he has received from a number of mental health professionals around the world, including the editor of *The Lancet*, and I will talk about that a little later.

However, going back to those 16 issues that I talked about last year, the first issue that I want to talk about very briefly is the Pyrtton site—something which I have spoken about at length and which is of considerable interest to the people in my electorate of Bassendean. I placed a question on notice last December, asking for the follow-up on information that was given to me by the relevant minister, Hon Simon O’Brien, in June last year that he would take the future of Pyrtton to cabinet in the very near future. There was some publicity in the local newspaper. I do not know how it got it, but it managed to get a copy of the relevant document, the Bennett Brook Nyoongah cultural and environmental concept plan, as reported in the *Eastern Suburbs Reporter*. I, as the local member, have not been able to get that, the public certainly has not been able to get that and the constituents of my electorate certainly have not been able to get that, and there it was in the *Eastern Suburbs Reporter*. I had a subsequent conversation with the Minister for Commerce, who said that he was about to take this to cabinet. When I asked him when this concept plan would be released, the answer was —

Timing of release of a concept plan is yet to be determined.

That is not good enough. This issue is rolling on. We do not know what is in this plan. The people of Bassendean and Lockridge, and the surrounding suburbs, have every right to be concerned.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

The second issue I want to talk about briefly is the Ashfield precinct plan. I am frustrated with the slow progress that has been made with the Ashfield precinct plan, along with the Pyrton issue, since we lost office. Significant progress was made when Labor was in government. It has all come to a screeching halt. I will apply as much pressure as I can in my time left as the member for Bassendean. I have raised the matter in my weekly meetings with my successor, Dave Kelly, who will hopefully take over as the member for Bassendean after the next election.

The third local issue I want to discuss is the progress of the cycleway from Tonkin Highway to Bassendean train station. Deadline after deadline has been pushed back with this cycleway. My understanding is it was supposed to be completed by the end of March, but nothing is happening. A fence was erected in about October last year that led me to think we were making some progress on the construction of the cycleway. Some work seemed to be happening, but now it has all come to a screeching halt. Yet another deadline that was put in place by this government for the delivery of an important piece of infrastructure for the people of Bassendean and the people who live beyond—all the way through to Midland—seems to have come to a screeching halt.

The one good thing I would like to say, which I raised in last year’s address-in-reply, relates to Hampton Senior High School and the need to fund a gym. I put a lot of pressure, as did the parents and citizens association, on the Minister for Education, and it worked. She announced last year there would be significant funding, from memory in the order of \$2.5 million, to build the new gym. That is great news. It is a win we can all be pleased with.

The fifth issue I want to discuss briefly is the Murray family’s outstanding debt related to the tragic loss of life of their daughter Claire Murray. I will not go through the full details of that issue except to say that I heard some of the ugliest sentiments expressed by Western Australians on talkback radio. The sentiments were ugly and ignorant. If people bothered to inform themselves of the full details of this story, they would have nothing but absolute sympathy for the Murray family and the efforts they have made to pay back this money. I worked with the Minister for Health, who I know has met with the Murray family, and I am hopeful that we can progress this issue. I am hopeful that the efforts the Murray family have made to raise the quarter of a million dollars will be enough. I think they have fundraised in the order of \$60 000 to \$80 000. I hope we can accept that that is a great effort. Frankly, this girl suffered from quackery. I named the clinician who was responsible for that quackery in the Parliament previously; I do not intend to do it again. If people want to read my blog entitled “Claire Murray: A casualty of Perth’s Generation deX”, they will read the full detail of the treatment this girl received and why she went on to become a drug abuser. She was initially a prescription drug abuser and then became a heroin abuser. People will have nothing but sympathy for the family if they understand the details of that. Nonetheless, I am happy that this matter seems to be progressing well.

My interest in organ donation was sparked by Claire’s tragic circumstances. It became perfectly obvious to me that regardless of the merits of individuals receiving organs, there simply were not enough organs available for people in need of them. I have done what I can to progress this issue. I introduced legislation to Parliament last year, which is supported by the Labor Party. It offers an approach to increase organ donation rates. I have had discussions with the Minister for Health. Frankly, I do not care whether he takes the nub of my idea and puts it in separate legislation to be introduced by government or whether it can be achieved through regulation, or whatever approach can be taken. I offer that as a private member of Parliament and in the spirit of bipartisanship. Two other members from other parties were involved in this process. I am hopeful we can progress that issue. It is theoretically possible that bill could be passed with support from the Labor and National Parties, but I do not think that would achieve much. I really want the government to buy into this. Without the government buying into this, it will not be properly implemented and it will not be a successful system. I offer that to the Parliament. Whether it is progressed through my legislation or through taking the nub of my legislation and embedding it in government legislation, or whether it can even be achieved through regulation, I am not sure.

The seventh issue I raised last year was an issue to do with people with diminished mental capacity, particularly elderly people with Alzheimer’s, and the capacity for people to manipulate the process by which they become the guardian and have someone officially classified as being unable to look after their own affairs. A person—who is not actually from my electorate—approached me out of a concern about the capacity to seek an expert of choice to get a predetermined outcome that would result in someone being declared incapable to look after their own affairs. I thought it was a real issue, and I intend to follow it through, but I have to say, with the new mental health bill that is out for public comment, there are far bigger issues and far more worrying issues than this simple issue alone. I will talk about those later. The draft mental health bill 2011 is out for public comment. Members can expect to hear a lot about that from me over the coming months.

The eighth issue I raised related to my desire that the Western Australian Electoral Commission become involved in preselections. The ninth issue was my push for reform of the Labor Party. I have done what I can; with little success on both issues. I think I helped raise the issue in the public arena, but I will give up. I am

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames; Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

going to apply for an entry in the book of heroic failures on both issues! They are major challenges. At least in terms of the Labor Party, the language of reform is being embraced. It is up to others to pick up the cudgels and run with that.

The tenth issue I raised last year was the issue of the supported accommodation option. I outlined that in an opinion piece published in *The West Australian*. It related to very dysfunctional families. As a last resort, instead of separating families, we should try to provide intensive 24/7 supported accommodation facilities. It is fair to say that when I wrote that paper I was a little nervous because it concentrated on issues of Indigenous dysfunction, which, unfortunately, are very prevalent in my electorate. The response I got was fantastic. Stephen Breen, the president of the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, was very supportive. I got a lot of support from Indigenous women in Western Australia. I am hopeful we can actually pick up that idea and run with it. I will certainly push that as hard as I can in my remaining year as a member.

The eleventh issue I raised was the operation of the Complex Attention and Hyperactivity Disorders Service; namely, the two CAHDS clinics—one at Joondalup and one at Murdoch. I think it is fair to say I was responsible for driving those and getting those established. They are good clinics and provide a good service. I am still very concerned about the referral pathway. The whole purpose of those clinics was to give parents the opportunity to have a second opinion for children diagnosed with a range of disorders, but particularly attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Unfortunately, the referral pathway, or the entry to those clinics, is via an authorised prescriber. The control of the child's treatment remains with the authorised prescriber. They, in fact, can create a bottleneck. In its very essence, my concern is that the very people who create the problem are determining access to those clinics. I will push that as hard as I can over the next year. Although it is great that the clinics are there, I do not think they are achieving as much as they could.

The twelfth issue is one that I am incredibly pleased with and proud of in terms of the progress that has been made over the past year. I have campaigned since 2007 about my concerns that the National Health and Medical Research Council's draft guidelines for ADHD have been corrupted by conflict of interest issues. Again, if people want to read my blogs, I have outlined those concerns in great detail. Initially, there were conflict of interest issues because of the make-up of the panel and then, finally, the straw that broke the camel's back in terms of the federal government, the conflict of interest issues in undisclosed pharmaceutical company payments to the most commonly quoted author in the study—Professor Joseph Biederman. I argued that these draft guidelines are so corrupted that they should be pulled down and a new process should be started; unfortunately, they are still available on the National Health and Medical Research Council website. They should not be because they are corrupted; they need to be pulled down.

Nonetheless, the major thing I argued for was an independent group to develop final guidelines, if members like, or clinical practice points as they have been termed, for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. At last we have a balanced group. This group has people with divergent opinions; we have people such as Professor Michael Kohn from New South Wales—I am a fierce critic of his work; members can read that on my blog—and at the other end we have Jon Jureidini. This committee will represent all viewpoints, and it is making progress towards having a balanced approach to the diagnosis and treatment of this "disorder". I am very proud of that, and I am very pleased that that has happened. I will continue to monitor that group's outcomes. It has put out draft clinical practice points, and there are some issues with those—in fact I wrote a 12 500-word response to the issues raised there—but nonetheless I can already see that there has been some improvement.

