



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
1997

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 13 March 1997

Legislative Assembly

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THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland) took the Chair at 10.00 am, and read prayers.

MOTION - GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [10.08 am]: I move -

That private members' business shall take precedence on Wednesdays from 5.00 pm until 9.00 pm and government business shall take precedence at all other times.

I would like to raise a number of issues which we might not resolve today. It is appropriate that we have some discussion about them in the Parliament. They relate primarily to the sitting times of this House. Standing Order No 224(1) provides that grievances will now be taken each Wednesday following the adoption of the Address-in-Reply.

It is intended that grievances be taken at 4 o'clock on Wednesday. The reform introduced last year to increase the number of grievances and shorten their time and to have grievances every week is sensible. I understand it has the broad support of all members. The proposal effectively means that grievances would be heard at 4.00 pm and other private members' business would continue at 5.00 pm. It is assumed, and implicit in the assumption, that the dinner recess would be reduced to one hour, from 6.00 to 7.00 pm.

Much has been said in this Chamber over the past few years and even before that about the problems of late night sittings of Parliament. The sitting hours for members, particularly for those with young children and members who are sole parents, can be particularly difficult. This proposal is a very modest reform. I would like to see a more dramatic reform. I believe we should not break for the dinner recess. I am also aware that some members believe we should not break for the luncheon recess either. I appreciate that this has implications for staff and the operation of this Chamber and should be handled with some care. All that is proposed here is that we, at least for a period, change the dinner recess to one hour. If the dinner recess is from 6.00 to 7.00 pm, private members' business would continue at 7.00 pm. That would be an advantage for members opposite. They would have a better media coverage of the issues being raised in private members' business. It would also mean that private members' business would finish at 9.00 pm and that would allow at least another hour and a half to deal with government business. Two or three small Bills, for instance, could be dealt with in that time.

I suggest that the dinner recess be shortened by half an hour to one hour. Therefore, the House would generally rise on Tuesday and Wednesday nights at 10.30 instead of 11.00 pm. That is a difference of only half an hour. However, it means that most people will be home half an hour earlier. That would be to the betterment of members and the staff of the Parliament.

I realise that some members will argue that the dinner recess is important. They have committee meetings and it allows metropolitan members time to attend electorate functions. Some members take the opportunity to go home and have a meal with their families and that is very commendable. However, with a bit of commonsense, members on both sides of the House could come to an understanding, a convention if members like, that from 7.00 to 7.30 pm we would not deal with contentious matters and we would not have divisions. If we were dealing with a matter that was heading for a division, we would defer it until after 7.30 pm. That would allow for some flexibility. The reality is that, most of the time, there are relatively few members in the Chamber and, most of the time, we are in Committee on legislation which involves three or four members from either side or we may be dealing with second reading speeches, in which only one or two members are involved. With the cooperation of all members of the House, we will save two half hours a week at least. Perhaps we can go beyond that in due course and sit through the lunch and dinner recesses, as happens in the Federal Parliament. If we did that, we would dramatically reduce the number of late night sittings in the Chamber.

Mr Pental: You say you are going to save half an hour's sitting time. At whose expense? Is it at the expense of the private members or the Government?

Mr BARNETT: At no-one's expense. The half hour saving will mean that the House will normally rise at 10.30 instead of 11.00 pm.

Mr Pental: But doesn't private members' business normally go until 10.00 pm?

Mr BARNETT: There will be no change in the allocation of time for private members' business. It will begin at 4.00 pm, which is earlier than was the case last year when it began at 4.30 pm. Grievances would come on at a time more available to the media. Other motions of private members would begin at 5.00 pm, go until 6.00 pm and resume at 7.00 pm.

Mr Pental: Private members' time does not alter?

Mr BARNETT: That is right. Therefore, the saving is returned to all members in an earlier retirement at the end of the night.

Mr Grill: I mentioned to you the other day that there might be a proposition from the Labor side to sit through the dinner and lunch breaks and to bring the adjournment back to 8.30 pm. I take it from your remarks that you would seriously consider a proposition along those lines.

Mr BARNETT: I hope that the House will agree to this proposal for the time being. Let us give it a go. However, I would support a more radical proposal - if it gets support across the Chamber - for sitting through the dinner recess. However, that should be discussed by all members. For the moment I ask members to try this. Let us shorten the dinner break to one hour. Let us have a convention across the Chamber that we do not have divisions in that half hour and see how it goes. If it does not work, I would be prepared to reinstate the present hours of sitting. However, I suggest we try this proposal and get at least half an hour more sleep at night.

MRS ROBERTS (Midland) [10.14 am]: The Leader of the House has described this as a modest reform. It is no reform at all. The proposal is fiddling at the edge of things. It would not advantage families or people with young children, as the Minister said. As a member who has young children, I can comment on this proposal. There is no advantage for someone with young children to go home at 10.30 instead of 11.00 pm, because children are asleep well before 10.30 pm. Therefore, getting home half an hour earlier at night will have no impact on the amount of time members spend with their children.

The Leader of the House canvassed this proposal with me and I presented it to opposition members, many of whom said it would be more disruptive to their family lives. Some of our members go home during that hour and a half break and some members have their families here at Parliament House for that time. The Leader of the House has tried to couch this in terms of being somehow beneficial to families, but members on this side of the House have said that, generally, they do not feel that will be the case. We do not support fiddling at the edges on these kinds of reforms. We believe Parliament needs a complete overhaul. Its operation is archaic. The Federal Parliament rarely sits beyond 8.30 pm. Yet, we are still following some gentlemanly conventions that have prevailed since the early part of this century. Earlier this century, being a member of Parliament was an unpaid job that gentlemen did at their leisure late in the afternoon and evenings. That may be convenient for members of Parliament who have second occupations or do private work in the mornings and it may be convenient for Ministers. However, the public now believes members are well paid and they should be working full time at being members of Parliament. They also believe we should sit in conventional hours. The feedback I get from the community is that the hours we sit here are crazy. They ask me how members can perform and how they can properly represent people when they work until all hours of the night. They also ask me what is the use of having a lot of half-asleep people sitting around the Chamber not only until 10.30 or 11.00 pm but also beyond midnight sometimes. They cannot understand why we start so late in the day. I think this is a nonsense proposal.

Mr Barnett: Some members objected when I introduced Wednesday morning sittings. The hours required to deal with the legislative program are great and growing.

Mrs ROBERTS: Only the more conservatively or traditionally minded members would object to morning sittings. Members in my situation and most members on this side of the House would not object. As the Leader of the House pointed out, there is no proposal to cut private members' time but merely to bring it on half an hour earlier and to cut half an hour off the dinner break. We support grievances being taken early. We do not support that part of the motion that refers to 5.00 to 9.00 pm.

Mr Barnett: Can I take it that, for the moment, the Labor Party supports retaining the 11 o'clock conclusion rather than 10.30 pm.

Mrs ROBERTS: We support the status quo until the Leader of the House can come up with a comprehensive and sensible package. As the member for Eyre has already suggested, this is something that we on this side have been discussing. If the Government does not come up with serious reform proposals for the sitting hours and operations of this House, we will present such a package to the Government and ask for its response.

This kind of tinkering at the edges gets this House nowhere. It is not a reform and it certainly does not advantage members who have young children to get home half an hour earlier when their children are already well and truly asleep.

The final proposal the Leader of the House made was that this House have a convention that there be no divisions at certain times. It is something the Opposition must consider. The only side of the House disadvantaged by this proposal would be the Government. It would have the most to lose. I think it may have difficulties getting Ministers back from the various functions they attend during dinner break. I ask the Leader of the House not to steamroll through this proposal on the numbers.

Mr Barnett: I made it clear I would not do it unless there was broad support across the Chamber.

Mr Nicholls: Are you prepared to have no change at all?

Mrs ROBERTS: This proposal is a pathetic effort and members will not be advantaged if the dinner break is reduced by half an hour.

Mr Nicholls: Try it for the autumn session and then put forward your suggestions for change.

Mrs ROBERTS: Half an hour in the grand scheme of things is neither here nor there. The Opposition has discussed it and it is not an initiative it supports. It would like to seriously look at propositions for starting Parliament earlier. It is not necessarily opposed to sitting through lunch or dinner breaks, which has been referred to by the Leader of the House and the member for Eyre, if that is part of the package of total reforms which will bring the way this place operates into the twentieth century. Compared with Parliaments around Australia, particularly the Federal Parliament, this place is operating in the Dark Ages. A host of reforms are required in this place and you, Mr Speaker, are aware of them. I regret to formally inform the Leader of the House that this proposal is not supported by the Opposition.

DR HAMES (Yokine - Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [10.23 am]: I cannot believe the Opposition is opposing a simple trial of a reform that has the potential to give an advantage to all members who have families. As a member in this House who has more kids than any other member apart from Mr Kierath -

Several members interjected.

Mr Pandal: Your wife supports longer sitting hours.

Dr HAMES: The member has been talking to her again!

This is opposition for opposition's sake and there is no sense in the stand being taken by the Labor Party. When this House finishes at 11 o'clock - often it goes beyond that if a member is half way through a speech - by the time members pack up and drive home it is 12 o'clock before they get into bed. This applies particularly to members such as the member for Swan Hills, who has an hour's drive to her home. If members have children, as I do, they have to get up early to help organise the children for school. The continual change to the time one gets to bed makes things very difficult. Members might say half an hour is not much, but half an hour of sleep at that time of night, especially when one has a big day ahead, is very important. If members want to give quality time to their children in the morning when getting them ready for school, that half an hour's sleep can make all the difference.

I strongly support the proposal to sit through the dinner and lunch breaks, but there must be a convention in place because all members have things they must do. Members who like to go home during the dinner break should still be able to do that. Provided there is a convention in place preventing divisions being called in that half hour it will give members an extra half hour away from the Parliament. It will not disadvantage the Opposition because any division it wants to call can be held over until 7.30 pm. It would not make any difference.

Members opposite are being led by people who have a negative attitude in taking this stance. A trial is worthwhile. It will not be supported by the Government today because the Opposition is opposing it. The Government will not bulldoze it through, because it wants a bipartisan position taken on this issue. If members opposite want to take this issue further, they should come up with a proposal which can be properly discussed so that a decision can be made. I would rather get home early. The late night sittings we have are ridiculous. Members talk about the requirements of Parliament and the things they have to do and the time they must spend in this place. Everyone has requirements. We sit in the Parliament for part of the time, not all the time. The late start in the morning gives members the opportunity to sit on committees and service the people in their electorate. Members are not elected only to sit in Parliament, but they must be here at certain times because of the heavy legislative requirement. We must balance those requirements. As a new Minister I find the time in the morning extremely valuable to see those people who want to meet me. When Parliament sits there is no time to do that other than in the corridors of Parliament and that is very difficult.

I strongly support the proposal put forward by the Leader of the House. I am extremely disappointed that members opposite will not support members with families and agree with the proposal. I hope the Opposition will quickly re-discuss this issue and come up with a new proposal.

MR PANDAL (South Perth) [10.27 am]: The proposal outlined by the Leader of the House is worth supporting on a trial basis, particularly as he has given an assurance that the altered hours will not be a detriment to private members. This proposal is something deeper and gives the opportunity to put before the Government the need to bring about more serious reforms in Parliament House; for example, the idea of cutting back on the hour and a half dinner break on the surface sounds good. I am one member who uses that time to go home. I am luckier than most members because I have a home within seven or eight minutes of Parliament House. However, it need not exclude

the possibility that people could see their families over the dinner break; if, for example, there were decent facilities in this place to afford members the opportunity to spend time with their spouse and children. Of course the dining room is woefully inadequate and unless one books two or three weeks in advance that is not a possibility.

Mr Speaker, you have made some comments, which I will not canvass now, about the facilities in this place and it is one way in which the matter can be addressed.

The Minister who has just resumed his seat touched on one issue I will raise. Incidentally, I have no sympathy for Ministers who whinge about the lack of facilities in this House because they are among the 17 people who can do something about it. The Minister is right: There are no facilities for meeting people in Parliament House and he and other Ministers have to sit in the corridors. Again, that is part of the wider problem. Parliament could begin sitting at 9 o'clock every day. One of the reasons we do not have early sittings is to suit Ministers of the Crown. The Minister made the very valid point that he has to meet people and deal with departmental issues before he comes to Parliament because there is nowhere in Parliament House to do that. It suggests that we should do something about that as one of the underlying structural problems in this place.

There is an argument for not having breaks at all and working through if that will enable people to get out of this place at 10.30 pm, or earlier. That will mean that some arrangements will need to be made for people who have to work through that period; namely Hansard staff, the officers at the Table, and so on. I agree with the opposition manager of business that we are mucking around at the edges when we should be dealing with the core problem. However, insofar as this motion tries to address the problem of late sittings, and insofar as it does not interfere with private members' time, of which there is precious little in this House, it is worth supporting for no better reason than the Minister indicated it is no more than a sessional order and, therefore, can be changed at any time.

MR RIPPER (Belmont - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.31 am]: I support the Leader of the House's interest in reform of this Parliament and I do not want him to be overly discouraged in his attempt to reform this place by the fact that we do not agree with his proposition. I can see both sides of the argument. Every second week I have sole responsibility for the care of my children, and I am certainly keen to have good contact with my children. On the other side of the argument, I was the manager of opposition business for the past four years, and that meant that I had to stay until the end of the sitting and also had to be here first thing in the morning to participate in opposition strategy meetings.

We need a comprehensive package of reform. A process has been started and should be continued. A Select Committee on Procedure, chaired by the member for Scarborough, who is now the Speaker, looked at a range of reforms. The Leader of the House should bring to the House a statement outlining the Government's response to the recommendations of that committee, and the Opposition should also develop a response.

Mr Barnett: That will happen. There is agreement across the House that we have a fundamental look at the sittings hours of the House. However, while that is worth doing, that is not an argument for not now making a marginal improvement for the benefit of members, which can be done easily with no down side.

Mr RIPPER: Let us have some commitment on both sides to a comprehensive process of reform, because everything affects everything else. We should look at the total package. A process has been commenced, it is a good process, and it should be brought to a conclusion. What do people use that hour and a half dinner break for? I use it to go home and have dinner with my children, on occasion. Some people use it to go to the parliamentary gym and maintain their exercise program. Other people use it for meetings or functions in their electorate, or for meeting people whom they would not otherwise be able to meet given the parliamentary schedule. Good use is made of that hour and a half dinner break.

It certainly would not assist me in my family responsibilities, nor, I believe, many of the other members with young children, to have that break cut back by half an hour. It is of no advantage for members who have young children to get home at 10.30 pm because their children are in bed and that is the end of it. Members can use that hour and a half break as an opportunity for contact that is all too infrequent in parliamentary life. This issue cuts across party lines because members on both sides have different views.

If we were to sit through part of the break, we would need not just a convention on divisions but a change to the standing orders, because the Opposition would want to have its vote recorded, via a division, on certain matters that might arise between 7.00 pm and 7.30 pm.

Mr Nicholls: Adjourn the debate!

Mr RIPPER: That is a bit of a clumsy mechanism. I understand that in the House of Commons all divisions are postponed to a particular time, I think Friday afternoon. I am not suggesting that we have all our divisions on Thursday afternoon, but if we did sit through or shorten the dinner break, we would have to change the standing

orders so that we could divide on issues on which we wanted to have our names recorded in *Hansard* as having taken a certain position. We could do that if there was the option of dividing at a later stage. It is possible to have the best of both worlds: Sit through the dinner break, and let people continue to do the things they want to do. However, we will need a more comprehensive reform than the one the Leader of the House has brought to us. The Leader of the House and I had a brief discussion and I think he might be prepared to adjourn this debate to allow further discussion between the parties. That is a good proposition, and there is a chance of our moving forward on this, but only if the Leader of the House will allow all of the valuable things that currently occur during the hour and a half dinner break to continue to occur in one way or another.

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Health) [10.38 am]: I want to present the point of view of country members, which so far has been lacking in what has been said.

Mr Trenorden: Totally devoid!

Mr PRINCE: Yes. I remind members that that view cuts across party lines as well. What has been proposed is a sensible, small change for trial purposes for a few weeks. The point was made by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that we sit in this place for about half of the year. We sit on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays of the weeks we are here. We sit on Tuesday and Wednesday nights but generally not on Thursday nights. Therefore, we sit for two nights of some weeks of the year. We are talking about a trial for the next two or three weeks. It is utter nonsense not to try something to see whether it works and is a better system, and we can then have a sensible and informed debate. To a certain extent, it is all hypothetical.

If we wanted to make more radical changes, we could start talking about sitting between 8.00 am and 5.00 pm or 9.00 am and 6.00 pm two or three days a week. When I was a backbencher, I came here from Albany to be in the Parliament and I did not have a home to go to in this place. If we look at the seating plan of this House, we find 21 country seats: Ningaloo, Moore, Dawesville, Bunbury, Greenough, Wagin, Collie, Roe, Avon, Albany, Geraldton, Murray-Wellington, Warren-Blackwood, Merredin, Stirling, Vasse, Mitchell, Eyre, Kalgoorlie, Pilbara and Kimberley.

Some of the country members live in the city and go to their electorates one or two days a week. Other members live in their electorates and come to the city. If the sitting finished at 5.00 pm or 6.00 pm, it would be a night wasted for the country members, because we would have to be here anyway. We could not go to electorate functions because the electorate is too far away. I might be able to go to meetings as a Minister, but that is in another capacity. I would not be able to use my time usefully as a backbench country member. To change the hours of sitting that radically would do our constituents a disservice and we would not be performing as we should. That factor should be taken into account in a broader debate about whether, and how, we should change the sittings hours of this place.

I agree that to sit after 10.00 pm or 10.30 pm is nonsense and that very few people can function at 2.00 am or 3.00 am. At least half of the opposition members have not been here for most of the debates that I have sat in at that hour. I do not have a problem with our sitting rational hours to perhaps 10.00 pm or 10.30 pm, after which we should call it a day and go home. However, to cut it off much earlier and to diminish the amount of working time for a country backbench member in this House, is a proposition I will oppose. This proposal should be tried to see if it works.

MR MINSON (Greenough) [10.40 am]: I do not wish to prolong debate because I do not think it was meant to be a general debate. However, a few issues have been mentioned and I wish to pick up a couple of them. The member for Albany has very eloquently spoken about country members. I would not support cutting the hours that this House sits. For nine years in this place I have been listening to members say that we on this side of the House are the conservatives, but every time an idea for change is promoted members on the other side do not wish to support such a change. It is a little mean-spirited to act in that way when we seek one small step for reform which would benefit most of us.

Many country members, after sitting in this place until late at night, may wish to return to their electorates, so they must rise very early in the morning to catch aeroplanes. We do not sit on Thursday nights until later in the year, but after sitting late on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, often at that time of the year until after midnight, followed by a late sitting on Thursday night, I must get up at 5.00 am the following day to go to the airport. If we can sacrifice half an hour each sitting day throughout the year to avoid that situation - so that I do not need to prop my eyes open with matchsticks - we should take the opportunity. It is a little mean-spirited of the leader of opposition business to dismiss this change just because it is not a wholesale change.

The member for South Perth mentioned the physical structure of this place. We have heard many times that it is never the right time to do something about the facilities here. I have already upset two new Ministers because I have told them that they cannot use my room. That is not because I am mean-spirited; it is simply because I now live in Perth. I transferred my entire family to Perth when I became a Minister. For that reason I use my room a lot to phone

my electorate, to write letters, and to keep in touch with my electorate office. I am not being mean-spirited. I will not move a motion now, but it is probably time that the House set a date by which the Premier or his nominee should tell us when something will be done with this place. When I was Minister for Disability Services, on a number of occasions I sat in the corridor with people in tears because there was no room for them to talk privately with a Minister. They had come to the end of their tether trying to look after a disabled child or because of some other problem.

I have heard the rhetoric. I have sat through the term of four or five Premiers now, and they were always going to do something but it was always after the next Budget or election. It is about time that this House suggested a date to the Premier - perhaps 1 July would be a good time - for him or his nominee to tell us what he will do about this House.

Mr Pental: You move it!

Mr MINSON: The member should move it and I will support it. I do not mind moving it, but I want to frame the motion so that it will achieve what I want.

Mr Pental interjected.

Mr MINSON: That is true. It was discussed in Cabinet. On a number of occasions it was discussed in detail, but it was as usual never the right time. It will never be the right time. If we do not move, as a House, that time will never come. This should be done not for our comfort but for the benefit of the people of Western Australia.

This motion should be supported by the Opposition. The Leader of the House does not intend to put it to a vote because it is not necessary. It is time for change, beyond this one.

MR TRENORDEN (Avon) [10.45 am]: I would like to see some bipartisan activity in this House. Driving to Parliament today I heard the public debate on the parliamentary superannuation scheme. At some stage we must address this matter because the public is giving us a hiding. We have been trying to deal with this issue for some years, but some members always promote a negative point of view. I appreciate that this will happen at some other time.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 12 March.

MR MASTERS (Vasse) [10.46 am]: In the year 1801 a Frenchman named Thomas Timothee Vasse was washed overboard from a small boat that had been sent to recover marooned sailors from a place now known as Quindalup, to return them to Captain Nicholas Baudin's corvette, *Geographe*, as part of Baudin's voyages of discovery around south west Australia. While Vasse is almost certain to have drowned after falling overboard, stories persisted that he survived, living with local Aboriginal people for a number of years. This voyage and that incident play an important and educational part in the history and present day character of my electorate and the people whom I am proud to be able to represent in this Parliament.

Today, the Vasse area is the second fastest growing region in Australia. Its annual population growth rate of 6.8 per cent - compared with a state average of 1.9 per cent - is a reflection of its Mediterranean climate, clean air and water, outstanding natural attractions and vast array of both natural and human resources. The Busselton and Dunsborough region is the premier tourist destination in Western Australia, having surpassed attractive but less enthralling places such as Mandurah as the place that most West Australians choose to visit for holidays.

Today Vasse hosts a number of mineral sand mines; contains arguably the most productive agricultural soils in the State, namely the Marybrook loams; grows grapes from which people such as Albert Haak and Krister Jonsson produce the best wines in Australia; provides the best recreational fishing experiences in the State; and, has attractions such as Yallingup Cave, the Busselton Jetty, Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse, outstanding restaurants such as Café Ibis at Dunsborough, accommodation facilities such as the Mandalay Holiday Resort in Busselton which has won national awards for its presentation; historical sites such as Wonnerup House near Ludlow and Minninup House near Capel, together with a wide range of arts and crafts shops and other tourist attractions. All of these things combine to make Vasse the place to live and holiday.

Two other features of my electorate are integral to its character. The first, Mr Speaker, is agriculture. Although most growth in Vasse is occurring in the various townsites that are spread throughout the area, it is the complex range of agricultural activities taking place as the backdrop to these towns that creates a uniquely mixed rural and urban environment which is attractive to town residents, tourists and farmers alike.

The second integral feature of Vasse is the quality of its natural environment. Although only a few people may be aware of the many rare or unique plants and animals that exist within the Vasse region, all visitors and residents accept that the natural environment of the region is special: The wide sandy beaches and clean waters of Geographe Bay, the rugged coastal beauty of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, the jarrah forests of the Whicher Range, the statuesque tuart forest at Ludlow and the tranquillity of Meelup. All of these natural features combine to make Vasse a truly special place.

I could continue to sing the praises of my electorate for several hours, but I believe I have a more important role to play in this, my maiden speech; namely, to advise members of this House that Vasse is experiencing a number of serious problems that require favourable consideration by decision makers both here in Perth and at the local government level. First, the pressures on agriculture are often adverse and unrelenting. In spite of the favourable climate and large areas of productive soils, the price of many agricultural commodities is close to or below the cost of production. In particular, many beef producers are hurting badly as a direct result of disputes between the United States of America and the European Union on their respective levels of agricultural subsidies. With Australian agricultural subsidies equating to less than 5 per cent of total farm income, North American subsidies 30 per cent, and some European countries exceeding 80 per cent of farmer's annual income, there is no such thing as a level playing field for agriculture. Although State Governments can do little to correct these international inequities, it is nonetheless important that these problems should be remembered when Perth based decision makers prepare policies and laws that impact on rural Western Australians. For example, there is a strong case in support of uniform electricity and petrol prices throughout this great State of ours on the basis that the great bulk of our wealth is created in rural and pastoral Western Australia, but mostly spent in Perth. For metropolitan residents to subsidise country people is both natural and desirable. It is a good example of how urban residents can show their support for decentralisation and regional development. I therefore concur with the comments made by the member for Ningaloo who, two days ago in this House, pointed out to members the problems that his rural constituents are facing.

A second major force affecting agriculture in Vasse is the rezoning of agriculturally productive land and its subsequent subdivision into small urban or rural residential lots, or to farming units that are not economically viable. As urban centres grow, by necessity that growth is located upon productive agricultural land. Although I commend the councillors and staff of the Shires of Busselton and Capel for their efforts over the years to strike the right balance and to protect agriculturally important soils from adverse development, the State Government has an important role as well through the Ministry for Planning and the Valuer General's Department.

It is important that members understand how good quality agricultural land is lost. As urban areas expand towards genuine farming properties, the unimproved capital value of those properties increases because of the real or perceived increase in the urban subdivisional potential of those properties. In turn, local government rates increase every year to reflect those increased land values. However, throughout this entire process, the agricultural income of those same properties has rarely, if ever, increased, and the farmers' ability to pay for the high rates does not improve. Eventually, most farmers finding themselves in this position simply give up. They either sell their land, subdivide it themselves, or allow speculators or developers to do so, and more of this country's limited supply of high quality agricultural soils is lost forever beneath houses, roads, shopping centres and such like. This process reduces our wealth generating capacity and significantly disadvantages all future generations of Western Australia. This issue provides a major challenge for both state and local governments. I hope all political parties will accept the challenge of finding a way to resolve this unrelenting pressure for the long term good of us all.

Another agricultural issue is land rezoning through local or state planning schemes, where privately owned land has development constraints placed upon it in order to achieve aims considered by the general community to be desirable. This process has been described to me as acquisition by stealth. In these circumstances, the most appropriate action is for the community to reflect its ambitions for future use or protection of that land by paying compensation through outright purchase or making other arrangements to reasonably satisfy the needs of the landowners who have used their own money to purchase the land in the first instance.

The second major issue I wish to raise relates to the social and human problems caused by the extremely high growth rates of the Vasse region. We should not become complacent, or naive, and assume that growth is, in itself, capable of delivering the end goals that a community agrees by general consensus are desirable. In Vasse, the annual growth rate is 6.8 per cent. Dunsborough's growth over the past 10 years has been 15 per cent per annum. This annual growth rate is placing great pressure on many of the services generally provided by both local and state governments. For example, the Vasse-Leeuwin Health Service, which covers the Shires of Busselton and Augusta-Margaret River,

has serviced a population growth of 47.6 per cent since 1986. One consequence of this growth is an increase of 38 per cent in the number of projected cases to be treated in the three local hospitals over the next two years. Although the Busselton District Hospital is the most efficient hospital in Western Australia, with an excellent quality of care combined with the lowest dollar cost per patient in the State, it requires \$2m in capital funding and another \$1m in operating funds to cope with this projected increase in patient numbers.

The tragedy of the Gracetown cliff collapse has highlighted the important work conducted by the Family and Children's Services arm of government in attending to the human needs of the Vasse community. Private service suppliers such as South West Counselling Services are unable to meet the community's demand for counselling, even with the introduction of a limited user pays system of cost reimbursement.

I am sure the Government, of which I am very pleased to be a member, is well aware of these issues. The new Busselton airport, which is to be opened in two days' time, will significantly increase tourism opportunities in the south west. In particular, those tourism opportunities will be improved during the shoulder and off-peak times outside the summer and autumn school holidays. However, the airport will in turn place greater pressures on the region's existing infrastructure. For example, although the Busselton bypass will reduce traffic flow through the Busselton townsite by only 15 per cent, the diverted traffic will comprise virtually all the heavy haulage vehicles which, because of their size, weight and limited manoeuvrability, are having a greater impact on traffic safety on the existing Bussell Highway within built up areas. I urge the Government to do everything possible to bring forward the date for commencement of construction of the Busselton bypass and I give notice that I shall be actively exploring with the appropriate Ministers every opportunity to speed up this most important project.

Everyone in the south west agrees that the existing Busselton police and courthouse complex is totally and woefully inadequate. It requires urgent replacement. In addition, the police station requires three additional officers to allow it to operate on a 24 hour, seven day a week basis to cope with the prodigious population growth.

The final issue I wish to raise, Mr Speaker, involves the natural environment. I suspect that some members of this place may have the perception that I am a greenie or environmentalist. If so, I wear those tags with some pride, since they mean that my electorate expects me to defend and protect the important environmental values of the Vasse electorate. However, perceptions are often deceptive. While I commend the efforts of people such as Rachael Siewert, Bob and Anne Goodale, Otto Mueller, Brenda Newby and others who have worked for many years for various important conservation causes, some within the environmental movement are little more than political activists, attempting to further their Marxist, closed market economy visions by proclaiming themselves as supporters of the environment when, in reality, they are simply anti-development.

The concept of wilderness is just such an anti-development concept. It requires large areas of land to be locked up for mostly false or inappropriate environmental reasons, while restricting or excluding wealth generating activities such as mining, sustainable timber harvesting and most tourism. It is worth noting that definitive publications such as "The State of the Environment: Australia" published last year by the Federal Government, conclude that, on balance, the Australian environment is in a relatively healthy state. Although this should not diminish our efforts to repair the damage that has been done by past ignorance, the doom and gloom position that is often peddled by people with political rather than environmental agendas should be strongly rejected.

