

APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2015–16) BILL 2015

Third Reading

Resumed from 23 June.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [12.20 pm]: I am pleased to rise to contribute to the third reading debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015 in relation to the worst budget ever—the worst budget in the history of Western Australia.

Mr P.B. Watson: And the most unpopular Premier.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: And indeed, as the member for Albany points out, the most unpopular Premier in the state's history. We have these clear —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Clearly not the best Treasurer. We know one thing—he will never be rated the best Treasurer. Whether he is the worst is somebody else's judgement.

Mr D.J. Kelly: It is a competition.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: He has very stiff competition.

I start by pointing out that the government is increasing the cost of electricity for 80 000 senior households, representing just over 100 000 individuals, by over 25 per cent in this budget. Seniors will suffer from not only an increase in the electricity tariff like everybody else—which is 4.5 per cent, or \$65.29, according to the budget papers—but also lose their cost-of-living allowance. Seniors' electricity bills will go up by about a quarter. The government is doing this to save \$18 million.

Government members have to understand this: the government is building a \$2 billion football stadium but it is cutting \$18 million out of the pockets of 100 000 senior Western Australians. The government says that these seniors are people who have the Seniors Card but are not eligible for the commonwealth government's Health Care Card. The government is saying that these people do not deserve that assistance. When did the Liberal government in Western Australia decide that seniors do not deserve the cost-of-living allowance? Is this something new that has only just been decided—that seniors deserved it in 2013 and 2014 but they do not deserve it in 2015? There is no transition provision for 80 000 senior households; about 100 000 individual seniors in Western Australia will miss out on the cost-of-living allowance. I remind members that the cost-of-living allowance was one of the great programs trumpeted by the Barnett Liberal government when it savagely increased electricity charges over the last number of years since being elected. When it introduced the cost-of-living payment, it said that it would protect seniors from savage increases in the cost of electricity that are being put on every other Western Australian. Now the government is withdrawing that benefit from 100 000 seniors.

Government members say, "Oh well, you have to save money in the budget. The budget is in deficit; we need to save money." At the same time they are happy to spend \$220 million on an underground bus station—the world's most expensive bus station—and at least \$2 billion, but probably \$3 billion, on a stadium in Burswood. They are the choices that this government is making: take the money out of seniors' pockets and put it into these glamour projects. That is the plan of the Liberal government. At the same time we see debt and deficit as far as the eye can see. The government has taken state debt from \$3.6 billion to \$36 billion and rising. There is still no plan to bring debt under control in this state. The government says it will have some asset sales to moderate its debt increases, but let us understand what that means. That means the government is going to sell community assets to pay off borrowings but it has no plan to stop borrowing! Even after the government sells its assets, it still cannot tell us when it will stop borrowing money, which will ruin the future finances of Western Australians. The Premier says that future generations will benefit from these glamour projects that he is building and therefore it is only right that they pay for them. Perhaps future generations might have been given a say in whether they wanted the glamour projects. I make the point again that commonsense fiscal management would have said, "Don't go crazy in the boom borrowing money when you'll be exposed when the revenue stops."

The member for Churchlands and I recently attended the inaugural meeting of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees. On the last morning of that conference we had a very interesting presentation from a non-government organisation that advises governments of resource-rich economies. This NGO was called NRGI—Natural Resource Governance Institute. It is based in New York and has offices in a number of countries around the world. NRGI made the point at the CAPAC meeting, as it is called, that in many resource economies around the world, when the resource boom ends and the windfall income finishes, there is a massive increase in debt. That is the opposite of commonsense. One would think that after a massive increase in revenue over a period, just like Western Australia had, that at the end of the income boost there would be no debt left, yet that is the exact opposite of what has happened in Western Australia. This NGO also pointed out that in badly governed countries with large

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resource endowments, this is the great symptom—it is called the resource curse. It is why countries in Africa, with huge endowments of natural resources, do not increase their wealth. A country might have cobalt or whatever precious metals or stones and when it runs out the life of the mine, it is no better off than before the enormous windfall boom. That is exactly what has happened under the Barnett Liberal government in Western Australia. It received an unprecedented wave of income. It did not just spend all that money; it borrowed money like has never happened in the history of the state! It has left the state in a worse financial position than it inherited. The problem is it then has to take money out of the pockets of 100 000 seniors.

We have seen tax rises for businesses across Western Australia. Every finance minister of the Barnett government in this current term has increased tax in their first piece of legislation. The first thing that each of the three finance ministers did in the chamber was increase taxes. That is a symptom of the poor management of this government. It has the resource curse. One could forgive an African country, with newly established governance procedures, if it got these decisions wrong, but what excuse does this government have?

We have been a resource economy for our entire existence. I would think that that would have allowed the current government to have a proper plan for how to run the state's finances, yet that is exactly wrong—that simple idea that it would have had a plan from the start and stuck with it, as countries such as Norway do; countries that have identified the so-called “Dutch disease”, the resource curse whereby a resource endowment actually undermines the economy rather than strengthens it. These are all the failings of this government—a complete and utter incapacity to manage good times. Members of the government have stated that since Saul Eslake has said that we should have a Western Australian Future Fund and it has a future fund, that should show that these criticisms are wrong. Of course, Saul Eslake has called for Western Australia to create a future fund but he asked for that future fund to be made out of cash surpluses and not out of borrowings. That is what happened in Western Australia; it delivered a future fund using borrowed money. There is \$13 million in the future fund. That is the increase in the balance of the public bank account between 1 July 2008 and 1 July 2014. An extra \$13 million went into the public bank account. When the Treasurer says the government has some billions of dollars or whatever in the future fund, it does not.

It is interesting to go back and look at the debate around the future fund when Hon Troy Buswell handled the legislation. We moved an amendment that only cash surpluses would be able to go into the future fund. The government rejected our suggestion. I moved that amendment; it was rejected by the government. Members will remember that there was a provision in the Western Australian Future Fund Bill 2012 that allows for the purchase of gold assets by the future fund. The former member for Kalgoorlie moved that original amendment, I think for 10 per cent—I forget the figure—of gold to be purchased in the future fund. The government rejected it because it knew there would never be any money in that fund. The Premier has stated that it is not one of those future funds that buys shares and holds other assets. Of course not! If it did, the state's debt would be higher because there is no money in the future fund. I have had this debate with the Leader of the House on a number of occasions. No future generation will thank the government for a \$2 billion future fund and \$50 billion of debt—or \$60 billion of debt or \$72 billion of debt, depending on when the government finally gets around to the fact that it cannot continue to manage the budget in the way that it is doing.

