

## TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

### *Motion*

**DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition)** [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house notes that the trade union movement represents just 9.4 per cent of Australian workers; expresses concern that despite the minimal representation of Western Australian workers by trade unions, the current state government is overly represented in its cabinet by union members; expresses concern at the vast sums of workers' money contributed by unions to supporting the election of the McGowan government; and condemns the Community and Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association of WA for its mute response to the massive cuts the McGowan government is imposing on the public service.

From its history, the union movement and the Labor Party have been one and the same. Indeed, I think, essentially, a long time ago the union movement in Queensland set up the Australian Labor Party, so it is no surprise that they are indeed one and the same. Back then, and for many generations, the union movement was broadly representative of not just the public sector, but also the private sector in Australia and Western Australia. As a result of that broad representation of the workforce, the union movement received special treatment and privileges in the community legislatively and otherwise. It was seen as the representative of the workers—of the little man—and the organisers of their voice. Over the decades, that voice has changed its perspective and its strength, and the representativeness of the union movement has waned significantly. In Western Australia, the union movement now represents 7.3 per cent of the private sector workforce. That is an exceedingly small share. Its share of the public sector workforce is also in decline. It is held up largely by privileges that the union movement has to access confidential information of the workforce; nonetheless, it is also on the line. As the representativeness of the union movement has changed—in fact diminished—it has been able to retain its special privileges and change its focus from being a member-based organisation to a political campaigning organisation because of its links to and power and influence over the ALP. These are simply facts.

Again, I want to emphasise that the union movement represents just 7.3 per cent of the private sector workforce in Western Australia and its representation is very narrowly based on a few industries, particularly construction, and the public sector. Increasingly, the unions have not focused on representing members as much. Some obviously do. United Voice does, but others get their influence through the ALP. They have also increasingly focused not on representing their members, being the voice of members and getting their influence from large membership numbers, but, rather, on special privileges and power achieved by getting the ALP into government around the nation. That is just the reality.

There are a couple of important issues. If a union movement retains its influence in the public through legislation, through privileges on committees, through a voice in the community, through funding and through other aspects of influence by getting the ALP elected, it does that to get payback. It campaigns for the ALP to get something in return. It is payback. It retains its power, gets on committees, gets contracts and gets funding. That itself is a concern.

Also, as I said, the union movement is increasingly public sector dominated in both public trading enterprises and the general government sector, but it is also representative in certain industries. If the union movement is increasingly public sector dominated and is increasingly relying on its influence through the ALP, it will push ALP governments to increasingly focus on hiring more public servants and employees, giving better conditions, retaining ownership over situations that are more conducive to the unions' perspective and increasing wages, and I will go through that in a minute. In other words, it pushes ALP governments to be large-government focused. Of course, it is no secret that these are concerns. Repeatedly, Labor leaders from Kevin Rudd and Alannah MacTiernan to others have voiced concerns about the changes in the union movement and its increasing influence over the Labor Party. The union movement controls preselections. If government funding is taken away, the union movement largely funds the ALP, at least from the reports that we have been provided. We know that a lot of the money that is provided for parallel campaigns is never reported, and I will comment on that later. The ALP is largely funded by and selected by, and increasingly staffed by, the union movement.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** A wholly-owned subsidiary.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** It is a wholly-owned subsidiary. In fact, the McGowan government is the most union dominated ALP government in recent memory, with 71 per cent of its ministers having direct affiliation with a union.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** In Australia or WA?

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** In WA. There is a 71 per cent union affiliation in cabinet, yet the unions represent 7.3 per cent of the private sector workforce. That is a profound imbalance. Indeed, it is a worrying imbalance.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Do you have nine per cent representation in your cabinet?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Of what?

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Of unions. You have none. Is that an imbalance?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes. We have a broader section of the community. We can see this imbalance increasing. Let me go through some examples. This is early days. I remember when I was Treasurer and I had responsibility for the Government Employees Superannuation Board. GESB Super is the superannuation of choice and necessity for some public servants. It is a very well run organisation. It is vital to all public servants. It was a requirement of the act some time ago that the Government Employees Superannuation Board have two union representatives. The people who represented the unions were chosen by the union movement. The government had no input on or veto power over the choice of those members. Sometimes I was told that the union appointees would learn the ropes and the issues or would have skills and would represent the wider public sector well. I had an appointee to the Government Employees Superannuation Board—I will not mention her name—who had never had a real job in her life; she came directly from university and had worked for a union as a part-timer whilst at university. She was appointed to GESB with no qualifications and no background. She had a position that required her to make decisions over the future retirement funding of hundreds of thousands of Western Australians. Why? It was because she was nominated by the union movement.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** She came straight from university?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** She was a student! She had had student jobs but she had never had a professional job. Before she came to GESB, she had only had student part-time jobs.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** I'm just curious as to what her tertiary qualification was.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** She had no background and she was put on the board by the union. Further, I was told, but I cannot verify this, that the money she was paid did not go to her; it went to the union. This applies to a whole raft of government institutions.

Members opposite might like to say that in the past unions represented most of the public sector and in the past one could find people in the union movement who had the qualifications, background and experience to be on the board of GESB, but, in this case, the union movement's representation of the public sector, although still large, is shrinking and the appointment simply was not qualified and the money went to the union. It was absolutely ridiculous.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** What was her tertiary qualification?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** She had no background to be on the board of directors of Western Australia's largest superannuation fund—none whatsoever! It was an illustration that the union movement really did not care about the future retirement funding of many of its members.

That is just one example and there is a whole raft of other state government institutions in which the legislation put in place by the Australian Labor Party requires union appointments. With many of those appointments, the money does not go to the representative—they do get costs—it goes to the union. This is wrong. Maybe way back when, when the unions represented broad-based groups in the community, that was justifiable, but it is not now. This illustrates that the union movement is very keen to get its power through ALP-elected representatives rather than memberships. Union membership is waning and the only way it can acquire influence is through political power.

A major transformation in the union movement over recent decades has been its loss of representation in probably the wealthiest sector of Western Australia—that is, the mining sector. Of course, the union movement retains a great deal of significance through the construction sector, which I will come to later, but the mining sector is largely union free. I might add that since the unions have lost their control or influence or standing in the mining sector, mining sector wages and conditions have done nothing but skyrocket. Work safety on mine sites, particularly in recent years, has also improved significantly. This transformation has been driven not so much by management, but by the workforce. The workforce has chosen to leave the unions behind, because workers largely agree with their employers that the best thing for them in terms of wages and conditions is a vibrant, profitable and internationally-focused employer rather than a union intermediary. It is the holy grail of the union movement in Western Australia to conquer back that territory. There is not only large membership—for some unions it is baseload membership—there is also a very high level of income in terms of campaigning money and fees. This is an issue that we will have to worry about with the McGowan government. Again, the McGowan government is the most union-dominated government in recent memory with 71 per cent of its

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members and many of its staff affiliated with unions. Most of them have been chosen by the unions and if they do not do the right thing, the unions have the power to veto them or to “de-preselect” them. In the eight-plus years I have been in this house we have seen Labor Party members jettisoned. Even though they performed well in the house, the unions overthrew them.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** One of the areas of the union movement that we have to watch is work safety. One of the areas the unions, through the ALP, will try to get leverage over in the resources sector is workplace safety. It is a very important area; indeed, we have structured workplace safety and given a great deal of influence over to the Department of Mines and Petroleum. Essentially, we have a related but special focus on workplace safety in mines for a couple of reasons. It is a big industry and it is a dangerous industry. Successive governments have wanted the industry to adopt and inculcate a work safe environment in all its activities and its focus. Therefore, through the Department of Mines and Petroleum, we worked with the firms to do that. It has been slow, but steady and successful. There is still more to go, but I think any reasonable person who goes to the mines or the resource sector, whether it is the oil or gas sector, or the iron ore or gold industries, and talks with the human resources people, the bosses or the people on the ground, such as the mining engineers, will see that work safety is imbued in its DNA. It has been a great achievement and we cannot let it fold or allow it to deteriorate, because mining is an inherently dangerous industry and it is our most important industry for exports, growth and, indeed, employment growth overall. We have done that largely without the union movement. That has been achieved largely without the union movement.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I will say that the union movement was onside.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Were you here during question time?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** There was eight years of inaction on occupational health and safety.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** It was done largely without the union movement. I know it is a mountain that members opposite want to climb and claim, but they cannot. They are trying to claim it and reclaim it, and those are the tools that they will use through the McGowan government. Today, or yesterday, the minister announced the Commissioner for Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare, who is a former head of UnionsWA. This is the type of stuff we will watch further to see whether the government allows unions to penetrate excessively or undermine in any way the reforms put to work safety in the mining sector.

Another important area that illustrates the influence of the union movement over government policy—maybe my colleagues will highlight this further—is uranium mining. Uranium mining has been an interesting issue with the ALP and the unions generally. With the exception of Western Australia, the debate about uranium mining in state ALPs has gone by the bye, as they all support uranium mining. Of course, South Australia has the largest uranium mine in the world. The ALP federally has given up the debate on uranium mining and will allow it to happen just like the mining of any mineral resource and has done away with the two and three-mine policies, and, quite rightly, it has moved on. However, for some reason—I think I know why—the Australian Labor Party here has always had a problem with it. Last time the ALP was in government, it banned uranium mining. When we came into government in the 2008 election, we committed to allowing uranium mining and the ALP whinged about that. There was a lot of exploration that created a lot of jobs. It has the potential to create many more jobs. Of course, the price of uranium oxide is now very low and it does not justify mining, but if the price picks up, we had the industry in a state in which it could expand. Western Australia has a huge proportion of the world’s uranium stockpiled in known deposits. In fact, I have been told it is the largest in the world. Members opposite are against uranium mining. I could never understand why the state ALP was so strongly against uranium mining, but during the last campaign we found out from the current Minister for Mines and Petroleum that the McGowan opposition was committed to allowing any of the uranium mines that had approval to go ahead, but it would not allow any more. It was a grandfathering exercise. The question was: what is approval? There is a litany of approval processes at both the state and, eventually, the federal level. It was left vague. As questions were asked of the minister, he was increasingly strong that if the mines got approval before the election, they would be approved, and I believe that four got approval of some sort. Right after the election, the minister indicated that that is what would happen. However, the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union then came out and said, “No way.” Mr McCartney said, “No; that’s not ALP policy. That’s not what’s going to happen. The minister’s wrong; we’ll see to that.” In other words, the head of a union vetoed a minister and overrode a clear election commitment. People in the industry accepted this begrudgingly—they would have liked it to be open—and were committed to expansion, investment and drilling. When we asked the minister who was right—him or

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McCartney—he said that no decision had been made. There are many ways to interpret that. It might mean that he does not know. It might mean that he will ask McCartney about it or that he might be negotiating. It was a clear case of a person who is not elected to this house, and who has great sway over the Labor Party, vetoing a government election commitment. That is a very dangerous event and there are others. I think my colleague the member for Bateman will address this more clearly.