The thirteenth issue I raised last year was the overreliance on psychotropic drugs for children in care. Again, the details of this issue are available on my blog. In brief terms, the concern is that kids who are going into care—either foster or institutional—are often put in a chemical straitjacket with a range of prescription drugs that do not deal with these children's underlying problems. Often, they come from very traumatic circumstances and we need to burrow down and support them. I am not saying there is no role for psychotropic drugs—I am often mischaracterised as saying that there is no role for psychotropic drugs; there is. I am just concerned that they are overutilised. There is evidence out of New South Wales that this overutilisation is common, there is evidence out of Queensland that this is common, but I cannot get the evidence in Western Australia. I have approached everyone from Minister McSweeney to the Premier to the Minister for Health, and I have gone down every avenue I can and I have not been able to get anywhere.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** The government has its head in the sand on this issue. I think there is always a danger that governments do not want to know the extent of a problem, because when that is identified, they actually have to do something about it. I will be pushing as hard as I can, and I am frustrated that I have not been able to make progress on that. I am particularly frustrated with the response of Minister McSweeney, who I think is one of this government's weakest ministers.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

The fourteenth issue I raised last year was that of Strattera; people have heard me talk about Strattera—an ADHD drug—and my long-term fight to, first, prevent it being put on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme, and then to have it taken off the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. Strattera carries a black box warning, which is the highest possible warning, for suicide; it also carries a warning of the risk of fatal liver damage. This year another risk warning has been added, that of cardiovascular problems associated with this drug. If members type in “Strattera” on the internet, my website is the third-highest hit; if members type in “Strattera Australia”, my website comes up as the top blog, because it actually outlines the full story of Strattera. I have done a rough sort of back-of-the-envelope exercise because earlier I had access to Eli Lilly’s sales projections for Strattera, and it has not achieved anywhere near the projected sales for Strattera; if I have helped to contribute to that by raising the profile of Strattera’s very sad history, I am very proud of that.

The fifteenth issue I raised in my speech last year, significantly in this Parliament and also on my blog, was my opposition to the inclusion of psychosis risk syndrome in DSM–5—DSM–IV being this book here; the current “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders”, produced by the American Psychiatric Association. I am so pleased to be able to say that the highest profile proponent of the recognition of a psychosis risk syndrome in Australia—arguably, the world—Professor Patrick McGorry, has actually reversed his position. If people have a look at my latest blog, I have praised Patrick McGorry for reversing his position. He did it through my blog, last June, but he did it publicly again in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on Monday, 20 February. I do not have time to read through all of it, but I will just read a little quote from Professor McGorry. The primary concern was that psychosis risk disorder—attenuated psychosis syndrome is an alternative name—would see adolescents considered to be at risk of psychosis being put on low-dose antipsychotics. Professor McGorry stated —

I think it’s a valid point to be concerned about the harms particularly in places like America ... I think probably I have given a bit more weight to that argument now”.

I am rapt that someone as high profile as Patrick McGorry has reversed his position. It is outlined in this article titled “About-turn on treatment of the young”, and it is great news for all involved. I congratulate Professor McGorry for having the flexibility to do that.

The sixteenth issue I spoke about was the future of the Raine study ADHD data. We have a unique story—I have probably lectured members with it till they are bleeding from the ears—about ADHD in Western Australia. The chief author of DSM–IV, Dr Allen Frances, is writing a blog for *The Huffington Post* that will be published in the next month or so about the Western Australian ADHD story and how significant it is. I do not know whether members are familiar with the Raine study, but it is a long-term study of the general health and wellbeing of children that started in 1989. It covered about 3 000 kids, and because there were such high rates of ADHD prescribing during that period it provided a unique data source whereby we could look at how kids who were diagnosed with ADHD and drugged were going compared with kids who were diagnosed with ADHD and not drugged. The kids who were not drugged but had “ADHD” were doing much, much better in that they were 10.5 times less likely to be rated as failing school. It is a significant study. We have long-term data—that is why it is unique—and there has been data analysis between age five years, when none of the children were medicated, and age 14 years. We now have data available for children—they are not children anymore—at age 17 and age 20; in fact, they are aged 22 or 23 years of age now. This is a rich data source that will be tapped, and I engaged in an exchange with Professor Fiona Stanley when she was still in her position at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, and I am very confident about the processes that she outlined to me about how that data will be taken forward.

In my remaining time I want to speak very briefly about some of the issues I raised at the start. I have obviously made a very large decision. People have put to me that I am retiring from politics; I would like to say I am not—I am actually jumping in at the deep end. I am leaving party politics to enter full time, hopefully, into the politics of mental health because I am deeply concerned about the future of mental health policy and practice in this state, in the country and across the globe. Mental health policy, in my view, is influenced by at least three factors, which I will list in descending order of importance: the first factor is money—the most important; the second factor is power, empire, and convenience; and the third and least important factor is science. I think that is wrong. I do not have time to talk about it in great detail, but very, very often money and power corrupt the science of mental health. We need to turn that around; we need to make it the other way around. Evidence and science and truth need to be driving mental health practice and policy, and that is what I intend to dedicate the rest of my working life to.

Let me declare where I stand so that there is absolutely no confusion about the politics of mental health; my position is easy to distort and mischaracterise. I am certainly not antipsychiatry; I am anti–bad psychiatry. Bad psychiatry, in my view, is the sort of psychiatry that is too quick to label and too quick to medicate. Much bad psychiatry is in fact imported psychiatry—particularly imported American psychiatry. As I said, I have spent

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

much of my career bagging DSM–IV and its definition of ADHD. It is really strange—politics takes us on some strange journeys—because one of my strongest allies now is actually the lead author of this book, Dr Allen Frances. His is the top name on the task force for DSM–IV; he was the chairperson. He has realised that there are unintended consequences as a result of that book and he is a passionate advocate for not repeating the mistakes of DSM–IV in DSM–5.

Obviously I have great concerns, which I have outlined publically, about the validity of ADHD as a psychiatric disorder. I do not believe that it is a valid psychiatric disorder. Some people have mischaracterised my position and said that I do not believe in mental illness. That is absolute rubbish. Mental illnesses such as depression, bipolar disorder and autism are real. I will not go through the full list of them and outline which I believe are valid and which I believe are not. However, all of those types of conditions, such as depression, are subject to two corrupting forces, the first of which is diagnostic creep. In other words, more and more people are diagnosed with the condition. The second corrupting force is over-prescription, which is often driven by the corrupted science of the pharmaceutical companies. Although I have concerns about the treatment of depression and the expansion of the use of antidepressants and psychotropic drugs, I acknowledge that depression is a real condition and that under certain circumstances the administration of psychotropic drugs is the most appropriate response. However, I think we have the balance wrong.

What have I learnt about mental health? I have learnt that it is rarely definitive and the science is very immature. An article in the July 2011 edition of the *New Scientist* describes the human brain as the most complex object in the universe. My understanding is based on an article I read—cannot remember the source—that stated that our understanding of the human brain was like having an early nineteenth century map of the world; we sort of know where the continents are and a little bit about them and we might know where some of the major water passages are—we might have discovered Bass Strait—but we do not know a lot more about the human brain than that. The human brain contains 70 billion neurons and literally thousands of kilometres of circuitry.

In my experience, the worst mental health practitioners are those who claim to know more than they actually do. Unfortunately, I do not have enough time to outline everything I wanted to say or why I have called for Professor Ian Hickie to be stood down as a commissioner of the National Mental Health Commission.

I turn briefly to my concerns about the draft Mental Health Bill 2011 that is out for public comment. The public comment period finishes on 9 March this year, and I certainly will be making a public comment. My good friend the member for Forrestfield is very interested in this issue as well. I have been going through the bill that has been put out for public comment in great detail and identifying some real problems with it. I do not have time to outline them in detail but I will briefly outline some of them. The Chief Psychiatrist has a very broad ability to designate people as mental health practitioners, who have extraordinary powers to detain people for up to 72 hours. “Mental health practitioner” is not limited to psychologists and psychiatrists; the Chief Psychiatrist is authorised to delegate his powers to authorised mental health practitioners, who, as I said, have an extraordinary ability to detain people involuntarily for 72 hours. They are the sorts of powers that we would be very concerned about if they were given to the police. Another concern is the ability for children as young as 12 to have psychosurgery, which is of great concern, and only slightly less concerning is they can have electroconvulsive therapy without the consent of their parents. That is extraordinarily concerning. Under the bill, children will be able to give consent on their own behalf if they are considered to understand their situation. How can a 12-year-old with severe mental health problems be in a position to give informed consent? I have been looking into that because it really concerns me. Some other issues that I have with the bill are the expansion of community treatment orders; the fact that psychiatrists do not have to give reasons for issuing community treatment orders; and not having an automatic review process, at least within the first three months. Also, this bill slants the burden of proof on the ill patient rather than the treating clinician or the mental health professional. I have not had time to outline those matters in the type of detail that I had intended, but the member for Forrestfield and I will make a lot of statements on this over the coming months. This is a real issue that all members should be concerned about.

**MR A.P. O’GORMAN (Joondalup)** [11.15 am]: I rise to give my response to the Premier’s Statement. I acknowledge that, like every other member’s electorate, the boundaries in the electorate of Joondalup that I will be contesting at the next election have changed, although only marginally. I welcome back to my electorate an area of Currabine that I had serviced previously. It is good to have those people back in the electorate of Joondalup.