For this reason, and in spite of my perceived greenness, I place on record my belief that the Government's current policy of allowing mineral exploration and mining in national parks and nature reserves subject to stringent protective conditions is entirely appropriate and desirable. Further, I affirm that the Government's primary focus on tackling the problems of salinity is also accurate as salinity is without any doubt the number one environmental issue facing Western Australia.

As a professional geologist and zoologist, who has worked in the mining industry for more than 20 years, one of my major tasks over the next four years will be to show to any who will listen that development and conservation can, and must, go hand in hand. Without a strong and dynamic economy, we will not be able to afford the expenditures needed to protect and enhance our environment. If people doubt the veracity of this statement, I invite them to visit virtually any of the east European countries or those of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics where environmental catastrophes are a dime a dozen. At the same time, without a healthy and diverse environment represented by adequate protection of our soils, water, air and biodiversity, our standard of living may be high, but our quality of life may be so low as to make life barely worth living.

I shall finish my speech by thanking a number of people, while very briefly touching on some important issues which time does not permit me to discuss in any detail. I thank the outgoing member for Vasse, Barry Blaikie, for handing over to me an electorate that has grown and prospered under his 25 years of care. May he happily retire to the Internet and his recently formed Cape Naturaliste Society, which members of this House and the other place may wish

to join to help celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of Nicholas Baudin's voyages of discovery as I mentioned earlier.

I say thank you to the many Liberals who have helped me over many years with moral support, vociferous discussion on issues as enthralling as elephant bird eggs - I thank Kevan Smith - and physical support during the election campaigns. I also thank Ron Maidment, who turned 90 years of age last month, who will forever be blamed for being the first person to have put the idea into my head in 1987 that I should consider standing for Parliament. I record the strong support given to me over many years by the late Lionel Berryman of Albany, who sadly passed away last October.

To my wife, Carolina, and my mother and brothers and their families, and to my friends and youthful influences - here I list a number: the Rains, Palmer and Danischewsky families; Percy Penguin; classmates from St Louis; roommates from St Thomas More College; Rotarians; Busselton Naturalist Club members; the new year's eve camp crew; mining industry associates and many others - I say that their support, friendship and argumentativeness over many years have been greatly appreciated.

To all those in the farming community of the south west, whether I explored their properties for minerals or more recently worked with them on land care projects, I say that I shall not forget their contribution to the economic wellbeing of this State. Although some of them may be suffering now from tough economic times and others from decisions made by previous Governments on matters relating to drainage rates, I shall stand by them.

I thank the diverse mix of people who make up my electorate of Vasse for their support. I support the sentiments of people such as George Webb, who represents the Noongar people of Busselton, that land rights in their current format are not bringing Australians together, but instead are dividing them and are even working against the reconciliation process. I am pleased to make a personal commitment to oppose racism and prejudice wherever and whenever possible, and I pledge to do more than just "have an Aboriginal person to Christmas lunch in 1980", as was proffered by a certain south west personality as a token offering to this cause.

To Allie Scott and members of the Busselton Jetty Management Committee I say keep up the good work - I have not forgotten my goal of seeking a refund of Department of Conservation and Land Management royalties for logs used as piles in jetty reconstruction.

To the people of Vasse, I submit that growth is inevitable, but we must devise ways by which we decide our own future, rather than having it imposed upon us from outside or by a laissez faire failure on our part to control our own destinies. We cannot, and should not, put up artificial barriers to growth and development. Instead we should plan our own future and then act to ensure it is achieved.

I look forward to working with this Government over the next four years to achieve continued economic development for the State which, in turn, will ensure the promised social dividends are paid. I congratulate the Speaker on his election to the position and, with my parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the House, I look forward to four years of open and honest efforts to govern for the betterment of all Western Australians.

[Applause.]

MRS HODSON-THOMAS (Carine) [11.04 am]: Mr Deputy Speaker, please pass on my congratulations to the Speaker on his election, and may I say how delighted I was to accompany him and the members for Thornlie and Vasse to the Governor's residence. I also extend my congratulations to my parliamentary colleagues on their election and I wish them well. May we all go forward and serve the interests of our electorates with honesty and integrity.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge my predecessor, the former Speaker Hon James George Clarko, who served the constituencies of Marmion and Karrinyup for 23 years with distinguished service. Jim played an active role in the previous Court coalition Government. He was Government Whip in his first term, from 1975 to 1977, and was Chairman of Committees from 1977 to 1982. On the retirement of Sir Charles Court he became Minister for Education but unfortunately this work was cut short as a result of the defeat of the coalition Government in 1983. At that time he only narrowly missed out on being elected as deputy leader of the party. During the long years in opposition, Jim served continually in the shadow Cabinet as spokesman for education and later for local government. He has been a mainstay of the Liberal Party both in the Parliament and in the community and his role as Speaker was a fitting conclusion to a distinguished career. It is a career that I am certain will not go unnoticed, and I feel deeply privileged to follow in his footsteps.

It has been said on many occasions that I have large shoes to fill, and I acknowledge that I cannot begin to fill Jim's shoes. Firstly, there are many differences between Jim and me, not the least being that we are different in stature, different in nature, different in years, different in gender, and different in worldly wisdom. Although these are just a few subtle differences, we do share much in common, the least of which might be our interest in rugby and the most

important of which is our belief in liberal philosophies and the free enterprise system. I ask the members of this House to join with me in thanking Jim Clarko for his services to the people of Western Australia and wish Jim and Edith Clarko a full and happy retirement.

It is with a great sense of pride, yet humility, that I stand in this House and speak as the inaugural member for Carine. The Carine electorate embraces, in part, the suburbs of Duncraig, Karrinyup, Trigg and Sorrento and covers all of the suburbs of Carine, Marmion, North Beach and Waterman. Many of the electors of my constituency are people who are self-made. I take this opportunity to thank them for their support and faith in me. I do not take the responsibility they have bestowed upon me lightly. I intend to, and will, serve the people of Carine with determination and vigour.

One of the outstanding assets in my electorate is the presence of some of the most beautiful beaches in Australia, if not the world. I can say this with conviction as I have been fortunate during my travels to have visited many beaches in the Mediterranean, Sri Lanka and the eastern and southern coasts of our great nation. It is imperative that the maintenance of this natural, social and family environment be preserved, and I consider this to be one of my priorities.

Western Australia has a unique and one of the most effective and well planned loop road systems in the world. One of the major benefits in having such an uncomplicated highway and freeway infrastructure in place is that road users are able to bypass suburban and local community streets. Motorists are in a position to traverse the city, to gain access to the Kwinana Freeway and travel from approximately Medina at this time through to Joondalup, and soon they will be able to travel further afield on it.

Reid Highway is slowly making its way through to Marmion Avenue. It has been extended to Erindale Road. This is of great importance to my electorate as much of the traffic exiting Reid Highway now enters North Beach Road, which is causing much anguish to the residents of Karrinyup and Carine. They are plagued by heavy vehicles which use these suburban roads to access Marmion Avenue, Karrinyup and Beach Roads. I understand that it is not on the Government's agenda to complete the extension of Reid Highway for some time. I consider this to be detrimental to the wellbeing and safety of the residents who are being affected by the delay. Traffic on all the feeder roads to Marmion Avenue, North Beach Road and Beach Road is excessive. It seems only a matter of time before a serious motor vehicle or pedestrian accident occurs. I urge the Government to consider advancing the completion of Reid Highway to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents and their families.

I acknowledge and congratulate the Government on announcing its funding boost to speed up the replacement of asbestos roofs on Western Australian government school buildings. I am certain that the parents, teachers and students of Karrinyup Primary School will look forward to their roof being replaced.

During my doorknocking visits of many thousands during the recent election campaign the single most important issue raised with me was law and order. Crime is not discriminatory. It may at some time affect us all. My own parents have been subjected to home invasion, as has my electorate officer and his family, who were victims of a burglary and who were held hostage by two hooded thieves who broke into their home, threatened them with knives and subsequently gagged and tied them up. During this invasion the thieves ransacked their home and stole their vehicle, which was later found vandalised. The thieves were never identified. As elected representatives it is critical that we accept our duty to the community to legislate and ensure that the penalties fit the crimes.

Another area of importance to my electorate is the encouragement of programs that captivate our youth. It is vital that they become involved in community affairs and that they share in the decision making process to assist in the solutions relating to the many pressures our youth face. Take, for example, youth unemployment, exposure to drugs, youth suicide and the pressures to succeed, to name but a few.

I look forward to the challenges ahead with some trepidation. I intend to take an interest in everything that comes before me, but of personal interest to me are issues relating to the marine industry. As the former executive officer of the Boating Industry Association, an industry group established in the 1970s to benefit the boating public, the boating consumer and recreational boating industry, I have a sound background of the industry in this State. I am currently chairing a special safety group established by the Premier to examine the current regulations relating to the carriage of emergency position indicating radio beacons, commonly known as EPIRBs. Although we rejoiced in the successful rescues of Tony Bullimore and Thierry Dubois, it was a great sadness to lose the lives of three people off Cape Naturaliste and then again weeks later to lose three more lives off Esperance.

I convey my sincere condolences to all the families affected by these tragedies and to the many families that have been touched in some way by the loss of lives at sea.

While the issue of EPIRBs is of vital importance to search and rescue and the costs associated with rescues, there is clearly more to the issue of maritime safety, which is complex. I trust that I will have the opportunity on another

occasion to enlarge on this subject which should be of great concern to us all. This State has a vast coastline of some 12 000 kilometres, much of it isolated. There are some 55 000 registered boats in this State and a similar number of unregistered boats, namely sailing vessels, not motorised. Many people participate in this leisure activity and the wellbeing and safety of boat users is dear to my heart. The charter of the boating industry is to promote boating as a safe, pleasant family activity. In my late twenties I was a keen sailor. Regrettably I do not participate in the sport today, probably because I do not have enough time. However, I have a genuine love of boating. I encourage all members to actively engage in this most enjoyable pursuit. In saying this I ask members to reflect on a time when they may have participated in a boating activity. How many members took the time to find out where the emergency equipment was located? Did they take the time to try on the life jacket; ask about, or read the instructions on, the lighting of a flare; did they ask how to operate a marine radio if faced with an emergency? I imagine that members who are not regular boat users answered in the negative. If I can make one suggestion, I ask that when next members step on board a boat, they do not wait to be told - ask.

I am proud of my personal achievements during my time with the Boating Industry Association. I am particularly pleased to have broken ground by being the first woman executive officer in its 25 year history. Another important role was to organise Western Australia's premier nautical event, the Boat Show, and last year's Perth boat, dive and fishing show was heralded by the industry as the best show ever. Profits were up over 100 per cent and gate attendance up by 42 per cent, which was never achieved by the men who preceded me.

Members might wonder what drove me to achieve success in this sphere. My inspiration came from overhearing a male colleague in the industry say that the best place for a woman on a boat was overboard without a life jacket on. I am pleased to say that this is not the view held by the majority in the industry and I thank all the members of the association for their faith and trust in me during my time with them. I hope one day this State will be the beneficiary of a purpose built venue to cater for the growing demands of the many event organisers in Western Australia.

For many members this will be of little or no interest. However, as a mother juggling family commitments with a busy career it highlights the capacity women have to manage both family and professional careers, because to me each is equally as important as the other.

Finally, I pay tribute to a number of important people in my life. Firstly, I thank my loyal campaign helpers for their encouragement and support. I realise that without their help I would not be here today. It is those good, decent individuals who make me proud to be a member of the Liberal Party. They seek no acclamation yet they are always there.

I know that this is a very proud occasion for my family, particularly my parents, who as European migrants came to this wonderful country in the early 1950s in search of a better way of life. I am very privileged to be their daughter and I thank my mother and father for their love and guidance and for raising me with Christian values. Finally, I thank my husband Kerry and our wonderful sons, Curtis and Carl, for their unconditional love, their enduring tolerance and more particularly their faith in me and, in the spirit of traditional rugby men, Kerry's coaching to always keep my eyes on the ball, to outwit my opponent and to get that ball out on the wing quickly.

[Applause.]

MRS HOLMES (Southern River) [11.20 am]: It is a privilege for me to address the House today as the first member for the new seat of Southern River. In my inaugural remarks I must congratulate the new and re-elected members in this place and give thanks to my campaign team, who all worked long and hard with me to win the seat. Particular thanks go to the Gosnells-Southern River branch, my campaign committee, my campaign director, David Brewster, and my husband, Graham, whose forbearance and patience never wavered. To both of these wonderful people I owe my eternal gratitude.

To become a representative of the people has been my long term ambition and it is an honour I do not take lightly. My determination is to work with and for the community and to do whatever I can to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to have and enjoy a good quality of life. This determination is the motivation behind my maiden speech. Maiden speech this may be, but maiden I am not! I would rather be regarded as a canny mother hen. As a canny mother hen, and broody on behalf of my electorate, I hope to ensure that more golden eggs are laid south of the river than has been the case in recent years. Scratching around the backyards of Southern River and adjacent areas, listening to my constituents, I have become aware that the community perceives that most of the chicken feed has gone to the northern suburbs and they feel that they are at the bottom of the pecking order.

Since I realise I cannot continue with this metaphor without dropping myself into the chicken manure, I will now get down to the nitty gritty. The south west and south east urban corridors are divided by the rural heartland of Southern River. As members know, this is in the main made up of the Jandakot underground water protection area. As such, it has presented difficulties to planners over the years because it lacks cohesion. Notwithstanding this, the people

of the area have much in common and it is my aim to bring the entire region together for a concerted attack on the major challenge that faces the community. That major challenge is employment. For example, Department of Social Security January statistics indicate that the number of job seekers receiving the Newstart allowance in the south metropolitan region was 5 098 higher than in the north metropolitan region. In percentage that means that 28.6 per cent more people are in this category south of the river than in the north. This is an undesirable situation.

With the support of federal politicians and state colleagues in this and the other place I am determined to inspire the south metropolitan community to tackle this problem, which members all appreciate is a blight on the hopes and aspirations of our youth and mature unemployed. If we are a democracy in the truest sense of the word, the community must also take its place as a strong and competent entity that can initiate progress and reform, rather than place total reliance on government to do things for it. In this regard, our job as parliamentarians is not only to legislate, but also to lead.

As elected representatives not only are we here to listen to the needs of our community and to resolve problems faced by those who do not have the knowledge to slash through the jungle of bureaucracy, but also we must encourage local organisations, such as the Chambers of Commerce, and local authorities to make the outstanding contribution to development that is within their capacity to achieve. We have already seen the benefits that have been achieved at a local government level through the various regional groups, and it is my intention to give them whatever help I can. At the same time, I intend to enlist their support, as well as that of the Chambers of Commerce and other industry and employer groups, in a bid to bring work not only to my electorate, but also to other suburbs in the south metropolitan area.

There is no doubt that coalition initiatives have been instrumental in putting Western Australia in a strong position on the job front. However, there are still areas which the advantages of economic growth have not yet reached. As the Premier has always rightly stated, the main focus for employment must be economic growth, gained by attracting increasing levels of business investment. Therefore, the business and industrial community must be given the encouragement and the confidence to create the jobs which are still in short supply in the southern metropolitan area. I call on my parliamentary colleagues with an interest in achieving a significant increase in regional employment to join forces with me in formulating a growth strategy that will benefit all our electors. Through a sound strategy, combined with determination, goodwill, energy and influence, it should be possible for us to make an impact on employment in the southern metropolitan area, based on increased economic growth.

Let me start the ball rolling by asking the question: What can be done? One answer lies in the fact that too often we look at large scale solutions when the better approach may be to tackle issues such as employment at a local and regional level. In this way problems can more easily be seen and broken down. This in turn allows us to deal with issues we identify as of primary importance, such as how to attract the business investment needed to provide employment opportunities.

Another answer must be the provision of incentives for investment, which should include the identification and removal of all unnecessary bureaucracy that stands in the way of economic growth. We must also ensure that we provide adequate transport facilities that meet the need. For example, we plan transport links to the central business district when movement within the region has at least an equal priority. In addition, while there is no doubt that the introduction of the rapid transport bus route in the south west corridor will provide a short term solution for the coastal belt, it is equally imperative that we improve transport facilities in the south east corridor. We must ensure that everyone in the region is provided with transport alternatives to enable them to reach job opportunities, not only in the CBD but also in nearby industrial precincts.

I am fully aware that money does not grow on trees, but it is imperative that we do all we can to provide the infrastructure necessary to achieve this goal. I urge the Government to do everything possible to bring forward the implementation of the proposed freight and passenger rail link south of the river. This will assist greatly both business and the tourism industry by providing opportunities, gained through increased accessibility. It will also supply the community with much needed access to greater freedom of mobility. This in turn will assist the environment, through a decrease in vehicular use.

In order to attract industry local government must be encouraged to consider providing a differential rating of industrial zones, as well as ensuring that the full range of essential services are provided to existing and proposed industrial land. This will enable manufacturing and other businesses to be established at a viable cost, and ensure they do not have to face an enormous financial impost when they wish to expand their operations in the future.

Another avenue I will pursue, with assistance from the Minister for Local Government and the Treasurer, is that a close look be taken at the possibility of introducing municipal bonds. This proposal is based upon the United States model, which gives the community the opportunity to invest in its own future and, at the same time, receive interest income, which in the United States is generally exempt from federal and state taxation. The establishment of

municipal bonds would enable both the State Government and local authorities more readily to initiate developments as well as being able to finance infrastructure repairs or improvements. It is a proposal worthy of examination. Not only would it give people a chance to receive a financial benefit by investing in their own community, they would also be investing in the flow-on benefit of employment opportunities for them and their children.

It is imperative that during this term of office we are seen to take action to redress the imbalance that is currently perceived by the community south of the river. This perception is not unfounded. I well remember an example of that when I was doorknocking in the 1993 election campaign. I doorknocked an elderly lady in Gosnells and she told me that she was really excited when she received an invitation from the then Premier to attend the official opening of the northern suburbs railway. Unfortunately, however, she told me that she was unable to attend because she had no vehicle of her own and there was no public transport available in the area to get her there.

To this end we must lay the foundations through the budget process to ensure that the needs of the communities south of the river are given first priority. This action alone would assist employment by stimulating business confidence and attracting investment and tourism to an area that has the potential to play an important part in the future of Western Australia.

While the electors of Southern River have my sincere thanks for providing me with success at the polls, they can rest assured that it is my aim and determination to do everything I can to ensure that they too achieve success. They are proud to live in an area that has the potential to become a major success story in the greater success story of Western Australia. They have shown me their confidence, not only in electing me as a local representative but also in re-electing the coalition Government to lead them to the turn of the century. Now it is our turn to seize the opportunity to reward them for their faith by providing southern metropolitan communities with the opportunities for success they so rightly deserve.

[Applause.]

DR TURNBULL (Collie) [11.33 am]: The most important principle in a democratic society is equity of access. Equity of access is an absolute right of people within a highly civilised society such as ours. One group of people in our society who do not have that right, and who have very great difficulty with equity of access, are those who live in rural areas. Today I will address the issue of giving value to the vote of people who live in country areas. All this rhetoric of one-vote-one-value, which is supported by both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party in this Parliament, is a denial of the rights of the people who live in rural areas.

Those people have very great difficulty with all aspects of technology that are supposed to improve equity of access, including transport on roads and in planes, and telecommunications. Collie has just gained a new fibre optic cable. However, we do not have a speedy Internet connection; in fact, the connection is quite slow. There are many areas in which -

Mr Cowan: You are in front of us: Merredin does not have the cable.

Dr TURNBULL: These factors are severely disadvantaging rural people and will disadvantage them even further.

The Western Australian electoral system includes a weighting of the rural vote. This Chamber has almost equal numbers of members from what are designated rural and metropolitan areas.

Mr Graham: What about those people who live in country areas that are not rural? Not everyone in the country lives in rural areas.

Dr TURNBULL: I thought the Pilbara was rural.

Mr Cowan: Are you trying to tell us that Port Hedland and Newman are not rural? Admittedly, they are urban-rural, but they are still rural.

Mr Graham: They are "remote" not "rural".

Dr TURNBULL: I accept the point. In statistical planning terms the area is deemed to be "rural". However, I am using the word "rural" to cover agricultural, pastoral, mining and remote areas. When I use that word, I mean non-metropolitan, and it includes the member for Pilbara's electorate.

Several members interjected.

Dr TURNBULL: I am glad we have that cleared up. I will not accept any more interjections from the member, because he has had his little aside.

I emphasise that equity of access is part of our democratic right. To have that, we must have a weighting of the rural vote. National Party members hold that view very strongly, and I feel particularly strongly about it. At the moment

I represent a magnificent electorate; in fact, it is a privilege to be the member for the best rural electorate anywhere in the world. It stretches from Boddington, through Collie down to Boyup Brook, to Balingup, Donnybrook and now, of course, to the towns of Boyanup, Burekup, Waterloo and Dardanup. It is fantastic.

If the one-vote-one-value system as threatened and promoted so hard by the two major parties in Western Australia were to come into effect, my electorate could stretch from Boddington to Walpole, and the member for Pilbara's electorate could stretch from Port Hedland to Kununurra. Given that, I contend that weighting of the rural vote is the democratic way of giving value to that vote.

One need look only at the House of Representatives in Federal Parliament to see how severely Western Australia is disadvantaged by this one-vote-one-value system. During the nine years that I have been in this Parliament I have observed that the House of Representatives does not have to consider Western Australia when deciding the composition of that House. Every word we hear from our Premier and the Leader of the Opposition accentuates the fact that Canberra does not count Western Australia. One of the more severe examples of that relates to commonwealth-state agreements on loan funds and other funds allocated to Western Australia to keep the economy and business of government running.

This approach is exemplified by the Commonwealth identifying \$70m as the notional value of the gold royalty that would be raised in Western Australia. Western Australia, as members know, does not have a gold royalty at this time, for good historical reasons. For the Federal Government to say that it will deduct \$70m from Western Australia's allocation on the notional basis of the amount we should raise through a gold royalty epitomises the fact that Western Australia does not have equity with other States in the Commonwealth of Australia. We do not have the means by which to influence the Federal Government. Therefore, we must eventually live with that fact that the Commonwealth will deduct its calculated value of \$70m from Western Australia's allocation. Not nearly enough research has been conducted on the impact of a gold royalty on Western Australia and the Government's Budget. A research project released this week titled "The Western Australian Gold Study" was undertaken by the Economic Research Centre of the University of Western Australia. The study was commissioned by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia. I will relate a few of the basic facts which arise in reading this document.

If a 2.5 per cent royalty were applied to gold in Western Australia, it would produce a gross revenue of about \$80m for the Government of Western Australia. When one considers the reduction in gold production and many other activities of the gold industry which may result from the application of such a royalty, it may end up as only \$50m in revenue for the Western Australian Government. The big problem is the long term effect of such a change. The net gain to the Government may be around \$50m, but the losses involved may be far greater.

The study estimated that with the introduction of the royalty, there could be a total loss to the State in five years of \$250m per year; that is, a loss five times greater than the \$50m revenue the Government would gain from the royalty. This royalty could be very detrimental and costly to the economy of Western Australia. If this cost were averaged across all households in this State - as is often done in such assessments - it would be the equivalent of \$370 per family per annum which would not go into the economy of Western Australia. It is a full estimate which takes into account many factors, such as the redirection of investment money.

The report estimates that the first effect of a royalty on the gold industry would most likely be a reduction in exploration. As members know, a gold royalty would apply on production and the costs of production would increase by \$12.50 an ounce. This would reduce the amount of money available for activities such as exploration.

We know that exploration has a large effect on jobs. The report also estimated that the royalty could result in the loss of up to 1 450 jobs across Western Australia, mainly out in the goldfields but also flowing on to the rest of the State. That would be a fairly short term effect of the reduction in exploration and drilling.

The other effect would be on the design and implementation of new goldmines. As I mentioned, Boddington is part of my electorate. The Boddington Gold and Hedges Gold Pty Ltd operation is producing about 17 000 kilograms of gold per annum, and will continue to do so for only another five years. A decision is being made right now about whether to go into another type of mining; that is, principally focusing on underground mining. The partners in Boddington Gold - Normandy Poseidon Limited, Acacia Resources Ltd and Newcrest Mining Limited - are dealing with the decision about whether to enter the new business.

Many people say that a decision on whether to create a new goldmine cannot be made purely on whether a royalty applies. I agree. Even a 2.5 per cent increase in the cost of production should not totally overrule a decision about a goldmine which may have a life of 30 or 40 years. However, the royalty factor must influence a decision on the life of a mine. When it comes to a decision about a royalty in Western Australia, we must consider both the short term and long term effects.

The gold industry has carried out a lot of research on the influence a gold royalty would have on its operations. An operation like Boddington Gold is certainly considering that aspect. I sometimes wonder how much research has been carried out by government departments, and I particularly question the Department of Minerals and Energy and the Minister for Mines. What studies have they done relating to the ultimate effect of a royalty on the economy of Western Australia? Many people say, "Oh well, it is not fair that all other minerals in Western Australia must attract a royalty." That royalty is staged with 7.5 per cent on unrefined ore, 5 per cent on concentrates and 2.5 per cent on fully refined product. The capital raised for all those other ventures, along with the structures of those mines, is predicated on the fact that a royalty will be paid.

Until now, in the gold industry, all of the financing, design and calculations of grade, etc, for gold mining have excluded the cost of a royalty. The Western Australian Government has arrived at a very serious situation. The future of our economy and jobs in our society in Western Australia could be determined by the Federal Government, which notionally says that it will deduct money from Western Australian grants because we are not charging a royalty. It is a very severe indictment of the Federal Government.

Mr Barnett: It has been doing it for a very long time.

Dr TURNBULL: It is still a very severe indictment of the Federal Government. The management of Western Australia must be up to Western Australia. If we are not to collect a royalty because of other benefits that not having a royalty gives our State, that factor is for our judgment. I mentioned earlier my concern that I had looked for evidence of research and not found any. I do not think research has been conducted, by particularly the Department of Minerals and Energy, as to what benefit goldmines deliver to the economy of Western Australia operating in their current form. There is obviously no doubt that if we add a two and a half per cent cost to the production of gold, the ratio from the grade to which gold can be mined will be increased. About 1.8 grams is at present the grade at which one can efficiently mine gold. That level will go up. Once that happens the amount of value of the resource that can be taken out of the site will be reduced forever. Western Australia has to decide whether lower grade ore will never be mined again.

Mr Barnett: What do you think would be the impact of a wage rise in the industry on the grades of ore mined?

Dr TURNBULL: It would have the same effect because it is a factor in production costs. When companies do their calculations a royalty is regarded as a production cost. Very serious consideration must be given to how this royalty proposal might be implemented. People in the goldmining industry have told me that the royalty has been a factor which they have looked at for a number of years. Whether a royalty comes in the term of this Government or the next Government will not really have an impact on the decision of Boddington Gold whether to go ahead with the new goldmine. What is three or four years difference in the life of a 40 year mine? It is one of those cases where the decision has to be made with a very clear knowledge of all the factors involved. We must know that if we introduce a gold royalty some of the investment and financing money will be moved to other sectors and not be spent in the gold industry. However, if that is to be the decision it should be made clearly.

Prior to the election the Premier and the Deputy Premier made the very important statement that a gold royalty was not part of the agenda of this Government. However, in his speech when he opened the gold conference last week the Premier said that the issue of gold royalty will be discussed. Having made that statement, it is absolutely beholden on us to get the details of the decision exactly right. How do we do that? We have to consult with everybody involved. It is also beholden on the Cabinet and the Ministers involved, particularly the Treasurer and the Ministers for Mines, Resources Development and Regional Development, to have very detailed discussions with the mining industry as to precisely how this will be implemented.

My electorate has many diverse areas, many of which I would like to address. Some members here today may be very pleased that I will not have time to talk about the issues of power generation and gas and coal prices. They were the main thrust of my last Address-in-Reply speech. The other areas of my electorate which are very important are the agricultural production areas. Here again we have the impacts of the fiscal constraints in government affecting the primary industry areas. We have also the impacts of the Federal Government's decisions, such as the requirements of the Hilmer policy and Australian Competition and Consumer Council. Currently, these are having a large impact in the dairy industry. They have had a big impact on the wool and meat industries and are having an impact on the wheat industry. They will impact on the dairy industry. I will tell members a very interesting thing that I did only 10 days ago: I opened a dairy.

Mr Graham: You were worrying me for a moment!

Dr TURNBULL: The member may find it fascinating that people open dairies. I did not know that people did it, but I opened a beautiful dairy. At the opening it was most interesting to look at the age range of people who were present. There were many young men there; in fact, half the people present would have been under the age of 40.

It is very rare that I go to meetings, sales, openings or even clearing sales in the country and find an equal number of young people under the age of 40 years and older people. I thought to myself, "Why is it that the dairy industry has so many young men?" Because the dairy areas of Burekup, Waterloo, Dardanup and Boyanup have only recently come into my electorate, I am seeing those communities in a different light and comparing them with the agricultural communities in other parts of my electorate. Those young people are in the dairy industry because of its stability as a result of the orderly market system. The Federal Government has not weighed up the social consequences of a decision to deregulate the industry or to impose a gold royalty, which will result in the loss of jobs and reduction of investment. One of the greatest tragedies in Australia is that the same thing will come about from the Commonwealth's attack on the dairy industry orderly market system that is occurring through the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

Many of the orderly marketing systems should be changed and adapted to the new financial and economic imperatives of Australia and Australia's overseas trade. However, they should not be destroyed, because when there is not enough stability in industries such as the gold, the dairy, the wheat or the meat industries in order to plan ahead, young people will drop out. They will try to find themselves a job in another area such as tourism. Unfortunately, many young people end up on the dole.