There was also an issue with the AMWU and the Treasurer. The Treasurer is trying to come to grips with energy policy, which is fair enough. I hope he is doing a good job—so far, so good. He said that he wanted to have a commitment to go to full retail contestability. Right now, the structure is that Synergy has a monopoly on any house or business that consumes less than 50 megawatts. It loses money and is heavily subsidised by the state. In the rhetoric, there are some problems with the argument, but this is not the time for debate on those. The Treasurer has voiced the view that he will increase prices by a figure in the vicinity of 15 per cent over two years. That will really hurt a lot of households. Last year, the Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier, decried us for being vicious and aggressive when we raised prices by 3.5 per cent. He is suggesting a fivefold increase on that, but that is a different issue. In the run-up to the last election, the Treasurer had essentially no energy policy because a 50 per cent renewable energy policy was abandoned during the campaign. I debated this with the shadow Minister for Energy at the time and explicitly asked whether he had a commitment to retail contestability. He said, “No. I’m thinking about it. I kind of like the Singapore model, which wound it back.” The minister had a policy, but the Treasurer and the Minister for Energy were forming policy, maybe in cabinet or maybe the minister by himself, but the minister also voiced his views publicly, which is what he should do, about moving to full retail contestability, and in that case increasing prices by 15 per cent. Again, the AMWU came out and said, “No way. That’s not ALP policy. If he wants to do it, join the Liberal Party. This is outrageous; he won’t do it!” Today, we asked the Premier who was right. He did not even know what Synergy did. He said that the government would not sell the monopoly. The sale was not the issue. There was no mention of the sale or selling any part of Synergy. Obviously, the Premier got it confused with Western Power; I do not know why. The Premier could not say who would decide—the AMWU or the Minister for Energy—on something as fundamental as retail contestability. More importantly, the government is proposing, as reported in the media, to increase electricity prices by 15 per cent over two years on the basis that Synergy goes to full retail contestability, and the unions are vetoing it. That is how it appears to us. It appears the AMWU has veto power on energy policy. It is outrageous; it is ridiculous. If the government does not go to full retail contestability because the unions have vetoed it and prices are increased by 15 per cent, do members opposite know what? They are turning Synergy into a taxing mechanism on behalf of the AMWU.

Let us go through some other examples. One of the real issues is the increasing public sector dominance of the union movement. The union movement has been much more able to retain its public sector membership than its private sector membership. This state, of course, has been bleeding in the private sector. All sorts of programs have been tried to retain membership or get it up, but they have not worked. In the public sector, it can be done in a number of ways. One of the ways, which operates in my office as Leader of the Opposition, is that the private details of new private sector employees are given to a union. Details of Leader of the Opposition office employees, who are Liberal Party staffers, are given to a union. The union then calls them and says, “You should be a member of the union.” The unions are given phone numbers, addresses and other details that in any other industry would be totally illegal to give to a third party. It is not the case that the workers went to the union and said, “Listen; I want to talk to you.” The unions got those details from somebody—I suppose it was the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, but I do not know—and they called workers to tell them to become members. This is outrageous behaviour. It is a release of confidential information. In the past, when virtually everybody in the public sector was a member of the union, it might have been acceptable, but it is not now. To my knowledge, if I go to a hospital and I want to send my private health details to, let us say, a doctor, I have to give the hospital permission to send that information, even though it is for me. In this case, somebody in the government—I think it happened under the Liberal government too, but I am not sure—gave a union private details of staffers in the Leader of the Opposition’s office. That is outrageous behaviour. That is one way in which unions can sustain their membership.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** That is one way for the Labor Party to sustain its membership.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Of course, in certain circumstances, we can envisage that —

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** Will you take the interjection?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** No, I will not.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, I have tolerated a lot of shouting across this house. I have been waiting for someone to ask to interject, and I have just heard the member with the call say he will not take an interjection. That indicates to me that it does not matter how much you yell, I am going to keep standing up and stopping the debate. So, please, listen. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I know what the government has to do; it is here to defend the unions. I understand that. I understand the union backgrounds of those who have spoken. I understand that. I understand their background, I understand their support base, but this is a debate. I understand why those members are here and who they are here for, but this is Parliament and we have a right to speak. These are difficult issues for members opposite; I understand that.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I get back to my point. We can see through history the influence of unions on Australian Labor Party governments. Look at the current Victorian government. It a one-term government so far that took over from a Liberal government that had put in place substantial changes to the cost structures of the Victorian public sector. The Andrews government has been in there a number of years, it is struggling in the polls now—I think it is down. The polls are 45–55; it looks like it will be a one-term government. That is the state of politics around the world, and members opposite should note it. In the latest budget —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, that is enough! You are not meant to be having a debate amongst yourselves; we are listening to the member on his feet. Enough!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** In the latest budget wages growth was 7.3 per cent, with inflation of less than two per cent. The circumstances in Queensland are that the previous Liberal–National government undertook a major transformation of the public sector; I think it basically reduced the public sector by 14 000 people or something of that vicinity. The Palaszczuk government was elected, marginally, on the basis of —

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes, it was. It has a very small margin. That is it; it does.

It won on the basis of replacing some of those workers. But in a very short period of time it has grown the public sector by more than Campbell Newman reduced it, with public sector wages growth in the vicinity of eight per cent.

I turn to the Rudd–Gillard–Rudd government. Again, we saw very rapid growth and expenditure there. Part of it was the stimulus action, and part of it was a very major expansion in the public sector. An example I give that is really pertinent to the government across the house is the Disability Services Commission. That was a creation of the Gillard government—it is bipartisan now—and it was to be funded out of an additional Medicare levy that was put aside for a while. The government decided to set up a large national bureaucracy and put it in Geelong, because Geelong was struggling from the demise of the auto industry. The government initially concentrated on two things: a computer system that was struggling; and, more importantly in the first instance, the growing of public sector employment by way of the Disability Services Commission, before it actually had a patron, I might add, or a client.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** What; like Fiona Stanley?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** There were 11 000 people in the Disability Services Commission. In other words, the National Disability Insurance Scheme was largely about job creation for the first five years of production in a marginal, Labor-held seat in Geelong. That is the pressure the ALP has various unions put on it. I could go across the board.

I turn to the Gallop–Carpenter government. This is an interesting one because it is clear in certain areas and unclear in others. When the Gallop government came in in 2001—I remember it very clearly—the economy was in recession. It inherited a very lean government; no-one could criticise the Richard Court government of bloating the public sector or excessive taxation. It had the lowest effective tax rate in the country. The Gallop government committed to a review of the public sector. John Langoulant ran it, it went on for quite a few months, and the government reduced the number of bureaucracies by a substantial amount and built these large super-bureaucracies—à la the current McGowan government. The then government used that to, in part, clear out what it perceived to be Liberal-oriented public servants; some of them probably were. Some of them who

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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I knew from my days in the public sector were actually Labor-leaning, but they worked well with the Richard Court government so they got the job. That was a mistake.

The Gallop government built these bureaucracies. Initially, the bureaucracy did not grow very significantly. But after that was done the bureaucracies became more and more turgid, more and more top-heavy, and they parachuted in a whole bunch of advisers to actually talk with each other rather than meet with clients. Over the seven years of the Gallop government the size of the public sector grew by 22 per cent. That was actually before the huge increase in population. Salaries started growing, and so in the last full year of the Gallop government salary growth was 10 per cent. In 2008–09, which was a combination of the Carpenter government and the Barnett government, salary growth was 14 per cent, according to the March 2017 report of government. There was a combination of massive increases in employment and very large increases in wages. When we came over—this is the secret that people opposite have for quite a few years been trying to hide—under its watch wages and salary growth was unprecedented, both in terms of the number of public servants and wages. It is a simple truth. Part of that was responding to demand and part of it was responding to the influences on the ALP to get more members and higher wages and better conditions in the public sector. The Labor Party, which is one and the same with the union movement, could do nothing but deliver it, and it did. In fact, it often bragged about it.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Under our watch, what has confused the current government to some extent is that we were, until very recently, exceedingly generous to union employees in the public sector. Under our period of government, a senior teacher—I think at the top rank—saw their wages grow by 70 per cent.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** So you were a union-dominated government, were you?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** From the lowest to the highest—70 per cent. By the way, that is a 35 per cent real increase.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** See, one of problems the government has with its members—this will haunt it over the next four years—is that they have been imbued with this rhetoric that we dudded teachers. We gave them a 70 per cent increase in wages and employed 6 000 more! Now, if that is called dudding, please dud me!

**Ms S.E. Winton:** How many of them are —

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We employed an extra 2 000 education assistants and gave them significant wage increases. Our proportion of education assistants per student is 50 per cent above any other state. In some cases it is 75 per cent above other states. We went out there and funded the education system, disability services, mental health, health and police like no other government. Members opposite might say, “Oh, it’s because you’re union-dominated”; no, it was because we were responding to demand.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** But you maxed out the credit card!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We were responding to demand. That is the problem: on one hand they say we did not give enough to the teachers; now they say we maxed out the credit card. They need to get their rhetoric right, because the Labor Party is in government now and it has to be responsible for its own rhetoric. But I have been diverted. Over the past few years, with the reduction in revenue and the tighter fiscal position, we have placed real restraint on the growth of expenditure in the public sector. It is not easy, because we still have to deliver the services. We froze the overall size of the general government sector from June 2012. There has been no increase in the overall size of the public sector since then, despite population growth. We did that through a range of hiring restraints and also 5 000-plus voluntary redundancies in the public sector. We turned around and employed 5 000 extra frontline employees. We revamped the public sector. We shifted the focus of the state wage position from inflation plus, to inflation at 1.5 per cent, and we negotiated successfully with the unions. The unions told us that they usually negotiated with us, and the only thing they wanted to trade off was the duration of the enterprise bargaining agreement. They wanted it to end after the next election, because they told us they were hoping that there would be a change of government and the next government would be more union friendly.

Also at times—it was on record in the media—I was pushing for something like the present government has done. I thought about a freeze altogether for a long time. It is in the media. I thought about a range of other things. I think someone came up with a scheme very similar to that of the present government, of a fixed sum of about \$1 000 a year. I brought it to my colleagues, but if we had done that, there would have been mass shutdown of the public sector—hospitals, schools, police and public transport.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Marching in the streets.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** There would have been mass marching on the streets and shutdowns. We simply could not afford that. We cannot afford to lock people out of hospitals, trains, buses and schools. The union movement made it quite clear that if the previous government did what the present government has done, it would take to the streets, so we did not do it. We went to 1.5 per cent, and we negotiated a range of EBAs that end soon. Just

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about every EBA was negotiated with a shorter period, so that the unions could get renegotiation under what they hoped would be a new government. That was what they got. The government has inherited that, and it will have to deal with it.

I support the government's wages policy, and I guess I am jealous that the government was able to do it with hardly a whimper from the union movement. There was a strike somewhere, but it was not at Parliament House. Did anyone see the unions going anywhere? I did not. I heard they were on strike somewhere. Maybe they were on strike at Cottesloe Beach. I read some tweets that they were a bit unhappy and were having discussions and were a bit disappointed, but good on the government. I guess what the union movement is saying is that only the ALP can screw it over, and that is what it has done. It has done the right thing, because wage restraint is absolutely needed, because our public servants are the highest paid in the country. We needed those wages to sustain essential services at that level, but population growth has slowed and wages in the public sector are simply not sustainable, so the government is doing the right thing. I do not want to sound like sour grapes but I am quite impressed with the government's wages policy. I wish I could have done it, but I could not, because the unions would not allow us to do it. However, they will come back and ask for something more, and that is what I am worried about.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** What's the payback?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** What is the payback? There would be a payback. The unions invested an unprecedented amount of money during the last election. There will be election funding reports, but they will represent only a small fraction of the amount of money and resources the union movement put into that election. We saw the unions campaigning and advertising heavily. On the Sunday before the election, on Channel Seven, between 7.00 pm and 8.00 pm, every ad was a union ad. Kerry Stokes must have been smiling. It was unprecedented. There were not many union people in my electorate, but down at the Canning pre-poll there were hundreds of union people who had flown over from the eastern states to campaign. They were being paid and put up in hotels. An unprecedented amount of money was invested in the present government by the unions, and they will demand payback. They were not doing it because members opposite have good smiles.

**Mr B. Urban:** I have.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Maybe.

They will want payback, and what will it be? Let us see. We have been watching that very carefully.