As I say, the \$1.5 million for financial counsellors is almost a rounding error in the \$26 billion or \$27 billion budget but it affects ordinary folk in our electorates. I am on the board of one of those organisations that provides financial counselling. Think about the impact of that change on actual people in the electorates that we all represent. Most people in this state are two pay packets away from being destitute; two pay packets away from being a homeless person. People do not have cash left in the bank because they live from hand to mouth. Remember that the average wage in Western Australia is higher than the national average but that means that a lot of people are below the average wage—they are two pay packets away from being destitute. The idea that financial counselling is for people on unemployment benefits is misunderstanding the problem. That is the worst cut the government has ever made. In a government that has made a lot of stupid cuts, that is absolutely and utterly the worst one ever. I wonder how many people will die because of it. How many people will be forced into desperation and take the wrong course in their lives? How many kids will be separated from their parents when the parents lose their house? These are not moot issues; these are actual issues. Members opposite should go and talk to the financial counsellors—talk to the desperation that they feel about what is happening. They have been told that they are only dealing with 1.3 clients per day; that is how complex people's lives are. People only see a financial counsellor when their lives are in a complete shambles. That is the only reason that people suck up their honour and go to see a financial counsellor. Members opposite have cut them; they have done that. Members opposite are not cutting the Perth Stadium or the world's most expensive bus station; they are cutting the benefits to the community. There are 100 000 seniors who have reached into their pockets because their electricity charges have increased by one-quarter. Members opposite are defending the \$1.5 million that was taken out of financial counselling to help the most desperate people in our community.

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MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [12.35 pm]: I rise to speak to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015. There are many people in the community, such as myself, who entertain that old-fashioned notion that the government’s role is to deliver services. I have to say, that is not the view of the incumbent government. In fact, it is unrepentant that although there is higher taxing, it is using revenue to service escalating debts, not to deliver more comprehensive and responsive services to the community. In fact, it regards it as a badge of honour that it is achieving greater efficiency and delivering fewer services. I want to spend a few minutes reflecting on the diminution of services and the impact that has had on ordinary Western Australians. I want to catalogue some of these in no particular order. In the words of Lewis Carroll, “The time has come to talk of many things”.

Members may recall the Liberal Party’s 2005 election slogan “Decisions not delay”—the member for Bunbury and the member for Hillarys over there certainly will. One would assume that the Liberal government is still adhering to this notion yet, in a range of government activities and in the sphere of services, there are either cuts or increases in demand that are not being predicted or planned for, and certainly not funded. Delay in itself is undesirable but when delays mean that people cannot access key or vital government services, that is unacceptable.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We have certainly delayed the canal.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Yes, member for Hillarys, it did delay the canal.

Throughout the committee stages of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015 we have heard about many of these delays. I am particularly mindful of things such as delays in kids accessing speech pathologists. Early intervention is not possible with delays around 13 to 15 months and that prejudices their ongoing educational outcomes. All of the examples that I am citing have come into my electorate office and we have had to help deal with them. There have been delays in liquor licensing approvals, in some cases hanging small businesses out to dry. That was despite the fact that the government had its hand on its heart and said it would cut red tape—unless, of course, you are Jamie Oliver, in which case you get a streamlined passage through the liquor licensing maze. Delays in courts have been caused by the failure to appoint judges. In 2014, Chief Justice Wayne Martin warned about this, stating that failure to invest in any new resources would mean delays. He is quoted in an article by Tim Clarke in *The West Australian*. Tim Clarke writes —

... the Supreme Court had fewer resources than in 2006, despite more than 454,000 people moving to WA since then.

At the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration conference that he was addressing, Chief Justice Wayne Martin said —

“Although I am awaiting a definitive statement from government on the subject, it seems likely judicial numbers will be reduced to levels below that which prevailed eight years ago.”

“Taking into account population growth, expansion in specific areas of jurisdiction, particularly criminal jurisdiction, and the significant increase in commercial activity in Western Australia, the failure to maintain appropriate levels of judicial resources will inevitably have an adverse effect on timelines.”

Tim Clarke’s article continues —

An unprecedented influx of murder cases in coming months, after six suspicious deaths in the space of six days last year, has prompted prosecutors and judges to publicly air frustrations in court and forensic officers to admit their resources are stretched.

The Chief Justice warned that the situation was going to get worse. The Law Society certainly talked to the Attorney General about delays in appointing new judges.

Then, of course, there is the Freedom of Information Act. I wish I had 20 minutes to talk about that. There are delays in departments meeting applications and, in fact, it is more often the case than not that they take more than the allocated 45 days to respond to an application or, in fact, invariably ask for an extension. Departments interpret the legislation too broadly and one has to go to external review, which can take anything from six months to a year.

The ordinary waiting list for public housing is somewhere around the five years-plus mark, and for priority housing it is up to two years. Delays in criminal injury compensation cases are around about nine months, which was the case for the last constituent with whom I dealt on this. There are delays in coroner’s inquests. I note that the Premier made a statement earlier this morning about a death in custody last year. When the opposition asked about that death in custody last year, the Minister for Police told us that she could not comment on the matter because it was subject to coronial inquiry. Guess what, members? The Premier was able to comment on it today, yet it is still subject to coronial inquiry because delays in the Coroner’s Court are running at 128 weeks. That is

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a terrible length of time for a family to have to wait, especially when there is some real doubt as to how someone died. Clearly more resources need to be put into that.

Of course, there is the delay in filling child nurse positions that were promised some time ago. This inevitably means that parents make one visit to the child health nurse, but not the second visit. Parents have to make the appointment for the second visit, which means that those parents who are able to parent effectively, the conscientious parents, will be making that second appointment voluntarily, but those who need the extra assistance and oversight will not make the appointment and kids will fail to flourish. That will place kids at risk.

There are delays in the review of guardianship laws that was promised by the Attorney General in 2013. That has consequences, because Western Australia has about 12 500 cases of elder abuse, a vast percentage of which are financial abuse and a lot of that is facilitated through the inappropriate use of enduring powers of attorney. Problems with enduring powers of attorney have been identified for some years and the Attorney General is dragging his heels. Last year I wrote to the Attorney General about the review that was commenced in 2013. The reply from the Attorney General reads —

The Department of the Attorney General is currently finalising the report on statutory review of the Act which I anticipate receiving by the end of September 2014.

Guess what, members? We still have not got it, and in the estimates hearing last week I was told that the report might be coming out at the end of the year.

Then, of course, we have delays in the Heritage Bill. A new, up-to-date and modern Heritage Act, to use the words of the Minister for Environment, was promised by the government in the lead-up to the last election. In the last two years in the Premier's Statement, when the Premier addressed Parliament at the commencement of the year, he promised that a Heritage Bill would be introduced in those parliamentary years. We are still waiting for that bill. In the meantime, buildings are placed at risk and demolition by neglect is occurring on a range of important heritage assets in the state. The government is completely unrepentant about that delay.

Then there is a delay in the second tranche of retirement village legislation. Madam Acting Speaker (Ms J.M. Freeman) will recall the parliamentary inquiry into retirement villages and some of the inequities and problems that were created for older Western Australians by sharp operators. The easy amendments were made in one piece of legislation that went through in 2013, I think, but we are still waiting for the tougher, more technical pieces of legislation promised to be introduced in this place. Again, we are waiting and people's livelihoods and peace of mind are put at risk.

Then, of course, there is the delay caused by the Minister for Transport in negotiating rent relief for small business owners at Elizabeth Quay. The minister has apologised for the delay, but in the meantime some of these businesses are going to the wall.