It was announced today that Western Australia has the best employment record of any State in Australia. One of the reasons that we have the best employment statistics in Australia is our very active mining industry. It is very important that the Government consider the social factors of a gold royalty. In fact the ACCC has a public interest component and a social factor component. I trust that when we have the presentation from the dairy industry on how it is managing its industry, enough weight will be put on the public interest and the social factors to ensure that a new, revamped orderly marketing system for milk continues in Western Australia.

MR GRAHAM (Pilbara) [12.02 pm]: I congratulate all members who were elected to this place, particularly those who were elected for the first time. I am surprised by the numbers who were elected on that side. I was disappointed that some of my colleagues moved on, particularly my friend from Northern Rivers, Kevin Leahy, who was a good member in this place and a good mate. I say that with no disrespect to the present incumbent, who said similar things about Kevin in his speech. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I extend my congratulations to the Speaker on his election. I have already done that personally, but I now do it formally. I hope that he shows significantly less bias against the Opposition than did his predecessor. My opinion of the previous incumbent was no secret to members of this place, given that, on many occasions, I pointed to, by way of points of order, his propensity to use formal warnings as a tool to control the Opposition and his being pre-warned when gags and guillotines were to be applied so that he could ignore Labor members who were on their feet and turn to government members in order that the Government Whip could move that the question be put. At one stage I moved a motion of no confidence in the previous Speaker. That was defeated on party lines. I told him while he was in the Chair, and I have no difficulty in saying it now, that I do not think he was a very good Speaker. Knowing the current incumbent, having travelled with him and having been on committees with him, I hope he will apply the independence of the Chair that he has espoused. I will examine the forthcoming budget papers very closely to see whether the \$40m to which he referred appears in the capital works budget. I hope that the chairman of the budget review committee supports the Speaker's request for that money to renovate this place.

The last state election was a bit of a disaster for the Australian Labor Party, to put it mildly. It is hard to think of a worse result than for us to lose ground against what is an extremely mediocre Government by any yardstick.

Mr Barnett: It does not seem to be what the electors thought!

Mr GRAHAM: That is fair comment; I accept that. The electors are all knowing and all powerful and I will not argue with them. However, I was surprised to see the Government drew on what was, 10 years ago, negative campaigning to be re-elected. I thought we had moved on from that. If we follow the cycle of election campaigns - next election we will actually be only one election behind the United States - the next election will be about warm and fuzzies and not negatives. I look forward to seeing how that goes.

The first term of the Government was not extraordinarily exciting. We all remember the first year when the Government effectively sat on its hands and did nothing controversial while awaiting the outcome of the federal election. We remember, of course, the ongoing commitment to do away with payroll tax in the first term of government. That was a lie; it never happened. It was never considered to be something that could be delivered. It was a policy raised in the interests of the federal Liberal Party. The Government, in its first term, can be characterised, with some exceptions, by very little vision. Probably the best example of that is one of my hobby horses: The Government said it would do things and develop things for industry and in four years was unable to come up with a comprehensive industry policy. To this day it still does not have one.

From which policy did the Government's claims about industrial development come? How did it determine the growth it claims has occurred? The answer to those questions is that the Government has no policy; it has never developed a formulated plan for industrial development in Western Australia. However, it has implemented some key decisions that have allowed some sectors of industry to develop. I accept that deregulation of gas in the Pilbara is one of them.

Mr Barnett: You would have to concede that we are doing a lot to put in place new industrial estates. They do not come easy, particularly with native title constraints.

Mr GRAHAM: The point I am making is that the previous Labor Government located a range of industrial sites. This Government is developing them. They were part of the planning process. I am not getting into a we did this, you did that situation. This Government has added to that. However, it does not have an integrated industry policy on where the State is going, how it will get there, and what sorts of steps must be taken by the State to get there. That is my point. The Government lacked that big vision on where it is going and how it will get there and it still lacks that vision.

Politically, the Pilbara was somewhat different from the rest of the State, I am happy to say. The Liberal candidate for that seat ran a rather silly, personal campaign in my view and obviously in the voters' views. It was based around where I live. Most people in Port Hedland know that after 20 years of living in the town, my wife died and left me as a single parent, and the family had no option but to move to Perth. He ran a rather silly, personal campaign based around that, which I found hurtful, although that does not mean that he should not have done it. I do not like living in Perth and given half a chance I would be back in the bush.

The outstanding result in the seat of Pilbara was due to many people. It is now a huge seat; it was always big, but it is now huge. I will have something to say about that later. I had an excellent campaign team. As country members know but city members never seem to understand, members from the bush do not run one campaign; they run five, six or seven campaigns. They run a campaign for every major centre or town in the electorate. One might find oneself running 10 or 11 completely different campaigns. City people do not understand that, but it is a fact of life in the bush. I was lucky that I had an excellent campaign team.

The Labor Party not only retained the seat of Pilbara, but also had a swing to it. The seat is now the safest Labor seat in Western Australia. Incidentally, when I was elected to that seat in 1989 the Labor Party actually had it deemed a marginal seat, but now it is the safest Labor seat and I am happy about that achievement. The electorate of Pilbara, which extends from Turkey Creek in the north to Warburton in the south and from Port Hedland on the coast to the Northern Territory-South Australian border, is 872 000 square kilometres. The next biggest electorate is Eyre, which is 587 000 square kms - 250 000 square kms smaller than the electorate of Pilbara. The electorate of Ningaloo is the Government's biggest electorate and is half the size of the electorate of Pilbara; that is, 437 000 square kms. We then take a quantum leap down to the next biggest electorate which is Roe and it is 87 000 kms in size. The Leader of the National Party's electorate is 66 000 square kms. We now come to the metropolitan area and members will begin to understand something about the size of Western Australia. It begs the question of vote weighting, which is a topical subject and there has been plenty of debate on it. Today there will be more debate on it because I intend to move an amendment to this motion shortly.

I initially thought that the Governor's speech was silent on electoral reform. I was not here on opening day and on first reading his speech I completely missed any reference to it. I thought that the mighty National Party had won out again in the party room and had rolled the Liberals and the Government had decided not to have any electoral reform. However, that is not the case because hidden in the text of the Governor's speech, after reference to people's conventions and the State and Australian Constitutions he said -

It will also consider the issue of electoral reform -

Interestingly, it does not say that the Government will introduce legislation for electoral reform. It does not say that the Government has done a lot of work and will bring a proposal to a committee of Parliament or put a proposal to the Electoral Commission. The Governor's speech simply said that the Government will consider electoral reform. I suspect my cynical view of the National Party might not be far from the truth. The Government has retreated somewhat from its position.

Let us consider how the State's electoral system is currently established. The Agricultural Region has within it seven Assembly electorates. In that region there are approximately 89 000 voters. Therefore, the average number of voters per electorate in the Agricultural Region is 12 000, with the electorate of Moore having the smallest number of voters, approximately 12 000, and the electorate of Wagin having the largest number of voters, approximately 13 000. In the South West Region there are 10 electorates with 133 000 voters; on average 13 000 voters - the electorate of Mandurah has the smallest number of voters, 12 481, and the electorate of Warren-Blackwood has the largest number

of voters, 14 494. I now come to the Mining and Pastoral Region, in which there are six electorates with 66 700 voters; on average 11 000 voters per electorate. The electorate with the smallest number of voters is Pilbara with 10 160 voters and the electorate with the largest number is Kalgoorlie with 12 490 voters. Members will be aware that there are three regions in the metropolitan area, but I have dealt with them as one. My argument is based on metropolitan versus non-metropolitan and not region versus region. In the metropolitan area there are 34 electorates and 817 000 voters; an average of 24 000 in each electorate. The electorate with the smallest number of voters is Perth with 21 800 and the electorate with the largest number of voters is Wanneroo with more than 28 000. The number of voters in this State is just over one million and there are 57 electorates - an average of 19 500 voters per electorate. Therefore, if we take 20 000, given the Government's proposal last year prior to the election, of X seats, plus or minus 15 per cent, it means that in the north west of the State, which is the area I am focusing on, the Kimberley and the Pilbara seats would be combined to make the electorate just over 1.1m square kms with a voting population of approximately 20 000. If any member in this Parliament understands what it means to have a large electorate with the resources that are available to a member, it is I, because I have been in that situation for eight years. Before that I had 10 years with the union movement. In spite of some people's views of the union movement, one is not exactly knocked down by staff and resources. I have represented people in remote areas for a long time.

I have all the responsibilities of a city member of Parliament - constituency inquiries, etc. My only staff member, who operates out of an office in Port Hedland, spends approximately 25 per cent of her time organising my travel and itineraries so that I can travel around my electorate. The same sort of combination of seats, if applied throughout the State, would include the combined seats of Burrup and Ningaloo, which would create an electorate of approximately 502 000 square kms. In both these seats the component parts have only one thing in common; that is, they are not in Perth. There is very little cultural community of interest between an elector living in Kununurra and an elector living in Wiluna, apart from the fact that they are not in Perth. I am referring to what the Government has been saying publicly and how that will affect the north west of this State. What will happen to those seats? The effect will be that those seats will be transferred from remote areas in Western Australia to the city.

There should be a good debate on one-vote-one-value, which I support. It is one of the reasons I am in the Labor Party. I do not agree that because one lives in a certain place one should have a natural advantage over somebody else. It is one of the corruptions of Western Australia that the Legislative Council has operated as it has because of gerrymandering of the electoral system to ensure and entrench privilege. I am in the Labor Party to change that.

A case cannot be made for vote weighting to be given to, for example, the citizens of Mandurah and, dare I say it, as you are in the Chair, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Osborne), Bunbury, because of their unique circumstances. These towns are simply extensions of the metropolitan area. Mandurah is 45 minutes from the central business district of Perth.

Mr Marshall: What about Dawesville?

Mr GRAHAM: The same thing applies. Can members imagine the outcry in Sydney if someone decided that residents of New South Wales who were 45 minutes from the capital city would be given additional vote weighting? It is absolute nonsense. All the western suburbs would be deemed to be special, remote and rural and given vote weighting when it is an area full of houses with red roofs and TV discs.

Mr Barnett: I could make a case that there is probably more diversity in my electorate than in yours. You should not assume that the metropolitan seats are uniform in any sense.

Mr GRAHAM: I do not agree and, unless the Leader of the House is prepared to extend my time, we will have to debate that on another occasion.

The Australian Labor Party's policy has an overriding objective; that is, the redistribution of political and economic power so that all members of society have the opportunity to participate in the shaping and control of institutions and relationships which determine their lives. There is no doubt that one of the overriding aims of any political party should be to give all people the right to have a say.

The Labor Party platform then outlines that, with regard to electoral reform, we believe in the principle of equally valued weights for determining the number of electors, and that in Assembly districts that should be no more than 10 per cent above or below. ALP members are bound by that platform and would be duty bound to oppose any legislation that differed from that. Therefore, I assume that if the Government brought in a strict one-vote-one-value system, we would oppose it on those policy grounds. It will be an interesting argument.

The effect of the one-vote-one-value process would be to transfer seats from remote areas of the State to the city. In my view, there is no argument to defend vote weighting in areas close to the city. I could, as I said to the Leader of the House, speak for days about whether there should be more or fewer seats in the city, and about what city members of Parliament think they do and what I think they do, and there might be a significant difference between

those two viewpoints. However, it is clear from the public debate that both major political parties are committed to some form of equalising the city and the rural vote. I am not sure whether there are any concrete proposals apart from the ALP's policy.

The Minister asked me, "What about the good folk in the Pilbara?" That is my primary concern. The argument for vote weighting in country areas is that it advantages country people. In my nine years in this place, I have received delegation after delegation from country authorities and from people in the country - more so in the past four years - complaining about the decline in services in country areas, and I have heard members opposite complain about that too.

If we were to make an objective judgment about the system of vote weighting in country areas, it is that it has not worked, and members of Parliament stand in this place every day of the week and outline why it has not worked. However, I have never received an approach from any member of the Liberal or National Parties to become involved in any sort of country caucus that will advantage country members' electorates generally on a bipartisan basis. I have received approaches from, and agreed with, the current member for Kalgoorlie to form a country caucus of the ALP for members with country or non-metropolitan interests, and I will engage in that actively and happily. I have a good relationship with members on the other side of politics and I have been approached on a range of matters over the past nine years - some were highly illegal, some were good fun, and some happened late at night - but never once have I been approached by a country member to join a country caucus to benefit country people.

The argument that we need to have vote weighting because it benefits country constituencies is not accurate. What will happen to people who cannot get to the city and access the bureaucracy if we remove their political representation? How will those people deal with issues? Until the system recognises remoteness as a legitimate factor in this State, there can be no legitimate system of elected government. There are a number of ways to do that, and I have no truck with any of them, but if we recognise remoteness as a factor when we draw up the electoral boundaries based on one-vote-one-value, we would put a weighting of some kind on that value.

Should we start it? I answer strongly that we should. Where should we start it? If we drew a 500 kilometre radius around Perth - a day's drive; not a bad place to start - we would remove the anomaly of places like Mandurah, Bunbury and Albany, which are at the end of train lines, bus lines and highways and on the outskirts of the city. Avon has adjoining electorates, one metropolitan and one country, one with 22 000 electors and the other with 10 000 electors. What a load of nonsense! I drive to York to go out for dinner. That is part of Perth. I drive to Northam too. There is a wonderful hotel at Northam, which I will tell members about another time. Those places are now outer suburbs of Perth. They do not need vote weighting. If we adopted a new approach and factored that in, we could well look after the interests of remote people - people who cannot access government services - and still maintain the principle of one-vote-one-value, particularly if we tied the development or the weighting in those seats to population growth.

That is what we did with the federation of Australia. The Northern Territory and subsequently the Australian Capital Territory and other territories did not have the required population and services to be able to participate fully in the federation, but we did not stop the federation. We simply put them on hold and said, "Okay, we will federate, and we will wait for you to develop and get to the required level, and you will then join automatically".

We could sort out the problem in another way by introducing a system of one-vote-one-value and providing the poor mug who ended up with the seat in the north, whoever that might be, and it is a big ask, with the resources to do the job. That is not an ambit claim and it is not what I am seeking at the end of the day, but if the State was determined to have a system of one-vote-one-value, and it was the simple proposal that was put forward by the Government - that is, X electors and X seats, divide one into the other and make all the seats the same size - that would make the state seat about the same size as the federal seat of Kalgoorlie. The resources of the current state member are an office and one staff member. The resources of the current federal member are two electorate offices, to be placed where he chooses, a staff of four or five, and a personal assistant for when he is based in Canberra. He also has vastly better research facilities in the Federal Parliament than we could begin to imagine here.

Mr Grill: He does not have them exclusively.

Mr GRAHAM: No. He gets the normal parliamentary allocation, and he gets additional resources because of the size of his electorate. I am not arguing that he should not get that.

Mr Grill: In respect of research facilities, he has the same as everybody else.

Mr GRAHAM: Yes. If the current system were retained, we would have a malapportionment of the electoral system that was patently unfair, so it must be changed, and the political imperative is for change. The question is: Should it change to the detriment of people who choose to live in the north west or in the remote areas of the State? Should they not have the same access to their members of Parliament, given that we all understand that their need is greater?

All the objective measures of the level of goods and services in the remote areas of Western Australia over the past 50 years have shown that the level of government services in remote areas in Western Australia is inferior to that in any other identifiable area.

The people in those areas have a greater need for political representation. That need should be balanced against their need to access that political representation, and we can do that without breaching the imperative of one-vote-one-value. If the current system were changed in the manner that the Government is pursuing in its public rhetoric - I do not know how much substance one can put on its public rhetoric - and without some kind of consideration of the type that I am speaking about, the effect of that change would be to disenfranchise voters in remote Western Australia. They would effectively have no access to their elected members of Parliament or their officers and no ability to influence the outcomes of government, be that Liberal or Labor. The question that I am putting is not a partisan question but a question of access by the residents of a region to their elected member.

Amendment to Motion

Mr GRAHAM: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but we regret to advise Your Excellency that the State Government now seeks to retreat from its earlier commitment to one-vote-one-value, notwithstanding the recommendations of the Commission on Government.

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Leader of the Opposition) [12.32 pm]: I second the motion. Mr Speaker, currently there is a dripping tap in the men's toilet, which you have probably noticed over the past 24 hours. The notice attached to that tap says, "This fault has been noted and is currently in the process of being repaired". The people of Western Australia have recognised, through many inquiries and arguments, the fault in our electoral system, but very little has been done to repair that electoral system since the Coalition came to power in 1993. The phrase "in the process of being repaired" is very apt in this case, because it appears to be all process and no outcome.

I will commence by referring to an agreement that was entered into in November 1995 between the National and Liberal Parties. The media statement that was circulated after that agreement was entered into states that the parliamentary leaders of the Liberal and National Parties have said -

"In principle, agreement has been reached on a system which would divide the State's electoral enrolment by 57 and allow for a variation of plus or minus 20 per cent.

In other words, the agreed position of the Coalition before the election was that we would move in the Legislative Assembly to have a variation on the system of one-vote-one-value that was a quota throughout the State of plus or minus 20 per cent.

The Governor's speech to the Parliament on 6 March states -

During this term, the Government will begin the process for a People's Convention to review both the State and Australian Constitutions. It will also consider the issue of electoral reform . . .

We have moved from a position to a consideration. That matter requires debate in this Parliament and some answers from the Minister responsible for this issue.

I will now comment on electoral reform in Western Australia. This issue has a long history of argument and debate. Effectively, two questions have been posed, the first relating to the malapportionment in our system, and the second about the role and functioning of our State's upper House. The most significant change in recent times was in the 1980s with the establishment of an independent Electoral Commission and proportional representation for the Legislative Council, albeit with the preservation of significant malapportionment in the system. Since then there has been continuing argument about the relevance of this malapportionment and the inequalities and injustices that it produced.

I turn now to these injustices and inequalities. They all relate to the over-representation in our Parliament and political system of one political party. Of course, that is the National Party. The issue of voting reform has nothing to do with the interests of country people, because in recent times we have seen that the interests of country people have been neglected, ignored and given low priority despite the malapportionment that exists in our electoral system. The latest example of that is the gold royalty where an unequivocal commitment has already been broken by the Leader of the National Party. This issue is all about National Party bums on seats in this Parliament. It has nothing to do with the interests of non-metropolitan voters. It has a lot to do with the representation of one party in this Parliament.

Let us look now at the wonderful National Party formula that has been invented. It probably rates beside Einstein's formula for ingenuity. In 1993 the great National Party formula was: Percentage of the votes in the Legislative Assembly 5.3; percentage of members of Parliament in the Assembly 10.5; percentage of members in the Cabinet 24.0. In 1996 the formula was 5.8 per cent of votes, 10.5 per cent of members of Parliament and 18 per cent of the Cabinet. That was a loss from 1993, but it is a significant formula.

Mr Cowan: It is a gain in votes.

Dr GALLOP: Mainly because the Liberal Party did not contest those seats. One hopes there would be a slight gain in the percentage of votes!

Mr Cowan: And we did not contest in theirs. Don't be stupid.

Several members interjected.

Dr GALLOP: I impress on the new Liberal members of Parliament that this is all about the interests of the National Party. It has nothing to do with their interests. It is all to do with the interests of the National Party leader and his five colleagues in this Parliament. The most important development in recent years was that the Commission on Government travelled throughout the State, consulted people, and reached the conclusion that there should be significant reform in our system. Indeed, the COG report of 1995 demanded a comprehensive and timely response from the Government. Following its broadly based inquiry, the Commission on Government recommended one-vote-one-value for both Houses with a plus or minus of 15 per cent deviation in the quota to allow for local factors. Secondly, it recommended better administrative support for non-metropolitan members - backing up the comments of the member for Pilbara; and, thirdly, an increase in the number of seats from 57 to 61 in the Legislative Assembly. That is part of the issue dealing with country members. Finally, the COG recommended a Legislative Council made up of five seven-member regions elected by proportional representation. The Commission on Government did the right thing by the political process. It brought out early a reform package for the electoral system. Its first report gave the Government of the day time to implement its recommendations before the last election. The challenge went to the Government but the Government failed to meet it.

We witnessed a very interesting set of arguments within the coalition. The then member for Scarborough, the current member for Innaloo and Speaker in this House, initiated debate within the coalition, with his advocacy of one-vote-one-value with a 10 per cent deviation for the Legislative Assembly. He also spoke to the Opposition about his ideas for electoral reform, and took up the case within the caucus of the parliamentary Liberal Party.

I will not go through the swings and the roundabouts, the twists and the turns. There were so many twists and turns it was like watching Greg Louganis perform one of his gold medal winning dives. Finally, in 1995 the coalition arrived at this famous agreement. The electors of Western Australia assumed that agreement was the basis upon which the coalition fought the 1996 election; that is, one-vote-one-value for the Assembly with a variance of 20 per cent. The last major change in our electoral system was in the 1960s. The property franchise left the Legislative Council. The conservatives consolidated their position in the upper House through malapportionment. Every time reform gets some momentum the National Party consolidates its position. The coalition agreed to leave the situation in the Council as it is. The coalition agreement stated -

... the Coalition supports the current regional system which recognises the geographic size and population spread of the State.

In the interests of maintaining the coalition, the National Party supported plus or minus 20 per cent, one-vote-one-value through the State; however, it retreated to the upper House and malapportionment. As part of the agreement nothing was to happen before the election late last year. Since the election there has been an interesting series of developments on this issue of electoral reform in Western Australia, just as there has been on the gold royalty and uniform tariffs.

Mr Cowan: There have been interesting developments in your factions.

Dr GALLOP: The Deputy Premier must have had a lobotomy in recent times. He has shown a very nasty streak in the past six months. There is nothing pleasant about his demeanour at all. It is interesting that the Leader of the National Party wants to change the subject. Is the Leader of the National Party on the State Council of the National Party?

Mr Cowan: Yes, I am.

Dr GALLOP: Was he at the meeting in February which discussed this issue?

Mr Cowan: Yes, I was.

Dr GALLOP: The Leader of the National Party was at a meeting of the State Council of the National Party in February this year which rejected one-vote-one-value. The Leader of the National Party is a guy who is not worth doing a deal with. The Liberal Party did a deal with him in November on one-vote-one-value. What happened to the deal after the election? The Nationals rejected one-vote-one-value. The promise of the Leader of the National Party is not worth the paper it is written on. In February, the National Party unanimously resolved to support the retention of the existing system of vote weighting in Western Australia, despite the agreement it entered into with the Liberal Party in November 1995. After the election the National Party ratted on that agreement and stated it would work as hard as it could to preserve the system.

Mr Trenorden: The member is not quite telling the truth.

Dr GALLOP: I am basing my conclusions on what I read in the newspaper. The member for Avon can tell us the real situation; I am only too happy to listen. I am sure the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs will do that as well. Let us turn to the Minister and the position that the Government has adopted since the election. The Government has made some strange comments about this issue since the election. The Minister was quoted in *The West Australian* as saying that the Government would bring about electoral reform only if that recognised the interests of country voters. It is unclear what precisely he meant by that. He may mean the extent of deviation from the quota with electorates throughout the State being broken up into equal numbers. He may mean the preservation of vote weighting in the upper House. It is important that he indicate what sort of electoral reform model the Government is working on, if at all. All of the indications are that the Government will now only consider electoral reform.

The National Party wants a weighting for country voters that will be decided "after negotiation". We are back into the negotiating phase. The Commission on Government brought down its recommendations, and some pressure was put on the coalition by the member for Innaloo and other Liberal members in this Chamber, and from the public because of the obvious need to reform our system. The Liberal and National Parties reached agreement in November. That took them through the election. They got through the election and now it is back on the table again for consideration. We are back where we were in 1995. We are considering the issue! This is exactly what the Leader of the National Party wants, because when the issue is being considered nothing changes. If it is considered for long enough, we will have no time to do anything before the next election. They are the clear tactics devised by the National Party to hold up this inevitable and important reform in our State's political system.

It is not good enough that the National Party is stalling on this issue. If its argument were based on some defence of non-metropolitan Western Australians, one would not mind. However, it is simply based upon its defence of its numbers in this Parliament; its ability to play a role within the coalition Government, and to look after its members of Parliament so they can enjoy the powers and privileges of being members of Parliament. That is what it has come down to. Within the coalition, when the National Party talks about electoral matters, it is all self-preservation. It has no other philosophical or intellectual content whatever. Who are the losers from that? When the trends in our electorate lean towards the conservatives, as they have done in the past two elections, the Labor Party loses out. However, when the trends go the other way, it is probably the Liberal Party that loses. We see a political party desperate to hang on to its position in the coalition through the device of malapportionment.

Throughout Australia one-vote-one-value is the established system. Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the Federal Government are not moving back to malapportionment. All the other States of the Commonwealth have political systems that can be defended on the grounds of principle. They can explain to their young people that the system is fair to everyone; it is based on the principle of equality, which is at the core of our constitutional understanding. It is only Western Australia that remains the final defender of this system of malapportionment. I believe that the tragedy of what we face is that a majority of people in Western Australia and members in this Parliament support one-vote-one-value. In this place a majority of members of the Liberal Party, the Labor Party and Independents support one-vote-one-value. If we had an unfettered vote on this issue, or all of the votes cast in the Liberal party room were added to all the votes in our Caucus, we would have a clear majority; so who stands in the way? It is the Leader of the National Party and his colleagues who are trying to hold up this inevitable process.

I will conclude my comments by asking the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs a series of questions about this issue so he has every opportunity to respond in his reply. First, does the Minister expect to introduce to this Parliament a measure for electoral change in this term? In other words, given the statement in the Governor's speech that it will be considered this term, can the Minister guarantee that it will come to this Parliament? Second, what will be the nature of that reform package in general terms? Will it include the Legislative Council as well as the Legislative Assembly, and what general principles will be brought to the Parliament? Finally, what process does the Minister expect to follow for reaching agreement on this issue? Thus far the Minister has not really performed with great distinction, given the comments he made on electoral reform in *The West Australian*.

Mr Shave: That is very ungracious of you.

Dr GALLOP: I am just referring to the article headed "Warning on vote reform". His first comments on the subject were that electoral reform will be shelved if the Court Government's move to one-vote-one-value meets "unreasonable" opposition. That is a pretty negative way for a Minister to start the reform ball rolling. He could have been much more positive about it and come to the Labor Party and told it that he was looking for its support. The Minister should forget about the National Party. The time has come to talk to us because we can talk turkey with him on this issue.

I think most of the members of the Liberal Party agree with us about what needs to be done. I want to know the process that the Minister intends to follow. The Labor Party is only too happy to talk to the member for Alfred Cove about electoral reform; about the principles outlined by the Commission on Government and also by the earlier royal commission. The time has come to change the system in Western Australia and to move to one-vote-one-value.

One-vote-one-value is the only way in which we can have a legitimate basis for determining our electoral boundaries in Western Australia. It is philosophically appropriate; it is intellectually appropriate; and it is practically appropriate, given that in all States in the Commonwealth it has worked extremely well as the basis for redistributions. In a sense it is a basic condition of democracy. If we say that all people are to have equal rights in a democratic system, we cannot then diminish those rights for some in relation to others when it comes to the most basic right - the right to vote. It is a simple principle. If people have the right to vote, it cannot be qualified; it cannot be compromised; it cannot be diminished. It is a right, a basic right, an elementary right. That core principle should lead us to conclude that we need one-vote-one-value.

I refer Liberal members to the position taken on one-vote-one-value by one of their predecessors, T.A.L. Davy. He was the member for West Perth in the Legislative Assembly, before dying very young while playing a game of bridge in central Perth. Mr Davy was a great believer in one-vote-one-value. Tragically he died early and could not continue that case within the conservative side of politics into the 1940s and 1950s.

MR RIPPER (Belmont - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.52 pm]: In the last election 24 314 people were eligible to vote in the electorate of Belmont. I looked at the figures for two other similar sized localities. In the seat of Albany 13 027 people were on the roll and 12 825 people were on the roll for the neighbouring seat of Stirling. In the seat of Albany about 25 850 people elected two members of Parliament, while in the seat of Belmont just over 24 000 people could elect only one member of Parliament. The same result appears in electorates closer to the city. In the locality of Mandurah there are two seats - Mandurah and Dawesville. In Mandurah 12 700 people were on the roll and in Dawesville, 14 162; that is, a total of 26 862. Those people could elect two members of Parliament. I ask members this: Why should a certain number of Mandurah electors have two members of Parliament while nearly the same number of electors in Belmont have only one member of Parliament?

Mr Barnett: It just reflects your ability.

Mr RIPPER: Leaving aside the quality of the member the electors of Belmont have, I can see no argument for the electors of Mandurah and Dawesville to have twice the voting power of those in Belmont. Surely the laws endorsed by this Parliament should apply equally in Mandurah and Belmont. There is an argument that, as part of the democratic concept, minority and individual rights must be protected. Equally, democracy means that the majority rules. It means that people have an equal right to participate in the election of their Parliament and the choice of their Government no matter what their income, status, expertise or location.

Mr Cowan: Is that denied?

Mr RIPPER: It is denied by our present system of electoral laws in this State.

Mr Cowan: Why?

Mr RIPPER: The system allows people in Mandurah and Albany to choose two members of Parliament; whereas a similar number of people in any metropolitan area can choose only one member of Parliament.

Mr Cowan: Does that have an influence on the majority of elected members of Parliament? You know it doesn't.

Mr RIPPER: I cannot see the point the Deputy Premier is making. The present system has an influence on the composition of this Parliament and it has direct political consequences. The fact that metropolitan Assembly seats have an average of twice as many electors as country seats has an impact on the composition of this House. The fact that metropolitan seats in the Council have 2.78 times the number of electors in country seats has an impact on the composition of that House. Real political consequences flow from that. If that were not the case, the Deputy Premier would not be as concerned about the issue as he is; he would be very comfortable with it.

