



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
SECOND SESSION
1999

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 16 June 1999

Legislative Assembly

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THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland) took the Chair at 12 noon, and read prayers.

NORTH BEACH JETTY FISHING FACILITIES

Petition

Mrs Hodson-Thomas presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 30 persons -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned residents, respectfully call upon the State Government to source funding to upgrade the North Beach Jetty in accordance with the design commissioned by the City of Stirling and prepared by Halpern Glick Maunsell, to provide a suitable recreational fishing venue which will better cater for people with disabilities and elderly anglers; provide facilities for families to enjoy fishing; and encourage youth to participate in constructive activity.

We wish to bring to your attention that there are limited fishing platforms with disabled and elderly access in the north metropolitan coastal area, and it is only possible to use the present North Beach Jetty at high tide in favourable weather.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See petition No 236.]

FINANCIAL PRODUCTS, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND MARKETS

Statement by Minister for Police

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Police) [12.05 pm]: As minister representing the Attorney General, I shall make a brief ministerial statement about an integrated framework for financial products service providers and markets. Members will recall that in past months, draft legislation amending template legislation, particularly the Corporations Law, has been tabled.

The Commonwealth has recently released a consultation paper entitled "Financial Products, Service Providers and Markets - An Integrated Framework". The consultation paper builds on the reform proposals contained in an earlier paper entitled "Financial Markets and Investments Products". The reform proposals are part of the corporate law economic reform program known, in this case, as CLERP 6. I apologise for the acronym. The proposed legislation provides for -

The uniform regulation of all financial products, including securities, derivatives, superannuation, life and general insurance, bank deposit products and foreign exchange; and

a harmonised regime for licensing of -

financial service providers, to replace the widely diverging current regulatory arrangements, which include the licensing of securities dealers and advisers, futures brokers and dealers, the registration of insurance brokers and foreign exchange dealers, as well as those arrangements governing insurance agents;

markets, to replace the present diverging requirements for the approval of securities and futures exchanges, and exempt securities and futures markets; and

clearing and settlement facilities, to replace the diverging requirements for the approval of securities and futures clearing and settlement facilities.

The Commonwealth proposes to release draft legislation for a further period of public consultation later in the year, with the new arrangements to commence on 1 July 2000. Having regard to the manner in which the proposed initiatives, if enacted, will amend the Corporations Law, and their wide-ranging nature, the documents are tabled together with the press release issued by Hon Joe Hockey, Minister for Financial Services and Regulation.

[See papers Nos 1028 and 1028A.]

WEST KIMBERLEY REGION YOUTH FORUM

Statement by Minister for Youth

MR BOARD (Murdoch - Minister for Youth) [12.07 pm]: I rise to inform the House of a major regional youth forum to be held in the West Kimberley next week. The forum has been organised as a direct response to recent discussions with local communities within the region. These discussions raised a number of public policy issues concerning the needs of young people in the area.

The coordination of youth services is a vital step in providing support for young people. One of the most important roles of the Office of Youth Affairs is reducing duplication and ensuring that programs from non-government and government

agencies work together. The West Kimberley region youth forum aims to achieve that coordination by bringing together all the players involved in youth services in the area. The Office of Youth Affairs will chair the forum.

As part of my commitment to consult with and involve young people in government decision making, staff from the Office of Youth Affairs will also be meeting with young people in the community to discuss issues of relevance and concern to them. Where possible, these responses will be documented and brought to the youth forum for discussion and consideration.

More than half of the population in the Kimberley region is under the age of 25 years. The Aboriginal population in the area is particularly young, with approximately 40 per cent below the age of 15 years, according to the last census. This young community is the future of the region, and the Kimberley is expected to be one of the fastest growing regions in Western Australia over the next 15 years.

I believe that this forum will set up the basis for a coordination of youth programs to provide for Kimberley young people well into the next century. I have asked that representatives from state and federal government agencies which work with young people attend the youth forum next week. These include the Education Department, the Western Australia Police Service, the Aboriginal Legal Service, the North West Mental Health Service, the federal Department of Employment and Training, the Kimberley Development Commission, the Ministry of Justice, Family and Children's Services, and the Ministry of Sport and Recreation. These government agencies will join with local government representatives from the Shires of Derby- West Kimberley and Broome, as well as many local service providers. An invitation has also been extended to local members of both State and Federal Parliaments. All these delegates will come together to discuss issues such as employment and training opportunities, sport and recreational activities and the fight against youth suicide. The most vital part of this forum is that all areas be represented. Coordination simply does not work if parties are missing from the negotiating process.