Another delay I am mindful of is the inordinate time taken to introduce legislation to control synthetic cannabis. It was identified as urgently needed and even one government upper house member of Parliament was pushing and pushing for this legislation. However, it took in excess of 18 months for this urgent legislation to be introduced in this house, and it has not yet been debated. Then there was a delay in addressing problems caused to subcontractors who were working on government jobs in which the principal contractor went into liquidation, causing great stress and in some cases forcing family businesses to the wall.

Then there are the delays in the repeat drink-driving strategy that was submitted to the minister by the Road Safety Council some years ago. We have had one piece of legislation that involved only alcohol interlock devices and no other provisions. Operational delays at Fiona Stanley Hospital prevented patients moving in and that escalated costs, which was yet another problem caused by this government's delay. Then there are delays in young people getting their driver's licence tests of anything between six weeks to three months. Members will recall that the former Minister for Transport was so concerned about this matter that he managed to expedite his own son's testing. Then we had disruptions and delays in train services, delays in Homeswest maintenance, and delays in addressing debt, which have compounded difficulties and led to the loss of WA's AAA credit rating.

We have had delays in police response times. In fact, serving police officers are saying that police response teams are destroying careers and they are embarrassed about how long it is taking to respond. In PerthNow in May, one northern suburbs police officer stated —

“I am completely and fully aware that our response times are really poor,” ...

“The response teams cover such a huge area ... so we have lost all our local knowledge.

“My great career has been destroyed by this dreadful new system.”

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We have had delays in capital expenditure, which I will not go into now because we are talking about recurrent expenditure, but they cause things such as road congestion, meaning more time on roads and less time with families, which equates to greater stress. Similarly, the government has delayed ordering rolling stock for trains, which means commuters, especially in northern suburbs, are jammed like sardines into those trains. Delays are endemic across the board and government simply does not care and it has no appetite to lift its game.

Finally, I leave members opposite with a cautionary tale that will provide them with cause for thought, I hope. I am indebted to Hans Christian Andersen, who wrote —

A vain emperor who cares about nothing except wearing and displaying clothes hires two swindlers who promise him the finest, best suit of clothes from a fabric invisible to anyone who is unfit for his position or “hopelessly stupid”. The emperor’s ministers cannot see the clothing, but pretend that they can for fear of appearing unfit for their position and the emperor does the same. Finally, the swindlers report that the suit is finished. They mime dressing him and the emperor marches in the procession before his subjects. The townsfolk play along with the pretence not wanting to appear unfit for their positions or stupid. Then a child in the crowd too young to understand the desirability of keeping up the pretence blurts out that the emperor is wearing nothing at all and the cry is taken up by others. The emperor cringes, suspecting the assertion is true, but continues the procession.

This budget is a symptom of the profligacy and imprudence of an out-of-touch government. It has been exposed and, similar to the emperor in the story, it has nowhere to hide.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [12.50 pm]: It was hard to know where to start my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015 because I have so many issues on my list. During this 15-minute debate, I will focus my comments on the relative inequality that this government has pursued in its failure to address issues of gender equality across the board. I will start my contribution by focusing on the Minister for Local Government’s recent proposed local government amalgamations, because the role of women in local government is one of the many areas in which the minister and the government have failed to address inequality. I will commit some facts to the record.

Australian politics is clearly dominated by men at the federal, state and local level. All three levels of government therefore do not reflect the demographics of most population centres. Certainly they do not reflect the demographics of Perth’s population centre, because more than 51 per cent of our city’s population is female, but we do not have that percentage of women in Parliament. In Western Australia’s Parliament there are 29.5 per cent of women in overall terms, but they comprise only 22 per cent in the Legislative Assembly and 41.7 per cent in the Legislative Council. A 2015 study conducted by Hastings et al found that women accounted for 32 per cent of candidates in local elections across Australia, but that number falls to 29.7 per cent when one considers those who are elected. Western Australia’s proportion of female councillors is 31.9 per cent, so although women are under-represented in local government relative to their proportion of the population, almost one-third of those who stand are elected. Flowing from that is if more women were encouraged to stand in local elections, that should help pick up their representation in local government. I raise these points because this government has no strategy to address this under-representation at this or any other level in the parliamentary system. In 2014, McCann and Wilson noted the reasons stated for women not standing—this applies to other jurisdictions, not Western Australia—are the party candidate selection process, which no longer applies here because we no longer have the threat of amalgamations; the nature of the electoral system; challenges facing women in balancing work and family life; discriminatory views about women in politics; and the adversarial nature of the political environment itself. I recently spoke in this place about what I consider to be a failure of diversity policies in Western Australia that would achieve any real improvements in outcomes for women. Between 1999 and 2013, the proportion of women contesting local government elections fell.

I now turn to the 2012 Robson report titled, “Metropolitan Local Government Review, Final Report of the Independent Panel”, which generated so much community, political and media debate about the future of local government in Perth. All the arguments, both for and against reform, revolved around the economic viability and long-term sustainability of local councils, but overlooked in those debates was an analysis of the impact that those amalgamations could have had on the democratic and representative character of the local government sector. Just in case members have forgotten what was trying to be pushed through by the government, I will provide a quick reminder. The government said that the number of local government authorities should be reduced from 30 to 16, which would mean a reduction of 111 council seats from 325 to 214, which is a reduction of 34 per cent. If one looks at the implications of that reduction, they see it would have meant an increased voter-to-councillor ratio because local councils would have had larger populations and fewer councillors; increased competition between those wanting to stand because there would be fewer positions; and larger electorates. Greater competition would have meant that prospective candidates from minority backgrounds—for instance, women, the lesbian, gay,

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bisexual, and transgender community, and ethnic communities—would have found it hard or would have been deterred from running for office. The Robson review recommended that political parties and groups be allowed to contest local government elections. It argued that the risk that local governments would become more politicised was low and pointed to results in Queensland; however, it failed to show that for the City of Brisbane in particular, because 70 of the 75 candidates who ran in the City of Brisbane elections were party affiliates. Observers cite the reason for this being that the City of Brisbane is a single unitary authority and thus holds major political significance in that state. The risk that can be applied geopolitically to Western Australia, particularly to big local governments such as the Cities of Perth and Stirling, is that they could become dominated by party politics, which would have a further negative impact on gender balance. Individual and institutional cultural attitudes and practices in relation to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and disability will need to be tackled to ensure that local government is actively inclusive of the whole community.

The University of Western Australia and the Committee for Perth previously released the “Filling the Pool” report, and have recently released the May 2015 FactBase Bulletin 44 titled “Still a Boys Club? Gender Participation and Representativeness of Local Government in Metropolitan Perth”, which states that getting equity into local government means that local governments have to have policies and practices that address gender discrimination and stop harassment and actively pursue and provide training for local government members and professionals in both of those matters. UWA intends to conduct more research into demographics and into the motivation of local councillors to help build a better picture of what is happening in local government. If this government has introduced any strategy aimed at helping to redress equality in women’s representation in local government, it certainly has not worked.