There is another issue here, and it is the real issue to some extent. Over time, the union movement has had a rich history in Australia. It has had, until now, a profoundly positive impact on the body politic and the values of Australia. I readily admit that. However, there is now a culture, in an increasing number of unions of not just thuggery but criminality. All members have to do is google "CFMEU" and look at the civil and criminal actions against it. Over 100 Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union operatives have been or are under investigation for civil and criminal wrongdoing, on over 1 000 different issues.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I can tell from the behaviour of members opposite that they are trying to deny this, but it is obvious. It is a cancer in the union movement, and the Labor government is unable to do anything about it because it is not in control—the unions are. I remember, right before the election, a video was flying around social media of a CFMEU organiser in Perth talking to a bunch of his workers, or his delegates, I am not sure. He was using language one cannot use in this place, saying that if Labor Party politicians do not do what the union wants, the union owns them and it can change them.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I will send it to members, if they want. Also, we read in the paper that the CFMEU is now merging with the Maritime Union of Australia, another militant organisation, to effect greater influence over the ALP. If members opposite are not worried about the influence of criminal behaviour in the union movement, and the influence of these people over them —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I acknowledge that the Leader of the Opposition has brought a fairly heated topic to the house. Members and ministers—not looking in your direction, member for Cannington—please do not yell across the chamber. The member has only 12 minutes left; give him the floor.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, I call you for the first time. You do not yell across the chamber when the Deputy Speaker is on her feet.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I know that this is hard for the Labor Party. Certain of its major leaders have raised this; it is not the first time. It is probably tough for the government to take from a Liberal opposition leader, but it is real. A question was asked of the Premier today. Yesterday, the Premier came out and banned ministers from interacting with Brian Burke. Good on him for that. I do not know whether Brian Burke is active in the Labor Party anymore. I do not know whether he is, but the government does not want him to be. Some of us have been around long enough to have seen his actions and his impact on the Labor Party repeatedly over 30 years. I guarantee that the government, for its own good and the good of the state, does not want him influencing its ministers. The question was about Brian Burke. He went to jail a long time ago for a crime that he has amended for. He went to jail, and that was a long time ago. He is an individual citizen and I am sure, as I read in the paper, he is unhappy about certain things he has done, so we will leave him alone. The Premier banned interactions between him and ministers. but when asked today whether he would do the same thing for the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, which is active now and doing these types of things, he waffled and refused to answer. He said no, basically. I think the word was “no”. I can tell the government that its concern is not Brian Burke, although it should be cautious about that; it is the influence of a small group of people in the union movement who focus largely on using their influence, through the Labor Party, to get to the coffers and powers of government. If they undertake behaviours when interacting with members opposite that are like those that take place in workplaces, we are all in danger. Some members of the government cannot see this because they were put there by the same people. I understand that some of them are blind to this issue because they have no choice. Some of them are essentially delegates from the CFMEU; they are basically delegates who were put there by the union. But the union’s actions are not appropriate for them to be influencing members of Parliament, let alone getting representation; they simply are not. The government should be leery of them. It can break loose, which I encourage it to do. We brought this motion forward because during the last election, as I indicated, we had no idea how much the union movement paid for the Labor Party’s campaign, but it was phenomenal.

**Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski:** How much did the business community pay for your campaign?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Not as much as the Labor Party’s campaign. It had the support of the business community. This time it had the business community firmly in hand. Labor got them; we lost them. Fair enough. We are trying to get them back. It was not so much the money that the union movement gave the Labor Party to spend; it was the parallel campaigns that went on.

**Mr B. Urban:** What about the banks?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** The banks did not give us anything. The major banks have had a positive policy of giving nothing, but equally to each party, for a long time. Now they give nothing.

We saw huge parallel campaigns going on, but the real problem for the public of Western Australia is that none of that parallel campaigning is transparent—none of it—even though in some of the campaigns members had been actively involved. The education union campaigned very hard—in pictures on the web at least—doorknocking and telling the troops. It campaigned and spent the money of hardworking teachers on campaigning for the Labor Party. The unions used that money by giving it directly to the Labor Party at least, but also on parallel campaigns. Do you know what? The public has no transparency of that expenditure whatsoever, and I suspect that the membership does not either. Before or during the campaign, the Labor government in Queensland decided to come forward with a policy of transparency in election funding. We have had debates about this in this house before. I think it is a good idea. One of the issues was to make funding to the Liberal Party by organisations such as the 500 Club transparent—that is fair enough; I agree—and also capping funding. That is fair enough; I agree. It will truncate election funding altogether, but so what. One thing that the Labor Party will always avoid, and we will not avoid, is making transparent and maybe capping the amount of parallel funding that goes on between the ALP and the union movement in political campaigns. It is as outrageous as political campaigns in the United States—that is, trying to avoid different types of funding. It is the same methodology. Parties receive certain money from the government on a per vote basis, which is clear. There is funding that is transparent and reported, and then there are all these secretive little groups providing parallel funding through the union movement that coordinate their campaigns explicitly with the campaign in ALP headquarters. None of that is transparent. It is not transparent to the public, to the electorate or, I suggest, to the union membership. It is a huge amount of money and it might not be used ethically. That is the real challenge of electoral funding reform and one that I personally will pursue. It is one that members opposite will be very quiet about. If the unions want to fund the ALP, they should just give it the money. It is a lot. The Labor Party out-funds us any day of the week. The big money in the last election was with it, particularly if we put all the unions in. The Labor Party would out-fund the Liberal Party six or seven to one. The big money was with Labor and it knows it. This time it had not only the unions, but also the big side of town.



Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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One of the issues with this, which I will pursue, is trying to get greater clarity about the various interactions between the ALP and the union movement to make sure that their interactions in terms of support, funding, projects, positions on boards, positions with staffing and positions on various decision-making boards are transparent. Increasingly, the ALP and the union movement are one and the same. They have huge access to money influence and they probably have the most concentrated influence on the body politic of Western Australia and in Australia. Most of those interactions are hidden and non-transparent.

**Mr B. Urban:** Workers!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Unions have 7.3 per cent of the private sector workforce; 93 per cent of the private workforce are no longer union members. Many of those who are members are forced to be members. The union movement has shrunk. If the government is not concerned about some of the criminal behaviour and the declining ethics in the union movement, that is fair enough. That is why we have the Corruption and Crime Commission and various other regulatory bodies. I imagine that the government will get rid of the code of conduct that dealt with lawlessness in the building sector. Established in, I think, the Department of Commerce was a group of people to oversee and administer that code of conduct. I assume that the government will chop that. The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union will have told the government to get rid of it, if it has not already gone. There has been no word about that. I am sure that the government will maintain the very special privileges the union movement enjoys, but, mark my words, the union movement is no longer a membership-focused organisation; it is focused on sustaining its influence over a shrinking minority of people by influencing the government. The union movement will use the powers of government to sustain itself. In no other area of politics does a small minority of people have such an influence not only in what the government does, but also in the selection of ministers. Government ministers have been largely chosen based not on ability or seniority but on union affiliation. There are certain people in this place who deserve to be a minister, who have been here and who have delivered, and who are not.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** The Minister for Tourism knows who they are; there is more than one. The government may have won by a landslide but the biggest concern the public of WA has with electing a Labor government is the excessive power that gives the unions. We will see what that is over the next four years.

**MR D.C. NALDER (Bateman)** [5.02 pm]: The motion before us today is that this house notes that the trade union movement represents just 9.4 per cent of Australian workers. The opposition has been pointing out that the union movement represents 71 per cent of ministers in the cabinet. I am going to talk about that influence and commentary about that in the press since the election. The number one concern in the broader community that has been expressed to me is that although the public has liked and enjoyed the government's rhetoric in these early days, they are concerned about the union movement's influence and whether the government can and will deliver on pre-election commitments and post-election rhetoric. Some things have occurred that have increased that level of public concern with the influence of the union movement. Following the election, the Maritime Union of Australia's Western Australia branch secretary, Chris Cain, said that the Premier owed the union some cabinet seats.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** Christy Cain.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** I stand corrected. She said that the Premier owed the union some cabinet seats. There is no question that that has been delivered. This government has the highest number of former union leaders and officials of any WA Labor government since World War II and the highest representation of unionists in the past 70 years.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** How many of us?

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** It is the highest in the past 70 years. We know that 71 per cent of the McGowan cabinet has union ties. That is almost 10 times the proportion of trade union membership in the WA private sector of 7.6 per cent, according to the 2017 Australian Bureau of Statistics. When we look at that, we see it is not only among ministers; we see the same influence in the roles being offered to chiefs of staff and other staff members in the ministerial office.

In addition to the concerns that are continuing to grow in the public arena, I refer to some of the commentary that has followed comments by certain ministers. Hon Bill Johnston, the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, said immediately after the election on 27 March that uranium mine projects approved by the previous government would be able to proceed. Consider then the comments by the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union on ABC radio on 18 April 2017 in an interview by Bridget Fitzgerald, that, according to my notes, stated —

The Mines Minister, Bill Johnston, has sent a statement to the ABC this morning saying 'Labor's position regarding the uranium mining in WA hasn't changed since 2012. Only mines approved prior to

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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the 2017 State election will proceed'. ... do you have any issue with those four mines ... and it is four projects that are essentially given the go ahead ... do you have any issue with those proceeding?

STEVE MCCARTNEY

**I have an issue with every one of them proceeding, because we don't believe they've got the go ahead.**

BRIDGETTE FITZGERALD

What do you think they're lacking?

STEVE MCCARTNEY

They're lacking a series of things ... all we've really got it is some approval. A couple of things wrong with this whole debate, in mind view, right; one is there is no economic argument to even start these things ...

That is the sort of commentary from the AMWU on uranium mining proposals. In March the minister said that it was categorical that those mines that had been given prior approval would be allowed to proceed. When asked in this chamber whether they would be allowed to proceed, the minister stated —

I will give no guarantee of any such thing.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** That's not what I was asked.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** I am directly quoting *Hansard* —

I will give no guarantee of any such thing. All projects in this state are subject to the will of this Parliament, and this Parliament keeps the right to make decisions on the future of any project in this state.

If what the minister said on 27 March matches what happens, I will eat my hat. The comments by the minister on 27 March were categorical that these projects would be allowed to proceed. There were no ifs, buts or maybes. All of a sudden it is uncertain because the AMWU has stepped in and said, "We don't like this. We don't agree with this policy. We actually don't like uranium mining and therefore we are telling the Labor government that it's not going to happen." Yet the Labor government said it would accept the umpire's decision on the four mines that had been approved and they would be allowed to proceed. We are already seeing a level of union influence, whereby at one moment in an election campaign the Labor Party was stating that the mines would be allowed to proceed if they had previously received approval but post the election, and because of the influence of the AMWU, the Labor government is now saying, "We're not really sure. We don't think they will be. We don't think they've ticked all the boxes at this point in time." The rhetoric has changed fundamentally.

I will also move to what has occurred off the back of questions without notice I asked the Treasurer today. I express some surprise, because I would say that the Treasurer has misled Parliament in the past 24 hours. The first comment I draw members' attention to is his comment yesterday about Treasury costings for the Liberals in 2008 that were not subject to analysis. I have copies of the Treasury costings for the Liberal Party and the Labor Party for 2008, 2013 and 2017. Both parties submitted those costings in 2008 and 2013, and the language on what constitutes analysis by Treasury is exactly the same right across the board. The only costing that Treasury never had was from the Labor Party in 2017. There is also commentary about royalties and the GST, but I will elaborate on that further when I speak in the third reading debate of the Supply Bill. The Treasurer said in question time that he had not said that the GST and royalties were influencing the government's financial position and that other things were being taken into account.

I will actually bring forth the quotes that both the Premier and the Treasurer have made regarding these issues, but that is for a later date. The purpose today is to share with the house the comments the Treasurer made regarding Synergy, and then the commentary from the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. The Treasurer went out in public and said —

... I want to get to a position where Western Australians can start making a choice about who provides them with their electricity," ... "You are seeing it already with gas, that competition has quite a dramatic impact on bills. That's where you see real pressure applied on costs—when there's a competitive market. That's what I'm trying to achieve."

He also said —

"The right policy outcome, that is competition, may also be likely to have a negative balance sheet outcome — that is Synergy's value," ... "It's effectively a transfer of value to consumers. In terms of the overall economy, competition and lower power prices is a good thing."