I will talk about a number of issues that bedevil us in the northern suburbs, the first of which is the Joondalup Health Campus. Over the years, Joondalup Health Campus has grown in size and capacity. It is the major hospital in the northern suburbs and will service over 360 000 people by 2020. The previous Labor government planned to develop Joondalup Health Campus as the third tertiary hospital in Western Australia. However, these

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

plans have been shelved in favour of keeping two tertiary hospitals in central Perth. The “WA Health Clinical Services Framework 2005–15” designated three tertiary hospitals dispersed across Perth to meet demand. They were Fiona Stanley Hospital in the south, a combined Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital and, by 2015–16, Joondalup Health Campus in the north was to operate as a tertiary hospital. As outlined in the “WA Clinical Services Framework 2010–20”, Joondalup Health Campus will remain a general hospital within the scope of the 2010–20 clinical services framework. This means that there will be no cardiothoracic services and a host of other services will be downgraded, including surgical services, emergency trauma services, operating theatres and training and research. The Reid review highlighted the need for a hospital located in the northern suburbs and the government must develop Joondalup Health Campus to a tertiary level to provide a full suite of medical services for the residents of those suburbs. The government cannot simply ignore us. The retention of Royal Perth Hospital as a circuit hospital should not be at the expense of Joondalup Health Campus becoming a tertiary hospital. The northern suburbs are expanding strongly and there is a high demand for premium hospital services in the region that can be achieved only by Joondalup Health Campus gaining tertiary status. That is something that I have been banging my lips about for quite a long time, and I will continue to do so until Joondalup Health Campus is recognised as a tertiary hospital.

We all know that transport is one of the major issues facing us. Channel Seven, 94.5, ABC radio, 6PR, Channel Nine and Channel 10 all recognise the congestion on our roads because their reporters are on the roads every day reporting the traffic snarls. This is a major issue for us in the northern suburbs. Again, the substantial population growth in the northern suburbs means that improvements are needed to the Mitchell Freeway. It must be widened to three lanes from not only Hepburn Avenue to Hodges Drive, but also from Hodges Drive back to Hepburn Avenue. It cannot simply be done one way. Yes, that would help people get home in the afternoon but it is not good enough to expect people should have to hand a note to their employer when they get to work late because of the extra time it has taken them to get to work.

**Mr A.P. Jacob** interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The member cannot ask me anything. He has my speech and I do not want interjections. It must be done both ways.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Why?

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** It is simply not good enough to widen the freeway going north and expect people to hand in a note to their employers when they get to work late. Will we have a booth at the exits of the freeway with someone handing out notes telling employers that their employees are late for work because they could not get through the traffic snarls on the freeway? In addition, there is a bottleneck at Hutton Street and this government does not have a clue how to fix it. I can tell members how it can be done. It is very simple.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order, members! It is generally accepted that we let members reply to the Premier’s Statement without too much interruption.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** All the media channels and the other media outlets are reporting that the peak traffic times occur for six hours a day up and down the freeways. That is unacceptable. People cannot get around it. They cannot get on the train and get into the city faster because they cannot get on a train. If they can get to a train station, they cannot get a parking spot. There are 3 000 more parking bays on the line, which were started by the previous Labor government and finished under this government, but this government has not delivered one extra parking bay than was originally promised by the former government. We need that freeway widened both ways. We need an answer to Hutton Street, which this government has no idea about at the moment. A way that we can solve the problem is to put some services and some government departments in Joondalup. It has been promised for years. We need to remove the traffic flow into the central city. This government continues to show that its only concern is for the Perth city area; it is not concerned about the northern suburbs and at the moment no infrastructure to speak of is coming out to the northern suburbs.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Train line?

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The train line is already out to Joondalup and was completed under our government.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Butler?

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Done under our government. It will not be in before the next election. Butler will not be completed before the next election.

The former Labor government put in the CAT bus that services the Joondalup central business district. That service is a shared arrangement between the City of Joondalup, Edith Cowan University and the state government. We added a second route with another two buses that incorporate Winton Road and Joondalup

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

Arena. That trial service was cut short as soon as this government came to office. Now, the demand is there for other areas. For example, the Motor Industry Training Association of Western Australia has up to 350 apprentices who need transport to its facilities. The National Electrical and Communications Association, or NECA, is putting in a college and some of its students would like to use public transport but cannot get from the train station to the college. Facilities like this have to be put in in an area such as Joondalup, which is expanding all the time. We have to have those services. The previous Labor government was committed to doing those sorts of things and we did them. It stands at the moment, and the last I read, up to 50 000 trips a month are being made on that CAT bus service during peak times.

The member for Ocean Reef keeps interjecting. Obviously, he does not have the backbone to stand up to his ministers and say, “I want some spending in the northern suburbs. I want some bus services. I want the freeway. I want things done!” He just kowtows and does as he is told, even about the latest project, the Ocean Reef marina. The Premier has signed a memorandum of understanding with the City of Joondalup to build —

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Good news!

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Good news! It is a piece of paper! It is worth nothing! There is not one dollar committed.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Yes, there is.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** No, there is not. The member can read the media release for himself. I will read it —

Premier Colin Barnett today participated in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signing with City of Joondalup Mayor Troy Pickard and CEO Garry Hunt, bringing the 30-year quest for a marina at Ocean Reef closer to reality.

How does that help? There is not one dollar —

The proposed marina will incorporate the existing Ocean Reef Boat Harbour and provide a permanent home to Whitfords Volunteer Sea Rescue Group.

**Mr A.P. Jacob** interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Not one dollar! And the member for Ocean Reef has not pushed to get one dollar.

**Mr A.P. Jacob** interjected.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Point of order, Madam Acting Speaker!

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker):** Member, you do not need to call. Member for Ocean Reef, I am going to call you for the first time. You have been warned. Please do not interject.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Madam Acting Speaker, he is —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Do not interject!

**Mr A.P. Jacob** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Do not interject!

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** There was \$700 000 put forward to the City of Joondalup to conduct its consultation process, and that has resulted in the move forward. This memorandum of understanding is nothing but a piece of paper and it does not serve any purpose to the people of Joondalup, the people of Ocean Reef or the northern suburbs in general.

I have previously raised the issue of West Perth Football Club, which has again been ignored by this government. It was ignored until I raised the issue about a new facility for the club.

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Is the member now saying that he is going to put in a train station at Arena Joondalup? Is he?

**Mr P.T. Miles:** You said that you were going to do it.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Joondalup, if you insist upon interacting with the member across the chamber I have just called for the first time, we are going to be here all afternoon and you have only 12 minutes. Would you please not engage with the hecklers.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Thank you for your guidance, Madam Acting Speaker.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames; Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

The West Perth Football Club—the Falcons—moved to Arena Joondalup in 1993 as a foundation tenant. It was one of the first organisations to commit to the developing regional centre.

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The current arrangement at Arena Joondalup has meant that the club has never been able to develop a real home. The club is keen to establish its own clubrooms at the arena, requiring a ground lease and a financial —

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I think that the member for Joondalup has made it abundantly clear that he is not inviting interjections, and, despite your previous rulings, the member for Wanneroo is persisting.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you; that is noted.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker and thank you, member for Girrawheen.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Any time.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The current arrangement at Arena Joondalup has meant that the club has never been able to develop a real home. The club is keen to establish its own clubrooms at the arena, requiring a ground lease and a financial contribution from the state government toward the cost of the building. The Falcons took the bold decision to move from Leederville to Joondalup to help develop the city and to expand Western Australian football in the northern suburbs. In 2007, 3 900 registered players were playing in the 13 clubs located within the West Perth district. The latest figures that I have, from 2010, show that there are more than 4 750 registered players at 15 clubs located within the West Perth district. Admittedly, an amount of money has been given to the West Perth Football Club to develop a theatre, coaching room and a gym, which—as I was saying before I was interjected on—was as a result of question I put to the Premier and the Premier then going out to the West Perth Football Club. The gym and coaching room will be opened on 24 March and I will happily be there as a guest of the West Perth Football Club.

I turn now to the basketball facility in Joondalup. Currently, the basketball centre in Joondalup is leased to the Wanneroo Basketball Association. The lease is due to expire this year and there is pressure for the basketball centre to be relocated. Again, nothing has been done. The Wanneroo Wolves Basketball Association currently consists of 100 teams, or 700 players, in the senior competition, with even more in the junior competition. It is a very healthy association with a large membership base. Basketball has grown significantly in size over the years and it is important that there is a major basketball centre to service the region and be a home for the local association. The government and the City of Joondalup have to get together and work on this to give the Wanneroo Wolves a proper home—a home the association can call its own for well into the future. It is vitally important. The Wanneroo Wolves is a great organisation that has many times won the state league.

**Mr J.J.M. Bowler:** Defending champions!

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Defending champions; thank you, member.

**Mr J.J.M. Bowler:** The member obviously trains with them!

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** I do not train with them. I am a bit short to be a basketball player—but anyhow!

I refer to the cultural centre. For a long time, Joondalup has been planning a cultural centre and the strategic plan 2008–11 proposed the construction of a cultural centre in the heart of the city. The plan revolved around being able to progress a range of innovative and high-quality urban development projects within the city. The development was to be constructed at lot 1001 Kendrew Crescent, Joondalup. It would be a great opportunity and would encourage and harbour the notion of diversity within our community. To date, no works have been undertaken. Similar projects have been undertaken in regional areas such as Mandurah and Albany. Joondalup has a diverse culture and population and would benefit greatly from having a focal point in the community for culture and the arts. The cultural centre would allow for performing arts and theatre facilities with both a major auditorium and a minor performance space. This building could cater for events such as school graduations and Edith Cowan University dance and drama productions and graduations, among other events. The government needs to establish a joint task force with the City of Joondalup to develop a specific proposal for the cultural centre and a project officer needs to be appointed to oversee the development of the centre.