I turn to the issue of the “Women’s Report Card”, which we expected would be produced earlier this year, but it was not. This is another issue on which there is a lack of information about what is happening with gender inequality in this state. This morning I listened to the Minister for Women’s Interests refer again to some strategies that she has launched. One is training-place scholarships for women in the trades and in science and technology. That is laudable, but it is not enough. She needs to do a lot more to bring forward this agenda. Between 2008 and 2010, 89 women were killed by their current or former partner; that is, nearly one woman a week was killed in domestic violence circumstances. That figure is disgraceful. Where are the strategies in the budget to address that shameful statistic? One in five Australian women has experienced sexual violence; one in six has experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner; one in four has experienced emotional abuse by a former partner; and one in three women has experienced physical violence. Those statistics are more than just sobering; they are an incredible indictment on the current situation of gender imbalance and the energy that is being put into addressing inequality in our society. This is a budget discussion, so when I looked at the budget papers I guess what amazed me the most, looking through the Minister for Commerce’s section where I would expect to see the pay equity unit, was that the pay equity unit has been dissolved. There goes another strategy or mechanism for working on closing the incredibly big gender pay gap that Western Australia suffers—in fact, it is the largest in Australia at the moment. We have no pay equity unit. The Minister for Commerce’s budget section is useless.

If we look at the Minister for Police; Women’s Interests section and turn the pages of that division, we find there is no reference whatsoever to women’s interests issues in those budget papers. This is probably the sixth or seventh year that that has been the case. Clearly, this government does not want to address women’s interests and does not want to fund the urgently needed resources required to bring women into a more balanced position with their male colleagues. Western Australia’s gender pay gap is the biggest in Australia. “Filling the Pool”, put out by the Committee for Perth only a couple of weeks ago, noted that there are very few women in leadership positions on boards of corporations or in powerful positions in industry; they are simply lacking representation in Western Australia. Where are the strategies, results and outcomes? This government has been in situ for six years, and all we have seen is the role of women in our community being undermined and downgraded. There are no policy officers in the Department of Local Government and Communities. All the indicators are very clear —

Mr C.J. Barnett: Maybe we deal with those issues in a more sophisticated way, not a patronising way?

Ms L.L. BAKER: If the Premier is talking about patronising, he should have a look at some of the indicators by which we measure the success of the strategies the government has put in place. I have yet to see any that show that whatever is in place is working; if, indeed, there is anything in place. There are no longer women’s policy officers in the Department of Local Government and Communities because they were got rid of several years ago. To start with, that could be a very good reason for these indicators going backwards. If the government is not looking at or counting it, it does not count. Those facts have been very, very clearly demonstrated by economic policy over the years. If it is not counted and it is being ignored, no changes will be made. That is what

we see from this government. It is shameful that no strategies are effectively being brought into play to target an improvement in the position of women in our community.

I will refer to another issue before I sit—an issue that, I think, concerns the whole Western Australian community, in particular a number of people who have suffered greatly from abuse or exploitation. It is the issue around a child abuse complaint support role for the Commissioner for Children and Young People or somewhere in the state government. Several weeks ago, during the estimates hearings, we heard the Premier say that the state government was no longer going to pursue the Blaxell recommendation and establish a child abuse complaint support role in Western Australia. He said that what we have in place is adequate and is working effectively. That is very different from the view put by the Attorney General in response to questions put to him by Hon Sally Talbot in the upper house last week about whether there would be some child abuse complaint support role rolled out by the government. He said that that would go ahead, but what he said that was very disturbing was that this government intends to wait until the federal Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been completed. There will have been a delay of five years before this government does what it said it would. We sat in this house and saw the Premier swear that he would implement all the Blaxell recommendations. He put it in *Hansard* and put out media releases about it, but we are still sitting here three years down the track, and now it looks like it will be at least a further two years before that child abuse complaint support role is rolled out in this state. That is not an acceptable outcome for the children of this state. If the Premier had any sort of decency he would push the Attorney General to move on this quickly, and not delay it until the royal commission is complete. The children of Western Australia, the families of Western Australia and adults who want to register that they have been abused and suffered exploitation deserve a process that works effectively. They deserve to have something in place from this government, as the Premier said it would do, that works; they deserve the government's attention. As far as I can see, they are not getting it. It is certainly something that the children's commissioner should be working on in my view; it is certainly something our child protection system needs to get right. We cannot sit around and wait for five years before the government moves on this very, very important issue.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [1.05 pm]: I want to make a few remarks during the third reading stage of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015, and make a few points to the house about the matters that have come forward over the course of the period since the budget was handed down. When a budget is handed down, there is then a process by which the estimates committee examines the budget, issues come forward, analysis is undertaken and we tease out aspects of the budget that were not immediately apparent at the time the budget was handed down. I said at the time of the budget being released that it was the worst budget in history, because the figures contained within it are the worst figures—the worst figures—of debt and deficit in the history of Western Australia: the worst growth in debt, the biggest deficit and the biggest debt in the history of Western Australia. I said to the house that it is verifiable that it is the worst budget in the history of the state.

I want to go through some of the figures contained within the budget. First of all, it had a \$2.7 billion deficit, and it also had predicted, in 2017–18 as I recall, \$36 billion worth of debt. To put that into perspective, I will do a comparison of Western Australia versus other states on the net debt for total non-financial public sector forecast for 2015–16. For Western Australia it is predicted that in 2015–16, as contained in the budget, the net debt per capita will be \$12 874; that is, as a proportion of net debt to revenue, 80.5 per cent. The next worst in Australia is the commonwealth government, which has a net debt per capita of \$12 442. In other words, Western Australia is around \$400 worse per capita than the commonwealth government; its net-debt-to-revenue ratio is 70 per cent—ours is 80 per cent. To put that in perspective: do members remember the Prime Minister continually saying that there is a debt and deficit disaster in relation to what he inherited in the federal budget? As we all know, it has got worse since this federal government came to office. He described it nationally as a “debt and deficit disaster”, yet in Western Australia it is significantly worse after coming from the best set of figures on record seven years ago. It has gone to the worst on record from the best on record seven years ago. It is worse in Western Australia than at a federal level.

I want to take the house through a comparison. If we compare it with the other states, in 2015–16 in New South Wales the net debt per capita is \$6 014—bear in mind that that is less than half of Western Australia's—with a net-debt-to-revenue ratio of 57.8 per cent. Victoria's is \$5 370 per capita—less than half of Western Australia's; Queensland's is \$7 823, which is a bit over half of Western Australia's; South Australia's is \$6 439 per person, which is half of Western Australia's; and Tasmania's is \$4 243 per person. In other words, Western Australia's net debt per capita per person is the worst in the nation, yet seven years ago we were the best in Australia. If we compare the figures, seven years ago it was around \$2 000 to \$2 500 per person. The state's debt is now up to more than \$12 500 per person for every man, woman and child. When I said it was the worst budget in history, few people contradicted me because those figures are, frankly, appalling. As I have said many times when asked, this is a problem that will take many years to resolve.

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There is no quick fix to this problem. It will take many years and potentially many terms of government to resolve. I will talk about the government's answer to this. I note a press release today by the Premier and the Minister for Regional Development to announce some land sales. They are preparing some sites for sale: the Cottesloe cable station, Claremont Police Station and three disused school sites. The government expects this round of land sales and the earlier round of land sales that it has announced, which as I recall included Kaleeya Hospital and a few other properties, to generate in the order of \$268 million for the state. Let us put that in perspective. Over the course of this financial year, the state's debt is increasing by around \$5 billion. The government, in answer to that, is selling property worth \$268 million.