We know that this unfairly weighted system has real political consequences. We are acutely aware of that on this side of politics. Whenever the Labor Party has been in government the conservative party has enjoyed a majority

in the upper House. For 106 years, until the recent state election, the coalition had a majority in the upper House. As a result Labor's legislative program was always subject to a conservative veto. How did that come about?

Mr Minson interjected.

Mr RIPPER: That is true. The conservatives were not prepared to accept that the Labor Party should have the full authority a conservative government enjoyed; so it fixed the electoral system to ensure that the conservative party would always have a majority in one House of Parliament. It is still playing the same game. Although members opposite contemplate the minimum level of reform required to satisfy the dictates of public opinion, they maintain in reserve some bias or weighting in the upper House to protect their political position.

They have not been as successful in that strategy as they would like. For the first time in more than 100 years the coalition will have to govern almost as Labor has had to govern when it was in office. Whenever Labor was in office it faced the possibility of a conservative veto of its legislation. Members opposite face the possibility that Labor and other parties may combine to defeat their legislation. Nonetheless, they are not in the same position that Labor was in when it governed in this State.

This Government will find its new situation fairly difficult. The arrogance already displayed by this Government early in its second term, combined with its loss of control of the upper House will prove to be politically damaging to it. It will certainly be a new experience for the conservative side of politics in this State to negotiate its legislative program through Parliament.

For no apparent intellectually credible reason people in Mandurah have twice the voting power of people in Belmont and people in Albany have twice the voting power of people in Belmont. Can the Deputy Premier explain why that is the case?

Mr Cowan: They still elected one member.

Mr RIPPER: They elected two members; the member for Mandurah and the member for Dawesville.

Mr Cowan: When people go to the polling booth they cast one vote.

Mr RIPPER: The suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition that the Deputy Premier underwent a lobotomy is justified. Is it not the case that the 26 800 people on the roll elect two members of Parliament?

Mr Cowan: Yes.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

[Questions without notice taken.]

Mr RIPPER: Before the lunch suspension I referred to the inequity in the current electoral system which sees the electors of Albany and Mandurah exercising twice the voting power of the electors in my electorate of Belmont. I was arguing that this has real political consequences in the Parliament. It is simply not a matter of theoretical justice; it is an issue that distorts the operation of the political system in this State. I will refer to some of the results of recent elections to justify that argument.

In 1993, on a first preference basis, with 44.15 per cent of the vote, the Liberal Party scored 45.6 per cent of the seats in the Legislative Assembly and 44 per cent of the seats in the Legislative Council. The Labor Party, with 37 per cent of the vote, took 42 per cent of the seats in the Assembly and 41 per cent of the seats in the Council. The real distortion was in the results pertaining to the National Party.

Mr Minson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr RIPPER: The member who interjected is a beneficiary of the malapportionment that the Opposition objects to. This member might have trouble gaining a seat in this place if he were forced to compete with the member for Geraldton in the one seat that would be in that area as a result of a fair distribution of seats across the State.

The real distortion occurs in the results for the National Party. In 1993 it had just 5.31 per cent of the vote - a miserable vote.

Several members interjected.

Mr RIPPER: It was just ahead of the Greens, on 4.31 per cent, and it barely exceeded the total votes of all the Independent and other candidates who are lumped under the heading "Others". The National Party achieved 10.5 per cent of the seats in this Chamber and 8.8 per cent of seats in the other Chamber. That is not unusual.

Dr Turnbull: The member for Belmont has far more intelligence than he is conveying to this House. I wish he would recognise that the 5 per cent is calculated across a few seats and not across the whole of Western Australia. It does not suit his story.

Mr RIPPER: It is calculated on the basis of fewer seats.

Dr Turnbull: The percentage in a smaller number of seats was far higher.

Dr Gallop: That is the point we are making.

Mr RIPPER: That is right. However, out of the entire State the National Party got 5.31 per cent of the vote and of the whole Parliament it got 10.5 per cent of the seats. The member for Collie is arguing that if the National Party stood candidates in every metropolitan seat it would get more than 5 per cent of the vote. Every time a person has stood for the National Party in the metropolitan area he has gained very few of the votes. I cannot remember a significant vote by any National Party candidate in a metropolitan seat. The National Party could increase its vote to 5.5 per cent or 5.8 per cent if it stood candidates in every metropolitan seat, but it would still be grossly over-represented in this House, where it had 10.5 per cent of the seats after the 1993 election.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Some interjections are helpful to the debate. I am afraid that from members on my right there is a barrage of interjections. I am aware that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is taking some interjections, and that is all right by the Chair. However, there should be fewer of them.

Mr RIPPER: I was enjoying the interjections from members of the National Party because I know it will not be an enjoyment we will experience after proper electoral reform in this State because they will not be in this place. We should give them a go before they disappear from the scene altogether.

Mr Ainsworth: You have been forecasting that for 90 years.

Mr RIPPER: We have been waiting for electoral reform for the last 90 years and that is the reason members of the National Party are still here. When we have genuine electoral reform, if the Liberals ever have the gumption and courage to bring it about, very few members of the National Party will be in this place. That party is over-represented by virtue of its vote in the election.

Let us look at the results of the last election. The Liberal Party received 39.9 per cent of the first preference votes, and picked up 51 per cent of the seats in the Assembly. The Labor Party received 35.82 per cent, and picked up 33 per cent of the seats.

Mr Cowan: We do not know how you got that many.

Mr RIPPER: It is information from the Electoral Commission.

Mr Cowan: It is really on the nose.

Mr RIPPER: It seems that the Deputy Premier doubts the advice of the independent Electoral Commission, because he is disputing the commission's figures that I quoted in Parliament. He is delaying me from getting to the most important figure: According to Electoral Commission figures the National Party, with 5.79 per cent of the vote, holds 11 per cent of the seats. We see a clear pattern: One party is particularly advantaged by the current electoral system - the unfair and undemocratic electoral system. This is not a matter of theory. The current electoral system entrenches the National Party in this Parliament. That has an interesting impact, because it denies Cabinet places, to which they might otherwise be entitled, to members of the Liberal Party. The member for Hillarys, as the Deputy Speaker, sits on the backbench. If we had a fair electoral system, on the results of the last election, the member for Hillarys would be one of those Liberal Party members who would be in the Cabinet. Sitting next to the member for Hillarys usually is the member for Roleystone. I am sorry he is not here while I promote him. He too would surely be in the Cabinet were it not for the unfair electoral system which we have and the fact that three spots in the Cabinet are taken by a party which has the miserable vote of 5.79 per cent.

There is a very clear and definite interest inside the Liberal Party in this State for a fair electoral system. I know that the member for Bunbury would have that interest as well. If we were to dispense with three Nationals out of the Cabinet we would have to promote three Liberals. There is one spot left and I intend to award it to the member for Bunbury - congratulations!

Dr Gallop: The Minister for Tourism.

Mr RIPPER: The member for Bunbury would make a terrific Minister for Tourism. I will not allocate the portfolios for the members for Hillarys and Roleystone. If we had a fair electoral system those three Liberal Party members

would, right now, be in the Cabinet. Electoral reform is not a matter of theory; it has direct political consequences in this State. Every other State has reformed its electoral laws. Even Queensland, which has a National Party Government, has reformed its electoral laws with, largely, one-vote-one-value with a very small concession for some remote areas. The National Party in Queensland can live with a fair electoral system. It has not proposed any change. If it is good enough for the National Party in Queensland, why is it not good enough for the coalition in this State? There is only one answer; that is, in Queensland the National Party has a dominant position in the coalition. In this State the National Party would largely disappear were we to have a fair electoral system, the sort of electoral system that has been recommended by the Commission on Government - a system based on one-vote-one-value with a maximum tolerance of 15 per cent.

I am concerned that the Government seems to be backtracking on its commitment to electoral reform. The recommendations from the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters and the Commission on Government promote electoral reform, and significant public opinion exists in favour of reforming the system. The response from the Government has been to make just enough commitment to satisfy the dictates of public opinion. The Government will go only as far as it needs to satisfy public opinion. Inside the Government, the National Party will pressure for any level of protection that it can get away with. There is always a danger of this Government's backsliding on electoral reform. I am concerned that, even at its strongest, the Government's position has not been to introduce any substantial reform in the Legislative Council. The Government might contemplate some reform in this House; however, it wants to preserve a conservative bolthole, a National Party fortress of sorts, in the Legislative Council. It is not good enough.

The electoral system has been reformed in every other State. Recommendations for electoral reform have been made by bodies charged with improving accountability in this State, and public opinion is crying out for reform. The only reason it has not happened is the position of the National Party. Liberal Party members need to show some courage in this debate and take a stand, both on principle and in their own interests, to bring about changes to this system. There is a real risk that this matter will be stalled and stalled until it is too late to take action in time for the next election. Will the Minister inform the House by what date the Parliament must pass electoral reform legislation to allow for all of the work that must be done by the Electoral Commission to produce a proper redistribution for the next election?

Dr Gallop: We do not want to give the game away. The National Party will make sure we go beyond that day.

Mr RIPPER: I would like it answered. I would like to know our deadline. I would like to keep an eye on the National Party and as the deadline comes closer I would like to take up this issue again if it is apparent that the Government is backsliding. This might give some secret information to the National Party; however, if the information is available to all of us - including the three potential Cabinet Ministers, the members for Bunbury, Roleystone, and Hillarys - we might see some action on this matter before it is too late. Those members can make a good start by supporting this amendment.

MR THOMAS (Cockburn) [2.49 pm]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to support the amendment and follow the speech made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in support of the proposition that there should be electoral reform in Western Australia.

Mr Bloffwitch: There has been reform. You brought it in five years ago. Wasn't that good enough?

Mr THOMAS: The member for Geraldton's interjection drew the attention of the House to the electoral reform introduced by a Labor Government almost a decade ago. He asked, "Wasn't that good enough?" The simple answer is no, it was not.

Mr Bloffwitch: Why did you do it?

Mr THOMAS: It was a compromise that went some way towards eliminating the disparity in the value of votes between rural areas and the metropolitan area. However, it did not go the whole way. It also introduced multi-member constituencies in the Legislative Council. That was a great move that was consistent with the recommendations of the Commission on Government. It predated those recommendations by the best part of a decade and it changed the nature of the Legislative Council. That was a great piece of electoral reform. However, in the Legislative Council, as with the Legislative Assembly, the vote of a person in the metropolitan area is not worth as much as the vote of a person in a rural area. That is anathema.

I enjoy reading about and studying American politics. One of the things that characterises public life in the United States is the wonderful quality of their prose, something which we do not have in public life in Australia. The American Declaration of Independence states that all men are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In the sense that those words refer to only men, they are dated; however, the principle has been judicially construed by the Supreme Court of the United States. It ruled that,

as a consequence of those words and principles, it is not possible to have an electoral system where the vote of one person is of greater value than that of another. Do those opposite agree with those fine principles? Should all people have equal rights in a political system? If the answer is yes, it follows that people should have an equal say in determining the type of Legislature that will make laws to govern them. Unfortunately we have a system in this State - the last one in existence in practical terms, as I understand it - where there is a very significant disparity between the values of votes of one set of people, those who live outside the metropolitan area, and the values of votes of those who live within the metropolitan area. That is a very significant discrimination.

Western Australia probably has one of the most centralised societies on earth. Of the 1.8 million people who live in Western Australia, over one million reside in the metropolitan area. Although we have a centralised society, the vast bulk of the votes are considered to be worth about half of those who live outside the metropolitan area. Why is this so? Two forms of absurd arguments have been put forward by the proponents of this inequality. One says that the people who are living in rural areas are disadvantaged; they are spread out; therefore, they need to have greater representation.

Mr Bloffwitch: There is no doubt about that; they are.

Mr THOMAS: The member for Geraldton can be exhibit A in my case for the proposition that all people should have equal rights in a political system.

Dr Gallop: You can jog around Geraldton in half an hour.

Mr Bloffwitch: You might be able to, but I can't!

Mr THOMAS: The density of settlement in the area the member for Geraldton represents is about the same as that in the area I represent. The people in his electorate are in no sense disadvantaged relative to those whom I represent in terms of the ease with which they can access their member of Parliament; in fact, they probably have a greater advantage because they are living in a smaller, more compact community. There is no reason whatsoever that the votes of the people of Geraldton should be greater than the value of the votes of the people who reside in Cockburn.

Mr Bloffwitch: That is like saying the people in Sydney should have more say than the people of Perth because there are more people in Sydney.

Mr THOMAS: I am saying that the people of Sydney should elect members to the House of Representatives, as is the case, proportionate to their population. The other argument that is sometimes put forward to justify vote weighting is to say that the rural areas generate the wealth of the country.

Mr Bloffwitch: That's true, too.

Mr Riebeling: He can be exhibit B as well.

Mr THOMAS: Yes. That is just economic hocus-pocus. People with only a little knowledge of economics will realise that that is absurd and that, in an economic sense, there is no greater merit for people who reside in rural areas compared with those who reside in the metropolitan area. I hope members opposite will agree with me on that.

Statements were made prior to the election by the Premier that electoral reform would occur during the life of this Parliament.

Dr Gallop: For the benefit of the member for Avon, can you inform the House how many votes the National Party candidate, the former mayor of Cockburn, received in his foray into metropolitan politics?

Mr THOMAS: I think it was less than 2 per cent, but somewhat more than he got when he stood against the member for Fremantle at a subsequent election. On that occasion I think he got 0.05 per cent, but he did not have the endorsement of the National Party; he stood as an Independent. When he stood against me he got about 2 per cent.

Prior to the election the Government indicated an intention to introduce significant electoral reform in terms of vote weighting during the life of this Parliament. We were encouraged in one sense, but were alarmed when we reflected upon the Governor's speech which, in part, said that the Government would now consider the issue of electoral reform. If passed, this amendment will amend the Address-in-Reply to reflect the view of this House that it should not be a matter of its being considered, but of its being acted upon.

The reason we are concerned that there may be some backsliding was set out in some detail by my colleague the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He said that he fears there might be pressure from the National Party within the coalition to protect its interests. If we transpose the votes of National Party members onto a fair set of boundaries, we find that it will probably hold two seats - one in the northern wheatbelt and one in the southern wheatbelt - and

the member for Collie might be able to hold an expanded seat in the portion of the south west that she represents. At the outside, the National Party would hold three seats.

Mr Minson: What about me?

Mr THOMAS: The Minister will have to fight the member for Geraldton to see who will represent an expanded Geraldton-Greenough region.

Mr Bloffwitch: I am sure it will be a good member whoever wins.

Mr THOMAS: I agree. The point is that there should be only one, not two.

Mr Bloffwitch: I can live with that.

Mr THOMAS: Some people have an interest in seeing electoral reform introduced. Ironically the way the votes went recently, it is not those in the Labor Party. We are acting on principle. We believe all people should have equal political rights and we are prepared to advance that principle, although on the results of the past couple of elections it would not be of any advantage to us; it would be of advantage to the Liberal Party. The voters in the Liberal metropolitan seats would elect a greater number of members and, of course, the members would have greater representation in the coalition, if it were to survive. There would be the opportunity for ministerial advancement to which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition alluded earlier.

We will be very interested to see the attitude of the newer Liberal members. The members who were cited by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are probably those who are close to being part of the Cabinet and, thinking they may secure advancement, do not want to get the Premier offside for voting with the Opposition in an amendment to the Address-in-Reply. However, we hope other members who perhaps are not so close to the Cabinet - perhaps those who have been recently elected - might exercise a bit of independence of mind and vote with us on this high principle.

Mr Cowan: It won't happen over there.

Mr THOMAS: The Deputy Premier says that, but I predict all Labor members will support this amendment, including some against whose interest it is directed. I am talking about the Labor members from the Mining and Pastoral Region.

Mr Kierath: That is because you have none left.

Mr THOMAS: We have a lot more than those opposite have in the Mining and Pastoral Region.

Mr Trenorden: You have one.

Mr Bloffwitch: You have only one and one Independent.

Mr Riebeling: I think we might have a few more than one.

Mr THOMAS: The member for Avon should look at the report of the Electoral Commission. It is probably on his desk; it is sitting on mine. If he does not have one, I will lend him my copy so that he can look at the results of the last election; however, I do not want to tarry with him now.

The Labor members, some of whose interests are directly adversely affected by this proposition, will support it because it is an important principle. The new members of the Liberal Party might be able to find a fortunate coincidence of both interest and principle and support the Opposition. I make the point to members opposite - particularly the new members, because they might not be familiar with the affairs of previous Parliaments - that it is necessary to push the Government and to place pressure on it because it drags its feet on reforms, especially those about which it is lukewarm. I will illustrate with an example from the last Parliament how cynical this Government can be on matters that ostensibly it thinks are of some import.

The Deputy Premier will be aware of a report of the Select Committee on the Official Corruption Commission Act in the Parliament before last that brought forward recommendations for reform to the Official Corruption Commission. The Government, on the face of it at least, was committed to implementing those reforms. The legislation to do that had already been drafted and it would have been a simple exercise for it to be implemented. However, that legislation was brought into the Parliament in only the last year of the Government's four year term. That is an example of an important area in which it was considered reform was needed. That reform would not have cost a cent and would not have required much time of the parliamentary draftsman because the work had been done to prepare the legislation. Notwithstanding that, the Government did not bring forward those reforms - relatively minor as they were, but nonetheless important - until its last year of a four year term.

I hope new members are listening to this. Members might think that was cynical enough. However, the most cynical act I have seen in this Parliament occurred on the last day the previous Parliament sat. A key part of the reforms to the Official Corruption Commission was the creation of a parliamentary committee to oversee the operations of that body. That recommendation was made by a committee which included me, the Deputy Premier, a former Speaker and the member for Geraldton - exhibit A. The recommendation involved only the creation of a committee. The drafting of its terms of reference had already been done. The establishment of the committee would have been a simple act. Month after month, year after year, I asked questions. I implored the Government to get on with the job and support that reform. It always said that it would do it soon - next week, next month, next year - but that did not occur. On the last day the Parliament sat the Government introduced a motion to create the committee. It appointed me, the member for Geraldton and other members to the committee. However, within 12 hours of its establishment the committee ceased to exist because the Government prorogued Parliament.

Mr Cowan: Did you achieve your objective?

Mr THOMAS: No. My objective was to have the committee created and working and making a valuable contribution to public life in this State. I wanted to get on with the job.

Mr Cowan: You would like to see it reinstated?

Mr THOMAS: I certainly would. I understand from my good friend the member for Geraldton that that will happen. I believe notice of that was given today. I am pleased about that. However, I am not pleased that it has taken five years for that relatively simple action.

Mr Cowan: You know this place is designed to maintain the status quo.

Mr THOMAS: The Deputy Premier suggests that things move slowly in the Parliament. I am aware of that. Sometimes we must reflect on matters and we do not want to act with undue haste because mistakes can be made. However, in this case there was no need for the Government to tarry in the way it did because the work had already been done. If any finetuning needed to be done, I did it: I placed the motion on the Notice Paper and I moved it. What the Government introduced was essentially in the form of the motion that I moved in the second session of the last Parliament. The matter could have been acted on all those years ago and I and the member for Geraldton and others who have an interest in this matter could have been doing the job that we wanted to do and which needed to be done.

I do not want to debate the issue of the parliamentary committee on the Official Corruption Commission. If members want to debate that, they can do so when the motion comes before the House, as I understand it will on the first sitting day next week. I am pleased about that. However, I use that example to illustrate that this Government is a master of appearing to want to do something, but in practice not doing it by dragging its feet to the extent that nothing will happen. I relay the story about the Official Corruption Commission committee to illustrate my argument to new members and backbenchers in the Liberal Party, whose interests, on this occasion at least, coincide with high principle; that is, everybody should have equal rights in a political system. That is not only the right thing, but also it coincides with their interests. Those members could support this amendment and therefore send a message to the Governor and the Government that this House believes the political system in Western Australia should contain equal political rights.

Not only do I and other opposition members think that, but everybody who has looked at the political system in Western Australia believes that is the case. The Government went to a great deal of expense to establish a Commission on Government during the last Parliament. It heard submissions and considered views from all sorts of interested parties - presumably people who believe there should be unequal rights in a political system. There are a few such people around; I note someone in the Speaker's Gallery who believes that is the case. The published report of the Commission on Government said unequivocally that the system of vote weighting in the Legislative Assembly should not continue.

The Government has said in the past that it is committed to implementing the reforms of the Commission on Government. Reference was made to that also in the Governor's speech. That is probably the most important reform that can be introduced into this political system to ensure that all citizens in Western Australia, whether they live in Port Hedland, Merredin or Cockburn, have the same rights and an equal say in the selection of the Parliament. That proposition is unanswerable. The only reason the Government continues to have a system in which that is not the case is naked self-interest.

MR COWAN (Merredin - Deputy Premier) [3.08 pm]: I find it incredible that since the beginning of the first session of the thirty-fifth Parliament the performance of the Opposition has been focused on seeming to divide the coalition or to divide members of the Government on some issues. I recall the Leader of the Opposition telling anyone who cared to listen that the objective of the Labor Party for 1997 after the drubbing it got at the last state election was to

go back to its grassroots; to identify with the labour movement; and to have some meaning and status and restore its credibility. However, what do we see? On the first day of the Parliament the right wing bludgeoned the Leader of the Opposition into allowing it to move an amendment to the Address-in-Reply, targeted at the National Party. I assume that was done on the basis that the Leader of the Opposition thought the right wing would then become a little more benevolent and would give other factions in the Australian Labor Party some of the positions that he wanted to hand out. That did not happen; they did not get them. That was the first try.

The next attempt saw the Labor Party asking government members to do its job - appealing particularly to new members to vote for the Labor Party. I can assure members opposite that there would not be one member on this side of the House so naive as to listen to the impassioned pleas of members opposite requesting that we do their work for them and cast our votes in their favour. We will not do that.

I do not like to give advice. However, in this case I will offer Opposition members the following advice: They should do their own work for themselves and by themselves and go back to what they said they would do; that is, restore some credibility to the Labor Party, because at the moment it has none.

Dr Gallop: Get on with the issue.

Mr COWAN: I am pleased to get on with the issue. I will deal with something that many people seek to do. I know that this behaviour is not confined to the Opposition; it is something that has been mentioned previously by members on this side of the House. There is a tendency for people to identify single member constituencies and look at the total vote cast. Some members on this side of the House were saying prior to the last election, "We got 54 per cent of the vote, but we got only 50 per cent of the seats." Mr Speaker, you and I know that there is no correlation in a single member constituency Parliament where one can take the total vote and say that, because one party obtained a certain percentage of the vote, it should get a certain number of seats. That does not work.

The Government has learned its lesson from the ALP's performance at previous elections. I have no shame in saying that we targeted the marginal seats, and we won them. As a consequence, the coalition now has the biggest majority in this House that it has ever enjoyed.

I acknowledge up front that the coalition does not have a majority in the upper House. That is not really the great concern to us that the Opposition has presented it to be. It is of no great concern to us, but it would be easier if we had retained the majority. I will explain why it does not concern us to the extent that many people would like to believe. Firstly, the major beneficiaries in the upper House were the minor parties. One should examine from where they secured their votes. With one exception, they secured their votes from former Labor Party or Independent supporters. Therefore, once again, I suggest that the Labor Party recognise that it has lost the support of the people of Western Australia.

The Leader of the Opposition has talked about the interests of the respective political parties in this debate and the reason they take a particular position about different electoral systems - they do so because of the benefits accruing to them from those systems. One does not have to be a Rhodes scholar to know that if one looks at the constituency of Western Australia one sees that, of the 41 rural seats in the Legislature, the coalition holds 29. I think that is right, but I will stand corrected if I am wrong. The metropolitan area has about 50 seats, and of those 50 seats, the opposition parties - including the minor parties - hold 26. So, again, one sees that there is a much greater level of support for the conservative parties in rural Western Australia, and there is about an even break of support for the ALP and the conservatives in the metropolitan area.

On most occasions it would be fair to say that the minor parties have a tendency to vote with the Opposition. That has not happened yet in Western Australia because this is the first time they have had an opportunity to be present in our legislative system. I welcome that; it is a good thing.

The Labor Party talks about its high principles. That is balderdash. It knows that if we move to this mythical one-vote-one-value system there will be a transfer of seats to the metropolitan area, and - surprise, surprise - it is in the metropolitan area that the Labor Party can win the most seats - not in the country.

Dr Gallop: That is not true.

Mr COWAN: Even its last bastion - the mining and pastoral region - is now under threat. Where are the marginal seats for the Labor Party? One is in the mining and pastoral region and one will be in the Kimberley.

Several members interjected.

Mr COWAN: The Labor Party does not even have it. It could not maintain the interest of the member for Kimberley; he became so disillusioned that he left. If members believe that the Labor Party is taking this matter forward on the basis of principle, they are mistaken; it is doing it for its own self-interest. Why does it not simply

acknowledge that? It is in the best interests of the ALP to transfer as many votes as it possibly can to the city. Such an acknowledgement would at least introduce some honesty into the ALP's electoral reform proposals.

Dr Gallop: Let us get the National Party's position on the table.

Mr COWAN: The National Party's position has always been and always will be that we support responsible vote weighting. I do not mind how we approach that proposal. I am quite sure that the Leader of the Opposition would be prepared to listen to this. I know that cameras have been brought into the House, but we do not have to worry about our looks every five minutes. We can think about the debate rather than how we look on television.

Mrs Roberts: That is personal and nasty.

Mr COWAN: The member for Midland is very good at that. I will remind her the next time she gets personal in this House. It will not be very long at all because she will jump right in.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

Mr COWAN: I would not waste my time. I said I would remind the member when she got personal, that is all.

I must point out that the National Party's support for vote weighting in regional Western Australia has never changed. If members care to look, I have said that, provided we change the criteria upon which the seats are distributed and allocated within our electoral system so that we may give real meaning to community of interest, remoteness and isolation -

Mr McGowan: And Mandurah!

Mr COWAN: I am quite comfortable in saying that the problem with the current system is that it contains the criterion that credence must be given to demographic trends. What happens, therefore, is that those seats that have population expansion, like Mandurah and, more pointedly, Dawesville are affected. If members read the criteria they will understand what I am talking about. They show that there was meant to be some consideration for the distribution of the electorate seats based on the application of the criteria. Unfortunately, because demographic trend is there, it shunts everything else to one side. As a consequence, those seats with the greatest shifts in demographics are favoured by the number of electors appointed to them. Therefore, Dawesville and other places of higher growth have the lowest number. Static populations such as those in the Kimberley, Ashburton, Kalgoorlie and Eyre are all loaded up to the gunnels. That is one of the aspects we have to change. I have said that I do not mind - I am sure the National Party does not mind - accepting a single quota for the Legislative Assembly provided we can remove the heavy emphasis on demographic trends.

Dr Gallop: What is your plus or minus?

Mr COWAN: Some of my colleagues tell me 25 per cent.

Several members interjected.

Mr COWAN: There is some debate in the National Party about the variation.

Mr Riebeling: It could be 40 per cent.

Mr COWAN: Any advance on that? I will cop 50 per cent.

Irrespective of whether we have one quota for the Legislative Assembly, we must have in place a mechanism that applies genuine vote weighting in genuine cases of need. That has always been the argument of the National Party. Other people have put forward the argument, "That is why the National Party does it." They go to ridiculous lengths to try to denigrate our position. As I have stated, we believe in responsible vote weighting. We are prepared to accept that there could be one quota in the Assembly, in which case I suggest that I would be very much in a minority unless the outcome were very close to the present position. That could happen if we shifted away from the great emphasis on demographic trends imposed on the way in which the commissioners apply the criteria.

Mrs Roberts: Self-interest - no change!

Mr COWAN: I have dealt with the self-interest of the ALP and I will not revisit it. The clear indication from the member for Midland is that she has a hearing affliction. If she does not have a hearing affliction and her listening skills are good, she certainly has a great deal of difficulty in being able to accept anybody else's argument.

That is my position in respect of the Legislative Assembly. My colleagues in the National Party are saying, "If it aint broke, don't fix it." That is the majority view and I acknowledge that.

Dr Gallop: Is the position you have just put reflective of the State Council meeting in February or your own position?

Mr COWAN: I have just said that it is my view. The majority view of the National Party is that we do not have any change at all.

To deal with the other place, the view has always been held by the National Party - and I am speaking for the National Party so that people understand clearly its position - that we have a Senate that represents the States and Territories. Its representation is based on equity of numbers and not some single member constituency, because it is a State's House, or is supposed to be. Some years ago it ceased to be a State's House, but that is another debate. The Legislative Council could very easily be a House which represents the under-represented regions in terms of numbers. Already the regions are represented by a significant minority in this place.

Mr Ripper: Should other groups, such as teachers and nurses, be represented in the same way?

Mr COWAN: They are represented now. Just as we have a Senate that equally represents the States and Territories, we could have an upper House in a state system that equally represents regions. Unless we move away from one-vote-one-value that is an impossibility. I agree that if we are to have that system we need to maintain the proportional representation, multi-member constituency model.

Dr Gallop: You are saying that one-vote-one-value and regional representation are not inconsistent, but of course they are.

Mr COWAN: Again the Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated his different philosophical views. I have given mine and those views which are a reasonable reflection of the National Party with the one exception to which I alluded. During the time I have been involved in politics, people in politics, watching politics and with a great deal of feeling about it, have always predicted the demise of the National Party.

Dr Gallop: I have never predicted its demise.

Mr COWAN: It has not happened and it will not happen. As a representative of the regions, I can say this with some feeling: We are already in a minority. There is no reason that we should change the system because in the last four years particularly it has given this State very good government indeed.