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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Then the AMWU came out and absolutely slammed the Treasurer's comments. In an interview with *The West Australian* on Monday, 22 May, the Treasurer said he —

... wanted to end State-owned power provider Synergy's monopoly over the residential electricity market "sooner rather than later".

Steve McCartney from the AMWU said —

... the Treasurer's statements went against Labor's position and the clear mandate given at the March state election.

"This is not the policy, it's not the party platform, it's just the Treasurer completely out of bounds, making it up as he goes along."

"Our members, and countless others in the community made it very clear in voting for this Labor government how they felt about the Liberal agenda, and to have the Treasurer running around saying it would be 'wonderful' to follow the plans of the previous Liberal government is an absolute slap in the face to those people."

"If Treasurer Wyatt wants to follow Liberal party policy, maybe he's in the wrong party."

I have never heard anything so insightful from the unions about one of the Labor Party's ministers. It begs the question: who is running the government? That is at the heart of this motion today. During question time, I asked the Premier who he supports. Is he supporting the Treasurer or the AMWU? The Premier turned around and first talked about Western Power. I do not know where this Western Power commentary comes from when we are talking about Synergy. I am sure that the Premier understands the difference between Western Power and Synergy and the difference between generating power, retailing power and transmitting power, but he did get confused a bit in comments about gentailing. Anyway, Western Power, as we all know, is about the transmission of power; it has nothing to do with the generation or retailing of power. But he started to make the inference that this was about Western Power and that we lost the election. He then went on to this strange and crazy thing about me and the seats of Bateman, Bicton and Alfred Cove. What that had to do with the question, I have no idea. Obviously he feels a little bit threatened by that question; that is how I would interpret it. These claims by the AMWU are absolutely outrageous. It is incumbent on the government to put the AMWU back in its place. The government should show the community of Western Australia that it has some spine and tell the union to mind its own business. We will have confidence in the government of Western Australia when it can say that this is the policy for Western Australia and it is not the unions that are running government. The Minister for Mines and Petroleum has started to back off on uranium mining and we are seeing this vague approach in response to the questions about Synergy and what the Treasurer has said. The government is trying to avoid answering the question and being clear and concise for the people of Western Australia, which is what Western Australians deserve. People do not stand for cheap shots and political campaigning in the federal election that we have started to see in the last 24 hours. We saw that today. The campaigning that the government did in question time today was a disgrace. We want to see a government that is not controlled by unions and has the authority and the autonomy to make decisions on what it has been elected to do. That is not what we are experiencing. Every time this government comes up with a policy, if the unions do not agree with it, they come out and slap government members down. Not once have I seen the Premier stand up to the unions and tell them to back off because they are not running this state. That is what we expect of leadership and from this government. Members opposite have so many ties into this Parliament, that for those who are not tied, it is a real risk. These factional influences

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**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** Here we go. Factional influences through the unions are dictating to government members how they act and operate, and they cannot handle the truth. They are demonstrating that they do not have the courage or the spine to stand up to these unions and let them know their place. Government members should show that they have the courage of their convictions to represent the people of Western Australia in their own right without these people pulling the levers behind their back and telling them how to think and operate and support. That is what we want to see; that is not what we are getting.

**MR S.K. L'ESTRANGE (Churchlands)** [5.16 pm]: The key concern surrounding this motion and debate is that unions no longer actually represent the workers. I know that members opposite think that unions represent workers, and a lot of members in this place who are members of unions in good faith think that they are doing the right thing by workers. They have a genuine desire to serve their constituencies with this philosophy of union involvement for the worker. I am advised that the reality is that unions represent only 9.4 per cent of the workforce. What I want to know is: who represents the rest of the workforce?

**Ms S.E. Winton:** I represent everyone in Wanneroo.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** If the member is representing her constituency, good on her—that is why she is here. I commend her and every member of this place for representing their constituencies because that is our first and foremost job. The member's role as a member of Parliament is not in dispute. The concern in this debate is the influence of unions over the functioning of government and the public sector, and how business is coordinated and conducted by the private and public sector in Western Australia. That is what we are on about here, because we are concerned that there is a heavy influence of union involvement in the current crop of members of Parliament in government. That is a fact. By virtue of the government's membership, that is not in dispute; we know that.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** Give me an example.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I will get to an example in a minute, member. Just give me a chance to get my speech started; it would be much appreciated. I have about 30 minutes ahead of me so if the member waits and listens, she might learn something. She has been here for two seconds, but she seems to know a lot.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy):** I ask you, member for Churchlands, to talk to the Chair—and can other members please listen in silence; thank you.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I thank you for your protection, Mr Acting Speaker.

I will read this point that was made in *The Weekend Australian* some time ago, but it is a point that started to deal with where the unions were headed. It was made by Judith Sloan in *The Weekend Australian* of 31 October 2015. She makes the point —

The real point is that trade unions in Australia have become less industrial organisations committed to enhancing the welfare of their members and more political bodies used by ambitious university graduates to secure political careers or well-paid positions at the Fair Work Commission and other government agencies.

Given this, it is hardly surprising unions fiercely resist any watering down of their influence within the Labor Party.

No greater example do we have than that over 80 per cent of the current members of Parliament in Western Australia have a strong affiliation with the union movement.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** And I'm proud of it. What's the point?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member is obviously proud of it; she is one of them. That is not in dispute, member. We know the member is proud of it; otherwise, she would not be here representing a union. We have got it.

The point is that only 9.4 per cent of the workforce are members of the unions. So who is keeping an eye out for the rest? Why should so much power be vested in this group of people who come from a union body politic that represents only 9.4 per cent of the workforce? It is remarkable.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** We represent the people who elected us, just like you.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Maybe the member for Mirrabooka was not here when I said that the role of members as advocates for their constituency is not in dispute. We are all here to do that. The point we are making is that for those members who are wedded to the union movement, the unions may well tell them how to vote on certain things. Yes, members have their community responsibilities to their constituency; that is not in dispute. But when decisions of government are before cabinet and the unions start influencing the outcomes of those decisions, it goes beyond representing constituents; it then becomes influencing the outcomes for Western Australia. The member for Mirrabooka knows very well that that is the case.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, please listen in silence. Member for Churchlands, if you spoke to the Chair, they would be less likely to respond.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Robust debate is a function of Parliament. I am interested in some interjections, but there are times when they are pointless. I am going quite okay, but thank you for your offer of protection again, Mr Acting Speaker.

I will talk about the comment of the Maritime Union of Australia's state secretary, Christy Cain. Let me tell members something that he said quite recently. On 13 March, just after the election, there was an ABC news item titled "Unions call for seats at Mark McGowan's cabinet table". It reports that when Mr Cain was asked whether he thought the Premier-elect owed unions some cabinet seats, he said, "Yes, I think he does." That is

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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why I am saying that it is of concern. A group of unions is able to influence a new government that is forming to ensure that it has union representation on it, but, remember, it represents only 9.4 per cent of the people.

Paul Murray was onto this.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I have no idea what the member's interjection has to do with my debate right now, but let me continue.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Paul Murray made the point on 1 March this year, just prior to the election, in an article titled "Hypocrisy clouds poor policy". It states —

... a new Labor faction which plans to link a disparate bunch of previously warring unions will emerge after the election to challenge the power of the dominant United Voice bloc.

It's all about who "owns" McGowan should Labor get elected and has some urgency because the unions think that is a certainty.

Paul Murray was onto this concern. We know that there is over 80 per cent membership. We know that the United Voice bloc is the biggest bloc in the Parliament, closely followed by the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. The concerns for the wider community are how this will influence government policy. That is what we are alluding to in Parliament today.

The most significant aspect of concern is that it creates an environment of uncertainty for the economy of Western Australia. No better example of that exists than the current Labor government's position on uranium mining. I heard some backbenchers interject, "Oh, no, here we go again." It is a serious concern to the people of Western Australia if, on the one hand, a party goes to an election saying one thing and then, on the other hand, once elected it starts implying another, particularly if, when it is implying the other, the dots can be joined between a union leader's point of view and the outcome of that change. That is when it starts to become a real concern for the people of Western Australia, particularly the people of Western Australia who are investing in that mines sector. Let me try to help join the dots.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Do you want a crayon?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** No, member. I am quite capable of explaining this to members, but I do appreciate his offer of support. This is the Labor Party's 2015 policy platform, which no doubt would have been drafted with the union movement. Paragraph 269 states —

The platform recognises WA Labor's long and continuous opposition to Uranium Mining.

That is pretty clear. It is not ambiguous at all. There it is. Then we move forward to the election and just after the election, the Minister for Mines and Petroleum —

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** Which one?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The current mines minister. This was reported in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* of 25 April this year, after the election —

Bill Johnston said the Labor position was clear, and that Vimy Resources' Mulga Rock, Toro Energy's Wiluna Uranium Project and Cameco Australia's Yeelirrie would be allowed to go ahead, along with Cameco's Kintyre project in the Pilbara.

There we go; we have a mines minister who is doing the right thing by the mines. He is supporting it. Just remember, members, it is not a position of the 2015 policy platform. He has gone against the policy platform of 2015. We applaud that position.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Hang on a sec, member for Wanneroo; just listen in. I am getting there; I am joining the dots.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Wanneroo needs to listen. The AMWU's state secretary, Steve McCartney, was quick to say that the minister had been misquoted and there was no way in the world that projects would be able to go ahead. How does a person external to the cabinet say that a minister has been

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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misquoted? How does that happen? Member for Wanneroo, listen in; here is the fourth dot. Is the member ready? The unions are rapping the minister on uranium and *The West Australian* reported —

Premier Mark McGowan is facing the first big internal test of his leadership after left-wing unions lashed out at Mines Minister Bill Johnston over what appears to be support of four uranium mines.

That was in an article by Daniel Mercer and Nick Butterly in *The West Australian* of Tuesday, 18 April 2017.

We are joining the dots. The policy platform was one thing, but the minister went to an election saying another. After the election, the unions said that his position was wrong. Now the minister is starting to backtrack on the position going into the election. This is what we are saying. We all have different backgrounds.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** You are doing the bidding of uranium mining companies.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am actually not. Member for Mirrabooka, I am making a point of the influence of unions to change the decision-making process of cabinet. That is the concern I have. Obviously, it will have a very negative effect on that sector of the economy if uncertainty ensues as a result of those changes and it will impact upon investment decisions.

Let me move away from talking about the mining sector to something completely different—something that the member for Wanneroo is passionate about, which is schools. The Liberal–National government embarked upon the independent public schools program. It was a highly successful program. It caught the imagination of school communities throughout Western Australia. Many of them were very keen and quick to jump on board to improve the governance of their schools and have more community involvement in the governance of their schools. It was highly successful. What was Labor's 2015 policy platform on independent public schools? Let me read it to members. The Labor Party's position is in a section of its policy document—for new Labor members who might not have seen it, it is a big red document. It is a big red book with a lot in it!

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Yes, it has a lot of ideas.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Let me tell the member about this idea, because I have no doubt that she will be keen to tell her school communities in Wanneroo about it. Let me tell members this idea. There is a section called “Returned to Government” and paragraph (z) states that it will —

Immediately cease any further roll out of the Independent Public Schools program;

That was under the heading “Returned to Government”. The document states that if returned to government, the independent public school rollout would immediately cease.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is the policy.

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mirrabooka!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Hang on a second; let me join the dots! Now let us look at the State School Teachers Union of WA position on IPS. Surprise, surprise; let us look at this. Under the heading “Independent Public Schools”, it states —

While remaining fundamentally opposed to the Western Australian Independent Public School (IPS) model ...

The policy platform aligns with the union platform. We have not yet seen the Labor government demonstrate whether it will go back on its IPS policy, but the track record to date on how the Labor government has communicated with the education community is appalling. There is no better example than the consultation, or lack of, with the Perth Modern School community on its Education Central policy. There was zero consultation for a complete change and then the government decided, after hearing the backlash, to go back on its plan and change it.