Mr P.B. Watson: We are paying \$2.5 million a day in interest.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Exactly. Thank you, member for Albany. In other words, today's announcement and the earlier announcement of land sales covers a few weeks of the growth in debt. This announcement today is minuscule compared with what the government has created: the worst debt and the worst deficit on record, by multiples. This government inherited \$3.6 billion of debt when it came into office, and in 2017–18 the debt is predicted to be \$36 billion. That is a 900 per cent increase. This government's answer to that is a \$268 million sale of land combined over two rounds. That covers a few weeks of the growth in debt and a few months of the interest bill. It is a bandaid solution for the problem the government has bequeathed Western Australia. It is an embarrassment for this government that it has managed to create this situation; it is not only an embarrassment, but also a burden for future generations of Western Australians. As I said earlier, the record is clear: of the last three governments, the only governments that consistently produced surpluses and drove down debt were Labor governments. The record is clear for virtually the last quarter of the century. The only governments that do it in Western Australia are Labor governments, not Liberal governments.

The other part of the government's answer to this debt problem is a fire sale of other state assets. No answers have been given to our questions about the sale of the port of Fremantle. No answers have been given to the important question of what the cost will be for importers and exporters when this government sells the port. Significant Western Australian exporters have seen me about this issue because they rely upon the current fees they pay to export through Fremantle port and Utah Point, Port Hedland. When those ports are sold, what will be the increase in costs for exporters? We rely upon our export industries. Will the sale of the port run some of the small miners in the Pilbara out of business? We know that they are already on the edge. Will the increase in costs run them out of business? If it does, then surely that is a relevant consideration in deciding whether to sell those assets. I can tell members for a fact that I have spoken to some of the people who use those facilities and they are very concerned. They are on the edge because of the iron ore price at the moment. If the government runs them out of business by doing this, be that on the government's head. I might add that the port of Fremantle is the state's major container port. As we know, a few containers come through Esperance and a few through Broome, but Fremantle port is essentially "it" for container traffic. When Port Botany was sold, there were massive increases in the costs for importers and exporters through those ports. The Port of Melbourne is currently up for sale and big increases are scheduled in the fees and charges. I want to know from the government whether the sale —

Dr M.D. Nahan: It is not up for sale. The bill for an effective sale has not passed Parliament.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, but the Treasurer knows it is going to be sold.

Dr M.D. Nahan: No.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Be that on the opposition's head if it decides to deny the Victorian government's mandate. However, as the Treasurer knows —

Dr M.D. Nahan: For the same reason that the member is complaining about, by the way.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, so why does the Treasurer not answer the question?

Dr M.D. Nahan: We will. When we put the bill through Parliament, we will address the competition issue through analysis.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Will there be big increases in the charges for users of the port?

Dr M.D. Nahan: We are not going to follow the approach of the Labor government in Victoria by jacking up the fees significantly before the sale; that is what it is proposing to do, and then it has in the legislation a cap on fees at around CPI. That is in the legislation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Here or over there?

Dr M.D. Nahan: No, in Victoria. They are going to jack up the fees beforehand and then regulate it towards CPI afterwards. We are not going to do that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: So the government is not going to jack up the fees beforehand, but it is going to regulate it afterwards.

Dr M.D. Nahan: We are going to have a regulatory regime, yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Will the fees for accessing the port go up?

Dr M.D. Nahan: We do not know. We have not put the legislation together. There is no intention to do so.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, but that is not an answer.

Dr M.D. Nahan: That will be debated in length in this Parliament by the legislation going —

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is not an answer. How much will the fees go up by? As we know, they are relatively competitive at the moment; we have relatively competitive ports. Will the fees go up or not? That is an important question. The Treasurer did not actually answer that question.

Dr M.D. Nahan: I am being honest. We will state what the fees are in the legislation we bring to this place. We have not got to that point yet. Some negotiations about stevedoring licences, which I am not involved in, are currently underway. I do not know if they will go up or down as a result of those negotiations.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If someone is buying a port, they want a return on their investment.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Of course they do.

Mr M. McGOWAN: And if the fees are going to go down, I am pretty sure the government will not sell the port.

Dr M.D. Nahan: I think we will. We will sweat the assets better.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the member said the word “sweat”, which is what I think he said —

Dr M.D. Nahan: We sweat the assets more—work them harder.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I understand what that means, of course, but all I am saying to the Treasurer is that he needs to be clear about what will happen to the port of Fremantle rather than have a single paragraph in the budget speech.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Of course we will. We have legislation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: But the Treasurer will not answer the question on whether the fees will go up.

Dr M.D. Nahan: We will have legislation in this house for this, and the Leader of the Opposition will have access to it. It will be debated, it will be transparent and we will deal with the monopoly risk issue—we will.

Mr M. McGOWAN: And will it allow for a new port to be constructed in Kwinana?

Dr M.D. Nahan: We will not do what the Leader of the Opposition’s mates are doing in Victoria, which is jacking up the rates in advance and capitalising on them.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, but the Treasurer will not answer the question on how much the fees will go up by.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Because I do not even know what they are.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Treasurer will not answer the question. It is a relevant consideration.

Let me get on to the next point because I have only three minutes left. Because of the government’s budget mismanagement, we have seen these issues teased out in the estimates committees. Financial counselling services have been defunded, and I think the reaction of financial counsellors, their clients and the broader community has taken the government by surprise. The government has cancelled free access for children under 12 to the Royal Show. That provision has been around for 11 years. The government cancelled its election promise for a child protection one-stop shop and cancelled the shark monitoring and tagging program. The wine industry will also lose \$11 million worth of rebates, and, believe me, it is unhappy about that. The wine industry is a highly competitive and important tourism industry, and it is very unhappy with that decision. We saw cuts to concessions for seniors; we saw a tax on first home buyers; we saw an increase in land tax; and immediately before the budget, we saw a massive increase in payroll tax. During the budget estimates hearings process we teased out a huge increase in the cost of the Perth Stadium that had not been revealed before.

That is just a snapshot of the things that have occurred in the last few weeks. This government presides over disaster after disaster; over the first six years after first coming to office, it has spent money willy-nilly without any control over the finances, and that is because it has had seven Treasurers and a Premier who does not care. The consequences are there for all to see.

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MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [1.20 pm]: I rise to speak on the third reading of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015, and I would like to talk about Albany and the great southern—the areas that the government has forgotten. I am sure I can speak not only for myself but also for the member for Wagin and for the Leader of the National Party, the member for Warren–Blackwood when I say that I am a great supporter of royalties for regions and always have been, but I think it should be royalties for all regions, not just the ones that are looked after by the government, especially the National Party, in order to win those seats.