I have already dealt with the Ocean Reef marina.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

Another issue that has been bugging my electorate for quite some time is that of the former Craigie High School site. I am happy to say that the structure plan for that site has been approved; it has gone through all the planning processes and all we need now is to see some bulldozers on site levelling the ground and the blocks being put on the market. There is another school site in Craigie—the old Camberwarra school site. I hope that will not sit for years and years as a derelict site. Yes, the buildings have been cleared, which is a welcome improvement, but we have to also get that land to market. It is about revitalising the suburb of Craigie. We also have the site at lot 9000 McLarty Avenue but when this government came in, it shelved any plan for developing that site. The original plan had 850 housing units through private ownership and with the Department of Housing. The Department of Housing has advised that the development proposed to yield units for single, family and pensioner accommodation.

I now refer to crisis accommodation in the northern suburbs. When we left government we had put in place funding to increase crisis accommodation in the northern suburbs. Many women in the northern suburbs are victims of domestic violence and they and their children are faced with the need to leave their homes. This particular group of women and children need to rely on certain services that are in place, such as crisis accommodation. Prior to the Barnett government taking office, funds were allocated through forward estimates for a crisis accommodation complex to be established in the Brighton–Butler area, which was to be administered by the Patricia Giles Centre. The Pat Giles Centre has been operating in Joondalup for well over 20 years. About two years ago it had its twenty-first birthday. It is a great organisation. It is cramped for space at the moment, not only for accommodation space for the women who need it, but also for counselling space and for space to deliver programs. It is vital that the Pat Giles Centre has that money in place so that it can actually do the job it is there to do.

I now refer to education and training. As everybody knows, the Joondalup CBD has been cited as an education and training area. We have Edith Cowan University, the West Coast Institute of Training, the Western Australia Police Academy, and now we have the Motor Industry Training Association of Western Australia, a private organisation. The National Electrical and Communications Association—NECA—is coming in and is starting construction of its building at the moment. We would like to see that progress further. The site of the former Australian Institute for University Studies in Joondalup was purchased by the previous government in 2007. At present the site is owned by the Department of Education. The West Coast Institute of Training is unable to make any significant improvement or develop that site because it does not have secure tenure. I am asking the government to transfer ownership of the land and buildings on the site immediately to the West Coast Institute of Training to allow it to plan for future expansion at the site to meet the training needs of the northern corridor.

Our new leader, Mark McGowan, the member for Rockingham, referred in his speech to the need for protecting families. We see this need in a big way in the northern suburbs. Many families in the northern suburbs are under pressure from rising government charges and increases in electricity and water charges. They can no longer cope with the increases in these charges that have been forced upon them by the Barnett government. These charges cost families well over \$1 000 a year.

Our new leader has announced, and has been criticised for announcing, a grant of \$200 for each school student and \$400 for each senior student in training.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** These families are under severe stress. I had a meeting on Monday with one of the non-government organisations in my electorate and was provided with the following figures. In 2007, the number of clients that the organisation assisted was 2 389; last year, 2011, the number was 5 116. That figure of 5 116, up from 2 389, is almost a 100 per cent increase in the number of people who have gone to that organisation for help. On-referrals indicate the number of people the centre could not help and had to refer on to other centres. In 2007, 1 091 people were on-referred because that particular centre could not cope with them. In 2011, the number of people it could not cope with was 1 852. Therefore, the total number of people the centre helped or referred on was 2 389 in 2007 and 5 116 in 2011. The centre has provided me with the results of a survey it conducted. The survey was called “How financial disadvantage impacts clients wellbeing”. It is actually a very good survey. It gives the responses to the questions of people who participated in the survey. Madam Acting Speaker (Ms L.L. Baker) with your permission, I would like to lay that survey on the table for the remainder of today’s sitting so that members can read about how this government is impacting on families in the northern suburbs.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** One of the other things that concerns me in the northern suburbs is the amount of crime. I ran an advertisement a couple of months back about crime. The Attorney General sought to ridicule me in this place by telling me how good the government was at reducing crime. I then read *The West Australian* on

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

Monday, 6 February, which had an article headlined “Joondalup a violent hotspot”. Also on 6 February there was an article headlined “Joondalup a punch-up hotspot”. Those articles came out of *The West Australian* and fairly shortly afterwards the police in Joondalup, along with the mayor, released some information. I was asked for comment as well, which I provided, and an article appeared in our local paper on 14 February this year with the headline “Crime slur debunked”.

The issue is that Joondalup was being targeted and criticised as a crime hot spot. There are issues in Joondalup—there are absolutely issues in Joondalup. The issues come down to the fact that there are a number of pubs and nightclubs in the Joondalup CBD. A lot of people now recreate there on Friday and Saturday nights. Some get over-intoxicated and there have been a number of fights. Over a long period we have seen those incidents getting worse and worse. However, I must congratulate the new superintendent of police, Charlie Carver, who has come to Joondalup. Within his first week—I think actually on his first day—I requested a meeting and got it because of the concerns I had raised with both the City of Joondalup, with the police and with the parents and teachers association. That meeting was about a number of youths who were congregating around Joondalup train station and causing problems for passengers and people walking in and out of that area. The response I got from the minister—again, not signed by his hand but by one of the lackeys in his office—was: “It’s not our problem. It’s Lakeside’s problem.” Lakeside Joondalup is saying it is not the shopping centre’s problem but a police problem. However, I can guarantee that the new police superintendent, with assistance from the council, is tackling that problem and, hopefully, in a short time we will see that problem start to disappear.

When I raised the issue previously, I put an ad in the local paper that showed me standing beside a burglary hot spot sign that was put up by the local Neighbourhood Watch. It has now been banned from putting out those burglary hot spot signs because of intervention from the minister. However, the police are now putting out signs on electronic noticeboards.

Several members interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** One sign on an electronic noticeboard is no more than 600 metres from the Minister for Police’s house.

Several members interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The one I saw was no more than 600 metres from the Minister for Police’s house, and the newspaper on Tuesday this week was still referring to problems with crime in the northern suburbs. What we need is this police minister, along with the commissioner, to allocate more police to that area so that police can be on the streets during those periods when there is increased crime.

Another issue that I have been chasing for quite a number of years now both under my own government—the former Labor government—and under the Barnett government is the issue of school dental therapy assistants. School dental therapy assistants provide school dental services to students in all our schools from kindergarten right up to year 12. They do a fantastic job. The problem is that they are undervalued. That issue was brought to my attention during the tenure of our government and I raised it with the then health minister, Hon Jim McGinty. He sat down with me and we worked out that the problem could not be fixed in a hurry but that we would in the meantime provide a yearly \$3 000 cash incentive as an attraction and retention bonus. That incentive was put in place very quickly while we investigated how we would improve the lot of those school dental therapy assistants. They are on very poor pay. As of 13 October 2009, their rate of pay was \$40 000 to \$48 000. They were asking to be moved from level 1 to level 2 on the public sector salary scale. That is not a huge increase for them, but it still has not been done, and they keep getting put off. They were supposed to have a meeting on 27 December 2011 when they were going to find out the results of the review to see where they were going.

One of the other things they have an issue with is the fact that they are still using old card systems. I have been in the workforce since I was 15; I am now 53 years of age.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** You don’t look it! You don’t look a day over 35!

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Thank you!

I entered the workforce when I was 15, and when I went to the stores at the business I was working for, they had a card system. That is how old that system is, and it has been phased out in most workplaces since that point in time. Our school dental therapy clinics are still using a manual card system to log information about their patients and what they need to do for referrals to dentists and therapists for patients’ oral health.

It is to the shame of this state that, in this day and age, we are using 40-year-old systems in what should be a state-of-the-art dental health system. We were the best in Australia; we have devalued the system. I think 99.9 per cent of school dental therapy assistants are female; I think there is one male dental therapy assistant.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

The shame of it is that they are not being taken seriously. They are not getting recognition for what they do and they are not being rewarded appropriately. They are being asked to work under absolutely archaic conditions. I am sure that if any member here was asked to work without a computer, he would walk out the door and say, “I can’t do this job; it’s ridiculous”, yet we expect —

**Mr P. Abetz** interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The member cannot do his job properly if he is not on a computer; if he is not on a computer, he is not doing it properly!

With the numbers of patients they have coming through their doors, we cannot expect school dental therapy clinics to operate with 40-year-old technology. We have to bring them up to date; we have to look after their safety.

I meet with school dental therapists in many school dental therapy clinics around the place, and I hear one thing all the time: they are concerned for their safety. We all know that one in five people in Western Australia will suffer a mental illness. School dental therapists are at the front line and can potentially be confronted by a person with a mental illness. The staff at a given school dental therapy clinic may not have done anything in particular to harm a child but, given the incidence of mental health, there may potentially be an issue. They are concerned. Not one of the school dental therapy clinics across this state has a second exit. If there is an issue at the reception desk, can they get out safely? No, they have to push past the person who is in their way. All the staff are women.

**Mr P. Abetz** interjected.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The member’s office has three people in it, and he is a male. I expect he would be able to stand up for himself.

It is a shame that we do not put second exits in school dental therapy clinics. At one of the most recent ones built in my electorate, at Craigie Heights, the door was included in the planning. The architect had a bit of a snarl at me when we turned the sod—“Why do you want the bloody door in there?” Well, I want the door in there so that these people can get out if there is an issue. I do not want to read on the front page of the newspaper one day that a school dental therapy assistant has been assaulted and was unable to escape because somebody does not think it is important enough to spend a few thousand dollars on putting a doorway in so they can escape if there is an issue.