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is for another debate, member for Mirrabooka. The point I am getting at is that consultation is not a strong component of the way members opposite govern and I will watch very closely how they handle the independent public school system that was set up by the Liberal–National government in Western Australia. I think that members opposite will slowly start to unravel it and pull it back and I think they

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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will acquiesce to the demands of the State School Teachers Union of Western Australia. I think we will see one of the most outstanding education initiatives in this state's history go down the toilet.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is what I think, but I hope I am wrong.

**THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy):** Manager of opposition business, I again remind you that if you speak through the Chair, there will be fewer interruptions from members and I would always remind members to please listen in silence.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for your support once again.

Let us move on. I gave an example from the mining sector and I flagged a concern in the independent public schools arena. Let us move on now to the relationship the new Labor government will have with companies that deal with government projects and government procurement. How will that play out in the future? Labor's policy platform in that arena is quite alarming. I will need to spell this out for members who are new to this place because it is important that they understand what these procurement policies are about. I will read from the policy document, which states —

A WA Labor Government will review all procurement policies and practices to ensure the following:

- (a) That preference in awarding contracts is given to those companies that are prepared to work within the Labor Governments industrial relations framework; that is, which have a positive approach towards the rights of trade unions and their members and respect the right of employees to become members of the appropriate union ...

That is the first point. It goes on to state —

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Member, I will accept that interjection because, remembering what I said earlier, only 9.4 per cent of the workforce belong to a union.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** It is 7.3 per cent in Western Australia.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The Leader of the Opposition says that 7.3 per cent of the Western Australian workforce belong to a union, yet we have a policy around procurement that states that it has to abide by Labor's view that the unions need to be involved. It goes on to state —

- (c) That all successful tenderers for cleaning contracts in Government owned buildings will be signatories of the United Voice "Cleanstart Principles".

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is an insightful statement in this policy document. It states that all successful tenderers will be signatories of the United Voice "Cleanstart Principles". If they are not a signatory to the principles of United Voice, which is a union, does that mean they will not be able to tender?

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Will they not be able to tender?

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** What I am getting at is: why can the best company not get the job based on its performance, regardless?

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** They are getting upset. I know there are a lot of United Voice members here, Leader of the Opposition. Let me go on. The policy document states —

Further WA Labor expects that such companies will ensure any sub-contractors will also comply with these provisions.

WA Labor will introduce mechanisms, systems and practices within government departments and authorities which are capable of implementing and policing the above, including effective contract management and audit processes to ensure compliance with this policy throughout the relevant

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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domestic supply chains. WA Labor notes the value in the use of relevant Trade Unions to assist in the audit of these successive contracts throughout the relevant supply chains.

The unions are now auditing government supply chains! This is in Labor's policy platform. Where was that in its election media? Millions of dollars were spent on advertising. I remember filling up my car with petrol at the local service station and watching Premier McGowan's advertisements rolling, rolling, rolling while I filled up the car. I thought: God, you cannot avoid this guy. He is everywhere. He is on billboards, on the telly, on the radio and at the service station! He was everywhere. It was like *Where's Wally!* But Wally was everywhere; he was right here. It was unbelievable! I saw none of this in any of those ads.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Listen to this; it is the last bit. I will wrap up soon, but I know the member for Wanneroo is enjoying it. The member for Wanneroo is having a great time! There is a lot, but this is important. The policy document goes on —

Further a WA Labor Government will ensure that there is a willingness by government departments to exercise this power.

In the policy platform, the Labor government has tied its departments to the union movement under its watch.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** And the problem is?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is a beautiful segue to my wrap up, member for Girrawheen. The problem is this: Labor's policy platform is clearly heavily influenced by the union movement. That is indisputable and it is very obvious. It is actually written —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** What's the party called? We are the Labor Party.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Let me finish. The member for Cannington is correct; it is the Labor Party, but unions do not represent the broader Western Australian community, with only 9.4 per cent national representation. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is 7.3 per cent state representation. Why does this union stranglehold exist over a Labor-held Parliament and cabinet when unions do not represent the broader community? That is our key concern. The broader Western Australian community is not interested in unions; it is interested in a fair go. They are aspiring, entrepreneurial, motivated people who want the best for themselves and for their kids; they do not want to be constrained by unions telling them when they can and cannot work. They are not interested in that. It is concerning that 80 per cent of our Western Australian members of Parliament are affiliated with unions, which is out of step with the 7.3 per cent union membership in Western Australia that the Leader of the Opposition told us about. It is out of step.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** We are only three months in, member. We know and we have examples and we are already seeing unions publicly putting pressure on Labor to abide by its policies. If a Labor minister steps outside that policy framework, they are whacked; they are told in the media that they got it wrong or have been misquoted. It is like the puppeteer with their hand up the puppet's back; the puppet got it wrong and it needs to go out and say it again this way.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, I hesitate to repeat —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! Please direct your comments through the Chair, thank you very much.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker; your protection is wonderful. I have been enjoying it greatly.

The key concern is that it is creating uncertainty. When a government says one thing and is heavily influenced by a union operative to say another and starts saying another thing, it creates uncertainty throughout the community of Western Australia, uncertainty for investment decisions in projects throughout Western Australia, uncertainty on building and construction sites, and uncertainty linked to government procurement. That is why the heavy influence of the union movement on the new Labor government is of concern to us in this place.

**MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville)** [5.43 pm]: I would like to start my contribution to the debate on this motion tonight with some indulgence from the house to extend my thanks to retiring state director Andrew Cox.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy):** Members!



Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** He was a great state director during a difficult election campaign. I extend my thanks to him and I wish him well in his ventures in Canberra. My thanks also go to retiring Senator Chris Back for his contribution to Western Australia since he was elected in 2009. I wish Chris, Linda and his family well in retirement from public life.

I know that I am a freshman in this place, but it is remarkable to see the rabble on the other side of the chamber protesting so much over such a routine contribution from the opposition, which is often in the position to have to highlight the scandalous dark links of unions with the Labor Party.

**Mr B. Urban** interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** My father is not a unionist at all. I am glad the member for Darling Range raised that point because I will get to it in just a moment.

I do not doubt the importance of unions to the Labor Party. I do not even doubt the importance of unions' contributions to our national history. I think there have been times since their inception, I think, in 1891 when they have contributed much to protect workers' rights and to improving standards of occupational health and safety.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** As I said, I do not doubt their contribution to our nation's history, but, similarly, I have been personally affected by an element that exists within the union movement—in the militant construction union that is the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, in particular. The member for Darling Range did say that my father was a unionist. No, he was in fact petitioned to become a unionist, but when he could not afford his ticket, or, indeed, refused to pay for a ticket, they came back the next day to the construction site in Midland where he was an apprentice and told him that he had to buy a ticket from them or he would not work. He refused again. They came back a second day, I think it was, and told him that if he did not buy a ticket, they would return and make sure that they beat him up.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Thank you very much.

**Ms A. Sanderson:** Was it a real job?

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** A real job—that is right.

In any case, my father, who was an apprentice plumber on the site, refused to buy a ticket. The very next day the unionists came back and they assaulted him; they beat him up. Ever since then, within him there was an attitude that he would never support the Labor Party or, more importantly, support a party that was aligned with the militant construction union.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Indeed, my family's contribution—indeed, my experience —

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Come on now. Right you are.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Ask him how many times he voted against a pay rise.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Okay. I cannot and I will not at this point. I appreciate that members opposite are protesting much for their departing union puppetmaster and I appreciate their hostility in this case.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! Members, thank you.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Look at them fire up. My relationship with construction unions is not limited to my father's experience; it was also my experience. In the summer of 2015–16, I had the good fortune of being a concrete formworker on two hotel sites that my employer BGC was constructing—the Aloft Hotel in Rivervale and the Westin hotel in the CBD.

**Mr M.J. Folkard:** Was it your first job?

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** It was not my first job, but I appreciate the interjection. It was certainly an odd job.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** My time in the construction industry, although limited, gave me enormous respect for those who risk their lives every day, with which I am sure all members in this place would agree.

**Mr M.J. Folkard:** I see callouses on your hands.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I appreciate that. Mr Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Dawesville, I do apologise. Members, please listen to the member in silence. Again, as I told the member who spoke before you, if you speak through the Chair, I will make sure that members listen to you in silence.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I will try my best, Mr Acting Speaker.

I am also cognisant of the point about the two deaths on the Jaxon Construction site in East Perth raised by the member for Cannington during question time. I was also working on the construction site at that time and I can promise all in this place that when we heard about those awful, awful deaths on site, it muted our energy during the day. It was saddening for all of us there. It absolutely has an effect; it is an awful thing. I hate to see any worker killed on a construction site, and we should do all we can to ensure that we mitigate that risk. A number of times I was in dangerous and potentially harmful situations during my time on site. I was knocked over by a concrete prop. Not callouses, but one of my fingers was crushed —

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I am glad members opposite all deride it, but it is indeed an experience —

**Mr M.J. Folkard:** It was because your sunglasses were fogged up and you couldn't see what you were doing!

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** These are dangers that all construction workers face on a daily basis. They are all dangers. I hope all in this place do everything they can to mitigate the risks to construction workers going forward.

My experience is not limited to concrete formwork, but my experience with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union on a daily basis as I arrived at work was consistently that I was hassled to become part of that union. I was called a scab when I was not.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** It is an affiliated site; the member for Girrawheen is quite right. But that did not stop the union from standing out the front and ensuring that every single time we went to work, we were hassled to join that union. That behaviour does not happen in any other modern workplace in Western Australia. To be frank, I find it absurd that we have, at this point in time, the various leaders of the CFMEU who have been convicted of assault, trespass, contempt of court and industrial law breaches and have a longstanding history of bullying, intimidation, standover tactics, thuggery and making threats against anyone who gets in their way, and they are part of the Australian Labor Party!

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I find it staggering that a union operates as an effective legal mafia and, as such, continues to have a significant role in our state's governance and democracy.

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** This is not the story of an organised —

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I seek your ruling on the member reading from his notes. This is not a speech that can be read from his notes. It is not his inaugural speech.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy):** Are they speaking notes, member for Dawesville?

A member interjected.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** He is not allowed to do that!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Are they speaking notes?

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Copious notes, Mr Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** They are copious speaking notes —

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Dr A.D. BUTI:** But he cannot read from them!

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I will go back!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! The member has a contribution to make; he is reading from copious speaking notes. Thank you.

*Debate Resumed*

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I will table the laptop later, shall I?

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Table that laptop!

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** This is not an organisation that I can imagine one of two major political parties in our democracy should have an affiliation with—and yet it does. Moreover, the concern I think we should all have in this place is that the CFMEU wants to grow and increase its power over the Labor Party, with a prospective merger with the Maritime Union of Australia. With that merger, the CFMEU will seek to fight as hard as it can to increase its influence over the Labor Party. That is, no doubt, made worse by the fact that it has recently formed what is the historic bloc called “Progressive Labor”! It seems that the Transport Workers’ Union of Australia, the shoppies, I think it is, the Australian Workers’ Union, the MUA and the CFMEU are all getting together to try to stop the dominance of United Voice.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Are you in Mathias’ bloc or faction?

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I am not a part of any faction, minister, but I appreciate the minister’s interest in this.

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I am not at all, minister! I appreciate the minister’s intense interest in my life at this point, but he is quite wrong.

It seems to me that the important power that United Voice has had for more than a decade is seeking to be countered by a group that has put aside substantial ideological leanings to exert its influence over the composition of candidates it sends to an election, and those cabinet ministers.

The unions have a say in the make-up of the Australian Labor Party; we know that. I do not doubt that. I think that at times it has contributed important milestones to our history. Indeed, I think it has contributed important and good members to this place. I consider the member for Morley to be at least a very close associate of mine, and I think she is a great envoy of United Voice.