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [3.28 pm]: I rise to support the amendment. I start by asking the question: What could be more basic to democracy than everybody having the same voting power?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CARPENTER: It is the most basic fundamental one could ever come across for a democratically representative Government. Everybody should have the same amount of power when it comes to having a vote. It is amazing that fact cannot seem to penetrate. Last night when I was speaking I thought the member for Geraldton interjected -

Mr Bloffwitch: It did not penetrate to the people who set up the Australian Constitution, so why should we take any notice of what you are saying now?

Mr CARPENTER: I thought last night that the member for Geraldton interjected in favour of one-vote-one-value.

Mr Bloffwitch: I am in favour of it for the lower House.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CARPENTER: I just wanted to make sure that I did not mishear because I was very enlightened by the comment. Does the member for Geraldton support the principle of one-vote-one-value?

Mr Bloffwitch: Of course I do. It is the weighting -

Mr CARPENTER: That is why he is so highly regarded as a political strategist. He supports the principle because it is obvious, and everybody else should support it. I suspect that even the Leader of the National Party does. Nobody who is intelligent could come up with the arguments that the Leader of the National Party has today and really mean them.

Mr Cowan: I mean it, my friend.

Mr CARPENTER: No, the Deputy Premier does not.

Mr Cowan: Yes I do.

Mr CARPENTER: What did the Deputy Premier say?

Mr Cowan: I said it would result in the transfer of seats to the metropolitan area, and the reason that the Labor Party has an interest in this is that it can win at least half the seats in the metropolitan area.

Mr CARPENTER: I suspect that reflects the Deputy Premier's own reasons for not supporting it. He is protecting his own interests.

Mr Trenorden: Surprise! What a brilliant conclusion! What wit!

Mr CARPENTER: The Deputy Premier is not interested in what is right or wrong. He is protecting his own interests.

Dr Turnbull: You are doing the same thing!

Mr CARPENTER: No. I would support one-vote-one-value, even if the Labor Party did not win a seat, because it is right. That is what members opposite cannot understand.

The SPEAKER: Order! I indicate to the member for Willagee that while from time to time members invite interjections from various members opposite, if they do that on a broad scale we then get a large number of members interjecting, which cannot be accepted. We can limit that if the member directs his remarks mainly to the Chair, and the Chair will always allow reasonable debate to occur.

Mr CARPENTER: Thank you, Mr Speaker; I apologise.

Regardless of the political outcome, nothing is more fundamental to the democratic system of government than the principle of one-vote-one-value, and that should apply in our State even if it does not apply anywhere else in the world, because it is right. All single member constituencies should be elected by roughly, as near as is possible, the same number of electors.

Mr Trenorden: You have just changed your point of view. You said you supported one-vote-one-value, and you are now saying you roughly support one-vote-one-value.

Mr CARPENTER: I did not invite the interjection but I would like to address it. The reason I said "roughly" is that it would be quite difficult to inflict upon the population exactly the same number of people per seat - say 21 104 people per seat.

Mr Trenorden: Then you agree with us!

Mr CARPENTER: No. Obviously there must be a slight amount of discretion, but as little as is humanly possible - certainly not 20 per cent; that is too great. Have I cleared that up?

Mr Trenorden: Not with me.

Mr CARPENTER: For election to the upper House of the Western Australian Parliament, one-vote-one-value should still apply, as near as is humanly possible.

Mr Trenorden: How many senators should Western Australia have?

Mr CARPENTER: I am talking about the Western Australian Parliament.

Mr Trenorden: It is the same argument.

Mr CARPENTER: No, it is not. Whether we have regions or statewide proportional representation I do not care, so long as the principle of one-vote-one-value applies. The argument that the regions would somehow be unrepresented is extremely thin because the most important thing is that the population, the people who make up the State, are represented. At the moment, the National Party can get a relatively small number of votes but a relatively large number of elected representatives.

Mr Trenorden: What percentage did you get in your seat? I got 67 per cent.

Mr CARPENTER: On the primary vote, 50 point something.

Mr Trenorden: So I am more representative than you?

Mr CARPENTER: I will come to that.

The member for Avon is really talking about how to make the system consistent. The arrangement that is in place at the moment, where we have a 2:1 weighting for country as opposed to city electorates, is totally arbitrary. The

only way that it can be consistent is to have everyone in the same position; that is, to have the same number of voters per seat. We might as well have a vote weighting of 3:1 or 4:1 for the country as opposed to the city. It is totally arbitrary. The only way we can be consistent is to have a principle that is right; that is, everybody should be in the same position.

One of the other arguments that the Leader of the National Party used is that each person in this place can vote only once; that is, each person has one vote of equal value. However, if we extended that to its logical conclusion, every person who lived in Merredin could come to this place and vote so long as each person voted only once, and an electorate in the city comprising 250 000 people would be entitled to only one vote in this place. That argument is not logical and cannot be sustained.

My knowledge of ancient Greek history is not very good, but the essential principles of democracy were established by the Greeks at the Acropolis in Athens. The fellow who lived the furthest from the Acropolis did not get to vote two or three times, so far as I know, because the ancient Greeks recognised the principle that each person should have the same amount of voting power. We must apply the same principle in this Parliament. Each member who comes into this Parliament should represent roughly the same number of people in his or her electorate, no matter from where that member comes. Anything other than that is a rort on the system, even if it is done with good intent, and cannot be logically defended.

One argument that used to be used - I have not heard it used in this debate but it might come up - is that vote weighting for country areas is justified on the basis that the country areas produce most of the wealth of the State; therefore, they deserve to have a representation which reflects that wealth. That is totally illogical and cannot be sustained, because if we extended that logic to anywhere in the metropolitan area, it would mean that people in suburbs like Nedlands and Cottesloe would have greater voting power than people in the suburbs that I represent.

Dr Turnbull: What do they produce?

Mr CARPENTER: They have greater wealth. It is a nonsense to suggest that people who generate more wealth should have greater voting power, and that argument cannot be sustained.

It is well and truly past the time in Western Australia when electoral reform should take place. I had the misfortune, although as far as my journalistic career went I suppose one could call it the fortune, of sitting through the WA Inc Royal Commission, which was a most enlightening experience. The royal commission's second report made recommendations about the general system of government which should apply, because it recognised that there were major faults in the system of government in this State. The report addressed the system of voting in this State and recommended that one-vote-one-value was an essential element of a properly functioning democracy.

Mr Trenorden: That is not correct. Read the report again.

Mr CARPENTER: The Parliament of any area is the hub in the wheel of its democratic system. It must be structured correctly. If it is not, the system cannot work properly. It does not work properly at the moment because of the distortion in the representation.

Mr Trenorden: There is a slight problem with that argument. The ALP was in power at the time, not our party. It was your side which was corrupt in this place, not our side.

Mr CARPENTER: A principle should apply to the Parliament and the voting system, no matter who is in government, no matter the result of the voting pattern once the principle is in place, and no matter who might be exposed as corrupt in any system of government at any time. That does not mean to say we should jettison the essential principles of democracy, which is that everyone should be equally represented.

Dr Turnbull: Do you know that in England, the home of democracy -

Mr CARPENTER: The home of democracy?

Dr Turnbull: It is the home of the Westminster system and it is a good model to follow. In that country, the Outer Hebrides' vote represents one-third of the number in the Prime Minister's electorate, and there is good reason for that. During the case that the ALP in Western Australia lost, it was argued that access, sparsity and remoteness have legitimate weight. In England that weight is 3:1.

Mr CARPENTER: It is equally wrong. It is as wrong as our system. One can probably draw examples of how the system should not work from all over the world. I am talking about what I believe the system should be. To me, it is easy to understand. What is more democratic and more right in a Parliament than one person having the same voting strength as another?

Mr Shave: I believe in equity.

Mr CARPENTER: So the Minister agrees?

Mr Shave: No, I do not. Don't put words in my mouth.

Mr CARPENTER: The member for Pilbara gave a brilliant enunciation of the principles of one-vote-one-value for which he will be long remembered in his electorate! He should be congratulated on that. However, he raised an important point which needs addressing. That point is the amount of resourcing which goes into country and rural electorates. Everyone should recognise that when one-vote-one-value eventually comes into play, as it will, rural and remote areas must be adequately resourced so that members can service their electorates. If that were not the case it would place a very unfair burden on rural members, and that cannot be allowed to happen.

Mr Trenorden: It will happen.

Mr CARPENTER: At the moment those members have very small numbers in their constituencies but large areas to cover. They will have even larger areas when one-vote-one-value takes its place in the system. Therefore the Opposition recognises and the Government must recognise, that those members must be adequately resourced even if it means having more than one electorate office. People would not quibble with that.

Mr Trenorden: I will agree to that as long as you put a member in each electorate office.

Mr CARPENTER: That would defeat the purpose about which I am speaking.

The principle of one-vote-one-value will eventually apply. It is as sure as the sun's rising. The logic of it defeats the arguments against it. In places such as Albany, for example, which used to be considered to be far removed and remote from the metropolitan area, with relatively small numbers of people, the situation has changed considerably. To extend the boundaries of Albany to accommodate the principle of one-vote-one-value, as proposed by the Labor Party, would mean a minimal change to the geographic boundary. The population of the town of Albany is something like 13 500, and to accommodate a few more thousand the boundary would need only be shifted slightly. The situation is probably the same as that in Bunbury, Geraldton at least, and Kalgoorlie. For the members who represent those areas to argue that they still require vote weighting to allow them to do their jobs as well as city members no longer applies. It is obvious even to some of the members who represent those seats and live in those rural towns, that the principle of one-vote-one-value can be applied without great difficulty for them or any great loss of service to their constituents. I have not heard any member from any of those rural towns disagree with that proposition.

The problem with consistency becomes starker when one moves closer to the metropolitan area and looks at places such as Peel and Dawesville. I fail to see the difference in the constituency and geography of those two areas. The same could be said of Rockingham and Mandurah.

Mr Trenorden: They are only lines on a map, which can be changed.

Mr CARPENTER: It defeats me why Mandurah should have only about half the electors of Rockingham and yet both electorates return one member to this place.

Mr Trenorden: I agree.

Mr CARPENTER: The same principle applies to the electorate of Avon which is relatively close to the metropolitan area. I cannot understand why only half the number of electors in Avon are required to return one member to this place as compared with a city electorate such as Wanneroo.

Mr Trenorden: You have never been there, and that is why. You would not find your way there in a week.

Mr CARPENTER: I have been there.

There is no logical argument against this principle. This is a demonstration of that fact. The only arguments put are those of self-interest from the parties who represent those areas. It is impossible to defeat the logic of one-vote-one-value.

The member interjected earlier about lines being drawn on a map. That is exactly the problem we face. It is totally arbitrary to start dividing the State between areas where, for example, 11 000 electors return one member and 26 000 electors also return one member. There is no consistency to that, and it must stop. The people of Western Australia are sufficiently knowledgeable and understand the point enough to accept the principle. If it means, and I doubt that it would, damage to the National Party, so be it. The National Party members should be confident enough to know that they will survive. I support the amendment.

MR TRENORDEN (Avon) [3.46 pm]: I do not think this will be the last time I stand in this place to discuss changes to the electoral system. Large truckloads of misnomers have been bandied around this place today. The National Party has never opposed the principle of one-vote-one-value. It is the basis of any western, democratic

system. That is not the question. The question is how it will be brought about. Members opposite have totally ignored the fact that the system they refer to does not exist anywhere in the world. The purity about which members opposite spoke does not exist. Even where the principle is enshrined in the United States' system, weight voting is still involved.

Mr Carpenter: How?

Mr TRENORDEN: That is the question! The member has just answered his own question, because the question is, "How much?" Democracy is a journey. It is not a destination. The member for Willagee said it himself. Can the member point to any western country which has an ideal voting system? If he tried, he would have hundreds of people arguing against him, because democracy is not a destination.

Mr Carpenter: There is no point in your comments. You cannot have rigid figures, but you can come as close as possible to it.

Mr TRENORDEN: That is precisely so. The member wants a system of rigid figures. That is his system. The federal system in this country is not one-vote-one-value. If it were the case the population of Tasmania would need to be close to one million people.

Mr Carpenter: Why?

Mr TRENORDEN: Because Tasmania has five members in the House of Representatives. It is meant to have voting numbers of 80 000-odd which would be around 200 000 people! There would need to be one million people in Tasmania.

The argument here is all about how to establish a fair and equitable voting system which -

Mr Kobelke: Looks after the National Party!

Mr Carpenter: Do you support the one-vote-one-value principle?

Mr TRENORDEN: Yes, of course, and so does the National Party.

Mr Kobelke: There is no rationality!

Mr Carpenter: It is a matter of the difference.

Mr TRENORDEN: Personally, I have had a hard look at the two interpretations of the Canadian High Court, and I support that court's decision: One-vote-one-value is the basis of all democracy, with a 25 per cent variation. That nation is very similar to ours, with sparse population.

Mr McGinty: Only in extreme cases.

Mr TRENORDEN: I agree; my seat should not have the same concentration as the seat of the member for Kimberley. I have no problem with the seat of Mandurah being treated the same as the seat of Willagee.

Mr Carpenter: Twenty-five per cent is too much.

Mr TRENORDEN: Is the member for Willagee saying that the learned judges of Canada who twice examined the proposal are wrong? Canada's High Court threw out the proposal for one-vote-one-value.

Mr McGowan: Isn't this Australia? Were you on a commonwealth delegation?

Mr TRENORDEN: I was, on one occasion. That is not why I examined the matter; I am interested in the debate. The member for Belmont, I and several other members were members of the Privilege Committee that visited Canada last year to examine political systems. We had several of these discussions while we were in Canada.

I hope the new members opposite will get similar opportunities to study other political systems, because they are enlightening.

It sticks in my craw that Australian Labor Party members do not believe in one-vote-one-value within their own organisation. At their state council meetings they give weighted votes to the unions so that they maintain power in the ALP. Within their own system they refuse to follow a one-vote-one-value system, but insist on it in the public arena. They are hypocritical in the extreme.

Mr McGinty: An agreement was reached last year between the coalition parties of which I have a copy and am happy to show you. It reads in part -

In principle, agreement has been reached on a system which would divide the State's electoral enrolment by 57 and allow for a variation of plus or minus 20 per cent.

Mr TRENORDEN: I know of no agreement. The Labor Party votes according to a fixed system, but the National Party does not. We have a parliamentary National Party and a state council; they are separate.

Mr McGinty: Will you rat on that undertaking which is clear in respect of the 20 per cent? Half an hour ago your member read out the decision of the State Council of the National Party of Western Australia.

Mr TRENORDEN: We have a different system altogether. We in the National Party can take whatever stand we like.

Mr McGinty: You were there.

Mr TRENORDEN: We are not the ALP. The member for Fremantle cannot keep on referring to us as though we operate in the same way as the ALP.

Mr McGinty: I am asking if you supported a decision your members made.

Mr TRENORDEN: They did not.

Mr McGinty: Joint party means National and Liberal.

Mr TRENORDEN: No-one asked me for my point of view in that process.

Mr Thomas: Was that a core promise?

Mr TRENORDEN: The member opposite can say what he likes. Some weeks ago, the State Council of the National Party of Western Australia voted for a position which was read out. Country people oppose the Opposition's proposal. If one-vote-one-value is introduced, the Labor Party will hold one seat outside the metropolitan area.

Mr Riebeling: How do you work that out?

Mr TRENORDEN: The member for Burrup will be long gone in that system. The Labor Party won the seat of Kalgoorlie by 4 per cent. It would have no chance of winning the seat of Kimberley. Where will Labor members hold seats? If the seat of Pilbara is spread over two or three seats, Carnarvon and the area north will have one member and the ALP will not win the seat of Pilbara.

Mr Carpenter: Your leader argued the opposite; that is, the Labor Party's rationale is to win more seats.

Mr TRENORDEN: The member for Willagee makes the same mistake. I am not a member of the ALP; I am a National Party member. I am elected by my constituents; I represent the seat of Avon, not the ALP.

Mr Carpenter: On what did you agree with your leader?

Mr TRENORDEN: I listened to the speech of the Deputy Premier and I agree with most of what he said. Last year I sent out a survey and asked my people about it. Between 92 per cent and 94 per cent were opposed to one-vote-one-value. I can say with a clear conscience that my electorate -

Mr Ripper: Was that the same survey reported in *The West Australian* where they opposed privatisation? Have you represented them on that in this House?

Mr TRENORDEN: Yes. What has been privatised in my electorate?

Mr Ripper: What about the hospital system?

Mr TRENORDEN: That is not in my electorate.

Mr Ripper: Are you opposed to privatisation outside your electorate?

Mr TRENORDEN: I am here to represent my electorate. What other members do is up to them. I am one of 57 members in this place. My first responsibility is to my electorate; it always has been and always will be. Unlike members opposite, who must represent the ALP first and their electorate second, I am happy not to be in that position. If I want to disagree with the Leader of the National Party or the Premier, I will do so, because that is my responsibility

Mr Riebeling interjected.

Mr TRENORDEN: Seven or eight.

Mr Riebeling: When were they?

Mr TRENORDEN: I have been here for 11 years. How long has the member for Burrup been here?

Mr Riebeling: For the past five years. Have you ever crossed the floor?

Mr TRENORDEN: I have sat on the other side of the House with another member while everyone else sat on the other side. Has the member for Burrup ever done that?

Mr Riebeling: No.

Mr TRENORDEN: He has not because he would lose his seat in an instant. He is a soldier of the ALP, which is the reason people voted against him in droves. I doorknocked in part of his electorate and I know that is why people voted against him.

It is strongly in the interests of the ALP to support its perception of one-vote-one-value because it will substantially benefit from that system. I think the federal Labor Party has eight members outside Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. The ALP knows that rural Australia has deserted it. The ALP is retreating to the metropolitan area at a million miles an hour and trying to shore up its strength in this House on only that premise. That fact is as certain as the sun will rise. Members opposite know that in their time rural Western Australia has deserted them while the Labor Party vote in the metropolitan area has increased.

I attended the major Commission on Government meeting held at the University of Western Australia. At a later date, Mr Deputy Speaker, you may be able to verify that you also attended. More than 80 per cent of people who were at that meeting were not in favour of the Labor Party's proposal.

Mr McGowan: That is rubbish.

Mr TRENORDEN: Was the member for Rockingham there?

Mr McGowan: You have only to ask people in the street.

Mr TRENORDEN: Who is clamouring to have the electoral system changed? Is it coming from the public? No; it is not. The issue is not being raised on talkback radio. The only place it is being raised is in this place because it concerns nothing more than power.

As I said, I surveyed my electorate and considerably more than 90 per cent of people in my electorate are not in favour of what the ALP is seeking. Of all those surveyed - about 1 000 constituents - one person supported the ALP principle of one-vote-one-value within the strict parameters required by the ALP. Also, my telephone runs hot on this issue. The two local newspapers have made an issue of this for some weeks and rural Western Australia is outraged by the proposal. They know that if 40 of the 57 members of this House were city based, rural areas they would not have their schools, hospitals and roads. They know that is an absolute certainty because history has taught them that lesson. Since one-vote-one-value was introduced into the federal system in 1968 rural Western Australia has been decimated. Evidence of that can be found from the last federal election. Only a handful of members can be mustered from places other than Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. Even the current federal leader of members opposite had to wait weeks before falling over the line in an urban-rural seat. This whole question is a political irrelevance. It is just about the power within this House. There is ample evidence of that.

The Canadian political system is extremely close to our system. In the United States, United Kingdom, France and other western countries none of the parliamentary systems has a distinct one-vote-one-value, such as that proposed by members opposite. Such a system does not exist. Democracy is an ideal to which we should all aspire, and we must recognise that millions of people have died for the cause of democracy. However, members opposite cannot produce one example of the ideal democracy. The only places in which one-vote-one-value is strictly adhered to are those with one State and only one party to vote for. That is the only sphere to which the proposal of members opposite can be correlated. The member for Willagee is correct in saying that one-vote-one-value will not decimate the National Party. In fact, its numbers will be the same.

Mrs Roberts: Under your idea of one-vote-one-value with 40 per cent weighting.

Mr TRENORDEN: The member for Midland has no point. One of the examples put forward is the old question of the electorates of Burrup and Wanneroo. The National Party told the Electoral Commission about the seat of Burrup, which was then the Ashburton seat. At one stage the electorate of Ashburton had approximately 12 000 electors. Because it had that number and had grown so quickly, the Electoral Commission decided its population would increase to 18 000 or 19 000 within four years. However, the work force left that area when the construction phase of a major project finished and the number of voters declined. The National Party told the Electoral Commission that would happen, and its actions in that regard have put much pressure on people in the National Party. The

Electoral Commission also dramatically underestimated the growth of Wanneroo. The National Party told the Electoral Commission that its estimate was wrong, but it would not listen and thought it knew better. By not doing its job properly, the Electoral Commission has placed pressure on people such as me. Before the last election the Electoral Commission was so keen to provide a computer model that it worked purely on the numbers. All the other requirements in the Act were put aside. In my view that was immoral. Surely the Electoral Commission has an obligation to take note of the Act but we were told at the meeting with the commission that it was working purely on the numbers.

Mr Riebeling: What was your submission?

Mr TRENORDEN: The National Party referred to particular seats and to the boundaries to be drawn before the last election. This is not the last time I shall speak on the subject in this House. I give members opposite due warning that if a Bill to introduce one-vote-one-value is presented in this House and, by some disaster, it is passed, there will be a substantial revolt in rural Western Australia. Should the ALP support such a Bill, its standing in rural Western Australia will nosedive. Of course, I do not know how it can lose more votes than it already has. Should the Liberal Party support such a move, it will feel the same pain.

My constituents have been very emotional about this issue and both local newspapers have run editorials strongly denouncing the ALP's position on one-vote-one-value.

MR MCGOWAN (Rockingham) [4.06 pm]: Few subjects are more important to members on this side of the Chamber than the state of our parliamentary democracy. Members on this side have taken up this issue over the years since the formation of this party because it is right to do so. The battle for democracy has been ongoing since the beginning of civilisation. The battle has been fought in this nation over the last century, first with popular suffrage, secondly to allow women the vote and, thirdly, in the 1960s, to give Aboriginal people the vote. That culminated in the wonderful referendum of 1967, for which I pay tribute to the coalition parties who proposed it. It was a great outcome because it recognised Aboriginal people as Australian citizens and gave them the opportunity to vote. The battle continues and it is now in the era of one-vote-one-value. I regard this battle as one of the most important in our country. It separates us from many other countries, and separates us from those nations that deny their people the right to determine equally who will be the Government. It is clear to me that we cannot be a fair, just and democratic society until everyone is given an equal say in electing the Government which decides our future lives. I strongly support the view that in both world wars our men and women felt they were fighting for a democratic system, freedom and equality. They thought we should all be equal in this country.

Mr Bloffwitch: You did not have one-vote-one-value in the Second World War. There was a weighted system.

Mr MCGOWAN: The member for Geraldton probably recalls that Australians were fighting for a democracy against a totalitarian regime. In order to ensure that this is a democratic country we must give everyone an equal say in electing the Government.

Mr Bloffwitch: I am one of the few members who has actually been to war.

Mr MCGOWAN: I admire the member for Geraldton for that. I was not aware of that fact.

Mr Thomas interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cockburn has been here long enough to know not to interject out of his seat. The member for Cockburn should also remember that he got away with only a warning for moving between the member on his feet and the Chair.

Mr Thomas interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member need not comment; I am giving him advice.

Mr MCGOWAN: Western Australia is in the unfortunate position of being the last State across the nation to have instituted one-vote-one-value. It is a fact that we remain the only State without that voting procedure, and it is a national embarrassment for all of us. It was a battle in some States for the change to be made. I recall that it took the Fitzgerald inquiry and the removal of the National Party Government in Queensland before one-vote-one-value was instituted. It was a great victory for the people of Queensland. I hope the same change will happen here; namely, that the conservative parties are removed from government and one-vote-one-value can be instituted. It will be a great victory for us on this side of the Chamber.

I now outline some of the anomalies and stark injustices in the current electoral system. My seat of Rockingham currently has an enrolment of 23 100 electors, and the neighbouring seat of Mandurah - I repeat the point because of its importance to the people in my electorate - has 12 700 electors; that is, just over half the people in my

electorate. The seat of Dawesville has 14 142 electors. Therefore, Mandurah and Dawesville combined have slightly more people than my electorate of Rockingham. That is an absolute disgrace. How can I look people in the eye in my area and say that they are equal to people living in Mandurah and Dawesville when their vote is worth only half that of people in neighbouring seats? It is a total disgrace.

Members sitting opposite who are totally committed to efficiency in resource allocation will be interested to discover that this voting system results in resources being allocated inefficiently between electorates. When Governments make decisions about whether certain projects should be built or services allocated - for instance, let us say a cultural centre should be built in Mandurah - two members of Parliament represent Mandurah, the members for Dawesville and Mandurah, and both members argue for facilities to be provided in their electorates. In my case, I represent the same number of people as those two members together, but only one member is arguing for available resources. It is totally unfair, unjust and should be changed. The people of Rockingham are in an absolutely terrible situation in being treated unjustly by the system.

I looked at the statistics on this matter. Generally, in the Legislative Council the proportion of votes is three to one in favour of the country over the city; that is, for the same number of people in the country and the city, there are three country members of Parliament and one city member. In relation to this House, two country votes are the equivalent of one vote in the city. This is a totally unjust situation. It is incumbent on us to address the situation so we can hold up our heads around the nation.

As I was saying earlier, the difference between Mandurah and Rockingham is stark. Mandurah is 15 minutes' travelling time from Rockingham, but apparently that 15 minutes down the road justifies an undemocratic electoral system. I hope the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs recognises that point. I can show him the small distance between Rockingham and Mandurah.

Mr Shave: I never go south of Alfred Cove!

Mr Carpenter: That is what the electors of Willagee said.

Mr McGOWAN: I will show the Minister the small distance between the two areas so he understands why two members of Parliament should not represent those neighbouring seats when one member represents Rockingham.

Another effect of this system is that I have an electoral office servicing approximately 23 000 constituents, and it is overflowing with people in need of my assistance in relation to disputes with Government, other people or whatever. I have a staff of one to serve 23 000 people. The member for Mandurah has 12 000 people to serve and also has a staff of one. Is that fair on the people of Rockingham and my electorate staff with that pressure placed on the office? It is not fair, is it Minister?

Mr Shave: It is a matter of equity; it is how you look at it.

Mr McGOWAN: I do not think it is a laughing matter. It is a matter which brings us into disrepute in the rest of Australia.

Earlier I was listening to the arguments presented by the National Party members as to why they thought the current system was justifiable. One of the arguments I have often heard put by National Party members is that because country areas produce so much wealth, they deserve better representation. If that is the case, the National Party members should support allocating 10 seats to the Kwinana strip, which produces \$8b worth of resources for the State. However, my area does not receive extra seats because of the extra wealth created in the seat.

Mr Shave: Do you have big gas reserves or an iron ore deposit in your electorate?

Mr McGOWAN: As I said my maiden speech, we are the major downstream processing area in the State. If the National Party wants to argue that its areas produce wealth, my electorate should have more representation.

Mr Shave: They argue that you use their resources.

Mr McGOWAN: In any event, the argument is that the distribution is based on wealth creation. A great deal of wealth is generated in my area. If the Nationals take that argument to its logical conclusion, they should support more seats being allocated to industrial areas. Other arguments were put forward; however, it seems that the members who put forward those arguments have left the Chamber. I heard probably the longest sentence I have ever heard spoken today. It was spoken by the Deputy Premier. I will have to get a copy of *Hansard* to read it because he confused me. I think he was saying that because of the distance one lives from the metropolitan area, one misses out on many facilities and opportunities that the metropolitan area offers. If that argument were taken to its logical conclusion, it would mean that an elector's vote in the Kimberley would be worth four votes and an elector's vote in the Northam area would be worth two votes. That is the logical conclusion of that argument. The votes of electors who live in

Avon, Warren-Blackwood or Bunbury, which is only two hours down the road, would be worth nowhere near as much as the votes of people who live in the Kimberley. I would like to see how long a paragraph the Deputy Premier comes up with to answer that argument. I am sure it would make interesting reading.

Some National Party members referred to the argument about equity; that is, that people in country areas deserved better equity. The people who deserve the most equity are the most socially disadvantaged and those people live, to the largest extent, in Labor electorates. The people who live in many Labor electorates are often the most socially disadvantaged and are the most deserving of better representation.

Members of the National Party said that people who live in rural areas should be entitled to vote weighting. I did not hear them say that about federal seats. Did they put that argument around when the Australian Labor Party held the federal seats of Grey in South Australia and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia and Kennedy in Queensland and the seat of the Northern Territory?

Mr Bloffwitch interjected.

Mr McGOWAN: The wheel always turns and it will turn for the coalition. When members opposite gloat about the situation they are in now, they should remember that the wheel will turn.

Mr Bloffwitch: I think it will be longer than you think; but it will happen.

Mr McGOWAN: It will happen. I did not hear National Party members saying that we should have one-vote-one-value in the federal sphere when the Labor Party held virtually all of the rural areas of this nation. If their argument were consistent, they should have adopted that stance. However, they did not. Their stance is based purely on self-interest, the preservation of their party, and keeping their jobs. That is not a rational basis upon which to run a democracy or a legitimate social policy.

I support the member for Cockburn who said that members of the Liberal Party should, in the time available to them before we vote on this amendment, talk to their leader and tell him that they support us, because one-vote-one-value will be in their interest in the long run. Members of the Liberal Party will do better out of this amendment than they do out of the status quo. All of the people in the Liberal Party who are vying for members' seats will have a greater opportunity to obtain seats in the lower House in the metropolitan area under that system. They should think about it. It will in their interest to tell the Premier that they support one-vote-one-value, not only because it is right and just and recognised around the world as the most fair and sensible system of government, but also because it is in their own self-interest.