*Amendment to Question*

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that the government recognise the value of school dental therapy assistants by giving them a career path and progressing them from level 1 to level 2 in the public sector salary level, providing school dental therapy clinics with updated equipment such as computers to manage their patients and providing alternative exits should there be an emergency in the clinics.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [11.45 am]: I rise to support this important amendment, and I acknowledge the member for Joondalup and the work that he has done over the years to support school dental therapy assistants.

Labor is committed to making life easier for families. We believe that we must do more to make sure that we are supporting young families by increasing the number of child health nurses and making sure that we have a strong level of service and intervention in the lives of young children before they enter the formal schooling system, to make sure that they are getting the early health care that they need to go forward in life.

Equally, school dental clinics play an important role in making sure that kids get the right start in life in respect of their dental hygiene, making sure that we have in place a culture of people caring for their oral health, and making sure that those children who are not getting the dental care they need can get the sorts of services they need to make sure that we are looking after their teeth.

As the member for Joondalup said, this is one of the most neglected areas of our health system. The school dental clinics are in an absolute state of decay. The member for Joondalup spoke about the fact that they are yet to discover computers in these clinics. I have said in this place before that they must be among the last government departments to still have the words “carbon paper” on their stationery requisition forms. It is archaic, and it is extraordinary for us to expect these people to work under these conditions.

These dental clinics play an incredibly important role, but the health department has allowed them to fall behind. This is an issue that I have raised with the Minister for Health on previous occasions. On the one hand, he has

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

said that he sees it as a primary health issue and that it therefore should really be the responsibility of the commonwealth government; on the other hand, he says that he understands we have an obligation and a role to play, but that it is too hard and he does not have any particular solutions for it.

But we must have some solutions. I am the member for Kwinana, and the importance of the fact that I am the member for Kwinana is that we have some of the worst recall and waiting times for school dental clinics in this state. Children wait for up to two years to be recalled and get the dental health care they need at their local school clinic. What do they see when they get there? They see an incredibly dedicated group of staff members working as hard as they can in the school dental services, but struggling against the tide of demand flowing from the community. As the member for Joondalup said, these people struggle with an index card system of administration to keep track of young families that are moving in and out of communities, swapping between schools and swapping between electorates and service areas. We are failing to meet the challenges associated with children's dental health.

The preschool and high school situation is not much better. At the moment the rate for recalls and checks of preprimary students is only 76 per cent, with the target being 85 per cent. Waiting times and recalls in high schools are hovering around the 50 per cent mark while the target is 80 per cent. That means that a generation of young people is moving into adulthood with chronic dental health problems. As they move into their adult years, they are already behind the eight ball and way behind in their overall health. Let us not forget that oral hygiene and health plays an important role in people's overall sense of wellbeing, in their comfort and in comorbidity issues that relate to their oral health. It is incredibly important that we get this right. As the member for Joondalup said, many clinics are run-down, second-rate facilities that quite simply fail the test of a modern health regime. Even more unforgivable is the way we undervalue the work of school dental therapy assistants, who are some of the lowest paid qualified workers in the public sector. They do not work in school dental therapy for the money. Rather, they do so because they care and because they understand the important role they play. How are they rewarded for that? They are rewarded by being made some of the lowest paid qualified people in the public sector. As the member for Joondalup said, the previous Minister for Health put in place a retention and attraction bonus of \$3 000 as a stopgap measure to stem the flow of school dental therapy assistants leaving the service and to make it more attractive to those considering moving into the area. In 2011 I challenged the Minister for Health to ensure that the \$3 000 attraction and retention bonus would at least in value be retained in the latest round of negotiations with the union and workers. It is my understanding that the Department of Health has undertaken a review of their pay and conditions, the outcomes of which were meant to be made available to the workers at the end of last year. It was everyone's understanding that they would be made available on 27 December 2011. It is disturbing that the outcomes of that review are yet to be made public. They remain unknown to the workers and to the union. We can only suppose that this issue has once again gone to the bottom of the minister's in-tray.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I find that extremely unlikely. All the time they have been negotiating with the unions they have known what is being proposed.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The workers are waiting for the minister's department to come back with a proposal as to how they should be properly valued and remunerated for the work they do. I am sure that Hon Linda Savage and the member for Alfred Cove are watching those discussions very closely as they survey the landscape to see what implications they might have for child health workers and whether there will be an opportunity to provide extra value to their work.

**Dr J.M. Woollard:** Curtin—or one of the universities—is looking to introduce a new program for school dental therapy assistants. I am not sure how far they have got with the government. But when nurse practitioners were introduced, the legislation had a grandfather clause so that nurses who had worked in that role for many years did not have to go to Curtin to do the nurse practitioner course. I am not sure whether that is being looked at in this situation. But certainly people who have worked in the area for many, many years should be able to put their names forward to get the same level. Otherwise, those people with the new degree will come out on a much higher salary than those who have worked in the area and who have the education and experience.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I thank the member for Alfred Cove for that very useful interjection. It is important that we use the current review to make sure that we place a value premium on the people who are doing this important work. As the member for Joondalup has observed, it is about not just the wages and conditions and the way that we acknowledge the work these people have done in the past and the fact that they are qualified workers, but also the systems that we have in place. A computerised system to make sure that we are tracking and effectively recalling these young members of our community is another part of the way in which we can value —

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

**Dr J.M. Woollard:** Member for Kwinana, I know that the dental therapists in the dental clinics in my area are currently handwriting lists to send to schools for children to come in for their dental appointments. I think there is a six-week waiting list already, and it is the beginning of the year. I am, like you, very hopeful that the minister will be looking at this over the next few months. They have been told they will get computers later this year. Hopefully, when they get those computers it will help to bring down those waiting lists.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Indeed. As the member for Alfred Cove has aptly described, the conditions in which these people work and the facilities that they have to use are archaic. They are doing a very important job. It is important that we acknowledge that. We need to make sure that we take this opportunity, and that the minister takes this opportunity, to ensure that these people are appropriately rewarded and valued for their work. I agree with the minister when he said during the course of 2011 that this is difficult. This is hard work. I agree with the minister when he says that he is doing all he can to make sure that we crack this particular nut, but crack it we must. It is not good enough to simply say that this is a responsibility of the commonwealth government, because we are in this space and we have a very important role to play to make sure that we are caring for kids' teeth. I acknowledge that some of this has a primary care flavour about it. I acknowledge that discussions are afoot between different levels of government to work out how to do this better. We must value the people who work in these facilities. We must make sure that we upgrade these facilities to make sure that they meet modern healthcare standards and, indeed, modern workplace standards. We must do better to ensure that kids, particularly in my area of Kwinana, do not have this two-year wait and recall rates, and actually get to these kids before their dental health issues become acute.

**DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Minister for Health)** [11.58 am]: I had hoped to receive some notes on this issue by now, because I do have them, but sadly they have not arrived. However, I have some knowledge of the matter and I will impart what I know to members. I would be happy to show the member for Kwinana where we are up to when I get that information.

We know that this group of employees is one of the lowest paid in our system. How did I know that? Did I know that when I became a minister? No; I knew that from when I was in opposition. In fact, I knew it in opposition after they had been given the \$3 000 bonus. A person who works in that area came to me and showed me two advertisements. One was an ad for a cleaner and another was an ad for a dental assistant in this system. The cleaner was going to be paid more than the dental assistant. I am talking about the shortage of funds that were paid to those staff at that time under the previous government. I was extraordinarily surprised when the member for Joondalup, who moved this motion, came to this house and said that those staff did not even have computers; if I had known that when I was in opposition, I would have made a huge issue of it. I certainly found out about that. I have instructed the health department to ensure that those staff receive computers. It is beyond belief that they do not have them in this day and age.

**Mr P. Papalia:** How long?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am trying to remember the briefing note that I received only last week. Hopefully my short-term memory is reasonable. The advice that I was given is that they were going to be rolled out over the course of the year. I said that that was not good enough and certainly not fast enough. It needs to be done quicker than that. I think I said I expected those computers to be taken out to those areas by July. I have just been handed my notes. The trouble I will have is being able to read them.

The other issue relates to funding negotiations. I have been informed that the new round of funding negotiations is due to commence in July. An industrial agreement has been negotiated and that is due to come on stream in July. We are intending to retain that \$3 000 bonus but will roll it into their standard wage. That becomes part of their normal wage. The classification structure for dental assistants will be reclassified to give them recognition for their standard of work. I will not quote from this document because then I will have to table it, but I will just check some of the notes that refer to the agreed rise in wages. It has to be done according to the limit that we have for growth in wages —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** The wages policy.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Yes, they are the words I was looking for. We need to do it within those constraints. I understand that those negotiations have been going well. That is why I was surprised when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that the union does not know about it. I would have thought it was within those negotiations that were being undertaken.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** It was widely anticipated that the government—this is as much from workers who have contacted me—will be putting in a formal proposal in late December.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** My understanding is that agreement has largely been reached. It puts that \$3 000 in place, particularly giving recognition to the work that needs to be done and making sure that those computers are rolled out, as we said.