Looking back to the 2008–09 budget, great southern had an allocation of \$10 million; in 2013–14, it went up to \$57 million. Goldfields–Esperance was on \$11 million in 2008–09, and it is now on \$99 million. Gascoyne was on \$4 955 000 and went on to \$89 891 000, which is an increase of \$85 million. The Pilbara went from \$11 million in 2008–09 to \$322 million in 2013–14. All the areas I have mentioned are in National Party electorates. The Leader of the National Party can stand and talk all he likes about royalties for regions and how well it is going but, as a regional member, I say that these royalties should be for all regions. I know that a lot of National Party supporters around my area are very, very upset about the amount of money we get in our region.

Last week it was announced that \$59 million is to be provided to extend Busselton airport, of which I think \$34 million is royalties for regions funding. The government says this will open up the south west. Margaret River is very well known; everybody knows about Margaret River, and I do not think it needs any advertising for its product. As the minister said the other day, one can go anywhere in the world and ask where Perth is, and the reply will be that it is close to Margaret River. Margaret River has that recognition. The great southern has the National Anzac Centre, which the state government and federal government put a lot of money into, so one would think that the government would try to upgrade Albany airport. We are five hours from Perth by car, whereas Busselton is 1.5 or two hours from Perth, on a very good road. The government cannot tell me that people are going to fly all the way to Busselton and stop there the whole time without going to see the capital city. The government had a great opportunity to open up Albany and the great southern. We have wineries and great tourism facilities down there, but we have been left in the lurch. Margaret River has the benefit of the caves; the money from the caves goes directly to the Tourism Commission, yet the government consistently lumps Albany in with the south west. All the money is going into advertising the south west, and most people think the south west is Bunbury, Busselton and Margaret River. We have been the poor relation all the way through.

I must congratulate the City of Albany; it has very, very good staff who are doing a really good job in getting facilities up and in promoting ideas to attract people to the town. However, call me cynical, but the Leader of the National Party is in a rather marginal electorate, and all of a sudden \$34 million of royalties for regions funding has been allocated to that area. Call me cynical, but to me that is very, very disappointing.

As other members have pointed out, this government has delivered a one-tier budget. The top half of town is being looked after; the bottom half of town is not being looked after at all. Housing is a huge issue in my electorate. In Spencer Park, a lot of people are living in cars and sleeping on couches; that happens all over Albany, but in Spencer Park in particular. There used to be a three-storey block of units there, but it was knocked down around 10 or 11 years ago, and ever since I have been in this job I have been saying to the government that the reason it could not be done when the Labor Party was last in government and during the first term of this government was that there was no Spencer Park facility plan.

That was done over two years ago; I brought it up in the estimates hearings and I said to the minister, “What’s happening there? You’ve announced \$575 million for regional housing—what’s going to happen there?” The block of land where the units were is prime real estate. It is right opposite the Spencer Park shopping centre, 400 metres from a school, 20 metres from a doctor’s surgery, 30 metres from a chemist and maybe 800 metres from the hospital. Seniors’ housing in Albany is diabolical, yet here we have some prime real estate just sitting there, with nothing being done. When I brought the matter up during the estimates hearings, the minister said that there was no plan for that in Albany. Perhaps the minister and his advisers can come down to Albany and talk to my constituents, and tell them why they cannot get housing, why they are sleeping on couches, and why they have to go to Perth to find somewhere to live because they cannot find a place in Albany, when we have this prime real estate sitting there. The government should either sell it for a really good price and build some units somewhere else, or use the development where it is, because it would be an asset for the government in the future.

Another issue is the one-stop shop referred to in the Blaxell report. I can remember being in the chamber when the report was delivered and hearing the Premier saying, “Yes, we’ve looked at all these issues and we’re going to act on all of them”. I remember talking to the three men who came and saw me about child abuse that first day a few years ago; they said, “We just didn’t know who to contact. No-one trusted us; we were only kids”. They did not know where to go, but it was interesting; it is still happening. A gentleman came to see me the other day who had been abused by a priest when he was younger; it happened over east, and we are trying to follow it up. In those days, he would go home and his old man would belt the crap out of him; that is where it was. These kids

had the courage to go and tell their parents that something had happened, but the parents either did not want to know or belted them. These are people at their most vulnerable. This government will spend \$2 billion on a footy stadium, Elizabeth Quay and all these big-ticket items, and they may be monuments to the Premier, but I got into this job because I wanted to look after people and make sure everyone had a roof over their head. I know that members always come here with dreams, and everything like that. I would like the Premier to visit Albany and see how some people live. He should come with me and doorknock in Lockyer and Spencer Park where people have dogs in their front yards and houses because they are scared that something will happen and they feel as though they need to protect themselves. Many people cannot eat properly. I received an email on Friday, which I meant to bring with me today, from a gentleman, a veteran, who has done his bit for the country. He is asking me what he can do. He turns on his heater only one hour a day and his hot water only once a day. I am talking about real people. I am not talking about statistics; I am talking about people who cannot survive at the moment. When power and water bills go up, those people want to be independent and live in their own homes, but they just cannot afford it anymore. Taking away funding for financial counselling is another thing that will affect the ordinary person in the street, especially people from low economic backgrounds and families. Most families are already struggling. Funding financial counselling might be a little thing to the Premier or the parliamentary secretary who said that only so many a day are seeking it, but if those people providing it could save only one life every day or help someone to get on the right track, it would be a win.

What about the Perth Royal Show? Come on! The government is going to make a saving of \$1 million on the Royal Show yet we are getting this big thing down at Elizabeth Quay.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Don't you like art?

Mr P.B. WATSON: I like art, but I also like people being able to put the power on at night and being able to feed their kids. I do not want them to have to access the hardship utility grant scheme every time they have to pay their bills. I do not know what the member for Kalamunda's electorate is like, but I have been in this job for 15 years and I have never seen such desperation among hardworking families, in which husbands and wives are working but they cannot pay their bills. I like art, but I think there is a time and a place for it—and it is not at the moment. We are saying that we have to cut all of these things, even politicians' pay, which does not affect those on the old-age pension.

Mr J.H.D. Day: The decision on Elizabeth Quay was made about five years ago and it is coming out of the budget that was allocated about five years ago. It is not a new decision.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I know that, but, for example, we knocked back a pay increase because of the current situation. Why can we not do the same and put the allocation for the statue towards financial counsellors or let the kids go to the Show? At the moment allowing their kids to go to the Show is one thing that parents can do. They cannot afford to take them to the movies or anything like that anymore because of the current situation. The Leader of the House can look at me funnily, but a lot of people cannot do that. Maybe we mix in different circles, but I have a lot of respect for the Leader of the House, so I will try to be nice.

Mr J.H.D. Day: I thought I should defend the arts sector.

Mr P.B. WATSON: My wife would want me to do it too, and I will be in trouble if I do not.

What is happening with shark monitoring is very interesting. Today in Denmark a woman was out on a surfboard and was attacked by a shark, so the sharks have heard, Leader of the House, that there will be no more tagging. What happens in Perth? The Premier said yesterday, "That's okay, we have got planes flying over." That is all right. I was at Goode Beach on the weekend having lunch with a friend, and he told me that the day before a 2.5 metre white pointer had been picked up on the monitors at Goode Beach. They are around down our way, especially when the salmon come in. The last big shark attack down our way occurred when the salmon were running and there was a dead dolphin on the beach. If we are going to have something like that, we have got to have it all. Denmark and Albany should have the same as other areas. When people who live in a regional area go for a swim, they should have the same safety measures as those who live in the metropolitan area. Swimming at Middleton Beach is a great tourist attraction. Perhaps we can get a pool there to make it safer.