MR RIEBELING (Ashburton) [4.24 pm]: If one-vote-one-value comes into being, my seat will be one of those that will be absorbed into a much bigger seat. That does not hold any fears for me as I am sure it holds no fears for members in neighbouring seats in the Mining and Pastoral Region. The Labor Party supports the principle of one-vote-one-value. It was interesting to hear the Leader of the National Party say that we were running this line because it would advantage us. However, I think at least two seats in the Mining and Pastoral Region would go to the metropolitan area. Despite the member for Avon's comment that we do not hold one seat in the Mining and Pastoral Region - we hold four - we will not run away from one-vote-one-value.

My concern about one-vote-one-value is equity of access for electors in the much bigger electorates. If we go down the road of one-vote-one-value, my electorate, which currently holds approximately 12 000 electors, would increase to 18 000 or 19 000, and the area of the seat would be vastly increased. The problem in very remote areas like the area I represent is that a seat of 18 500 or 19 000 people in the Pilbara would not generate any more work than a metropolitan seat of the same population. However, it would create problems for those people living in the area getting to a member of Parliament's office to talk to the member about his or her problems. Very few people come from Tom Price, Paraburdoo or Pannawonica to visit me in Karratha. The majority of people who come to my electorate office which is based in Karratha are from Karratha. That is the problem for members who have large areas to cover. Along with electoral reform legislation to introduce one-vote-one-value there should be a vastly improved electorate office system for country and remote areas. The much bigger electorates should have four or five electorate offices to provide equity of access for electors to their members of Parliament.

Mr Bloffwitch: These are things that will have to be considered.

Mr RIEBELING: Absolutely. I am sure the member for Alfred Cove knows about that. He would love to introduce electoral reform, maybe not for the right reasons, but to give the Liberal Party a bigger slab of the number of seats. I might be a bit cynical.

Mr Shave: You are not suggesting that I will be guided by my political considerations?

Mr RIEBELING: No. However, it would have some bearing on his decision.

It is interesting that all of the members who spoke against this amendment today come from the National Party. They believe that because people live in the bush, they should have greater vote weighting to speak with authority in this place. They have accused us of being motivated by greed and so forth in this matter when their whole stance is based on self-interest. They know if one-vote-one-value is introduced, the National Party is the party that is likely to be decimated, although not into total oblivion. However, it will reduce the size and impact of that party in this place. That is what they are fighting against.

The Leader of the National Party rabbited on about all sorts of things, none of which made sense. A person who favours a democracy must believe in one-vote-one-value. That is a cornerstone of democracy. If a person says he believes in democracy, but believes in one and a half votes to one, it does not make sense. One-vote-one-value is the only sane scenario.

Members opposite cannot say an electorate will have 20 000 people in it and that is it. It would make sense if they proposed a variation of 1 000 either way, with changes in population, density and the like. Every electoral system in the world which operates on the principle of one-vote-one-value has that sort of structure. To say one agrees with one-vote-one-value with a 25 per cent weighting makes a mockery of the situation. To then say they are doing it not because they are scared for their position is ridiculous and no-one in this place believes them.

The member for Avon made an interesting speech. He was of the opinion that we should go to a country that is very close to us to investigate its electoral system and he referred to Canada. On his trip to Canada he must have slept a long time because Canada is on the other side of the world. To get to Canada he must have flown over the other Australian States. He did not have to go to Canada to find a better system than the one which operates in this State, he could have gone to any State in Australia to do that

Mr Shave: Do you support the one-vote-one-value system that Queensland has?

Mr RIEBELING: I support a fair system of one-vote-one-value. I do not support any divergence from the one-vote-one-value principle.

Mr Shave: Do you now retract what you said about the member flying over all the States?

Mr RIEBELING: If he had stopped in any Australian State, he would have found a better system than a 25 per cent variance.

Mr Shave: Do you think so?

Mr RIEBELING: Yes. It is not a cynical political exercise, which is how the Nationals were trying to describe it. It is the system we have historically supported for many years.

Mr Shave: How long has your party supported one-vote-one-value? You are obviously an authority on it.

Mr RIEBELING: I am not an authority on Labor history. It has been for as long as I can recall - for at least the last 30 years.

Mr Omodei: What about compulsory voting? You are getting democratic now.

Mr RIEBELING: I absolutely support it.

Several members interjected.

Mr RIEBELING: What does it have to do with free enterprise? It is an obligation on members of the community to vote. It is not a privilege we should treat lightly. The fines for people who do not vote are not sufficient.

Mr Omodei: Do you think they should be put in gaols?

Mr RIEBELING: Every person has an obligation to have a say on who should run this State. Any move towards making voting in the state elections voluntary would be a backward step. The result would be a reduction in the number of people who vote; therefore the strength of the voice with which people speak in this place would depend on the number of people who vote in the elections. In local government the councillors speak with the authority of 50 per cent of 15 per cent of their electorate. Therefore, approximately 7 per cent of the electorate give them their mandate for four years. That is a joke. Until that situation improves, the standing of local government will not improve. Giving thought to moving away from compulsory voting is a backward step and I hope the Minister concerned will not go down that path. It is the first time I have heard that proposal come into this debate.

Mr Shave: It is under very serious consideration.

Mr RIEBELING: It would be a stupid move, but it is one of which members opposite are capable.

Mr Omodei: How many countries in the world have compulsory voting?

Mr RIEBELING: I think we live in the best country in the world.

Mr Shave: Then you support the current electoral system?

Mr RIEBELING: No, I do not. I do not support anything other than one-vote-one-value.

Mr Shave: You cannot have it both ways.

Mr RIEBELING: We can. It would be one way of getting rid of members opposite and the Labor Party wants to make sure that when it does it will wipe them right out.

Mr Sweetman: You are being driven to get rid of us. What is your motivation?

Mr RIEBELING: It is the political game. One side against the other, but one does not use a rorted system to get into power. That is what the National Party is supporting - a system that has given it a degree of power for many years. The National Party does not want it changed because it knows it will lose that degree of power.

Several members interjected.

Mr RIEBELING: Members should consider some of the anomalies that occur in this State. The member for Rockingham mentioned the problems he has with the size of his electorate and compared it with the size of the two electorates in Mandurah. It is a situation which simply should not occur.

I understand that 50 years ago members of Parliament who represented areas such as Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie required a special allowance because it took several days to travel to the capital, but those days are gone. I can fly from my electorate, which is 1 000 miles from Perth, and be in Perth in two hours. One can fly from the Kimberley, which is 2 000 miles from Perth, and be in Perth in four hours. The improved transport system means that vote weighting has nothing to do with the distance of electorates from the metropolitan area. To have voter equity members should have extra resources to make sure the people in the electorate have an equal opportunity to contact their member of Parliament.

The member for Avon kept saying that the result of my election was a bit closer than I thought it would be and it would be the end of the seat. It probably will be because it will be redistributed out of existence. I would like to see the Nationals run for lower House seats again. The National Party said in my electorate during the last election campaign it would resist changes to the electoral system so that one-vote-one-value would not be introduced. One of its arguments has been referred to by the member for Rockingham; that is, the Pilbara and country areas produce the wealth, so the people in those areas should have a greater say in what happens in this place. Like the member for Rockingham's electorate my electorate contains two shires, the Shire of Ashburton and the Shire of Roebourne, which between them produce \$6b worth of exports. On the basis of what the candidates who ran against me said, the Pilbara should have six or seven seats. That is a ridiculous scenario, as is the Nationals' argument. My electorate is a productive area of the State; however, not a huge number of people live there.

Whether this Government likes it or not, it was elected to govern for the people of Western Australia, not for the iron ore and gas producers or the wealthy. To say that people in certain areas deserve a greater say than people in other areas is not sustainable in any argument for a democratic system. I hope that when the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs prepares the legislation he will bring to the Parliament he gives serious consideration to the electoral system in the upper House. If we do not abolish the upper House, a fair electoral system would be to have one electorate and to vote for all the seats within that electorate on a proportional system. The Minister also may consider combining the two Houses. That would also be better than the current system. However, it is imperative that we choose a system that gets away from zones, because that necessarily provides for some differential weighting in various areas. Once again the Nationals have benefited from the upper House malapportionment. The only way to correct that once and for all is to have one electorate for the entire State.

Mr Trenorden: Why not one electorate for the upper House of the Australian Parliament?

Mr RIEBELING: I am glad the member for Avon has returned, because I miss him. The member brought up the same point in the last debate. The Member for Avon finds it hard to grasp that Western Australia is one State. The member raises the system of voting for the Senate, but Western Australia is a single State.

Mr Trenorden: The member is espousing a principle, so it should stand true for the Senate.

Mr RIEBELING: The principle for elections in the House of Representatives is one-vote-one-value.

Mr Trenorden: It is not, what about Tasmania?

Mr RIEBELING: The electorates are the same size.

Mr Trenorden: They are not.

Mr RIEBELING: I understand that each federal seat has 60 000 to 65 000 electors. The member for Avon might not understand this. However, if he looks at a map of Western Australia the seat of Kalgoorlie is a massive area. Like any metropolitan seat Kalgoorlie has 60 000 voters; each electorate is exactly the same.

Mr Trenorden: They have 80 000.

Mr RIEBELING: It might be 80 000 in Kalgoorlie.

Mr Trenorden: The member should check those things out.

Mr RIEBELING: I do not want to check that out. The member for Avon is saying that I am wrong.

The federal system is a much fairer system than ours.

Mr Trenorden: In your opinion.

Mr RIEBELING: I am not giving the member's opinion, I am giving mine. The member for Avon says that the Senate should be considered in the same way as my proposal for the state upper House. That is rubbish, because Western Australia is a single State.

Mr Trenorden: What about the principle? It should not apply in some places and not in others.

Mr RIEBELING: We are debating the Western Australian system. We have vote weighting in both the lower and upper Houses. Compared with the metropolitan area, people in the country receive an advantage in both Houses, not just one. Both Houses must be reformed if we are to be a true democracy. If we are to regain voters' confidence in the Parliament, we should have a system of one-vote-one-value in both Houses, or have only one House and abolish the upper House.

Mr Trenorden: Confidence in this place has been eroded by corruption

Mr RIEBELING: And the incompetence of the coalition Government. The past four years have not seen an increase in the confidence of the people of this State in this institution. The coalition has run this place for the past four years. Members opposite can keep blaming the Labor Party for the next four years. However, in another four years when we go to the people the argument that it is not the coalition's fault will have worn a little thin after nearly a decade of a coalition Government. The coalition should start to produce and stop blaming us.

Mr Shave: You were decimated. We have a record majority.

Mr RIEBELING: Yes, the Government does. Let us hope that in another four years members opposite might take some responsibility for their own actions. I doubt that will happen. However, if that happens, the coalition will be chucked out. Members opposite will see what it is like from this side under a system of one-vote-one-value. I do not think the coalition will bring that system in, because if it were brought in, we would not see many National Party members in this place, although there will be plenty of Labor members and we will be sitting on the government side.

MR SWEETMAN (Ningaloo) [4.45 pm]: I rise to support the member for Pilbara, but not to agree with his amendment to the motion. I am sure he was speaking against his better judgment. I wish to speak only about my area, which is in the north of the State and, traditionally, has been made up of five seats. Until 1977 the Liberal Party held those seats, and from 1977 until now the Labor Party held those seats.

I have been a member of the Liberal Party for nearly 15 years. I have participated in forums of the Liberal Party at lay party level for at least 10 years. Even when we did not hold any seats in the north and some party members wanted us to embrace one-vote-one-value as our only chance to win a seat, I was consistent in my argument that we would win a seat when the people in those electorates were ready to re-elect us.

Mr Carpenter: Do the majority support one-vote-one-value?

Mr SWEETMAN: No. The member's own supporters do not support it. That is why I am here today. For the member for Burrup to talk as he did about amalgamating some of the large seats at the top end of the State is fraught with danger, especially if he expects to represent those areas by opening several electorate offices manned by two or three members of staff. The result would be an extension of the Public Service. People do not want to be represented by members of the Public Service. We are elected members. They entrust us to do a job on their behalf. That will disfranchise people.

Mr Riebeling: Who is in your office at the moment?

Mr SWEETMAN: Two volunteers; my electorate officer does not start until 1 April.

Mr Riebeling: Who will your constituents see when you are not there?

Mr SWEETMAN: They will see my electorate officer. I am in favour of increasing the number of electorate officers. However, the proposal to double the size of the electorate and appoint electorate officers in several areas is fraught with danger. Before the last election there was a perception that the former seat of Northern Rivers, now Ningaloo, was too large. There was a perception, as there was in the electorate of the member for Burrup, that they were being represented by lazy members. I did not fan that argument when I was campaigning. However, I made it to this place, and the member for Burrup nearly did not. As a consequence of that perception and the tyranny of distance, I am here.

Mr Riebeling: I have a bigger margin than you have.

Mr SWEETMAN: Wait four years! My area is different from others. I will speak to the substantive issue of the amendment. I appreciate the passion and the conviction with which the members for Willagee and Cockburn delivered their speeches, and I have no doubt they believe 100 per cent in what they are saying. My electorate has only 10 916 electors. From the latest census material available I have about 24 000 or 25 000 people living in my electorate. On top of that another 3 000, perhaps 3 500, commute to the area - that is, fly in, fly out. Added to that is another disability, which is an old local government term for our visitor component; that is, the tourists who visit the area. For five or six months of the year my electorate has a population of about 40 000 or 50 000 people. Just because people are tourists to an electorate does not stop them from bowling down to the local member's office to complain about issues in their electorate. We are representing them.

Mr Trenorden: One of my constituents lives in the area for four months every year.

Mr SWEETMAN: He probably gives me a lot of trouble.

Mr Riebeling: Are you saying that there are more tourists who go to your area than visit Perth?

Mr SWEETMAN: I am not saying that; I am saying that the turnover in visitor numbers is large.

Vote weighting for the bush area is imperative. We must retain it, and I do not want to be drawn into the broader argument where there are anomalies, where there is not a great distance or population in some electorates. I do not want this to be an argument between the country and the city electorates. I accept different dynamics apply in the electorates in Perth.

Mr Carpenter: We agree with that.

Mr SWEETMAN: The simple fact is that the member for Willagee could leave home in the morning, drive around the whole of his electorate - I accept that he would not speak to many people - and be back in his electorate office in time for smoko. With a good run I could be around my electorate, not talk to anybody and be home in about four or five days. That is the difficulty I face in trying to represent my constituents. I also have a diversity of interests across the length and breadth of my electorate, and that must be factored in to representation.

In addition, if we want to be idealistic, in the purest sense one-vote-one-value should act as a handicap on diligent members. In other words, if the members for Willagee and Cockburn are able to increase their percentage of the vote to 70 per cent or 80 per cent, given the opposition's argument, it stands to reason that every four years we should have a redistribution so we can shepherd out some voters and keep the numbers uniform. In its truest sense, one-vote-one-value does not apply because more people are voting for one side than the other. That has a disproportionate effect when taking the percentages into account. That is why I believe going to non-compulsory voting is an inextricable component of the argument surrounding one-vote-one-value.

MR MINSON (Greenough) [4.52 pm]: I have been listening to the debate with some care. During every debate on the Address-in-Reply and in every general debate in this place since I arrived here in 1989 someone has moved an amendment along these lines. The arguments tend to become a little repetitive. If people want to read a fairly complete resume of what it is all about, they might like to dig out the addresses made by Hon Jim Clarko, which sum up the issue pretty well. I have some new material with me today, and I want to reflect on a little of it.

The argument today seems to be resting on two things, one being the Commission on Government's report. I say upfront that the Commission on Government is not necessarily a bible for this place to follow. It has put forward a lot of suggestions, quite a few of which I do not agree with, for the consideration of this place. It has put forward its point of view on a number of matters. I cannot agree with the Commission on Government in this area.

We have heard another suggestion this afternoon, and I do not think anyone has questioned it; that is, how good the federal system within Australia is. I do not think the federal system in the lower House is particularly good at all.

As a Minister, I have observed and dealt with the Federal Parliament for some time. During the past four years I was frustrated by the fact that we on this side of Australia do not get a fair deal. When it comes to being represented our people do the best they can, but the job is made nearly impossible for them because of the size of the area they look after and their numbers. They do not have the grunt to do the job. Two of the most energetic people in federal politics are probably the members for Kalgoorlie and O'Connor. They are fairly colourful characters and both of them have a huge amount of energy; however, they spend all of their time on the road. It is absolutely absurd that Graeme Campbell must represent an area that is a significant proportion of Australia.

I will just weave that into the state system. I suggest that it is not a matter of raw numbers. I believe in one-vote-one-value, too; but I do not believe in equal numbers of voters in each electorate. We should be looking at a difficulty index. It has often amused me that because someone comes from a so-called remote area or has a very large electorate, that person, therefore, must have a bigger job to do, or a bigger electorate allowance, or a bigger charter allowance. In fact, some of the quite remote electorates have only one or two population centres. Most of the electors of the member for Pilbara, who moved this amendment, live in Port Hedland.

Mr Riebeling: And Halls Creek.

Mr MINSON: I ask members to try to catch my drift. I am trying to say that by getting on a couple of planes he can be accessible to and, more importantly, can listen to the points of view of many people in his electorate without a heck of a lot of effort. I will not bring my electorate into this because it has shrunk a little. The electorate used to cover 10 shires and a little of the Geraldton City Council area, but not much. Effectively, I represented 10 shires and about 50 000 square kilometres. Let us look, for example, at the electorate of the member for Merredin. I have not bothered to count all the shires in that electorate; however, there is no commercial air service to this area. He must drive to get to his electorate, and once there must drive all over it.

If country members want to go to the local councils to find out what they think about some issue, it is very difficult. Some of the local councils in the city areas have several members of Parliament in them; for example, the City of Stirling and the Wanneroo City Council. If I or the members for Merredin or Avon want to get a cross-sectional view of what our councils think, we will be pretty busy. I make a lot of my contacts to local councils by telephone. I have had meetings with members of three of the shires in my electorate in the past three days in this building when they have come here for one reason or another. However, as a Minister, I found it almost impossible to visit the councils on the days when they met.

If there is to be vote weighting, it should not be based on population or on area, but on a difficulty index. I am prepared to countenance change, but in doing so I would like to see some attempt to tear ourselves away from the supposedly God-ordained decree that says each person's electorate shall have the same number of people in it. That is not one-vote-one-value at all; sometimes that can mean one-vote-no-value. It is time we went beyond that stupid ideology and looked at just what an electorate needs in terms of travel and representation, and the demographics of how the electorate is made up.

I live in an electorate in Perth, where my family is located, where those in the community pretty much have the same sorts of interests. I can drive from one side of that electorate to the other in a matter of minutes. It would not worry me if the size of the metropolitan electorate in which I live were doubled. It is a homogeneous mass and most people tend to approach life in the same way. They tend to face the same sorts of issues, go to the same sorts of schools, and have the same sorts of transport problems. We must get away from the silly idea that somewhere in the Bible it is written that all electorates must contain the same number of people, because that is stupid. Also, we must get away from the idea that the Australian federal system has the best electoral system, because it does not. I do not know that it ever had the best.

Mr Kobelke: It is a long way ahead of ours.

Mr MINSON: I disagree with that. Those who live in the seat of Kalgoorlie might agree with my point of view. A heck of a lot of them vote for the Opposition. It is convenient for opposition members to push this line. They have not wrapped their intellect around it at all. All we have heard about this afternoon is the Commission on Government, the federal system, and a funny thing called one-vote-one-value. The Opposition has not presented to this Parliament any sensible argument for why the State should move to a different system. I can countenance a system for Western Australia that is different from the existing system, but I want to see a system that gives proper representation and a proper voice in this place for everybody in Western Australia, or as near as possible to that. The system the Opposition puts forward will not do that. The system that exists now comes far closer to doing that than the Opposition's proposal.

I am not interested in whether the next reshuffle of boundaries amalgamates the electorates of the member for Geraldton and me and whether one of us must draw straws and fall on his sword. That is not particularly important.

What is important is that the people of the mid west area are properly represented. From what I have heard this afternoon, they are better off with the system they have than they would be with what has been put forward.

MR SHAVE (Alfred Cove - Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs) [5.01 pm]: It is interesting for the Labor Party to attack the National Party on what appears to be a positional change on electoral reform. The member for Rockingham said that since its formation the Australian Labor Party had favoured the principle of one-vote-one-value. That is not correct. It might interest the member to learn a little about the history of the Australian Labor Party on this issue. In the 1920s and 1930s the ALP wanted greater weighting in the system than did the conservative parties.

Dr Gallop: That is not true.

Mr SHAVE: The Leader of the Opposition can do his research; I have done mine. In 1929 a Labor MLA said that one member would be enough for the entire metropolitan area. The Labor Party began to push for one-vote-one-value in the 1970s. It is a late introduction into its policy. The reason it is imperative to its position at the moment is that it knows that in rural Western Australia it does not receive the same level of support as the conservative parties.

Mr Trenorden: The upper class does not reside in the country areas.

Mr SHAVE: How can we blame people in country Western Australia for trying to support their current position through their political representation? Members need look only at the federal system to see what is happening federally. Since I have been a member of this place Premiers of this State - Labor and Liberal - have said that the Federal Government neglects Western Australia and that it does not care; that the State contributes, but does not get what it should. That is true: The State produces between 25 and 30 per cent of the nation's wealth, but receives 10 to 12 per cent in grants. The Opposition can hardly blame Western Australians such as I for being angry with the centralised system of government in Australia that favours the eastern seaboard and discriminates against Western Australia.

Mr Graham: This is my Pilbara speech No 1 you're giving. I usually delete "Western Australia" and insert "Pilbara" when you guys say that, but you don't give me an extra cracker for it - not one cent!

Mr SHAVE: I am going to try to look after the member for Pilbara's mate next week, so he should be nice to me. Country people say they see what is happening in Canberra -

Dr Gallop: National Party members, not the country people, say that. There is a difference.

Mr SHAVE: No, I will get to that in a minute. The Opposition has selectively misquoted some of my colleagues from the country. On this side of the House the country members of Parliament are reluctant to support the proposition of the Opposition. The members for Ningaloo and Greenough have spoken on this matter because they are concerned about their constituents.

This debate is about changing the electoral system. Over the past four years I did not see much debate from the Labor Party about changing the electoral laws in Western Australia.

Mr Graham: We ran a private member's Bill; we took it to the High Court. What more do you want?

Mr SHAVE: It has taken the Opposition the first week in Parliament to put up this matter as one of the major items on its agenda.

Mr Graham: We did that last term. We even drafted a Bill for you.

Mr SHAVE: Why is it one of the major items on the Opposition's agenda now?

Mr Riebeling: We know that now you've lost control in the upper House you'll do something about it.

Mr SHAVE: I see. The Leader of the Opposition's conclusion that the majority of members on this side of the House are supportive of electoral change is not accurate.

Dr Gallop: I said that a majority of members of Parliament were clearly in favour of electoral reform.

Mr SHAVE: I do not consider of great consequence what Labor Party members do because if they do not conform to the party line, they are sacked.

Mr Riebeling: When do you vote against the Government, you independent person?

Mr SHAVE: I have the right in my party to do whatever I want. Does the member for Burrup?

Mr Riebeling: Have you exercised that right?

Mr SHAVE: I have not had a reason to.

Mr Riebeling: Nor have I.

Mr SHAVE: In case the member does not know the rules of his party, I inform him that if he votes against his party, he will be flicked; whereas if I vote against my party, I will not be flicked.

Dr Gallop: Who will you vote for on Saturday?

Mr SHAVE: We will see. I am amused to hear the members for Burrup and Pilbara as country members, apparently representing the people, say that they support the pure position of one-vote-one-value when they know that if members of Parliament are pulled out of country areas, it disfranchises their electorates from the decision making process. To say that the problem can be overcome by extending the electoral boundary of the member for Pilbara from the Northern Territory border to South Australia and then across to the Indian Ocean, and that he can represent the people in that electorate if he is given a couple of extra electoral officers, is nonsense. It is like my saying that if I am given a couple of extra electorate officers, I will service my electorate properly. People do not want to talk to electorate officers; they want to talk to the members. Has no-one told the member for Burrup that? Does the member ever go into his electorate office?

Mr Riebeling: I do.

Mr Graham: I do that now. I go from the Northern Territory-South Australian border to the Indian Ocean and from Turkey Creek in the north to Northam in the south. That is 172 000 square kilometres.

Mr SHAVE: Is that not reason enough for the member to understand that his constituents are not getting proper representation?

Mr Graham: A one-vote-one-value system would give me an electorate the same size as my federal colleague's. Whether or not I like him, no-one has ever argued that Graeme Campbell does not represent his electorate. He is able to do that because he is given the appropriate budget; he is not tied down as I am.

Mr SHAVE: The member knows as well as I do that with an electorate of that size a member cannot see all the electors and attend Parliament on a regular basis.

Mr Graham: If you give me an electorate of that size I want the same resources as Graeme Campbell gets; then I will do the job. If you do not, you are disfranchising my constituents.

Mr SHAVE: If the Eastern States suddenly were gracious enough to say that Western Australia is a large State, and it is not getting enough representation and should have more members of Parliament to represent the various areas -

Several members interjected.

Mr SHAVE: They will not do it because they do not have to do it, and they have the votes. Why must we go to Canberra every year and beg, cap in hand, when our State is producing the wealth to pay for the dunderheads on the east coast who are not producing? If one were to draw a line across the middle of Australia and took out Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, God help the rest of them!

People talk about philosophies. In the early years of the Australian Labor Party there was one philosophy. The situation has now changed, so party members have changed their coats to suit the fashion. Why would the ALP not want to move seats from country Western Australia? There are 14 seats in the south west and the Labor Party does not hold any of them. What is the solution? Get rid of the seats.

Dr Gallop: We advocated this in 1983 when we had all the seats.

Mr SHAVE: What does the ALP do when it does not have the numbers? It works the system. I was interested to hear that it is ALP policy to have a 10 per cent weighting. That is not democracy according to the Labor Party. An electoral system in a pure democracy has no weighting. That is the Labor Party's democratic system. The member for Pilbara tells me that he does not know how he would vote if we went to a pure system with no weighting because he would be voting against his own party's policy. If we accept the ALP's or its lay party's argument that we have weighting, the question is whether the weighting is 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent and so on. There seems to be a recognition on the part of all political parties that we should have weighting. The only people who have been constant and honest about this over the years are the conservative parties.

Mr Kobelke: Rig it and keep rigging it!

Mr SHAVE: It did not seem to bother members opposite at the last election. I did not see any public statements saying that the Labor Party thought it was unfair that it could win the election with 46.5 per cent of the vote.

Dr Gallop: We tried to change the system.

Mr SHAVE: I did not see any public statements from members opposite that supported the argument that they should not be elected with 46.5 per cent of the vote.

Mr Pandal: Did the Liberal Party come to a conclusion on the issue of one-vote-one-value, setting aside the tolerance level?

Mr SHAVE: The Liberal Party has always had the view that there should be a reasonable level of weighting. I am not trying to deceive the member with my answer. If one-vote-one-value includes 10 per cent weighting, which is the ALP's philosophy at the moment, then that is not one-vote-one-value.

Mr Pandal: Did not the new Speaker last year manage to bring about change within the Liberal Party in relation to its policy on one-vote-one-value?

Mr SHAVE: The new Speaker strongly supported change to the electoral system and advocated that strongly in the party room. There was a position, subject to a number of other changes that might occur to the Electoral Act. Within the parliamentary party there was a general view - not agreed by all members, but by a majority - that the Liberal Party would consider changes to the Electoral Act with perhaps a reduction in the existing weighting.

Mr Pandal: The majority view of the Liberal Party was to go to one-vote-one-value and the only thing undecided was the question of the tolerance level.

Mr SHAVE: No. The member is saying that the Liberal Party supported the concept of one-vote-one-value. That concept states that there is no weighting.

Mr Pandal: That is not correct.

Mr SHAVE: According to the member's interpretation, no; but according to mine, yes.

Mr Pandal: What is your view as a Government? What is the tolerance level that would take into account the sort of distortions that you have explained?

Mr SHAVE: The current Liberal Government has not reached a position on what the level of weighting should be if there is to be electoral change.

Dr Gallop: So the position you put before the election is meaningless.

Mr SHAVE: If the previous Government had come to an agreement with the National Party to change -

Dr Gallop: It did.

Mr SHAVE: If it had done that, legislation would have been introduced.

Dr Gallop: We have the agreement.

Mr SHAVE: You have shown me a press release. That is not an agreement.

Mr Carpenter: So the press release was a pack of lies.

Mr SHAVE: It said that the party had reached a position that it supported. There was no signed agreement.

Several members interjected.

Mr Trenorden: You show it to us.

Mr Pandal: You made a public statement and commitment, but you are -

Mr SHAVE: I said there was a public position.

Several members interjected.

Mr Riebeling: You are looking at several positions.

Mr SHAVE: Yes, and probably another eight or 10 issues related to electoral change would have formed part of any package that had not been determined.

Mr Riebeling: You just forgot to tell the people.

Mr SHAVE: Someone raised the issue of non-compulsory voting. We did not put that in the press release either, but that is a position that many of our members support.

Mr Pental: Do you not deny that the Premier told the House last year that the Liberal Party and the Government were heading towards one-vote-one-value?

Mr SHAVE: I agree.

Mr Pental: Therefore you are committed to one-vote-one-value but the question is one of the level of tolerance - whether it is 10 or 15 per cent -

Mr SHAVE: - or 25 per cent. That is correct.