**Dr J.M. Woollard:** I was told last week that they expected a decision to be made in the next eight weeks. It looks like something is very close.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Sure. We need to remember that the current agreement expires at the end of June. The next period of agreement is beyond that. That is why I think it is proposed to start —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** It was extended to June.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Okay. It does not matter. Whatever it is, we all recognise the need for increased wages. The former government gave that wage increase of \$3 000. We will make sure that that is retained and rolled into their normal wages and then look beyond that to an increase in wages that has been negotiated in percentages that are acceptable to both parties. That is the key message that I want to give today. The member for Kwinana acknowledged that this is about primary care, and we know that that is true. There has been a huge deficiency in the management of dental care across Australia. The standard of dental care that is being provided is not adequate. I recall that one of the proposals put forward in the commonwealth–state health agreement was to bring a new Medicare-equivalent levy to cover dental care across Australia. The federal government chose not to have that in, and I can understand why. That would have been a politically difficult thing to do. But someone has to come up with a better method of looking after patients' dental care. It is a primary healthcare responsibility. It is not a state government responsibility, and so all state government health ministers are very reluctant to step into that space. Not all state governments have the school dental system that we have in place in Western Australia, but there is an inadequate system Australia-wide. How we fix that, I do not know, but someone has to try to come up with something to find a way to get better dental care.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** Do you support that Medicare-based proposal?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The difficulty in that is that it is a new tax, is it not? Who is going to come up and say, “Yes, I think a new tax is appropriate”? The figures that were done were for a Medicare-equivalent levy, so on top of the 0.75 to 1.5 per cent levy people currently pay for Medicare for health care, they would have to have another one on top of that for dental care. I just do not think that the public would wear that additional tax.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** I think the public would. It is a question of whether it was made into a political issue—if your side of politics said, “Yes, we agree that dental health is important.”

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It is not that easy. Our side of politics has been opposing some changes that were put forward to the current system of referring patients to specialists for dental care. It is something with which I do not agree. I have said that Western Australia is the big loser in the current system. New South Wales and Victoria are the big winners in that, because they have the dentists available and ready to do that treatment. Our share of that additional commonwealth system is very small. Trying to get political will federally for the state is clearly very difficult, even when I support what the commonwealth is proposing.

The only good thing in all of this is that the standard of dental hygiene for kids is far better than it used to be. Of course, the fluoride in the water has made an enormous difference. I know there are people who do not like it, but all I have to do is open my mouth in front of the mirror—not something that I am wont to do, mind you. I have a mouth full of amalgams; most of my generation do.

A member interjected.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The member is a bit younger than me.

A lot of people needing dental care in those —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** I have found a very clear solution on the fluoridation issue—that is, I gave it to the member for Cockburn, who is our shadow water spokesperson. I just gave it to him to deal with, because that way you have much fewer meetings.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** As members know, Busselton people are very strongly opposed to fluoridation. We are not pushing that they do it, but the dental standard of kids' teeth in that area is not as good as in the metropolitan area where there is fluoridation. As I say, I look at all the repairs that I have had done to my teeth. I have six children, and not one of them needed a filling while they were living at home. I think only one child has had a filling since then. The rest of them have teeth that do not have a single cavity. That is virtually unheard of from our day—everybody had cavities; everybody needed repair. Fluoridation has made a huge difference. The standards of care we need through the dental hygienist and the dentist are still there, but they are a lot to do with

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

teeth structure as they are about cavities. They are the kids that have overbites or teeth coming the wrong way or difficulties with the structure of teeth in their mouth. They are the ones that tend to need more dental care. Dentistry is a very important profession. It is very important that we keep pushing ahead with those things.

I am just looking at a letter that says a formal offer will be made to the unions on 21 February, which is the day before yesterday.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** What date was that?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It was 21 February. This is a letter—in fact, I can table this letter—to Ms Toni Walkington from me, which I signed and obviously did not remember the exact date. I signed on 20 February, three days ago. It is to Ms Toni Walkington, branch secretary of the union. The letter states —

Thank you for your letter of 2 February 2012.

The Department of Health will initiate formal discussions with the union as soon as practicable.

I am advised that no formal offer will be made on or before 21 February 2012.

As previously indicated, my expectation is that these matters will be settled as expeditiously as possible and given effect prior to 28 June 2012.

That is the time that they were extended to. I table the letter.

[See paper 4528.]

**Mr R.H. Cook:** So you will be making a formal offer on 21 February?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** No. I misread it when I read it the first time. I will read it again. It says that no formal offer will be made before 21 February—which means that given that that day has passed, the formal offer can be made—and that it will be put into effect by 28 June. We will be proceeding down that path to make sure that we get a good outcome for those dental assistants, as we were calling on the Labor Party to do when we were in opposition and it was in government.

**DR J.M. WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [12.10 pm]:** I am very pleased that the Minister for Health is looking into this issue, because it is a very serious issue. I remember when the minister and I were sitting on the other side of the house and there was a rally out the front of Parliament House. Dental therapists from all over Western Australia came to that rally. When I talked to them out the front of the building, I was shocked to hear about some children, particularly in regional areas, who, when they went for their first dental check with a dental therapist, were referred to Princess Margaret Hospital and had to have up to 17 extractions, because their teeth were in such poor condition as a consequence of their poor oral health care. So this really is a very important role. In the metropolitan area we may not be experiencing the severity of damage that can be caused by poor dental health as is being experienced in some of the regions, but even though we are not experiencing that to the same extent, it is still a problem.

Another problem, as has just been mentioned by both the minister and the member for Kwinana, is the long waitlist for dental therapy. One of the reasons for the long waitlist is the difficulty in retaining dental therapists in the government sector because of the much higher salaries that are paid to dental therapists in the private sector. I am, therefore, very pleased that the minister is looking at increasing the current salaries to keep these dental therapists in the public sector. As I said to the member for Kwinana, because a new course has been established at the university for these people, we need to make sure that the people who have been working in this area for 10 or 15 years and who have the expertise are not disenfranchised or fall behind when the new people come out with degrees and are paid a much higher salary. Yes, I will take an interjection.

**Mr A.P. O’Gorman:** It is a school for dental assistants, not dental therapists. It is for assistants.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** Yes. Sorry. The new course is for dental assistants. I cannot remember the new title that they told me they will come out with—it is some health practitioner-type role—but their salary will automatically go up. That really would be a slap in the face for the people who have worked in this area for many years. Therefore, unless we do something to help those people and keep their salaries up there, we could lose those people. As I said to the minister, when I recently visited one of the dental therapy clinics in my area that services six local schools, I was very disappointed with myself because the last time I visited that clinic, I was made aware that it was not using computers. I often call for old computers and take them to Murdoch, and I called in last week to check whether the clinic had a computer, and, if not, to get it a computer. That is when the staff there told me they were expecting a computer within the next few months. I am very pleased, minister, that that will be rolled out sooner rather than later because the clinic staff were writing out lists of appointments for children from other schools. I would like to ask the minister’s advice. That dental clinic uses a very small area

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

and is in the shape of a C; people go in one door and around to where the nurses work. The part in the middle of the C used to be a storeroom for the school. The school has told the clinic that the walls of the storeroom could be knocked down and it could be merged with the clinic. To whom should the clinic go for funding? It would improve the facilities of that clinic.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** At present it would go to the school and the Minister for Education.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** No; the school cannot fund the dental therapy clinic. The school is happy to give the clinic the storeroom area, but the funding cannot come out of school funding because it is for dental therapy.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** As you heard in the Premier's Statement, he talked about a new way forward to try to work with schools to upgrade standards of services. I cannot give you more details than that because it is something that will be talked about in the budget process. I do not know specifically that —

**THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson):** Minister for Health, can you talk towards the microphone so that Hansard can hear you, please?

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Yes.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** You are turning your back on —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Yes; I understand that. I am finished.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I might provide the minister with the detailed particulars in writing of that clinic and maybe he can get back to me so that I can advise the dental clinic who best to take it up with to try to get those extra facilities.

I am very hopeful that something will be done in this area for these people because we have to remember that they are there to look after our children.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** You can get up next.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Do you mind if I interject? In the course of your contribution you suggested that we were not experiencing these challenges in the metropolitan area quite so much as in the regions.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Why don't you get up and speak afterwards?

**Mr P. Papalia:** I am not, because we are constrained by time. There are a significant number of schools in the metropolitan area with waiting times of more than 24 months, including Halls Head in the minister's electorate, and my own electorate schools such as Settlers primary, Endeavour primary and East Waikiki. Well over a dozen schools across the state have waiting lists of more than 24 months for children to get dental follow-up.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** Member, when I said they may not be having the same problems in the metropolitan area, I was talking about the children who were turning up at those clinics and needing 17 extractions. I was told that was prevalent in the regions, particularly for Aboriginal children.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Some of us have a lot of high-density Aboriginal populations in our metropolitan seats. I suggest that they would be experiencing exactly the same problems in those seats whether in the city or in the country

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** That was not the advice I was given, but I am sure the member will check with his clinics, and, if it is, I am sure he will forward that information to the government and the minister.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, can we stick to the amendment, please.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I am very pleased to hear the minister's response that something is happening with this and I hope that something can be done to both retain the current number of people working as dental therapy assistants, and attract more people into this area so that the waiting lists, which are very severe in some areas, can be diminished.

**MS A.R. MITCHELL (Kingsley)** [12.20 pm]: I wish to speak about school dental therapy, and certainly dental therapy in a broader context, because it is such an important part of the health budget and the health component. In fact, in many ways it is the area of health that is almost forgotten about. If we say —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson):** Member, are you talking to the amendment?

**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** I am.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Okay.

**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** Thank you.

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, you said you are talking about a broader thing, but you must only talk to the amendment.