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** That is right; I said an associate, member for Darling Range!

But imagine a circumstance when a body—an organisation—with such a history of illegal activities of being so immoral, unethical and abusive could have a say in who stands for an election, and, moreover, who becomes a minister of the Crown. I might be a freshman member to this place, as I mentioned before, but I do not doubt that the unions, effectively, own the Australian Labor Party. This should be a concern for all of us in this place, and moreover the concern that there seems to be a possible change of ownership in the offing. A rogue, militant construction union, which, as I have outlined, has proudly ignored the rule of law, is trying to become the new owner of the Australian Labor Party.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Stop reading your speech!

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** They are copious notes, minister.

It wants to offset its declining membership base by increasing its influence over the cabinet and government.

As I said at start of my speech, I do not doubt the importance of unions to the Labor Party. I do not doubt the importance of unions for their contribution to our nation’s history. I think we all know in our heart of hearts that the CFMEU is not the face of modern unionism in Western Australia. We all know as well in our heart of hearts that it has a sordid history that should be rejected by all people in this place.

Several members interjected.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** With that, I invite all members in this place to join the opposition in expressing our concern about the unions’ growing influence, and join us to particularly reject the CFMEU. In such a small

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effort, we will show to the rest of the world that those members stand in rejection of hostility, aggression and militant unionism, and stand with us for all that is just, right and moral.

**MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield)** [5.56 pm]: I am not the lead speaker on this motion, but I feel I have a bit to contribute. It may come as no surprise to those opposite that, yes, I have a union background, and, yes, I have had a long history with the union movement. I want to correct some of the misinformation that has been spoken about in the last hour and a half or two hours.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange**: Which one, member?

**Mr S.J. PRICE**: Probably each and every one of you who has spoken.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange**: Which union were you with?

**Mr S.J. PRICE**: Sorry; yes, it was the Australian Workers' Union—absolutely.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange**: Thank you

**Ms M.M. Quirk**: Apparently your research was extensive!

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange**: I was just making sure it was on the *Hansard*, member for Girrawheen, and I just got it.

**Mr S.J. PRICE**: Just to be clear before I start, some very unsavoury comments were made about a couple of my close friends. There was a lot of commentary about Steve McCartney, secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. Steve is one of the most passionate people who could be found in the union movement, and he is someone you would definitely want in your corner when you have an issue on the worksite and in negotiations on behalf of members. I put in that same bracket Christy Cane. Opposition members have sat here and run Christy down on numerous occasions, and it is absolutely disgraceful.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange**: We are quoting what he said in the paper.

**Mr S.J. PRICE**: No, but the commentary that went with that. He is one of the best people we could have in the union movement, and he is doing an absolutely fabulous job in one of the most dangerous industries in this country. He is constantly under attack by you on the other side and your friends in the industries to try to get rid of the MUA—and it is disgraceful.

I would also like to congratulate the Minister for Commerce on the appointment of Stephanie Mayman as chairperson for the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health. Once again, the opposition had a shot at Stephanie's history within the union movement. She is one of the most experienced people to take on that role. She worked for the WA Occupational Safety and Health Tribunal for 10 years, she was a founding member of the WA WorkSafe commission, she was a commissioner of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission—members opposite may not realise we have two jurisdictions that operate in this state—and she was also secretary of UnionsWA from 2001 to 2004. She has a wealth of experience.

**Ms J.M. Freeman**: She is an absolute champion campaigner on asbestos.

**Mr S.J. PRICE**: Absolutely. It was a fabulous appointment, and I commend the minister on that.

I will go back because I am a bit confused. Members opposite said 71, 73 to 80 per cent of us have union links? Can they tell me which one it is, because it should be 100 per cent! The Labor Party did come through the union movement. To correct the history of, I think, the member for Dawesville: the Labor Party was actually formed in 1891 on the back of the Australian Workers' Union, which was the Australasian Shearers Union which was formed in 1886 in Ballarat. Then, in 1891, after a shearers' strike in Queensland, 13 members were committed to either three or five years of hard labour on St Helena Island. At that point, the working men and women of this country decided to form the ALP. There is a long history there, but if members are going to quote it they should get it right.

I will now go back and talk about safety in the mining industry. The Leader of the Opposition brought up some very important points. I am not sure whether he has any understanding about my background, but apart from working in that industry, when I was employed by the union, in my role as secretary I sat on a number of committees. These were government committees, and I will start by talking about one called the Mining Industry Advisory Committee. It is a statutory committee set up under the WorkSafe legislation. It consists of a tripartite arrangement between the government, the industry and the unions. I was one of three union members on that committee. The other two were a representative of the CFMEU mining and energy division, which represented the coal industry, and a representative of the AMWU. Our job on that committee was to make recommendations to the minister about safety issues associated with mining. It sits under the resource safety section of the

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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Department of Mines and Petroleum. It still exist today and still plays a major role in identifying, developing and publishing many of the guidance notes for the industry to help meet its safety obligations under the regulations.

Not only that, as we had an unfortunate spate of fatalities—I think between 2013 and 2014 there was a period of about two years when we killed in excess of 10 people in the mining industry—there was a very big focus on what was going on within that industry. Unfortunately, it was concentrated on a couple of the big operators, and there was a distinct difference between the ways they operated. As a result of that—the member is right in what he said—safety in the mining industry improved significantly, but it was not without union involvement. Safety in the mining industry improved because we took a different approach, and we ended up implementing a user-pays system, for which the industry paid based on the number of man-hours worked. The levy was placed on that to generate income that then allowed the Department of Mines and Petroleum to employ more appropriately qualified inspectors. That focus on improvement led to increased safety on those worksites and ultimately, even though we are still killing people, we are not killing people as often as we used to, which is a good step forward but not far enough.

We are also working towards implementing a new reporting requirement and adopting an offshore safety regime that they called the safety case regime, which allows companies to put forward a plan to manage their own occupational health and safety risks on-site. That is ongoing, and it is good work that needs to be continued. At the same time, there was a national approach to improving occupational health and safety in the mining industry. That was called the national mine safety framework. Western Australia, being one of the main mining states in Australia, was a big player in that along with Queensland. I think there is a little bit of mining in Victoria and something down in Tasmania but apart from that, WA was one of the predominant parties to that.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** There is mining in every state of Australia.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** Yes, but once again we are talking quantity. We continued on, and as part of that process a committee was established called the Ministerial Advisory Panel. I sat on that as well, along with a number of other union and industry representatives. MAP was doing some absolutely fabulous work on streamlining safety regulations and requirements in the mining industry, and ensuring that there was consistency across the country. We would look at the best regulations, the best guidelines, and the best code of practice at a particular mine site anywhere in the country to cherry-pick the best safety approach to be applied across the country, in particular in Western Australia. I am not sure whether that is still going, but the previous Minister for Mines and Petroleum was a strong supporter of it, and once again it was a step forward. Do not discount the role that the union movement has played in improving safety in the mining industry in this state; it is wrong to do that.

The next area that the Leader of the Opposition touched on was superannuation. It takes quite a brave man to come in here and talk about the union movement's involvement in superannuation, when we compare industry superannuation funds with commercial superannuation funds.

**Mr D.C. Nalder:** The latest results are not that good.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** It is challenging for everyone, but industry super funds on average have returned more than commercial super funds. The boards of the industry superannuation funds have equal representation between industry and the union movement. To say that there are positions on boards for union representatives and not say that there are an equal number of positions on the boards for company representatives is not a fair representation of what is going on. I was on a superannuation advisory committee. Once again, three union members were on that board along with three industry members.

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** The Chamber of Commerce.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** The Chamber of Commerce was one of them.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** What super fund was that?

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** Australian Super—no small one, with nearly a \$100 billion under management, one of the best and one of the biggest.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** Did you pay your fees back to the union?

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** I was not paid a fee. This was an advisory board.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** That was the fund that wanted to buy Western Power.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** Such a big superannuation fund looks around the globe to invest its money, so it would be interested in anything that pops up.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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Once again, we cannot forget where superannuation funds came from. They were established through the union movement, and they have allowed hundreds of thousands of Australians to save for their retirement, and without the union movement we would never have started that.

The other point I wanted to touch on before I get into what I wanted to speak on, was that members opposite made a number of comments about the CFMEU and the MUA. Those two unions represent their workers absolutely fabulously in the most dangerous industries in this country. Just because members might not agree with how some of them look, and may not like how some of them sound, they do a great job representing workers in absolutely dangerous industries. The member for Dawesville has experienced and realised how dangerous those industries are.

I will get back to a couple of other points about the motion. When we talk about union density within the country, the opposition has pulled up this rubbery figure of 9.4 per cent.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** It is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** Yes, they are ABS figures, but for what? They do not give us all the information that we are looking for.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** If you do not like something, you just ignore it.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** No, absolutely not—the exact opposite. Those same ABS figures show that union density across the board, when private and public sector membership is not separated, is closer to 16 per cent. Let us talk numbers. If we are talking around 16 per cent, we are talking about 1.6 million Australians. That is not an insignificant number. It is absolute rubbish for the opposition to say that 1.6 million Australians are unrepresentative and that they are not important enough.

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** It is the largest organisation.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** That is right.

The opposition has talked about the make-up of the Labor Party. I am a proud union member, and always have been during my working career and always will be. On this side of the house, there is not only members of the union movement, whether it be past employees or current members, but also teachers, police officers, ex-defence force personnel and even a couple of lawyers.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** We will not hold that against them. We also have small business people as well. The members for Jandakot and Pilbara are Indian-born small business men who moved to Australia and who ran successful businesses before coming to this place. Worst of all, we have a lot of parents on this side of the table! How dare we have parents here when they should not be here! We have a significant number of female members. Unfortunately, when I look to the other side of the chamber, which is the same side I am on because we cannot all fit on the other side, there are two female members.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey:** Proportionally, we are doing okay.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** Yes, it is 13 per cent.

We are truly representative of the voting public of Western Australia. The opposition tries to single out one aspect of our party's make-up and says that we are not representative. That is a very flawed approach.

The final point I want to touch on is a comment by the member for Hillarys a few days ago, just after we were doing maiden speeches. From *Hansard*, the member for Hillarys said —

It is interesting that people on the government benches, even as late as yesterday, were coming to this place and kissing the ring of the union leaders who they are here to represent.

When I hear those sorts of comments—I do not know; it must be my background—I conjure up pictures of *The Godfather* and the mafia. There is only one person in this chamber who reminds me of Don Corleone and he is not in here at the moment. When the opposition wants to talk about who has been running the state and how they have been doing it, members need to look closer to home.

**Mr B. Urban:** Backbencher.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** Absolutely. The member for Dawesville made a comment about a past unionist who behaved badly, got caught and went to jail. I am surprised he knows who he was talking about because I am guessing it was quite a while before his time.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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The motion refers to the influence of the trade union movement within cabinet, but the debate essentially has been all about us. I would like to finish by referring to part (4) of the motion, which condemns the Community and Public Sector Union—Civil Service Association of WA for its mute response to massive cuts. The opposition has just demonstrated that its side of the chamber does not know much about campaigning! There are many ways of campaigning, negotiating and achieving an outcome. Running a campaign is certainly not the only form of negotiation available to people. If the public sector union is not happy, and just because we are not reading it in the paper, does not mean it is not doing anything. There are different aspects to campaigning that achieve outcomes. You guys failed quite dismally at the last election; hence the outcome. But to say the public sector union is not doing anything and is mute is certainly overstepping the mark and demonstrates the opposition's lack of knowledge of the union movement.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** They have protests, but not at Parliament House.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** But that is how to campaign: build up to it and have a strategy—all the things that the Leader of the Opposition might need to learn about before the next election—to achieve the outcome you are looking for.

**Mr D.C. Nalder:** Mislead people.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** I do not think so.

**Mr D.C. Nalder:** Change the position after the election.

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** That is not it at all.