Nothing has happened with the ring-road that we paid for and that Alannah MacTiernan opened.

There is one other thing I want to mention. One of my constituents has written to me and said that the Department of Education has increased from \$5 million to \$20 million the public liability insurance for kids attending workplace learning and that he is concerned that small business will not be able to pay the extra premiums to accommodate this increase and therefore kids will not be able to do work experience anymore. That is one issue. There is another issue involving a young girl who wants to work as a volunteer at a police and community youth centre, but people under 18 years of age cannot apply for a working with children card. I suppose this is really a federal issue, but this 15-year-old who has volunteered as a gymnastics and netball

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coach now wants to be able to be paid for that, but she cannot because she is under 18 and cannot apply for a working with children card.

They are just a couple of the issues concerning my community that I wanted to raise. I am very disappointed with the Water Corporation on its southern seawater desalination plant.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka) [1.35 pm]: I rise to speak on the third reading of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015. I always appreciate the opportunity to participate in the estimates committees. We know that this budget has had quite an impact on many communities, not the least of which is the impact the budget has had on seniors not only from increases in electricity and other utilities, but also in the reduction of entitlements for Seniors Card holders. The cost of electricity has increased by 25 per cent for over 100 000 Western Australian seniors because they have lost their cost-of-living assistance payment all because the government needs to find savings of \$18 million. What is most interesting is that to achieve that saving the Minister for Energy said that the agency needs to harvest some savings from the process by going through a verification process for seniors. There is a volunteer seniors' information centre in William Street where people go to ask questions and I understand after discussing and confirming this with the minister that those volunteers who have given their time and effort are now being told not to turn up on Monday and to not come any longer to volunteer. For the first time ever, the department has employed people to come in with a particular "skill set" to undertake that verification and make a range of different phone calls. This is a temporary arrangement until the verification process is complete. We know that not only is the cost-of-living assistance payment being taken away from Seniors Card holders, but also a whole range of other concessions that Seniors Card holders have been eligible for will be taken away because they are getting taken off the Seniors Card.

In every which way, people are being impacted upon. I want to talk about that every which way. At the same time as the cost of living allowances of some of the most vulnerable people in our community, such as seniors, and the eligibility of those who can hold a Seniors Card are being taken away, we are reducing financial counselling by \$1.5 million and taking away the capacity of people to seek additional assistance through financial counselling. Here we are: we have had an increase in the cost of electricity, people have lost their Seniors Card and all its benefits, and while all this stuff is going on who do people seek assistance from? They try to go to a financial counsellor, but they cannot. Suddenly they start using other things to meet the cost of everyday living. They might start using a credit card, thinking they just need to get through a little problem they have at a certain point. We know—the Treasurer also agrees—that the gap between credit card rates and interest rates in Australia is too high. The Treasurer asked the Council of Financial Regulators to look into that. A Senate inquiry is looking into that. The cost of living has risen and the government has taken away some benefits involving the cost-of-living allowance. At the same time we have a financial system that is, frankly, broken, not in terms of how seniors are broke but it is not working to deliver to the community because of this gap.

We are getting ourselves into that sort of difficulty or having problems paying rent or things like that when we are seeing cuts to community legal centres. The federal government has imposed cuts on community legal centres. The 23-odd community legal centres that get state funding are under pressure and they are losing funding. Everywhere we turn we see people seeking assistance in an economy in which the wheels of production are still turning. Businesses are still employing people. We recently saw a reduction in the level of unemployment. It is not the case that we cannot afford these things. We are not looking down the barrel of the European Union telling us that we have to make a payment on Monday and we are not at the stage that we cannot make pension payments or keep the government running. We have that capacity. We just choose to have some sort of priority that is not about people. It is a priority about edifices and creating places for people to play but not to live. How does that work for us? How do we explain that to the community and talk about it in a way that meets people's expectations of what government should provide in the community?

We have all these dual impacts and funding being cut to community legal centres. Employment is steady but still increasing and there are problems with fly in, fly out workers and areas like that. Lo and behold, this government decides to make a major change in how it funds employment law centres. The Department of Commerce just threw up its hands and said it is not doing it anymore. It might refer some 127 clients from Wageline to the Employment Law Centre of WA. That is from Employment Law Centre data, not data from Wageline because Wageline does not collect that data. The Department of Commerce does not want to use the data anymore. It does not want people to have access to that sort of stuff, even though as the Department of Commerce it has carriage of that. It says that because the Attorney General has a commitment to it, he can fix it. That will save the department \$240 000. Yay! Beauty! The next thing we know, the Attorney General said that the only way he can get that sort of money is to stop funding the Environmental Defender's Office—another good aspect of it. The Minister for Planning knows that I have a commitment to the Mirrabooka bushland. He could suddenly decide that it should not be part of Bush Forever anymore. That is the sort of thing that would go to the Environmental Defender's Office, which would say that it is not a good decision and give some reasons for that. But no, not

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only did the government say that it will de-fund this office, which does good work, but the employment law centres will get that \$139 000, which is nowhere near the \$400 000 that they need to operate. The government says, “Here you go; just have this piddly bit of money and we will work it out for you.” How is that good management of government? That is not even good accounting of paperclips and pens. It is chaotic out there. The government just keeps cutting little things with no rhyme or reason. I know that the press hate the word “narrative” at the moment because it thinks it is political jargon but, frankly, a bit of consistency would be good, even if this government does not have a narrative other than saying “Yippee, we’ll be able to cut lots of ribbons in the lead-up to the election.” It concerns me.

The other thing that concerns me is that in the meantime the government keeps pulling money from all these other areas. Every time we go to a counter, we are charged a fee. Every time we turn around and want services from government these days, it is a case of fee for service. Frankly, as we know, there was recently a discussion about fee for service for schools. Thankfully, the Minister for Education said that that would not occur in our schools. We know, because we have seen reports, that parents are contributing much more than ever before to deliver the sort of education that they want for their children in public schools. Public schools should be publicly funded.

I turn to the interest accrued by the rental accommodation account. Every time someone puts a bond into the rental accommodation account, it goes into a central account, which is administered by government. The government is basically saying to people, “When you pay a bond to your landlord, we are going to put it into a central account. We get to take the interest from that and that goes to the benefit of the community.” It does not really benefit the community. I have discovered that over 50 per cent of it goes to the administration of the department; it is used as reimbursement for the costs and expenses of the Department of Commerce and the bond administrator—a total of \$5.9 million in 2013–14. If we look at the estimates, we see that an increasing amount of money is paying for that and a decreasing amount of money is going to the public to help with advocacy and tenancy advice, and education.