Mr Pental: So we are all agreed on one-vote-one-value but the problem is the tolerance?

Mr SHAVE: The problem is that if we have a weighting of 25 per cent members on the other side say that it is not one-vote-one-value.

Dr Gallop: Might I remind you that you have the numbers and, therefore, the question is perfectly legitimate.

Mr SHAVE: I can count.

Mr Kobelke: You cannot answer a straight question.

Mr SHAVE: I can.

Mr Kobelke: Answer the member for South Perth.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Pental: He has answered. The Government is committed to one-vote-one-value. The only question is whether the tolerance is 5, 10 or 15 per cent. Is that correct?

Mr SHAVE: No. What the member said to me was "prior to the state election".

Dr Gallop: After the election you had a different position.

Mr SHAVE: The Leader of the Opposition read the press release which said that the coalition parties were looking at that option, or whatever the words. We have had the Leader of the National Party and the member for Avon saying that their state council position on 27 February was totally opposed to it. If members are asking me if the Government is in total support of that situation -

Dr Gallop: Might I ask a question?

Mr SHAVE: Let me finish. I have received between 20 and 50 letters from shires throughout Western Australia all opposing a reduction in vote weighting.

[The member's time expired.]

MR MCGINTY (Fremantle) [5.24 pm]: I rise because the contribution just made by the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs has cast considerable doubt on where we will go from here when reforming the voting system in this House. The position was very clear in everyone's mind prior to the election.

Mr Trenorden: In your mind, not everyone's mind.

Mr MCGINTY: The Premier, Hon Richard Court, and the Leader of the National Party, Hon Hendy Cowan, made a joint public statement.

Mr Trenorden: What is the date of it?

Mr MCGINTY: The date is 28 November 1995, 12 months before the election.

Mr Trenorden: Was it before or after the electoral agreement between the Liberal Party and the National Party was signed? You do not know.

Mr MCGINTY: We have an agreement between the Leader of the National Party and the Premier.

Mr Trenorden: We are not the Australian Labor Party. We do not have a caucus.

Mr MCGINTY: Does the member know Hendy Cowan? He is his leader who has committed the member, himself and his party.

Mr Trenorden: Not us.

Mr McGINTY: The member does not support that issue; or does he?

Mr Trenorden: Not every issue, no. I am not a member of the ALP, thank you.

Mr McGINTY: Will the member be voting against his leader on what his leader has publicly committed his party to do?

Mr Trenorden: If his position is anything other than 25 per cent, yes.

Mr McGINTY: When this issue comes up, I look forward to his crossing the floor and voting against the Government.

Mr Trenorden interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McGINTY: Before the last election the Premier and Deputy Premier made clear to the public in writing as well as telling this House what they would do after the election. That statement was quite clear. They said they did not want to rush into legislative reform in this important area before the election. They spelt out their reason as follows -

"In the current climate, any attempt by the Government to introduce major electoral changes at this time will only be seen by the electorate as a cynical attempt to introduce change for our own advantage," the leaders said.

That is fine. They went on to say that they were committed to introducing change after the election. The nature of the change set out in the media statement is thus -

. . . agreement has been reached on a system which would divide the State's electoral enrolment by 57 and allow for a variation of plus or minus 20 per cent.

That does not mean maybe 15 or 25 per cent. What has been committed to is legislation which would do away with the current vote weighting in this Parliament and replace it with a 20 per cent tolerance. I am disturbed that we have heard today from the Leader of the National Party and members of the National Party a repudiation of that pre-election commitment. People went to the election knowing that the Liberal and National Government in this State was committed to reform of the electoral system in the Legislative Assembly with the 20 per cent tolerance replacing the present two-tiered structure. Today we have heard from the National Party a complete repudiation of that. The Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs is equivocating and no longer prepared to honour the pre-election promise that was made in crystal clear terms by his leader. It is unfortunate that the Premier is not here. His word has been subjected to the scrutiny of his Minister, who will not back the Premier with the commitment he gave before the election. Maybe the Premier should be issuing some clarification on the matter. We certainly have not had it during the contributions today.

During the course of this debate we have heard an awful lot of waffle about Canberra and States' rights and the terrible Eastern States. I will put that to one side. I want to deal seriously with this important and vexed issue. We must recognise that progressively over the past two decades in Australia every State and Territory has moved to a system whereby every citizen has had approximately an equal say in electing government representatives.

Mr Minson: Western Australia is doing better than any of them.

Mr McGINTY: Western Australia is the odd place out. I know the situation that exists in the Senate and the five members guaranteed for each State in the House of Representatives. It is important when looking at this matter to recognise that in order to achieve federation 100 years ago those concessions from the democratic principle were part of the accommodation to arrive at the bringing together of all of the colonies to form the federation of Australia. Let us look not at 100 years ago but what has happened over the past few decades in Australia. Malapportionment in vote weighting has been a feature of every Australian electoral system for the best part of a century. The other important feature of every Australian electorate is the dramatic change and conformity with the principle that has emerged in the past two decades. We have seen States that have had a malapportioned electoral system, like that in Western Australia, moving away from it. South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales in both Houses have a system where every electorate has a tolerance of 10 per cent, which is necessary because of the demographic changes that occur.

Mr Omodei: Who is the wise person who selects the quota? What is the ideal number?

Mr McGINTY: I am not here to score political points. It is an issue we must address, because we are completely out of step with the rest of the country. The tolerance range varies from the Commonwealth with two and a half per

cent to the situation in the Northern Territory with 20 per cent. That is the range of tolerances that exists currently in Parliaments throughout Australia. We have 15 Parliaments throughout Australia if we count two Houses in most of the States except Queensland and the two Territories, plus the Commonwealth. Our provision at the moment, where we have a variation of 300 per cent, is obviously completely out of kilter with what exists throughout not only Australia but also the western world, where people are elected by a system of single member constituencies.

Mr Cowan: Can you tell me the difference between the smallest and largest seat in the United Kingdom?

Mr McGINTY: I know it is something greater than that. The United Kingdom is very close to having most of its seats of equal size, but because it is based on a county approach and because of the Scottish islands in the north of England, some seats are quite disproportionate, and I acknowledge that that situation exists.

The member for Avon spoke about the Canadian situation. The Canadian High Court decision to which the member for Avon referred was, as I recollect it, a challenge in the Province of Saskatchewan to the electoral boundaries. That province had two seats in remote and isolated parts of the State - and this perhaps relates to the position in the UK as well - which were 25 per cent of the quota. My recollection of that decision is that it was not so much a tolerance of 25 per cent but that those two seats were that much out. I have not read the decision for some years now so I might be wrong. I accept that there were two seats.

Geographically, that Province is not unlike Western Australia. We have the Western Desert, places with very few people in them. I could, on my understanding of the notion of electoral equality, make an exception for those two areas because of their geographic enormity. I am happy to make that concession, because we need to be reasonable about this matter. The argument which has taken place during this debate that a woman cannot give birth to a baby in a particular electorate because that will cause the absolute vote to be out by one is not worthy of this House. Those sorts of exceptions could be reasonably accommodated within the principle. The Canadian situation was found to be a constitutionally valid electoral system.

In the United States, again a system derived from the British, as in significant part is the Canadian, the accepted tolerance last time I read any of the cases was under 10 per cent, and that was a deviation from the largest to the smallest, so perhaps what we are looking at there is something less than the Australian average, if I can put it that way, of a tolerance of 10 per cent above or below the quota.

Of the approximately 15 Parliaments around Australia, apart from the Senate - which represents States, not people - the only place in which this important principle is broken is both Houses of the Western Australian Parliament. Even the Tasmania upper House, which for a long time was not unlike our upper House, has reformed itself in the past two years and has now introduced a tolerance of 10 per cent for upper House members. Apart from the constitutional requirements in respect of the Senate and the minimum number of members of the House of Representatives, no Parliament in Australia outside of this State has the unprincipled basis of electing members that we have. I urge members to recognise that the time is right to change the electoral system.

I detected in the Minister's approach a view that he did not want to be seen to be giving support to the catchcry of one-vote-one-value. Let us put that to one side. Let us talk about what it really means. The principle that underpins it is simply that every citizen in the State should have an equal say in electing the Government. We should not say that people who do not have neighbours should have a greater say than others. We should not say, and we do not say, that people who are rich should have a greater say than people of poor or humble origins. The important principle is that we are elected to represent people. We are not elected to represent sheep, iron ore mines, trees, or acres. As soon as we move away from that important principle of looking at population as the basis for constructing electoral districts, we get into significant trouble. Ten per cent seems to be accepted as a pragmatic measure to accommodate demographic changes and the like. That does no violence to the principle. The further out we move, the greater the violence to the principle, and while we on this side of the House are committed to the notion that all citizens should have, as much as is possible, an equal say in electing the Government to represent them and to govern the State, some accommodation is obviously necessary.

I agree wholeheartedly with the opening comments of the member for Pilbara. We do not redress the quality of representation question, about which many members have spoken today, by allowing members to represent economic interests or areas of land. We redress that question by providing members with the resources to enable them to present quality representation to the people whom they represent. The member for Willagee, for example, must deal with significant social problems in his electorate; I suggest significantly more difficult issues than the average member of the National Party would deal with in his or her lifetime. Perhaps the member for Willagee needs greater resources than does the member for Merredin, and certainly the member for Alfred Cove, to assist him to serve his electorate. That is a resources question. Let us not deviate from the principle. We need cooperative and constructive talk between the parties in this Parliament, because it is an issue close to the heart of us all and in which we all have a significant interest, to see whether we can come up with a system which would be regarded as fair, within the limits of that principle.

The upper House presents a particularly vexing problem. It needs reform. It is wrong to have a system that for over 100 years has guaranteed one side of politics a permanent majority. We need to restructure that House. We need to get to a system where when the political pendulum swings the way of the conservative side of politics, as it is at the moment, the conservative side of politics can expect to have a majority or a large representation in the upper House. However, when it swings back our way, as it did in the 1980s and as it inevitably will in the first decade of the next century, we should have a reasonable expectation that in a good year, we will have a chance of winning a majority of seats in that place.

The issue of the minor parties also needs to be dealt with in that context. We should not have a system which entrenches power in one side of the political spectrum regardless of what the public is saying. Within the context of allowing all citizens a roughly equal say in electing the Government, or to put it in the shorthand or catchcry phrase of one-vote-one-value, we should be able to find between us a system that satisfies the principles and is fair to the electors, not to the political parties, in that it accurately reflects their will as expressed through the ballot box.

As I have thought more and more about this issue over time, I agree with what the Leader of the Opposition has said about the importance of regional representation in respect of the upper House. If we can construct a system that is fair in the broad sense, provides for the representation of groups and regional interests, and enables the vote to reflect the swing of the political pendulum, that is what we should address in a cooperative way. I urge the Minister to embrace the question of change to the voting system. We are out of step, and we must have a change. It must be done in a principled way which allows everyone in Parliament to feel - as members do now in most other Parliaments in the western world - that the system which elects them to Parliament is fair and therefore the deliberations of the Parliament are just, democratic and fair. We on this side of the House do not feel that, for reasons that deep down everyone understands, particularly in respect of the upper House. It is simply not fair to have a system whereby city voters by legislation of this Parliament have only half the voting power of their country brothers and sisters. That is the approach which should be adopted, not one of trying to advantage one over the other or trying to disparage the important principles that underpin our system of representative government.

I urge the Minister, the Leader of the National Party, and all members of the Government to approach this matter differently from the way they have during the course of debate today. They should look at it as a principle that must be embraced to bring Western Australia into line with what one expects of a modern, representative democracy. It is not too late.

MR PENDAL (South Perth) [5.41 pm]: I briefly want to associate myself with the commitment given in November 1995 by the Premier and the Deputy Premier for one-vote-one-value. It does not matter the choice of language used at the time. The Deputy Premier would know as would every member of the coalition Government that it indisputably said that there was to be adopted one-vote-one-value in the Legislative Assembly in Western Australia with a tolerance or variation up to 20 per cent. The fact that the words "one-vote-one-value" were not used is irrelevant. Mr Deputy Speaker would know, because he had more than a passing interest in the whole matter, that the words used were that the State would be divided into 57 electorates. One can read that whatever way one likes, but it means one-vote-one-value. If the argument then becomes one of variation, that is largely academic anyway. Many country members have been sparring at shadows that probably are not there. If I had to choose a tolerance level it would probably be 10 per cent, although I may shift from that.

The Act when it is written will be a message to the commissioners that they are able to either vary the electorates by that amount or produce electorates of equal size precisely. The Act further allows for, I think, seven electorates to become out of kilter, by which time a redistribution must occur.

Mr Cowan: It does not do that. It just says there shall be a redistribution every second term.

Mr PENDAL: Then that part has altered since I was last familiar with it. Nonetheless it does not alter the principle that I am getting at.

Mr Cowan: You are right.

Mr PENDAL: The principle is that no-one that I am aware of, on either side of the House, has had serious doubts about the integrity of the electoral commissioners. We occasionally moan about the outcomes but no-one has suggested that an electoral commissioner has ever been on the take. They will produce 57 electorates, and they have the capacity to vary them according to the criteria that we lay down. Most times those criteria are able to be met by not much effort on their part. For example, when I was a member of the coalition parties I took steps to prevent the boundaries of the Perth City Council, when it was to be reconstituted, whipping across the river to Victoria Park, going around the Burswood Casino, and back across the river, with the suggestion that that would be the new boundaries of the new Perth City Council. In the end, the Minister for Local Government was forced to come into Parliament and make changes so that nonsense did not occur.

Most people understand what community of interest is and what natural boundaries are, and most people understand all the other criteria that are laid down. Therefore, in the final analysis, it does not really matter that the variations occur, because if they occur as a result of the criteria it is the whole point of their being put in initially.

That is why I think the amendment is worthy of support. I intend to support it, if for no other reason than to have the Government go on the record to say that the promises that were made at the behest of the current Speaker, who did a superb amount of work in this respect prior to the election, and the commitments that were made by the two coalition leaders will now be fulfilled: We will see a Bill in this session that will divide the State into 57 districts and according to the government parties the variation that would be acceptable would be 20 per cent.

In the current circumstances of the numbers in this House the Government will get its way. Not a lot can be said against that because the Government said it on 28 November 1995. However, it cannot now resile from that position because it would be dishonest. During the election many people made a decision based on the fundamental issue before them, perhaps not the most prominent issue but certainly an important one. Therefore, the commitment is worth supporting. The Government had an obligation to say to us today in more categorical terms than it did, that we will have changes; we will have one-vote-one-value or electorates of equal numbers; and that the tolerance level in this case would be 20 per cent. If there is any doubt about the Government's intentions, members of this House are entitled to support the amendment and have it on the public record that the Government has not made itself clear.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (18)

Mr Carpenter	Mr Kobelke	Mr Riebeling
Dr Constable	Ms MacTiernan	Mr Ripper
Dr Edwards	Mr Marlborough	Mrs Roberts
Dr Gallop	Mr McGinty	Mr Thomas
Mr Graham	Ms McHale	Ms Warnock
Mr Grill	Mr Pental	Mr Cunningham (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (24)

Mr Court	Mr MacLean	Mr Sullivan
Mr Cowan	Mr Masters	Mr Sweetman
Mr Day	Mr McNee	Mr Trenorden
Dr Hames	Mr Minson	Mr Tubby
Mrs Hodson-Thomas	Mr Omodei	Dr Turnbull
Mrs Holmes	Mrs Parker	Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Johnson	Mr Prince	Mr Wiese
Mr Kierath	Mr Shave	Mr Bloffwitch (<i>Teller</i>)

Pairs

Mr Brown	Mr Bradshaw
Ms Anwyl	Mr House
Mr McGowan	Mr Barnett

Amendment thus negatived.

Motion Resumed

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Bloffwitch.

TABLED PAPER - CORRECTION

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Osborne): I have received a request from the Premier to amend the report on consultants engaged by the Government for the six months ended 30 June 1996 tabled in the House today. Under the heading "Ministry of Premier and Cabinet" on page 1, the amount paid to Dover Consultants Pty Ltd was inadvertently excluded, which omission subsequently affects the subtotal and grand total. Accordingly, under the provisions of Standing Order No 233, I advise the House that I have authorised the necessary amendments to be made and pages to be substituted.

House adjourned at 5.54 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

LEGAL AID - OVERSEAS STUDENTS

14. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Are overseas students eligible for legal aid in Western Australia?
- (2) In the last year, has any overseas student received legal aid in Western Australia?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply -

- (1) Yes, any member of the public may access Legal Aid's telephone information service, advice bureau and duty lawyer service. To qualify for a grant of legal assistance; that is funding for a lawyer to run a case, applicants must meet a national means test and eligibility guidelines and the matter for which aid is sought must meet Legal Aid's priorities. Typically there are matters relating to indictable criminal charges, some summary criminal matters as well as serious family law cases and limited assistance in civil cases.
- (2) The Legal Aid Commission does not record information to identify whether an applicant is an overseas student or not. Legal Aid therefore cannot say how many, if any, overseas students have accessed its services.

COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT - PRIVACY LEGISLATION

17. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Has the Attorney General prepared a comprehensive options paper for public discussion of the Commission on Government's Recommendation No. 4 concerning privacy legislation?
- (2) If yes, when and how will the paper be made available to the public?
- (3) If no, why not and when will the paper be ready?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply -

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) The Attorney General has received a privacy legislation information and options paper from the Ministry of Justice and is monitoring developments in the area of privacy including the release of the commonwealth discussion paper - "Privacy Protection in the Private Sector (September 1996)". Privacy legislation has been included as an agenda item at the March 1997 meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys General.

MINISTER REPRESENTING THE MINISTER FOR THE ARTS - PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

42. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts:

What is the name of each committee, board, tribunal and all other similar bodies within the Minister's portfolio?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

The Minister for the Arts has provided the following reply -

ArtsWA -

Cultural Centre Development Committee
Ministerial Task Force on Public Act
ArtsWA Customer Service Council
ArtsWA Regional Services Committee
Ministerial Arts Advisory Board
Aboriginal Arts Assessment Panel
Local Arts Assessment Panel
Visual Arts and Crafts Assessment Panel
Literature Assessment Panel
Music Assessment Panel

Theatre Assessment Panel
 Dance Assessment Panel
 Multi-Arts, Youth, Marketing Assessment Panel
 Theatre Industry Panel
 Arts Venture Capital Advisory Board

Perth Theatre Trust -

Perth Theatre Trust Board

Western Australian Museum -

Western Australian Museum Board of Trustees
 Western Australian Maritime Museum Board
 Maritime Archaeology Advisory Committee
 Maritime History Advisory Committee
 Museum of Natural Science Board
 Social and Cultural History Museum Board
 Albany Residency Museum Board
 Museum of the Goldfields Board
 Geraldton Region Museum Board
 Western Australian Museum Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee

Library and Information Service of WA -

The Library Board of Western Australia
 Standing Committee on Public Libraries
 Standing Committee on Public Records

Art Gallery of Western Australia -

Board of the Art Gallery of Western Australia
 Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation
 Customer Service Council

Screen West -

Screen West Board
 Project Development Panel
 Production Funding Panel
 Conference Advisory Panel

MINISTER REPRESENTING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL - PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

44. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

What is the name of each committee, board, tribunal and all other similar bodies within the Attorney General's portfolio?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply -

The following statutory boards, committees and tribunals are under the jurisdiction of the Hon Attorney General and Minister for Justice -

Appeal Costs Board
 Commercial Tribunal
 Commercial Tribunal - Consumers Panel
 Commercial Tribunal - Credit Providers Panel
 Commercial Tribunal - Landlords Panel
 Commercial Tribunal - Tenants Panel
 Commercial Tribunal - Experts Panel
 Commercial Tribunal - Travel Agents Panel
 Criminal Injuries Compensation
 Equal Opportunity Tribunal
 Guardianship and Administration Board
 Law Reform Commission Board
 Law Reporting Advisory Board
 Legal Aid Commission Board
 Legal Contribution Trust
 Legal Costs Committee
 Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal
 Legal Practitioners Complaints Committee

Mentally Impaired Defendants Review Board (being formed)
Parole Board
Prison Officers Appeal Tribunal
Retirement Villages Disputes Tribunal
Small Claims Tribunal
Strata Titles Referee
Supervised Release Review Board
WA Financial Institutions Authority Board

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE - PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

46. Dr CONSTABLE to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice:

What is the name of each committee, board, tribunal and all other similar bodies within the Parliamentary Secretary's portfolio?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The following statutory boards, committees and tribunals are under the jurisdiction of the Hon Attorney General and Minister for Justice.

Appeals Costs Board
Commercial Tribunal
Commercial Tribunal - Consumers Panel
Commercial Tribunal - Credit Providers Panel
Commercial Tribunal - Landlords Panel
Commercial Tribunal - Tenants Panel
Commercial Tribunal - Experts Panel
Commercial Tribunal - Travel Agents Panel
Criminal Injuries Compensation
Equal Opportunity Tribunal
Guardianship and Administration Board
Law Reform Commission Board
Law Reporting Advisory Board
Legal Aid Commission Board
Legal Contribution Trust
Legal Costs Committee
Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal
Legal Practitioners Complaints Committee
Mentally Impaired Defendants Review Board (being formed)
Parole Board
Prison Officers Appeal Tribunal
Retirement Villages Disputes Tribunal
Small Claims Tribunal
Strata Titles Referee
Supervised Release Review Board
WA Financial Institutions Authority Board

GOVERNMENT PROPERTY - SALE

59. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Health:

(1) In relation to all real estate (land and buildings) sold within your portfolio in the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years -

- (a) where was the real estate situated (giving the actual address of the land and building);
- (b) for what amount was the real estate sold;
- (c) when, if ever, was the most recent valuation of the real estate conducted; and
- (d) what was the value of the real estate according to the valuation?

(2) What real estate within your portfolio is currently for sale or in the process of being sold?

Mr PRINCE replied:

(1) 1995-96 and 1996-97 Real Estate sold

- 1.1 (a) Lot 64 Carter Street Three Springs - Old Staff Residence.
- (b) \$53 000
- (c) 29 November 1996
- (d) \$57 000

- 1.2 (a) Lot 684 (No. 37) Robinson Street, Carnarvon - Staff Accommodation
 (b) \$55 000
 (c) 9 January 1996
 (d) \$55 000
- 1.3 (a) Lot 7 (No. 141) Newcastle Street, Perth - Clinic
 (b) \$250 005
 (c) 29 November 1996
 (d) \$250 005
- 2 Real Estate currently for sale or in the process of being sold
- 2.1 Locations 4250, 4255, 4256, 4257
 Murdoch 'Superblock'
 Farrington Road/Murdoch Drive/Kwinana Freeway, Murdoch
- 2.2 Mt. Henry Hospital
 Cloister Avenue, Como
- 2.3 Locations 408 and 144
 (Farm paddocks opposite Whitby Falls Hostel site).
 South Western Highway, Mundijong
- 2.4 Yule Brook Farm
 Bickley Road, Kenwick
- 2.5 (Part) Wanneroo Hospital Site
 Shenton Avenue, 1Ha for Nursing Home
- 2.6 3 x Houses at Carnarvon
- 2.7 2 x Vacant Blocks of Land at Carnarvon
- 2.8 1 House at Esperance
- 2.9 4 x Houses at Pinjarra

GOVERNMENT PROPERTY - SALE

64. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts:
- (1) In relation to all real estate (land and buildings) sold within your portfolio in the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years -
- (a) where was the real estate situated (giving the actual address of the land and building);
- (b) for what amount was the real estate sold;
- (c) when, if ever, was the most recent valuation of the real estate conducted; and
- (d) what was the value of the real estate according to the valuation?
- (2) What real estate within your Minister's portfolio is currently for sale or in the process of being sold?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

The Minister for the Arts has provided the following reply -

Department for the Arts -

- (1)-(2) None.

Western Australian Museum -

- (1) Not applicable.
 (2) Nil.

Art Gallery of Western Australia -

- (1) The Art Gallery of Western Australia has not sold any real estate - land and buildings - in the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years.
- (2) The Art Gallery of Western Australia has no real estate currently for sale or in the process of being sold.

Library and Information Service of WA -

(1)-(2) Not applicable

Perth Theatre Trust -

(1)-(2) Nil.

Screen West -

(1)-(2) Nil.

GOVERNMENT PROPERTY - SALE

66. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) In relation to all real estate (land and buildings) sold within your portfolio in the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years -
 - (a) where was the real estate situated (giving the actual address of the land and building);
 - (b) for what amount was the real estate sold;
 - (c) when, if ever, was the most recent valuation of the real estate conducted; and
 - (d) what was the value of the real estate according to the valuation?
- (2) What real estate within the Attorney General's portfolio is currently for sale or in the process of being sold?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply -

- (1) There has been no real estate sold within the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years.
- (2) The former St Brigids Convent (Crown Reserve 40197) John Street, Northbridge is in the process of being sold.

GOVERNMENT PROPERTY - SALE

69. Dr CONSTABLE to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice:

- (1) In relation to all real estate (land and buildings) sold within your portfolio in the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years -
 - (a) where was the real estate situated (giving the actual address of the land and building);
 - (b) for what amount was the real estate sold;
 - (c) when, if ever, was the most recent valuation of the real estate conducted; and
 - (d) what was the value of the real estate according to the valuation?
- (2) What real estate within your Minister's portfolio is currently for sale or in the process of being sold?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply -

- (1) There has been no real estate sold within the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years.
- (2) The former St Brigids Convent - Crown reserve 40197 - John Street, Northbridge is in the process of being sold.

HEALTH - ROSS RIVER VIRUS

Government Strategies

79. Mr PENDAL to the Minister for Health:

- (1) How many cases of Ross River virus have been reported in each year for the past ten years in Western Australia?
- (2) How many cases of other mosquito-borne diseases have been reported in each of these years?

- (3) What strategies are in place, or are planned to -
- (a) combat these current mosquito-borne diseases; and
 - (b) minimise any escalation in them?
- (4) Have estimates been made on the economic impact, especially to the workplace, of Ross River and similar diseases, given their ability to incapacitate victims?
- (5) If not, will the Government consider implementing a comprehensive program on ways to deal with the problem?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1) Number of notified cases of Ross River virus in each year for the past ten years in Western Australia.

Year	No Cases of RR virus
1987	61
1988	150
1989	672
1990	51
1991	237
1992	723
1993	151
1994	97
1995	210
1996	1 479

- (2) Barmah Forest virus and Australian Encephalitis are the only other mosquito-borne viruses which are locally acquired in Western Australia. Barmah Forest virus became notifiable in June 1994; hence there are no figures prior to 1994 for this disease.

Year	No. Cases of BF Virus	No Cases of AE
1987	-	0
1988	-	0
1989	-	1
1990	-	1
1991	-	2
1992	-	0
1993	-	9
1994	9	0
1995	8	1
1996	48	0

- (3) Strategies for combatting current mosquito borne diseases and for minimising any escalation of these diseases are the same. Current strategies include -
- (a) Aerial application of larvicides in the Peel and Bunbury regions. Application of larvicides follows the determination of the timing of mosquito breeding cycles. This surveillance is carried out in conjunction with local government officers.
 - (b) Planning and implementation of cost effective mosquito control strategies in the various regions in conjunction with local government.
 - (c) Fortnightly surveillance of mosquitoes and Ross River virus at a number of strategic high risk areas in the South West.
 - (d) Fortnightly surveillance of Australian Encephalitis activity occurs at 22 major population centres throughout the northern half of Western Australia. This provides an early warning system which is the basis of health alerts by the media.
 - (e) Testing of larvicides to determine resistance of mosquito larvae. Evaluation of the efficacy of newly available larvicides such as altsid briquettes for saltmarsh mosquito control in the Karratha area.
 - (f) Funding of contiguous local authority groups to share the cost of larvicide application.
 - (g) Research into the ecology of Ross River virus and the mosquitoes that transmit it. This is carried out by the University of Western Australia Department of Microbiology.

- (h) Environmental research to assess the feasibility, effectiveness and suitability of the drainage/filling to provide long term low maintenance control of saltmarsh mosquitoes which are the main vectors of Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses.
 - (i) Provision of public information and education material to increase public awareness and encourage the adoption of personal preventative measures against mosquito bites.
 - (j) Training courses to local government officers and others on mosquito biology, mosquito borne disease and mosquito control strategies; eg. a course is currently being conducted in Broome between 11-14 March 1997.
 - (k) Issue of public warnings through the media.
- (4) The economic cost of each case of Ross River virus has been conservatively estimated at \$2 612. This does not include the broader adverse impacts, such as the impact on tourism.
- (5) Not applicable.

HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITIES - TASMANIAN CRIMINAL CODE

High Court Challenge - Intervention

102. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) What does the Attorney General estimate to be the cost to the Government of intervening in the High Court challenge initiated by homosexual activists against aspects of the Tasmanian criminal code, including airfares, accommodation, legal fees, court costs and salaries?
- (2) How many Government staff were required to travel to Canberra for the intervention?
- (3) How many legal representatives were required to travel to Canberra for the intervention?
- (4) On what grounds did the Attorney General seek to intervene in this matter?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply -

- (1)-(4) The State has not incurred any expenditure to date in respect of this High Court action. It will seek to intervene at the appropriate time.