I conclude by saying that it is obvious that those on the other side of the chamber do not really know what they are talking about, and their slight of the union movement is absolutely disgraceful. We represent working Australians generally and working Western Australians.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** We represent all electors and workers in Western Australia. The opposition has referred to union density, but it did not refer to the tens of thousands of people who benefit from union agreements. There have been major construction projects in the north west, and, yes, union membership may be down, but the number of people who worked on those projects and benefited from union agreements would collectively be into the hundreds of thousands of people. The union movement looks after not only those in the union, but everyone. We certainly need unions to maintain the balance we have to have within the workplace to protect workers and the occupational health and safety of everyone who works in this state.

**MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Parliamentary Secretary)** [6.17 pm]: I rise to contribute to the debate on the motion moved by the opposition that refers to trade union representation in the government. Is it not astonishing that of all of the issues pressing the state currently—record unemployment; low wage growth—this is the motion that has been raised in private members' business as the highest priority that the opposition can find to debate? We have record use of methamphetamine, the worst rates of domestic violence in the country, we are getting ripped off by the goods and services tax allocation, and we have an appalling rollout of the national broadband network, yet this is the best the opposition can come up with. This is its priority. When we are talking about representation, credit where credit is due—men are well represented on opposition benches. If they want to talk about representing the community, they should see what opposition benches look like from this side. It is paltry. There are two women on the entire opposition bench in here, and there is only one female Liberal Party member in the upper house. It is embarrassing. The opposition should be embarrassed. It is a disgrace. The opposition lets absolutely everyone down with that appalling representation of women. Then we hear the ridiculous argument from members opposite about representation on merit. Do Liberal Party members know what that says? It says that there are two women of merit in the entire Liberal Party of Western Australia—and one in the upper house! What an insult to all the women in the Liberal Party and in Western Australia. It is an absolute disgrace. Federally, it is no better. It is embarrassing. It is excruciating. The community is deeply disappointed. Something has to be done to fix it. I do not care if the Liberal Party does not adopt quotas. Whatever you do, fix it. It is bad, and the Liberal Party will continue to be in the wilderness if it does not represent the people.

If we want to talk about diversity, we have Aboriginal people on the Labor benches. We have Indian and Chinese-born people, and we can always do better. This is representative of the community and all those people bring their experiences to Parliament, regardless of whether they are members of or associated with trade unions. This is about what we bring as representatives to Parliament and the broadness of those views is what matters in the Parliament. The federal Parliament is no better for the Liberals; it has 13 women out of 63 in the House of Representatives.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Mr D.J. Kelly:** It is a disgrace.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** It is a disgrace and that the women continue to defend it is incredibly embarrassing. Good on those women like Sharman Stone who stand up and say that it is wrong, that it is not working and that we need to change what we are doing. Good on those women who stand up for all women in the country who want better representation of their views in the Parliament. The Liberals have six female senators out of 23 in the Senate.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Chosen on merit.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** They were all chosen on merit; only six women in the entire country are meritorious. What an insult that is to the Liberal Party membership. What an insult that is to all the conservative women in this country. They do not make it past the glass ceiling or the concrete ceiling that is somewhere in the Liberal Party and says that they are not good enough to represent the Liberal Party in the Parliament.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey** interjected.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** So they can make the tea and be president of the divisions. They can run the meetings—that is terribly generous, but they are not good enough to be in the Parliament and to have a seat at the decision-making table. The community has rejected the Liberal Party's view of representation in the Parliament. Members opposite talk about unions and what unions represent. Let us look at what unions are today. I think members will find that they are not made up of mostly men in construction. Most unionists are actually women aged between 35 and 65 years and working in the health and services sector—that is what a unionist looks like. There is this total obsession with one small portion of the movement. If members opposite looked at the growth areas or those areas that are highly represented, they would see that Roy Morgan Research released earlier this year in January outlines how public administration and defence, community services, electricity, gas and water, and transport and storage are the most unionised industries, and most of those industry workers are female. Education professionals, health professionals, protective service workers—this is very tiny writing here—electro technology and telecommunications trades, clerical office and support workers, health and welfare support workers such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists, and administration clerks in all the hospitals that the previous government privatised over the last two terms of government are made up of mostly women. Women are members of unions because it is women who get a rough deal in the workplace. They see the value in membership because it is the unions that work to close the pay gap and protect their penalty rates. It is the unions that fought for paid maternity leave when we were the only one of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development nations bar America that did not have a publicly funded paid maternity leave scheme. It was the unions that drove that campaign. Women are bearing the brunt of casualisation, of less and less permanency in the workforce. It is women who are clustered into low-paid industries, and that is what is feeding the pay gap. It is women who will bear the brunt of this opposition's support of the penalty rates cut.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** The penalty rate cuts were put in place by Bill Shorten.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** Rubbish! From next week, 700 000 people will have their pay cut, and they will be mostly women who work in retail and hospitality. It is pretty appalling to see the previous Premier waving the flag for pay cuts for low-paid workers: "Yes we support that". Before the election, Colin Barnett was very, very clear about his support for cuts to penalty rates. A report from the ABC stated —

Premier Colin Barnett confirmed he would seek to have the WA Industrial Relations Commission review pay rates for workers under the state system, a day after the Fair Work Commission announced changes for people under its jurisdiction.

Another report stated —

The Premier said it was not fair that hundreds of WA small businesses had to pay double and sometimes triple ... wages on Sundays and public holidays when most big business chains had traded away penalty rates in deals with unions.

That was absolutely not true—it is outrageous. It is the women who are bearing the brunt of that, and opposition members support it. I do not back away from my support or this government's support of penalty rates.

**Dr M.D. Nahan** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Yes, member, you have made your point. She is not taking that interjection. Move on.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** These are mostly casualised industry workers on low pay, who will be on a further reduced low pay. They are the members that many members on these benches have represented before coming into the Parliament. I proudly bring my principles of fairness and equity and of fighting for what is right to the Parliament. I am very proud to maintain those principles in the Parliament, and it is possible to do both. The areas in the union movement that are actually growing are in what will be an exploding health care and services sector. We will have a massive ageing population. We are rolling out a National Disability Insurance Scheme, so



Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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there will be a huge number of childcare, aged-care and disability support workers. All of those sectors are unionising. Most of the large providers in the disability sector in WA are unionised. Those unions have lifted the standard of living for those workers who are doing incredibly important work. The unions will provide the certainty and the base by which any disability insurance scheme succeeds because they will have provided a high quality and stable workforce. The workers will not be churned over on casualised contracts and short-term employment. Those workers will actually get good, quality support.

I will now look at the structure of the union movement and the head of union movement. We have heard a lot about being picked on at building sites and someone having their fingers squashed by a concrete panel on a building site after working on the site for about five minutes. Let us look at the people who run the union movement. In Western Australia the head of the union movement is Meredith Hammat, a woman. She is a fantastic advocate for working people across the spectrum.

**Mr P.C. Tinley:** Who was her predecessor?

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** Before her it was our very own minister Simone McGurk, who was also a fantastic advocate for working people. Who have we got at the head of the union movement nationally? Sally McManus and Ged Kearney, two women from services unions. It does not quite fit in with what opposition members are saying about being picked on at union sites. The result of having strong connections to the union movement and working people is that we actually have a connection to the community. Unions are made up of people, not a third-party entity, and we talk to those people and those members. That results in the kind of policy that was announced today on family and domestic violence leave for public sector workers. The Labor government has implemented that policy because it is about not only supporting the people who work for the state government, but also seeing the bigger picture that is broader than just dollars and cents. It is about maintaining for those women their access to employment and money, and their economic and physical independence. We have also seen the kind of policy that was announced by the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations on the entitlements for deceased workers. The previous government sat on that report since 2014—what an absolute disgrace! One woman who would have qualified by almost two days missed out on that payment. Members opposite should hang their heads in shame for that. It is ridiculous.

We will see an increase in permanency in the public sector, because permanent workers provide better service and they provide more certainty in employment and in schools. Those workers deserve financial security. They deserve to know when their next pay cheque is coming. Education assistants deserve to know whether they will have a job in term 2 or term 3. Workers deserve to know whether they can get a mortgage. If a person has a steady job, they have the confidence to spend. Cutting permanency, cutting penalty rates and increasing insecurity in the employment market just increase insecurity in the economic market. People do not want to spend. They do not want to participate economically. They are too worried about the next pay cheque.

Yes, there is representation of the unions through members on this side. There is representation of women and people with a non-English speaking background. There is a broad representation and we are very, very proud of that representation.

**MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys)** [6.30 pm]: I rise to associate myself with this motion and to support this motion. It is an important motion at the start of a new term of government, because it highlights the very narrow sectional interests —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman):** Members, we have had a reasonably quiet debate. Let us not start the first minute of the speech with heckling. Wait for a bit, heckle a bit, I will shut down the debate and then we can go on.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** Thank you, Acting Speaker, for your protection.

As I was saying, the motion is important because it highlights the very narrow sectional interests that are represented within this government and within the governing party of our state. It raises alarm bells about the next four years. Today in question time, the Premier had an opportunity to highlight to the people of Western Australia that he would govern for all the people of Western Australia and in the best interests of the people of Western Australia. He had the opportunity to condemn the militant Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, not just because I say that it is militant, but because of the actions it has taken to deliberately harm the best interests of this state and the people of this state, in particular its actions during the construction of Perth Children's Hospital.

**Mr B. Urban:** Where's your proof?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I will give the member my proof. If he just waits, he will get it. Do not take it from me. I will quote the commissioner of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, Mr Nigel Hadgkiss.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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On one occasion, around 400 people blockaded the main entrance, preventing a large concrete pour involving 45 trucks. Another time, the main entrance to the site was glued shut. In another incident, the union organised a blockade preventing 200 workers from entering the site to perform work. That type of action is not the action of cuddly, teddy bear-wielding, loving unionists who care about and nurture the interests of this state; this is a rogue, militant trade union costing the people of this state money and time in the opening of a hospital. Forty-five truckloads of concrete amounts to a lot of money and hundreds and possibly thousands of working hours lost when that concrete has to be returned unused. Gluing locks shut is the highest form of thuggery possible and, of course, physically blockading workers and stopping them from getting on-site when they want to work is, again, not exactly cuddly and carey-sharey. It is clear that this rogue union deliberately went about delaying the construction of Perth Children's Hospital.

In Parliament today, the Premier had a choice: he could have supported the people of Western Australia and the sick kids who would like to move into new premises—we know there are a number of issues around that hospital, but one of them is the delay in construction—or he could have supported the CFMEU. Quite clearly, he chose the CFMEU. He put the interests of this rogue, violent union ahead of the interests of Western Australians. He was given a choice to condemn the union, but he chose to support this union. I remind members that even people like Kevin Rudd and, in the past, Bob Hawke have dissociated themselves from militant building unions—the old Builders Labourers Federation, the Building Workers Industrial Union and the CFMEU in their time. The Labor Party has been known to take a step back in the past and look after the interests of the entirety of the people, rather than the narrow sectional interests of their union masters. It is just that this Labor Party led by this Premier in this state in this term has chosen not to do so. That will be to the detriment of our state, because it shows that, when given a choice, this government will always put the interests of the trade union movement first.

As we have heard in this debate and as we know from public debate generally, the trade union movement is diminishing in numbers. We can quibble about the numbers and we can pick apart the statistics, but the Australian Bureau of Statistics is the arbiter on this. It is an independent body that gathers statistics and has been running this series on the trade union movement for decades, not over a couple of years, and it has continually shown in the last 20 or 30 years a collapse or slump in trade union membership. Trade union membership is not only less than one in every 12 workers in the private sector, but also only around four in 10 workers in the public sector—that hot bed of unionism—which is just as important. The majority of public sector workers in Western Australia and across Australia do not belong to a trade union, even in the highly unionised public sector. In the private sector, if we take out the effective closed-shop no ticket, no start unionism that is forced upon predominantly young casualised workers and working mums in the retail sector through the two large supermarket chains, the union membership would be even lower than seven or eight per cent. Members know that, and the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations ought to know it better than anybody else because he has been privy to that for quite a while. It is an effective no ticket, no start. He knows as well as I do that if those employees were given a real choice, union membership of the particular union that he is affiliated with would collapse as well.