We are seeing a government that says, “Here is a pot of money. No-one is going to look. Let us take it from this area.” We also know that it is taking from that pot reimbursement for the Magistrates Court, not just for the tenancies but for the parks and villages accommodation. Here is another pot of money. We all know that people who are using the Magistrates Court are paying quite large fees for small claims matters while the real costs are incurred in the Supreme Court of Western Australia. Those sorts of things have not been factored in and they are still not paying for them. They are paying a small proportion of those costs. The Department of the Attorney General refuses to find out what the real costs are so it can apply them. It refuses to work out how it can tax those high-end, long litigation areas—“No, no; let us go with the small stuff. Let us go with the people who need access to justice, access to financial counselling and access to help with tenancy.” That is the small target. The problem with small targets is that they do not deliver a lot of money. They deliver small amounts of money that have a huge impact on the community as a whole. The government really needs to stop looking at the paperclips and start looking at the big structures and whether it can afford to deliver them.

We know that the Liberal Party has form in attacking people on the edges. In October 1995 it ceased the funding of Centacare financial counselling in Balga. I was working in a community legal centre when Roger Nicholls cut funding for financial services. I know that the government has form. It thinks it can save money by attacking the vulnerable in our society instead of looking at the big end of town and how it is delivering to them. We will have a stadium but we may not have players. The government has placed itself in a situation of delivering to its mates without delivering to the community. That is terrible. We also have Elizabeth Quay.

Ms R. Saffioti: With no buildings.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes, with no buildings. I say to the Minister for Planning that the kids from Boyare Primary School used to be able to afford to get on a bus and come to Parliament House. They used to go across the Narrows Bridge and say to the teacher, “Are we going into another country?” Frankly, they never come into the city.

Mr J.H.D. Day: A school excursion will be absolutely wonderful for them.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: They will not be able to afford a school excursion because their parents will not be able to get the financial counselling they need to pay for the additional stuff they need such as school excursions under this government. They will not be able to do them. The fact of the matter is that the minister is attacking those who can least afford it and that is disgraceful. Put the financial counselling back, make sure community legal services can operate in this state, and address some of the issues that do not cost a lot but benefit a lot.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [1.49 pm]: I rise to speak on the third reading of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2015–16) Bill 2015. There are many serious issues facing Western Australia and the world. Liberal Party members in particular are looking more and more like the frog in the water that is being slowly heated and they have no idea what faces them, because of the decisions they are making. As the water

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boils it then of course reaches the point when suddenly they realise that there ain't no way out! This is despite some members on their own side consistently highlighting the fact that every week the state sees a further \$100 million placed on the state's debt ledger. This is despite the fact that we are increasingly hearing in our electorates and our electorate offices and through our community organisations and groups that more and more people are under financial pressure: under the pressure of trying to make ends meet, under the threat of their job security and being at risk of the fact that their household budgets are not stretching. This is despite this government's bull in a china shop approach to increasing the cost of essential services, in particular those services that households require to function, including electricity, water, gas et cetera. All things have been happening and this government has been bubbling away and in that pot have been some willing froglets.

Ms R. Saffioti: Tadpoles?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, if they were tadpoles they would not be able to climb out of the pot and turn down the heat. These are froglets; they have actually got the opportunity to climb up out of the pot and call this Premier for what he is, and call this Treasurer for what he is, but they refuse to do it. Instead, we have seen them get up in this place and try to defend, sometimes through simple abuse of the opposition as we saw yesterday with the member for Forrestfield, when they actually had the opportunity to stand up for their own communities. Yesterday, the member for Forrestfield could have stood up and defended the Foothills Information Referral Service, the only one in that area, which of course is to be affected by the cuts to financial counselling; he could have chosen to do that. He is the froglet in the pot and simply decided to attack everybody else and use spurious arguments, rather than actually defending one of his community organisations, which the member for Bassendean quite rightly highlighted in his contribution yesterday. The member for Forrestfield has been on record saying that it is actually a wonderful organisation, yet yesterday his words were hollow, because he did not take the opportunity to stand up and defend it.

We then saw the member for Southern River in the matter of public interest motion be like one of those bunnies with their eyes caught in the glare of the Premier's beam, simply standing up and defending the indefensible and talking about how in some respects it is the fault of the financial counsellors for the situation that many people are in, and that they are spending too much time with them and that there are other ways to go. These are examples of the froglets in the pot. Unfortunately, the heat has now reached a point where it is about to boil over. The state's debt levels are at a historical level. The priorities of the government have been focused too much on delivering projects to a much smaller group of Western Australians and not spending the benefits of what should have been a beneficial boom to a greater number of people. That is the legacy that this Premier has set the state up for. The Treasurer, in his arrogance and in his hypocritical approach to his portfolio, has found himself defending things that he himself has criticised and warned against in his position in economic academia before he entered this place. All the way through we have ministers who are defending the indefensible. That is a terrible legacy to leave the people, the children and the grandchildren of Western Australia into the future who will, of course, be saddled with this debt for many years.

In my contribution I want to highlight a couple of the examples of what I consider to be the new line; the new words that come out with regard to resourcing pressures. In Estimates Committee B, the member for Albany asked a question on my behalf—because I was in the other chamber in the hearing for local government—about what some might see as simply an innocuous slashing of one position from the Department of Sport and Recreation. The position is the regional manager's position of the Peel office of the Department of Sport and Recreation. When asked why it had done this, Mr Brimage was quoted as saying —

We made a decision at the departmental level to put an alternative service model in the Peel region.

When further pressed as to why it was that Peel was getting the “alternative service model”—a very interesting term—he said —

There are challenges across the board for the public sector. There are resourcing pressures on salary levels and on a range of costs across the system. We have to use our resources optimally.

Yes, let us go and slash the position of the regional manager of the Peel office of the Department of Sport and Recreation. This is, of course, a pattern we have seen with Education, where we once had a district director resident in Peel who was addressing issues for schools in Peel. This government took that position away and centralised it to Perth. We now have a district director for the south metropolitan education system that covers some 240 schools.

We saw changes to the policing model. In relation to workforce development, the member for Dawesville, in his capacity, could stop the erosion of the workforce development centre. He did nothing and it went. Once again, it was reinforced by the Leader of the National Party in his capacity as well. We have seen consistent erosion of services in Peel with the focus on having direct autonomy in the region. This latest example, the disappearance

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of the regional manager's position at the Peel office of Sport and Recreation, is a significant issue for the region; a region that has a massive number of young families with young children in it, a region that has massive numbers of people moving to the region to live and to recreate and to find work. What happens? An alternative service model will be delivered to Peel. The alternative service model this government delivers to Peel is to take services away from Peel. That is the history and the track record of this government.

The Liberal members who represent the Peel region have, by and large, been silent, except I will not include the member for Murray–Wellington, because the member for Murray–Wellington very well knows that the published figures show how much funding in the royalties for regions program has not been delivered to the Peel. His federal colleague Don Randall has also raised the issue of the poor funding that has been received by the Peel region. Where have the other upper house Liberal members and even the National Party members been? The member for Dawesville, as the Deputy Premier, who actually has a chance to represent the community at the highest level in cabinet, will not defend the Peel. Where has he been? He has not even been there. We never see in the paper or in the media any defence of these moves by the Liberal and National Parties. They never stand up for the Peel region. They never do it!

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Health, that is finished for the moment.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Health, I call you to order for the first time. You can carry on the argument after question time.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

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

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I do not want to call you to order for the second time!

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 4816.]