HOMOSEXUALITY - AGE OF CONSENT

Commonwealth Legislation

105. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Is the Attorney General aware that the Human Rights (Sexual Conduct) Act 1994 (Commonwealth) sets a maximum age of consent for adults at 18?
- (2) Is the Attorney General aware that the age of consent for homosexual male adults in Western Australia is 21?
- (3) Does the Attorney General accept that s.109 of the Australian Constitution maintains that where there is a conflict between a Federal and State law, the Federal law prevails?
- (4) If no to (3) above, why not?
- (5) If yes to (3) above, why did the Western Australian Government seek to intervene in the High Court challenge involving the declaration of the Human Rights (Sexual Conduct) Act 1994 (Commonwealth)?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following response -

- (1)-(3) Yes.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Because the High Court challenge involved issues of constitutional law and the respective powers of the Commonwealth and States.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT - DISCRIMINATION

Repeal

109. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Did the Attorney General claim that the State should not outlaw discrimination just because it exists?
- (2) If yes, will the Attorney General seek to repeal the Equal Opportunity Act 1984, on the grounds that it outlaws discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, religion, marital status, disability, political affiliation, age and impairment?
- (3) If no, why not?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following response -

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.
- (3) In certain circumstances it is justifiable to override an individual's right to discriminate. Such circumstances include protection against discrimination on the grounds and in the areas stipulated in the Equal Opportunities Act 1984.

INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS - COURTS

Budget Allocation

124. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) How much has been allocated in the Attorney General's budget for translator and interpreter services for -
 - (a) 1995-96;
 - (b) 1996-97?
- (2) How much has been allocated for the Criminal Court area?
- (3) How much has been allocated for the Family Court area?
- (4) How much has been allocated for the civil court actions area?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following response -

- (1) (a) \$35 200.
(b) \$47 200.
- (2),(4) Allocations for criminal and civil jurisdictions are not separately identified.
- (3) A separate funding allocation of \$7 500 per annum for Family Court translator and interpreter services is provided by the Commonwealth.

PRISONS - PRISONERS

English Language Skills

125. Ms WARNOCK to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice:

What English as a second language courses have been provided for both men and women in Western Australian prisons who have inadequate English language skills?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following response -

The Ministry of Justice gives resourcing priority within Adult Basic Education to Aborigines, women, those from an English as a second language and those with an intellectual disability. Educational courses are available throughout the prison system and offered on a "needs basis", for example, the current Indo-Chinese group in Broome Regional Prison. A flexible system of delivery dependent on the prison population's special needs and numbers has

been developed. The Ministry of Justice also offers functional language courses to prisoners to assist them in coping with prison life in a foreign setting.

CASUARINA PRISON - SECURITY

151. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Justice:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of an article that appeared in *The West Australian* on 8 January 1997, concerning the Justice Ministry admitting that soft handling of the State's most dangerous prisoners had led to a drop in security at Casuarina Prison?
- (2) Has there in fact been a soft handling of the State's most dangerous prisoners at Casuarina Prison?
- (3) What was the purpose of the policy?
- (4) Was the Minister advised of the policy?
- (5) If not, why not?
- (6) Is the Minister also aware the same media article reported that staff could not be held responsible for the attempted escapes at Casuarina Prison?
- (7) Does the Government accept that staff could not be held responsible for the attempted escapes?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No. However, management did implement a less intrusive regime.
- (3) To better manage the unit with no intended reduction in security.
- (4) No.
- (5) The policy related to the special handling unit management only.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) Yes, in the context of the open letter to Casuarina staff dated 7 January 1997 as reported in *The West Australian* on 8 January 1997.

PRISONS - PROPOSED CHANGES

158. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of an article that appeared in *The West Australian* newspaper on 13 January 1997 which called for a complete overhaul of the prison system with an emphasis on prisoner rehabilitation?
- (2) Does the Minister intend to overhaul the system?
- (3) Exactly what action does the Minister intend to take to change the existing system?
- (4) What will be the objectives of the new and/or revised system?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following response -

- (1)-(2) Yes.
- (3) Additional to those measures to ensure the safety of the public and security and good order of prisons the following measures will be enhanced progressively in prisons -

More accurate assessment of the risk of recidivism of individual prisoners and program needs; further development of programs which are better tailored to reduce the risk of recidivism; enhanced case management of prisoners so that treatment and educational programs are accessed by prisoners; enhanced prison to community transition programs to provide a smoother return of prisoners to the community; the development of a unified IT system for all offenders.
- (4) The objectives of the revised system are -

To ensure secure custody of offenders for the protection of the community; to ensure the health and safety of prisoners in custody; to minimise future recidivism of offenders in custody by all available means including the provision of remedial programs, further education and the development of employment skills; to manage offenders in the community so as to reduce future recidivism; to collaborate with other agencies in strategies to achieve the primary prevention of crime.

PRISONS - INMATES

Young Offenders

164. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice:

- (1) Has an estimate been made of the number of young offenders who that will be sentenced to a period of imprisonment under the "three strikes and you're in" laws introduced in the Criminal Code Amendment Act in late 1996?
- (2) Has an estimate been made on the likely increase in prison population as a result of that law?
- (3) If so, to what extent is the prison population likely to increase in actual numbers and in percentage terms?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Minister for Justice has provided the following response -

- (1) Yes, in relation to sentences of detention imposed under the Young Offenders Act.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) It has been estimated that in a full year a net increase of 125 prison beds will be required. This equates to an increase of 5.6 per cent on the muster as at 10 March 1997.

PRISONS - SECTION 9 INQUIRIES

Ministry of Justice - Intelligence Unit

188. Mr BROWN to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Further to question on notice 1503 of 1996, did the Intelligence Unit at the Ministry of Justice play any part or provide any information to the section 9 inquiries into Casuarina and Canning Vale prisons or the police inquiries into certain matters in the Ministry of Justice concerning -
 - (a) cost overruns in the Building Services Division of the former Department of Corrective Services;
 - (b) allegations about the Masonic Lodge;
 - (c) the alleged assault against prisoner Chapman;
 - (d) the alleged assault against prisoner McKenna;
 - (e) matters raised by complaints to the police task force;
 - (f) abuse of the promotional system;
 - (g) bad administration of the investigations' office;
 - (h) allegations of drug trafficking by prison officers; and
 - (i) the influence of a prison clique known as the "purple circle"?
- (2) Did Mr Barry Corse provide any information to the Ministry of Justice on any of the matters contained in the aforementioned question?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following response -

- (1)

(a)	No.
(b)-(d)	Yes.
(e)-(h)	No
(i)	Yes
- (2) Yes.

DETENTION CENTRE - LONGMORE

Disturbance - Investigation

190. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice:

- (1) Was there a disturbance at the Longmore Detention Centre on or around Sunday, 16 February 1997?

- (2) What was the nature of the disturbance?
- (3) Was property damaged?
- (4) What property was damaged?
- (5) What was the cost of the damage?
- (6) Prior to the disturbance, did the management of the institution or any other person in the Ministry of Justice receive any information that such an incident may occur?
- (7) On what day, date and time was that information received?
- (8) Were staff warned of a possibility of a disturbance?
- (9) Were any additional security precautions taken after the advice was received?
- (10) Has there been an investigation into the disturbance?
- (11) What did the investigation find?
- (12) Has the investigation come up with any recommendations?
- (13) What are those recommendations?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Minister of Justice has provided the following response -

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Four consecutive incidents of damage to property involving five detainees and a further three detainees were inciting others.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Twenty-four windows, three televisions, one Nintendo television game, one light fitting, one guitar and three pool cues were destroyed.
- (5) Approximately \$5 000.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) Thursday 13 February 1997 at approximately 1600 hours.
- (8)-(10) Yes.
- (11) Two possible scenarios have been suggested. They are -
To cause a diversion to enable a group of detainees to smoke marijuana in the quad.
To cause a diversion and deplete staff numbers in order to effect an escape via the control room.
- (12) Yes.
- (13) A number of security adjustments be made to the locks on the control room doors. The five detainees responsible for damage be placed on individual management regimens and separated in the program. That they continue on "strict" security classification. That the five detainees be charged by police for wilful damage. The three detainees responsible for inciting were isolated for 24 hours. The investigation continued in an attempt to ascertain if scenario two or any other scenario was to be effected.

DETENTION CENTRE - LONGMORE

Disturbance - Investigation

205. Mr GRILL to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Does the Health Department keep statistics detailing the number of deaths in Kalgoorlie-Boulder per annum?
- (2) Can the deaths of people of Aboriginal descent be extrapolated from the statistics?

- (3) If so, would the Minister supply the number of persons of Aboriginal descent dying in Kalgoorlie-Boulder in each of the last ten years?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1)-(2) Yes.

- (3) Using the postcodes 6429 - 6442 to represent the Kalgoorlie-Boulder statistical local area, the following Aboriginal deaths have been recorded -

Year	Aboriginal Deaths
1986	38
1987	29
1988	29
1989	30
1990	28
1991	40
1992	28
1993	48
1994	26
1995	31

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

EAST PERTH REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY - CHAIRMAN

36. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for Planning:

I refer to the Minister's admission in the Press today that former Minister for Planning, Richard Lewis, is being considered for the position of chairperson of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority.

- (1) Why did the Minister treat Parliament with such contempt yesterday by concealing the fact that Richard Lewis was being considered for the chairperson's position - a fact the Minister later conceded to the media?
- (2) Who nominated Richard Lewis for the position?
- (3) Who else is being considered for the position of chairperson of the authority?
- (4) Is Mr Lewis being considered for any other government jobs?

Mr KIERATH replied:

- (1)-(4) I did not treat the Parliament with any contempt yesterday - quite the reverse. I thought the Leader of the Opposition worked out the real answer behind my answer to the question. I answered the question as the member asked it.

Dr Edwards: Very smart.

Mr KIERATH: I did. No final decision has been made about who will be chairman of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority. Richard Lewis is being considered, along with a couple of other people. The member for Maylands can rest assured that as soon as the decision is made, she will be one of the first to know.

DISABILITY SERVICES - BUDGET CUTS

Meeting with Non-government Organisations

37. Mr OSBORNE to the Minister for Disability Services:

Will the Minister advise the House of the key issues raised at his meeting last night with non-government organisations to discuss the foreshadowed commonwealth budget cuts to Western Australian disability services, and the response by Minister Moylan following his meeting with her this morning?

Mr OMODEI replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. Last night I met over 60 representatives from non-government disability organisations, which are funded under the Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement tied grant services and which are the specific target of the commonwealth funding cuts. The major message at the meeting was that disability organisations do not have any fat to cut and that many will not be able to sustain their current services to

people with disabilities if the Commonwealth imposes its so-called efficiency dividend of 4 per cent in 1997-98 with a further 1 per cent for the following two years. These organisations are already stretching their resources to the limit to deal with the significant level of unmet demand for services by people with disabilities and their families and carers. The fact that there is significant unmet demand for disability accommodation and support services across Australia was clearly documented in last year's national evaluation of the Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement, which is due to expire in June this year. The rationale for specifically focusing on demand in the national evaluation was principally to establish funding arrangements in the next agreement which more adequately meet the demand than has the current agreement. It is, therefore, disturbing to me that the Commonwealth, as a major party to this identification process, has threatened budget cuts in the first three years of the new agreement. For its part, the State Government has acknowledged the needs of people with disabilities in its Count Us In strategy which will inject \$125.5m of new funding over five years.

I have asked non-government disability organisations - and they have agreed - to lobby all Western Australian federal members of Parliament asking them to insist that disability services be exempt from the 1997-98 federal budget reduction.

At my meeting with Minister Moylan this morning she confirmed the Commonwealth's intention to impose the 4 per cent plus 1 per cent plus 1 per cent budget cuts. I would like to work cooperatively with the Minister to increase funding to people with disabilities in Western Australia. However, faced with this unyielding position, I am forced to take a strongly defensive action. I have advised Mrs Moylan that, if the Commonwealth imposes the cuts as stated, I must seriously consider whether to sign the next CSDA. At the same time I must consider my options regarding future commonwealth-state responsibility for the CSDA tied grant services in Western Australia.

My state counterparts are so concerned about these cuts and the future funding of disability services that a meeting of State Ministers has been set up for 17 April to discuss our position. In the meantime I invite all members of this Parliament to do all they can to influence the Federal Government to change its mind about funding cuts to people with disabilities.

GLOBAL DANCE FOUNDATION - FUNDING

Cabinet Consideration

38. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

- (1) Was the Premier involved in the decision to provide government support for the Global Dance Foundation to stage a world dance congress in Perth?
- (2) Was this a matter for Cabinet consideration?
- (3) Is the Premier concerned that \$430 000 has been paid to the Global Dance Foundation without any guarantee that the event will be held, and that only half that amount can be recouped if the event does not occur?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(3) I was the Minister for Tourism at the time the decision was made and I was aware of the proposal. When the proposal was put to me, it was sent to the Tourism Commission which made its decision on the matter.

Dr Gallop: Did you make any recommendations?

Mr COURT: No. The proposal was put to me and then passed to the Tourism Commission. All the relevant information on this matter is available. The Tourism Commission has been successful in attracting many one-off events, such as the world swimming and world triathlon events. Focus has been placed on attracting more ongoing cultural events and events that occur every year, so that the benefits are ongoing. This was seen as such an opportunity. Certainly, some risk was involved but all these events have some risk factors. There has never been an international event at which different international dancers come together. Obviously, the foundation has had some difficulty meeting the original timetable. This Government has been behind a number of proposals. It is concerned that the group has not met its commitments but the Leader of the Opposition must accept that, if an attempt is made to attract events to this State, from time to time difficulties will arise.

The other problem of major events with a high profile, such as the Heineken and Rally Australia events, is that every year more is asked for the rights to those events. The time is reached when decisions must be made about whether full benefit is obtained from such events. I repeat that the proposal put to me was sent to the Tourism Commission which then acted on its own advice. I do not believe it did go to Cabinet; it would not normally. However, I will pursue that matter.

GLOBAL DANCE FOUNDATION - FUNDING

*EventsCorp Advice***39. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:**

Was the decision to grant the money made against the advice of EventsCorp?

Mr COURT replied:

As I said, any decision would have been made on the advice of the Tourism Commission.

Dr Gallop: EventsCorp is part of the commission.

Mr COURT: I am not aware that it supplied any specific advice. It is part of the tourism body.

Dr Gallop: Will you provide the advice it gave?

Mr COURT: Yes. If EventsCorp advised against it, I will provide that advice. As I said, we would go into something only on the advice of the commission.

MANDURAH SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOMS

*Transportable***40. Mr NICHOLLS to the Minister for Education:**

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the large number of transportables and demountable classrooms currently located at Mandurah Senior High School?
- (2) Does the Minister support the construction of an additional high school within the Halls Head area to provide for the rapidly growing number of students in the Mandurah area?
- (3) If so, will a new high school be constructed and be available for the commencement of the 1999 school year?

Mr BARNETT replied:

- (1) Although I have not yet visited that school, I intend to do so. However, I am aware that the school has a very large number of transportable and demountable classrooms and that the school population in Mandurah and the Peel area is increasing very rapidly. While those buildings are certainly less than desirable, by the end of this year all will be air cooled - most of them are now and that mitigates some of the problems.
- (2) Clearly, there will be further expenditure on new facilities for secondary education in the area. My own preference - it is only my preference - is to have a senior college, which I believe will offer better academic and vocational programs for students in the area. That route requires coordination between the new college, Coodanup Senior High School and Mandurah Senior High School. There is a division in the area about that proposal. I look forward to going there with the member to meet parents, teachers and principals to discuss that issue.
- (3) I cannot guarantee that a new high school will be constructed by the beginning of 1999. However, we will certainly commit to expanding facilities for secondary education in Mandurah, whether it be a separate high school or senior college - that is a decision yet to be made. I would prefer the separate college; it is a more sophisticated way of progressing and it will be better in the long term. Similar issues arise in Kalgoorlie. I cannot guarantee that the facilities will be in place by the beginning of the 1999 school year, but they will be not long after that.

ALINTAGAS - KINGSTREAM PROJECT

*State Support***41. Mr GRILL to the Minister for Resources Development:**

- (1) Has the Government agreed to provide state support for the Kingstream project?
- (2) If yes, what is the nature and extent of such support and does it apply to the proposed Oakagee port?
- (3) What advice was sought and what processes were followed in determining this matter?
- (4) If no, is the Government considering the provision of such support?

(5) What support is being considered?

Mr BARNETT replied:

(1)-(5) We need to be very clear when we talk about the provision of state support or what some might call subsidies. There is no transfer of income in any form from the State Government to the Kingstream project. However, as part of its agreement, which I hope will be tabled in Parliament next week, the State has negotiated a position that will allow the project to be located at Oakagee and, associated with that, will provide infrastructure, including rail, power, water and - the major item - a deep sea port. Provisions in the agreement Act protect the State's position. If the project proceeds at Oakagee, the State will develop - probably privately funded - a new port and infrastructure and, more particularly, a new state of the art industrial site.

Mr Ripper: Underwriting private investment.

Mr BARNETT: That will be done for the benefit of economic development in this State. The first company to benefit will be Kingstream Resources NL. However, it will be only one company -

Dr Gallop: So the member for Greenough was right in his advertisement during the election campaign; he was right all along.

Mr BARNETT: The Leader of the Opposition really must concentrate.

Dr Gallop: I'm concentrating very hard.

Mr BARNETT: There is no grant, subsidy or income transfer to the Kingstream project.

Dr Gallop: It's just a guarantee, that's all.

Mr BARNETT: There is no guarantee for the Kingstream project at all. There is a sharp distinction between the policies of this Government and those of the previous Labor Government in assisting industrial development.

Dr Gallop: Tell us what it is.

Mr BARNETT: I am about to tell the member - he really must learn to listen harder.

We will assist in providing infrastructure. Anything at all provided in the way of industrial development within my portfolio of Resources Development is infrastructure available for the use of a project and by third-party users - all of it is common-user infrastructure. There is no underwriting and subsidy for Kingstream at all.

Dr Gallop: What is the total state commitment?

Mr Ripper: How much money will the State spend?

Mr BARNETT: Members should wait until next week when the state agreement is a public document.

Dr Gallop: Tell us now.

Mr BARNETT: No; I will table the documents next week.

MINISTRY OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET - ELLIOTT, MR RICHARD

Consultancy and Employment

42. Dr CONSTABLE to the Premier:

I refer to the consultant's report for the six months ended 30 June 1996 which was tabled in the Parliament this morning.

- (1) When did the consultancy for the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet, Dover Consultants Pty Ltd, specifically for the services provided by Mr Richard Elliott, cease?
- (2) Has Mr Elliott been engaged in the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet since the beginning of 1996 and, if so, in what capacity?

Mr COURT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

(1)-(2) I advise that the report tabled today had some omissions - I was just advised of this before coming into the Chamber - and the aspect raised in the question was one of the omissions. A correction will come through

in relation to that report, I hope this afternoon; if not, tomorrow. The member is quite correct that the report had an omission on that point and, I am told, some others as well. I apologise for that. Those corrections will be made as soon as possible.

EDUCATION - TRUANCY

Rate

43. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Education:

The independent child health survey on education, health and academic competence last month expressed great concern about the number of children not attending school. Will the Minister explain -

- (1) How almost 11 per cent of students describe themselves as truants when teachers have estimated the level of truancy to be only 6 per cent?
- (2) Why 14 per cent of students can be absent from school for over half a day per week, and are deemed by the report as being at risk of lower academic competence?
- (3) Is truancy a much greater problem than has ever been officially acknowledged?

Mr BARNETT replied:

(1)-(3) On any given day in our schools, around 1 per cent of students are absent without a proper explanation.

Mr Ripper: It is 1 950 per day.

Mr BARNETT: It is 1 per cent of -

Mr Ripper: It is 1 950!

Mr BARNETT: There is a bit of a rule in this House that one side asks the questions, and the other side answers them.

On any given day around 1 per cent of students are absent without proper explanation by way of illness, movement of parents or whatever. Within particular segments of the population, be it cultural or geographical groupings, the figures can vary greatly. As I have said in the House before, among Aboriginal children the absenteeism rate - truancy if the member wants to call it that - is 15 to 20 per cent. It is an outrageous situation which has been going on for generations within Australia and our system.

Mr Ripper: This data in the report does not include the Aboriginal element.

Mr BARNETT: I can only assume that the member opposite wants to debate the methodology of a sample survey. I am telling the member the Education Department's assessments through principals; that is, we have around 1 per cent of unexplained student absences in our education system.

I do not dismiss truancy as an issue. I know a number of schools have a severe problem with truancy, and many programs are being put in place at school level to reduce truancy. A great deal of cooperation is taking place with the social justice committee, involving police, welfare agencies and the like. This is a problem in our schools, but it is not a new one. I take it seriously. I do not believe the figures in the report accurately reflect the true situation across the State in the Education Department. Some of the issues the report raises about truancy and about the performance of our children in schools are very important. One of the main conclusions of that study is that socioeconomic background, employment status, occupation, achievement levels and qualifications of the parents affect, in a statistical sense, the performance of children at school. That is the principal conclusion of that study. I am not surprised by it, but it is important.

MINING - MINERAL SANDS

Beenup, Benefits to Region

44. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Resources Development:

Being aware that yesterday the Minister officially opened the BHP mineral sands mine at Beenup, north east of Augusta, and having worked with the mineral sands industry in the Capel area for many years and being aware of the major economic benefits brought to the Capel region by its activities, could the Minister advise what employment and other benefits have been created by the Beenup project and what long term benefits will flow to the south west region as a result of the mine opening?

Mr BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for his first question. Although the Beenup project is not within Vasse, it certainly has implications through his electorate, the electorate of Warren-Blackwood and indeed those of Bunbury and Mitchell. The Beenup project is a significant development. It is the fifth mineral sands project in this State and the second on the south coast. Compared to some other developments around the State the expenditure on it is perhaps not very large, although \$220m is a lot of money. A number of features of the project are important. The first is that the company, BHP Titanium, went out of its way to employ local people. Of the 150 permanent jobs two-thirds have gone to local people. That is a significant and credible strategy adopted by the company. The State Government through various agencies had a lot of involvement in the project. One of the major benefits is the provision of infrastructure, not exclusively for this project but for other users. BHP contributed a significant \$12m for the construction of a new powerline, which reinforces all the southern Augusta region. It also contributed \$17m to the upgrading of Sues Road, which will be available for all users in Western Australia, both industrial and private. It provides shorter, quicker access to the south coast. It also provides for the separation of heavy vehicles from tourist and private vehicles, which is desirable. I am sure the member will agree that it will be of substantial benefit to his electorate.

The work content is also of great credit to the company. The content is 95 per cent Australian and 75 per cent Western Australian. Some \$15m a year is spent on wages, salaries and services in the south west region. We always think of the transport and engineering companies which benefit. United Construction built the world's biggest dredge for the project and engineering and transport firms around Bunbury were involved. However, one example that catches my attention is that of the Augusta Hotel. It had \$800 000 worth of bookings during the construction period. The benefits of such major projects flow through all sectors of the economy in a very pervasive way.

POLICE - CORRUPTION

*Existing Watchdogs***45. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:**

- (1) Does the Minister for Police stand by his reported comments in *The West Australian* of 17 February that existing corruption watchdogs are tough enough to root out police corruption and that Western Australia does not have anywhere near the extent of police corruption that exists in Queensland and New South Wales?
- (2) If so, on what basis did he come to these conclusions so soon after his appointment?

Mr DAY replied:

- (1) Yes, I do stand by those comments.
- (2) I may have been appointed Minister for Police about eight weeks ago but I was elected a member of this Parliament four years ago. During that time I have been able to make a number of observations, both through press reports and my own observations, about the Western Australia Police Service. I do not have the view that endemic or substantial corruption exists in the Western Australia Police Service. Nevertheless, we must recognise that from time to time problems do exist. Where they exist and are identified and reported, adequate action needs to be taken. Over the past two years the Western Australia Police Service has been substantially restructured. There is now an assistant commissioner for professional standards; in other words, somebody to deal with the area of corruption in the Police Service and to report directly to the Commissioner of Police. The level of control in that area has been very much upgraded. The Official Corruption Commission has been completely revamped and is now named the Anti-Corruption Commission. It has been given the power to investigate any reports of corruption within the Police Force. I am aware that it has a copy of the report of the so-called Tomlinson committee from the other place. The Ombudsman in Western Australia has power to investigate matters of corruption or allegations of wrongdoing in the Police Service. The Police Service contains internal investigations and internal affairs sections to take action against its own people. Therefore, an adequate structure is in place in Western Australia to deal with any allegations of corruption. If a deficiency is shown to exist in the future we will take appropriate action.

POLICE - CORRUPTION

*Anti-Corruption Commission Briefing***46. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:**

I ask a supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

- (1) Has the Minister had a briefing yet by the Anti-Corruption Commission, and if so, when?
- (2) Has the Minister now read last year's Select Committee on the WA Police Service report on police corruption?
- (3) If not, why not? If so, has his reading of the select committee report changed any of his views?

Mr DAY replied:

- (1) I have received a briefing from the Chief Executive Officer of the Anti-Corruption Commission. I cannot remember the date precisely, but it was some time during February.
- (2) I said in my previous answer that I have read the majority of the report of the inquiry into the third term of reference.
- (3) It has not changed my view. As I said, the Anti-Corruption Commission has a copy of that report. It is up to the commission to take action as it sees fit.

FIREARMS - BUY-BACK SCHEME

Success

47. Mr OSBORNE to the Minister for Police:

- (1) What is the current status of the national firearms buy-back scheme in Western Australia?
- (2) Has the scheme been successful in removing the types of firearms used in the Port Arthur massacre?

Mr DAY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1) The national firearms buy-back scheme has been operating in Western Australia since 1 October 1996. As at midnight on Wednesday, 12 March 1997, last night, 14 992 firearms had been surrendered for compensation in this State. They have a total value of approximately \$5.1m. Of those firearms, about 95 per cent were previously licensed; the remaining 5 per cent were unlicensed. Overall, the scheme is progressing well. The Police Service aims at a six weeks turnaround from the time that firearms owners hand in their firearms to when they receive their cheques. In many cases, that period of six weeks has been reduced.
- (2) A number of firearms of the type used in the Port Arthur massacre have been handed in. Eighty-eight of the self-loading, military style rifles used at Port Arthur have been handed in, of which 59 were unlicensed. I remind members and the public that the amnesty in relation to this buy-back scheme expires on 30 September this year. I encourage all members of the public to take advantage of that amnesty prior to that date so that they are, firstly, within the law and, secondly, given compensation for their firearms. An information line, a 1800 number, is operating. It is receiving about 1 500 calls a week. If members of the public have queries about this subject I urge them to take advantage of the information service.

ALINTAGAS - KINGSTREAM PROJECT

Treasury Advice

48. Mr THOMAS to the Minister for Resources Development:

- (1) Was a joint bid by AlintaGas and Epic Energy submitted for the supply of gas to the Kingstream project contrary to the advice of the Treasury Department, as reported by John McGlue in *The West Australian*?
- (2) If yes, will the Minister table all Treasury advice and other relevant documents?

Mr BARNETT replied:

- (1)-(2) The bidding for the gas business associated with the Kingstream project is a complex issue. There was some debate as to whether AlintaGas should be involved in the bid. My view is that the best thing is to have as much competition as possible. Because AlintaGas happens to be owned by the State, I would not want to limit in any way its ability to bid and compete with private sector suppliers of gas. Equally, I would ensure that the Kingstream project will have the potential benefit of as many competitors as possible. It could win both ways. That is what competition is about. The initial bid for 170 terrajoules of gas was by Epic Energy, which was backed by AlintaGas in the sense that Epic would fund an expansion of the pipeline and AlintaGas would cooperate to allow that to take place. It was a commercial decision made by the board of

AlintaGas in consultation with Epic. I was advised of that bid, but I was not advised of the details. I did not see the details, but I agreed the board should be in the marketplace and allowed the bid to go through. It has only put in a bid; it has not secured the business - it is a competitive process.

I was advised of Treasury's advice through a report in *The West Australian*. I was in Taiwan at the time and the advice was not discussed with me. I assure members that in no way will the taxpayers of Western Australia be put at risk by AlintaGas competing for that business from the Kingstream project. I would not allow that to happen and equally other gas consumers will not be put at risk.

Dr Gallop: What did Treasury say?

Mr BARNETT: It was outlined in *The West Australian*.

ALINTAGAS - KINGSTREAM PROJECT

Exclusive and Secret Deals

49. Mr THOMAS to the Minister for Resources Development:

Why will the Minister not accept the standards of the Commission on Government that preclude exclusive and secret deals between government instrumentalities and private companies?

Mr BARNETT replied:

This is fantastic stuff! We have a mysterious group of people opposite. There is no exclusive and secret deal. Kingstream Resources NL, a private sector company which is developing a project, sought commercial bids for its gas business. AlintaGas can bid for that work. If AlintaGas secures the bid and if that involves major expansion of the pipeline, in due course it would require ministerial and Cabinet approval. The whole point of competition and corporatisation is to allow entities such as AlintaGas, Western Power and others to make commercial decisions. The last thing this State wants is a Minister involved with the negotiating parties. That is what members opposite did when they were in government. They wanted to be in the deal and that is why this State lost \$1.5b. I do not want to be involved in the deal.

Mr Grill: In Kalgoorlie you intervened in the market. You told Western Power that it could not undercut the prices put forward by the goldfields gas pipeline.

Mr BARNETT: That is another issue which was discussed in this House at least half a dozen times last year. I did not intervene in the market in Kalgoorlie. Like the Premier I am incredibly proud of the goldfields gas pipeline. The gas prices are down by 30 per cent and development is taking place. All last year we heard the baying of members opposite saying, "You will never get reticulated gas to Kalgoorlie."

Dr Gallop: I never said that.

Several members interjected.

Mr BARNETT: Members opposite said that repeatedly. What is happening now? The mums and dads in Kalgoorlie are getting a gas supply at their back door.