As the member for Morley said, some unions are increasing their membership. The Australian Nursing Federation in this state is increasing its membership, but I do not need to point out to anyone on the other side of the chamber that the Australian Nursing Federation is not affiliated with the ALP in Western Australia. Not only that, at the election, it did not just campaign against the Liberal Party; it campaigned against the Labor Party too and took out front-page advertisements in *The West Australian* urging people not to vote for the Labor Party. Is it any wonder that a union that is not affiliated with the ALP and campaigns against the ALP is increasing its membership? Perhaps other unions could look at that and wonder how they could increase their membership.

It is interesting that, in talking about industrial accidents, the member for Forrestfield did not talk about industrial accidents or about injuries on worksites, but used the pejorative term “killing people” on more than one occasion. It is the class war—suggesting that employers and, by extension, members on this side of the house somehow do not care about the lives of workers and, at worst, deliberately set up worksites to injure, maim and kill people. That is a despicable slur. Members opposite know it is untrue and it is used only to perpetuate the class war that their side of politics wants to wage against employers and genuine working people in this state. Members opposite should carefully consider their words on that because I do not know any employer who has ever been happy about an industrial accident. To make it even worse, when a member of this house stood up and talked about an industrial accident that happened to him, the protectors of the working class—the people who usually stand up for injured and maimed workers—ridiculed that member, and laughed at him just like the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations is doing now.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** Once more, it proves that the trade unionists on the other side of the chamber care more about virtue signalling than the reality of what happens on worksites.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** That is what the member for Cannington does. He comes in here and preaches and pontificates but when the rubber hits the road and someone talks about an industrial accident that happened to them, he laughs and he scoffs.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, I would ask you to talk through the Chair.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** As I was saying, members on the other side —

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** Member for Collie–Preston, Minister for Sport and Recreation, do not talk about trade unions because we know what the trade union movement's sellout of working men and women —

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M.P. Murray:** You're a grub!

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy):** Member, I ask you to withdraw that comment.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** I withdraw.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The minister needs to stand up to withdraw.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I withdraw.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, minister. Again, direct your comments through the Chair and I will make sure that members listen to you as silently as they can.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** The trade union movement used to proudly stand up for working men and women in industries such as construction, forestry, mining and engineering. Today, the trade union movement puts fashionable interests such as shutting down coalmines ahead of the working men and women in seats like the member for Collie–Preston's seat. I know that in his heart of hearts, the member for Collie–Preston wants to stand up for those people.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I know he does. I am giving the member a compliment.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** In his heart of hearts, the member wants to stand up for those people, I know he does, but his union masters have told him to embrace a 50 per cent renewable energy target. They have told him that is what he will do and he will get his comfy seat. They told him not to worry about his working men and women who will lose their jobs in Collie.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** That is what the member is doing.

We then come in here and hear about industry super funds. The industry super funds have resisted tooth and nail the notion that the members of those funds should have the right to elect their directors. They have resisted it tooth and nail because —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** The banks will not let that happen.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I will pick up that interjection, Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations. Every large Australian bank—that is, the big four—is a publicly listed company. Who elects the board of directors of publicly listed companies? It is their members, their shareholders. When Labor members come in here and talk about industry super funds, they are denying their members the right —

Several members interjected.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Ministers! Member, can you please speak to the Chair so I can give you protection. Members, please listen to the person speaking in silence. All comments need to come through the Chair as a way to facilitate the debate so that members can make their contribution.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

As I was saying, when people come in here and talk about the industry super funds, they do not want to talk about the uncomfortable truth that they are denying members of industry super funds the ability to choose who represents them on their board—who makes decisions on their behalf.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** More importantly, there is a really important reason that they do that.

*Point of Order*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The member for Burns Beach is not on his feet giving a speech, but I am finding it difficult to hear the member on his feet with all the interjections going on behind him.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I do concur. It is very important that Hansard record the debate. I ask members to listen in silence.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** The reason that trade unions and the Labor Party do not want to see industry super fund members directly elect their directors is that —

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I am not listening to that.

It is because in many cases—not all—the union-appointed directors pay part or all of their directors' fees, which are fees taken out of members' funds, back to the trade union, and this is documented. Despite their fall in membership, the income of the trade unions rises—surprise, surprise. Where are they getting their income from? They get it from all these other non-union activities. That money either gets funnelled directly to the Labor Party or is used in the third party campaigns that the Leader of the Opposition was talking about. It is their slush fund. The superannuation savings of ordinary Australians are being used by the trade union movement and its mates in the Labor Party as a slush fund. One of the people over there—I did not pick up who and I apologise; I would like to give them credit—mentioned the sole purpose test. In an interjection, the member for Forrestfield mentioned the sole purpose test. I wonder how the sole purpose test of superannuation funds applies to the use of members' money to campaign against a supposed policy, which has not even been introduced, about the banks having more access to superannuation that I see on loop when I turn on the television late at night. I wonder how those advertisements meet the sole purpose test. I do not think they do and I am sure that will be determined.

That is the debate we are having. We are having a debate about the fact that this Labor Party in this state is a wholly owned subsidiary of the trade union movement—a very narrow group of people who are not representative of the best interests of Western Australians. The member for Morley talked about penalty rates.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Collie—Preston!

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** Penalty rates are an interesting topic, because we know that there are unions like the shoppies—the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association of WA. I do not want to get it wrong, so correct me if I am wrong.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** We know that the shoppies, and unions like the AWU in the time of Bill Shorten, traded away penalty rates to the big end of town—the large corporations—to the detriment of small businesses. A person who is running a small cafe, an IGA supermarket or a small family-owned pharmacy, cannot compete on a level playing field with the big boys. We know that big unions and big business get together to create big government. It is like the people inside the house in *Animal Farm*. It is like Napoleon and his mates inside the house in *Animal Farm*. That is exactly what it is. That is what this government is putting together in Western Australia. It is early days—it is very early days. We heard the member for Churchlands talk about the interesting correlation between the State School Teachers' Union of WA's position on independent public schools and the Labor Party's policy position on independent public schools.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** It is not —  
Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! You have the opportunity to speak. Let the member have his say. Thank you.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** It is not what is happening today. It is not what will happen tomorrow. It is what will happen over a period of four years. Why did the Labor Party not come out and adopt the position of the teachers' union to abolish the IPS system? It is because the Labor Party knows that the IPS system is popular. We have already heard members in this house talk about how they have been put onto the boards of their local independent public schools. I think that is a fantastic idea. It is great. I would encourage everyone to do that. That is what the boards of independent public schools are there for—to enable community leaders, including members of Parliament, to be represented. However, members of the Labor Party cannot eat their cake and have it too. They can either say they will continue to support these schools 100 per cent, they will fully resource them, they will continue to provide professional development, and they will allow other schools to enter the program if they want to do so, or they will stand condemned by their inaction. They will be condemned by the fact that they have a secret plan to abolish the independent public school system. The IPS system has been very popular and successful. It has led to better outcomes for all our public schools, in particular the schools in lower socioeconomic areas—the schools of the people we are here to look after.

Government members should not come into this place and wax lyrical about how they are not controlled by the trade union movement. I do not have a lot of time today, unfortunately, but I could talk for hours and hours on this. I want to focus on the discussion that was had earlier about the creation of “Progressive Labor”—the joining together of the disaffected, let us call them, right-of-centre unions in the Labor Party with the extreme militant left-wing unions in the CFMEU and the MUA —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** The what and the who?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** The CFMEU and the MUA. I am sure the minister knows them. I know they are probably not factional friends of the minister but I am sure he knows who they are.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Do you have any factional friends?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** It depends on which day of the week it is! I know that when members come in here and say Christy Cain does a great job, Mick Buchan does a great job —

**Mr B. Urban:** That is pronounced Buchan.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I cannot do that accent, so I will not try! Okay!

**Mr B. Urban:** Please get it right!

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** As members would know, given my name, I have heard every pronunciation of my name, so I apologise in advance if I cannot do the accent as the member can do it. He might be from the same town; I do not know.

**Mr B. Urban:** Is he from Newcastle?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I have no idea. The member can tell me. He is the member's mate. When members come in here and say, “These guys do a great job”, I need to go through a compendium to check which union they are on, because they are either praising them or they are in fear and dread of them! We know that this government—this Premier—is controlled by United Voice and the unions coalescing around UnionsWA and the leadership of the Labor Party, who are Mick Buchan; I am sorry if I cannot pronounce it —

**Mr B. Urban:** You got it right that time!

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** There we are—the member is teaching me how to pronounce it, too!

Whether it is Mick and Christy Cain, we know that their alliance with the right-wing unions is all about gaining additional control in the ALP. Who will they get that additional control from if they are successful? I see the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations smirking—we will see what happens! The minister will probably be able to tell me what happens, although occasionally the bush telegraph comes down our way and lets us know, but not always accurately.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Is it a phone call in the middle of the night?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I can tell members that when they are seizing control, they are not going to be seizing control from the Liberal Party, they are going to be seizing control from United Voice. They are going to be seizing control from the people who got most of the government members there. The frontbench know, but

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Acting Speaker; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Stephen Price; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mick Murray

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for newer members: we are opposition. Do members know where the enemy is? The enemy is not on this side; we are not the enemy, we are the opposition. The enemy is there on the government's own benches. When I hear praise of Christy Cain and Mick Buchan and the rest of them, I flick through the book and think: Oh, that is Australian Workers' Union praise; yes, that is praise. They are clapping them and cheering them on; they are wishing them for better to hopefully give them all a better place in the sun within this large backbench than they have right now. But if I see it comes from United Voice or the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, I see genuine fear because the success of the proposed merged entity and the success of this new left-right alliance—"Progressive Labor", progressive left-right; all that sort of stuff—will mean the demise of United Voice and the AMWU. So, when the Premier came in here today and said, "No, I'm not banning the CFMEU", the Premier knows that he —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** He was never asked that!

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I asked him a couple of hours ago whether he is banning contact with the CFMEU; banning contact with ministers—like he did with Brian Burke. Brian Burke has served his time—I do not know the man, never met him; he has never sent me an email! I do not know; I had better go home and check whether he sent an email on some other email address, but —

**Dr M.D. Nahan** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I do not know. We will have to have a look.

I do not know the man. He served his time, he is selling a book—good on him—like other booksellers. I remember Hon Jim Cairns at Prahran Market: for years and years and years he was selling his book from a little table. He was a small businessman. In retirement, the left-wing Jim Cairns became a small business man, selling books on the open market. They all see the light eventually, Mr Speaker. Burkie, I think, was always pretty good on markets—not so much open markets, he just liked his own little deals.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** When the Premier is standing up for the CFMEU, I guess it is probably a combination of a little bit of respect for his trade union compadres, and a hell of a lot of fear about what will happen if their numbers rise. They have made it very clear.

Of course, who will be left out of this battle? The ordinary Western Australian workers and people. We will see unleashed the greatest wave of industrial disputation we have seen in decades. Yes, it would be treachery on the people of Western Australia at a time when jobs are not exactly plentiful, and the government has been a beneficiary of that, and at a time when the economic cycle is at or near its lowest point. This is the time that a trade union movement will try to trash more jobs in a grab for power within the Labor Party. Make no mistake, I do not oppose trade unions.

Several members interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I do not oppose trade unions vociferously advocating for the interests of their members. That is what they were set up to do. When they do it properly, they get rewarded. I talked about the Australian Nursing Federation earlier in my contribution; it is being rewarded.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*House adjourned at 7.00 pm*

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