**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** I am just couching things in terms of fitting them into why it is good that we are actually talking about this issue, because in many ways, as I was trying to say, the concept of dental health is one that does not get the credibility, the front page and the headlines that other aspects of health do, I guess because people do not die in that area. Dental health and dental therapy is a very important area because it starts at a very young age. I, like the Minister for Health, experienced many visits to the dentist when I was younger. We did not have school dental therapy clinics; we went to the dentist. I think that even that has changed: school dental therapy is there now and it is very fortunate when it is available to students because it is a wonderful asset and help to parents. We had to go to the dentist with mum and dad and I must admit that I hated those times; I hated them with a passion. I visited dentists regularly and I spent long sessions with them. Subsequently, I am in a position similar to that of the Minister for Health in terms of my teeth. I have a wonderful dentist and I have had him for a long, long time now, but I see the advantage of the school dental therapy clinics and I am very grateful for them because they make a difference. There is no question that we value school dental therapy assistants; we value them greatly.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** It is certainly important that they exist because, as I said, parents do actually see the need to take young people to a dentist, so they rely on the school dental therapy clinics and the people who do that very valuable work. The whole dental business is quite difficult. I often talk to my dentist. He has been president of the Western Australian branch of the Australian Dental Association, so he sees all these aspects. As I am in a chair with him a little bit, and I cannot respond to him, he has a lot to tell me as we go through these things! Therefore, it is extremely important that we consider this matter and it is certainly something we are pleased to consider, but of course, as has been stated, much of this issue is currently in negotiation and, while it is in negotiation, it is not appropriate that we spend time in this place being specific about one or two aspects of the amendment that has been presented by the member for Joondalup. Some of the areas could be looked at, but the amendment that has been presented has a number of factors within it that cannot be differentiated and pulled out one by one. It is important to look at these things in totality and to not just pick out bits and pieces. It is pleasing to note that at this point in time many of these areas presented within the amendment are actually being considered, presented and discussed. It appears at this point, in terms of the work going on, that this amendment is not actually, I will not say it is not relevant—it is certainly relevant in terms of its content—appropriately dealt with, along with this matter, within the Parliament. That is absolutely not intended as disrespect to school dental therapy assistants and to the school dental therapy program, because it is critical that we have this service available to all students at school, not just some students. Certainly, it is one of the programs in dental health through the school program. We encourage families to make sure that they are also doing the best they possibly can for the dental health of their sons and daughters and in fact themselves because, as I said, dental health is something that we really need to look at. It is because of these factors that I have referred to in speaking to the amendment that I wish to move a further amendment.

*Amendment on the Amendment to Question*

**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** I move —

That all words after “assistants” be deleted.

Amendment on the amendment put and a division taken with the following result —

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

Ayes (26)

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

Dr E. Constable  
Mr M.J. Cowper  
Mr J.M. Francis  
Mr B.J. Grylls  
Dr K.D. Hames  
Mrs L.M. Harvey  
Mr A.P. Jacob

Dr G.G. Jacobs  
Mr R.F. Johnson  
Mr A. Krsticevic  
Mr J.E. McGrath  
Mr P.T. Miles  
Ms A.R. Mitchell  
Dr M.D. Nahan

Mr C.C. Porter  
Mr M.W. Sutherland  
Mr T.K. Waldron  
Dr J.M. Woollard  
Mr A.J. Simpson (*Teller*)

Noes (24)

Ms L.L. Baker  
Dr A.D. Buti  
Ms A.S. Carles  
Mr R.H. Cook  
Ms J.M. Freeman  
Mr J.N. Hyde

Mr W.J. Johnston  
Mr J.C. Kobelke  
Mr F.M. Logan  
Mr M. McGowan  
Mr A.P. O'Gorman  
Mr P. Papalia

Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Mr E.S. Ripper  
Mrs M.H. Roberts  
Ms R. Saffioti  
Mr T.G. Stephens

Mr C.J. Tallentire  
Mr P.C. Tinley  
Mr P.B. Watson  
Mr M.P. Whitely  
Mr B.S. Wyatt  
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

---

Pairs

Mr J.H.D. Day  
Mr D.T. Redman  
Mr C.J. Barnett

Mrs C.A. Martin  
Mr A.J. Waddell  
Mr M.P. Murray

Amendment on the amendment thus passed.

*Amendment, as Amended, to Question*

Amendment, as amended, put and passed.

*Consideration of Question, as Amended*

**MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen)** [12.33 pm]: In October 2009, in tabling a report on WA's bushfire preparedness, Premier Barnett told Parliament that —

The review found that Western Australia is well placed to respond to bushfires, with well-established plans and arrangements and strong relationships between the agencies and organisations involved. Areas of concern were identified, but it should be noted that since this review was conducted and the various recommendations made, the Liberal–National government has taken strong action to better prepare the state and place it at the forefront of quality bushfire control and management.

This assurance was the first of a number of assurances given by the Barnett government. We now know how misplaced and naive those assurances were. The complacency of the Barnett government has proved to be very costly. Since that assurance was made, WA has faced record property losses from bushfires. A month after the Premier made that statement, Coroner Alastair Hope made damning findings into the tragic deaths of Trevor Murley, Lewis Bedford and Robert Taylor in a fire on the Great Northern Highway in Boorabbin National Park in the goldfields in December 2007. That inquest indicated the lack of interoperability of firefighting agencies, poor communication, conflicting protocols, decision making without the benefit of accurate information, and inadequate incident command training for those charged with key roles. The outcome of this hearing caused many within the Department of Environment and Conservation to seriously reflect on how it undertook its firefighting duties. Although this fire occurred before the Premier made his bold assertions, it was clear to all those with peripheral knowledge of firefighting issues in this state that the coroner's findings, when they were delivered, would be highly critical.

As a result of these findings, DEC commissioned a review of its ability to manage major fires, and this review was conducted by Euan Ferguson, chief officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service. That review was not completed until September 2010. He made a number of recommendations, which I will not go into in great detail. I will refer to a couple. The second recommendation was that the DEC fire management policy should be reviewed and updated. It is my understanding that that has not yet occurred. He also noted at recommendation 4 that it was sensible, in considering planning development proposals on land adjacent to the DEC estate, that development authorities invite comment from DEC on the fire management consequences of development proposals. I am not sure that that has been formalised. The government has issued some planning guidelines. They are not enshrined in legislation, and, in fact, the first Keelty report suggested that those guidelines be enshrined in legislation. Recommendation 13 states —

**A Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Chief Executives of DEC and FESA would be a valuable statement of joint commitment between the two agencies.**

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

That occurred only in about November last year.

Although there have been a multiplicity of inquiries, and certainly a number in relation to DEC, we can see that some of those recommendations have not been implemented. In regard to the litany of inquiries that have been made into bushfires in Western Australia in recent years, we see that there is insufficient follow-up as to whether those recommendations are always implemented.

In December 2009, fire devastated Toodyay. Forty homes were lost, even though some of the same issues that were identified in the Boorabbin inquest were also present in the management of the Toodyay fires. That was some months after the Premier again gave us assurances that we were well prepared. There are a multiplicity of reports on the Toodyay fire. I will not go into them in detail because I have done so on a previous occasion in this place. But, certainly, with this multiplicity of inquiries, it was like pulling teeth. I think the victims were further victimised because they continued to want answers and they continued to not be given those answers, and this very much compounded their trauma. One of the things that came out of the Toodyay fire that was of particular relevance when we think about the Kelmscott fires was recommendation 3 of the major incident review of that fire that was conducted by Stuart Ellis. That recommendation states —

FESA, in partnership with other agencies and the community, develops Western Australia’s urban interface firefighting capability and capacity

That was an issue that would arise again in Kelmscott. In February 2011, fire destroyed 71 homes and damaged a further 39 in the Kelmscott–Roleystone area. There was also a fire concurrently that caused property damage at Clifton Hills. We then got to a situation in which there was growing concern within the community. The capacity of the various agencies to fight fires was in question. The government eventually agreed to conduct the Keelty inquiry. That is an extensive and substantial report, which I think, arguably, goes beyond its terms of reference but which, nevertheless, acts as an extremely good blueprint for fire management in Western Australia in the next decade. There were 55 recommendations in the report, and they are in various stages of implementation. Although the Premier has very proudly boasted that over half have been implemented, a number of major ones have not been, and they relate to planning. The WA Planning Commission is being dilatory. I am most concerned about that. Secondly, no-one seems to want to take responsibility for the issue of fuel loads. That is something that I expected to have been canvassed more in the second Keelty report but it has not been. There needs to be a “tenure-blind” assessment of fuel loads. That needs to be made available to decision makers and people who need to make assessments about where prescribed burning should take place, even to local councils so they can be informed.

There are other, what I call good intentions, which, frankly, are great—they are better than nothing—but I think do not add much to the knowledge. The Department of Commerce, for example, put out a booklet entitled “Building for better protection in bushfire areas”. It is better than nothing if people are thinking of building in an area which is heavily treed on the urban interface. It is basically copied, as it acknowledges, from an Australian Capital Territory publication. On the last two pages there are references to the Keelty Perth hills bushfire review and there are some contact numbers and email addresses. For example, it would have been helpful to have included a map of the bushfire-prone areas and other local information. The problem is that if that information is not included, people assume it is not important. Good attempt—I will give it four out of 10. That is another problem: people think they are doing the right thing but it is the omissions that are misleading. The other issue about fuel load is that there is a real battle going on about whether that information should be made public or not. How can we say that bushfire preparation is a shared responsibility if people are acting blindly without having access to all the relevant information?

The aftermath of the first Keelty report was that the former CEO of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, Jo Harrison-Ward, lost her job. Eventually, the Minister for Emergency Services also had a change in his portfolio, although that was a slow burn and took some months. Shortly after a replacement for Jo Harrison-Ward was appointed, Wayne Gregson—a very distinguished police officer—was interviewed by the media. He observed that he was “gobsmacked”—that was the word he used—by some of FESA’s inadequacies. That goes to show that even as late as last year there were still many things that needed to be done.

In the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee’s ninth report, which came out late last year, a number of findings were made about WA’s bushfire preparedness. Finding 2 is important. It states —

The United Fire Fighters Union of Western Australia made serious allegations to the Committee about poor training, inadequate equipment levels and inadequate firefighting staff numbers within FESA that may lead the State to not being sufficiently prepared for the coming bushfire season.

We are yet to hear what has occurred to fix those issues.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

In recent months we have heard at length about the Margaret River bushfire in November 2011, which led to 40 houses being lost. I take this opportunity, before I talk about the Margaret River fire, to congratulate the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River, in particular Ray Colyer and all his colleagues, who have done an excellent job in community recovery and their ongoing work on behalf of a community that has been severely scarred by this fire; not least because it is an erosion of trust. The very people who were supposed to protect them from bushfire in fact caused it. Less well known, however, is a fire that occurred at the same time, which also meant that the Department of Environment and Conservation was under-resourced, and that was in Nannup. I refer to a report that appeared on PerthNow this morning, which states —

**As the Government prepares to hand down the report into the Margaret River blaze today, Nannup residents say they are state's forgotten fire victims.**

While Margaret River burned in the November bushfires, another devastating fire was raging through their region.

The fire—also caused when a prescribed burn by the Department of Environment and Conservation got out of control—destroyed more than 50,000 hectares.

It was spread across mostly state forest, but affected many residents and farm owners too.

In some cases entire crops were destroyed and heavy machinery was burnt to a crisp.

Nannup shire president Tony Dean said he unsuccessfully lobbied Premier Colin Barnett to have the blaze included in an inquiry by Federal police chief Mick Keelty on the Margaret River fires.

The report is expected to be released mid-morning today.

“We pleaded with Mr Barnett to get our fire included but they declined,” he said.

This was despite DEC being at fault in both incidents.

“The two fires were happening at the same time so of course they influenced each other, especially in terms of resources.”

While DEC has conceded it started the fire, Mr Dean said homeowners were still waiting for an official investigation so they could receive insurance.

“Until the incident assessment is conducted there's not much more we can do,” he said.

“At this stage, the investigation hasn't even started.

“We've been totally ignored.”

I think we need to bear in mind that this was not an isolated incident; it was not the only case when a controlled burn has caused significant damage. I think more than 55 000 hectares were destroyed in that Nannup fire.

I have also had correspondence relating to the recent fires in the Gascoyne; a number of volunteer fire brigade members have expressed their concerns about how that fire was conducted. The correspondence states —

... The Morawa Volunteer Brigade was asked to attend the Carnarvon fire, taking their unit to assist in control of the fire which by the time they were called had spread but was still of a manageable size ... On arrival in Carnarvon, they were placed on standby and did not go near the fire for four days. They were naturally upset at this decision, but as FESA and DEC were jointly managing the fire with the Carnarvon Shire, they had to accept the decision.

... The fire jumped the North West Coastal Highway on to Boolathanna station and the station manager wanted to use his earthmoving plant aided by fire units, to extinguish the outbreak. The Incident Manager vetoed the idea saying that the fire could only burn as far as Lake McLeod where it would run out of fuel. The manager of Boolathanna went ahead despite this and contained the small outbreak.

According to those who observed it —

These two facts indicate that the Incident Managers, either FESA or DEC, were not able to appreciate the problems that the station managers or owners faced, having their feed destroyed by fire when containment using existing equipment and personnel was possible.

They say that we need to be mindful that —

... these station people had come out of a five year drought and a damaging flood and at last had adequate feed to be able to re-establish their stations on a payable basis. To see that possibility gone was heartbreaking. To be told that they would not be eligible for Disaster Relief Funding would have been overwhelming.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

But to be told that the fire should be allowed to burn their feed until the fire front reached a natural barrier was adding insult to injury.

They are the concerns expressed in relation to Carnarvon. There are broader problems than those identified in the second Keelty report.

I think we see some common themes. The first is that it is not the initial reaction of the authorities to take responsibility; in fact, in some cases there are positive efforts to either evade responsibility or certainly blur the lines. I think if we are really going to move forward and have a mature discussion about fire control in Western Australia, all the facts need to be available, and there needs to be some frankness by the government when in discussion with the communities.

In that regard, I think the second Keelty report is an excellent document, from what I have read superficially, but the people of Margaret River are still asking how the fire was managed once it had started. However, that is outside the scope of the terms of reference of Mr Keelty's inquiry.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I certainly have called for, and I hope the release of this report will enable, the major incident reviews, or post-incident analysis, that is done by the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Fire and Emergency Services Authority as a matter of routine, to also be tabled so that we will have some idea about the management issues that were of great concern to the residents. I think we have now got to the stage at which many in the community distrust the government's assurances that everything that can be done in preparation is being done. I think they regard those assurances as pretty hollow. We are still at the stage at which we need systemic changes, not just changes in personnel. As I said, the title of the first Keelty report was "A Shared Responsibility". That means having access to all the information so that people can make informed decisions. That applies to not only householders, but also the community in general and all agencies working closely together.

As I said, I have only briefly read the second Keelty report. I will comment on the fire regions and the recommendation to include the gazetted fire zones. We very much welcome that and it is long overdue. For all the years that I have been in this position I have been saying that our south west is exposed and we need a greater career presence in the area and greater resources in the south west, and this gazettal will permit that. However, I urge that the Australind station be progressed with expedition. I do not believe that is occurring. We also need to identify other possible locations for career stations. Currently, there is no career station between Bunbury and Albany. Obviously, resources are such that we will not be able to cover all this area with FESA personnel. We need to rely heavily on volunteers, and a strategy that acknowledges and values volunteers and makes the best use of them needs to be updated. I believe that includes the volunteers' charter being enshrined in legislation.

In addition, DEC is subject to a lot of criticism. There are some 220 firefighters in DEC who must cover the vast state. There needs to be a serious examination of DEC's resources. There has been a huge loss of corporate knowledge as the older DEC firefighters retire. Before the Margaret River fires the Minister for Environment was given warnings about that from the Australian Workers' Union, which represents those firefighters. Minister Marmion has had his head in the sand. On 26 September, Minister Marmion was written to and advised that the union had major concerns about the number of firefighters and the fact that 39 per cent of firefighters were aged 50 or over and were expected to retire and that there needed to be a succession plan. That needs to be addressed, and we want to hear from Minister Marmion about how he will do that.

Another thing about moving out the gazetted zones means that there is some uncertainty about what is happening with local bushfire brigades, which are the responsibility of local government. Will they be replaced with volunteer fire and rescue brigades that are run by FESA? What will be the relationship between those brigades and the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service? It is very important not to forget and discount the very important work that the bushfire brigades do. We value them incredibly. I am concerned that there will be many sensitivities about that issue.

We will need clarity from the Minister for Emergency Services about the current status of the bushfire brigades and whether there is capacity for FESA to set up the FRS brigades in their place or whether it intends only to rebadge them. That is an important issue.

Finally, I refer to the fact that there have been many inquiries and that we are constantly debating these issues in hindsight. I enjoin the government to think of a new approach to assess whether the state is prepared for an emergency.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

p298b-318a

Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Acting Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Roger Cook; Dr Kim Hames;  
Dr Janet Woollard; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr David Templeman

---

Brian Jackson from the RAND Corporation in the United States has written a number of articles, and in one titled “A New Approach for Assessing Emergency Preparedness” he refers to the idea of looking at “response reliability”, stating —

Policymakers and the public need ways to prospectively assess preparedness so they know what they can expect when disaster strikes. Doing so is also critical for resource management. Because of the nature of emergency situations, there will almost always be “more that could have been done” when responding to a particular incident or disaster. But in a world of finite resources, achieving ideal performance in such situations will almost never be possible. Trying to address every shortfall identified retrospectively in response actions therefore risks either creating unsustainable demands for increasing preparedness expenditures or focusing scarce resources on shortfalls that may be easy to see but that may not be the most important preparedness problems.

He refers in the article to developing another system for assessing preparedness, and I certainly call on the government to contemplate not having a situation in which inquiries bring forth recommendations, some of which are implemented and some of which are not; a subsequent emergency occurs; and then another inquiry is held and subsequent recommendations are made. We are looking back—in hindsight. I want to look forward. I want to see a suite of policies that will ensure Western Australians can be safe in the future. I do not think it is up to only Mr Keelty or the others who report on these issues to lead the way. The government must, in the light of climate change and population growth, exercise some leadership in how we prepare for future emergencies.

*Adjournment of Debate*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Given that there are only a few minutes remaining before lunch, am I able to adjourn the house? Can I move the motion that the house be adjourned?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson):** No, you cannot, but I can. Under standing order 61, member for Mandurah, this business is interrupted and adjourned to a later stage of this day’s sitting. I will vacate the chair until the ringing of the bells at two o’clock.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 330.]

*Sitting suspended from 12.58 pm to 2.00 pm*