The West Kimberley region youth forum will not simply be a talkfest. We are committed to providing real solutions for the needs of young people in the region. I have recently begun plans to place a regional youth development officer in the West Kimberley. This officer would take over the role of ensuring the coordination of youth services in the area. I call on all members with an interest in the West Kimberley and all ministers with a department that deals with young people to ensure that they are involved in this event.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS (INTERCEPTION) WESTERN AUSTRALIA AMENDMENT BILL 1999

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Prince (Minister for Police), and read a first time.

AUSTRALIA ACTS (REQUEST) BILL 1999

Second Reading

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Police) [12.11 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

In November this year, Australians will vote on whether Australia is to become a republic. If the referendum is passed, Australia will become a republic at the national level. The States will then have to consider whether to sever their links with the Crown. There is an argument that section 7 of the Australia Acts of the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom needs to be amended to ensure that States can exercise their own constitutional processes to sever their links with the Crown. Section 7 deals with the relationship between Her Majesty and State Governors. It states that "Her Majesty's representative in each State shall be the Governor".

The States are bound by the Australia Acts and cannot legislate in a way that is contrary or repugnant to the Australia Acts. If a State were to amend its Constitution to provide that the Governor is not Her Majesty's representative, this may be considered to be repugnant to section 7 of the Australia Acts. Accordingly, for the sake of certainty, section 7 of the Australia Acts needs to be amended if Australia becomes a republic to ensure that States will be able to sever their links with the Crown should they choose to do so.

Section 15(1) of the Australia Acts sets out a procedure for the amendment of the Australia Acts. This can be done by commonwealth legislation passed at the request of all the State Parliaments. Another possible way of amending the Australia Acts is by inserting in the commonwealth Referendum Bill a power for the Commonwealth Parliament to make such an amendment. This is recognised by section 15(3) of the Australia Acts, but no actual power is given in the Australia Acts to make an amendment in this way. Accordingly, there is legal doubt as to whether this course is effective.

The Commonwealth has inserted in the transitional provisions in its referendum Bill, the Constitution Alteration (Establishment of Republic) Bill, such a power for the Commonwealth Parliament to amend section 7 of the Australia Acts. The States have been critical of the initial draft of this provision, and would prefer that the amendment be made by the more legally secure and appropriate route set out in section 15(1) of the Australia Acts. Accordingly, the Solicitors General, parliamentary counsel and law officers of the States have negotiated uniform request legislation which is proposed to be enacted by each State. The Bill has already been introduced into the Victorian and the New South Wales Parliaments and it is expected to be introduced into other State Parliaments shortly.

The Bill requests the Commonwealth Parliament to enact a Bill in a form set out in the schedule to amend section 7 of the Australia Acts. This state Request Bill will not come into force unless the Commonwealth's referendum Bill, the Constitution Alteration (Establishment of Republic) Bill, is passed by the referendum and receives a royal assent. Accordingly, this state

Request Bill will have no effect if the commonwealth referendum on the republic fails. If the commonwealth referendum on the republic is passed, however, and all the States pass this uniform request legislation, the Commonwealth Parliament may amend section 7 of the Australia Acts by adding two subsections. These subsections provide that a State Parliament may make a law providing that section 7 does not apply to the State and that if it makes such a law, then section 7 ceases to apply to the State.

This amendment therefore places the power in the State Parliament to decide at a future date whether it wants to terminate the operation of section 7 in relation to the State. The Bill does not affect the constitutional procedures necessary for a State to sever its ties with the Crown. It does not remove any requirement in a state Constitution to hold a referendum.

If all States pass this uniform request legislation prior to the Commonwealth's referendum Bill being passed by the Commonwealth Parliament in August this year, then the Commonwealth will be in a position to remove the provision in its referendum Bill dealing with the amendment of section 7 of the Australia Acts, as the Commonwealth will be able to act upon the section 15(1) request. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 1) 1999

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 2) 1999

Estimates Committees A and B Report and Minutes - Presentation and Adoption

MR BLOFFWITCH (Geraldton) [12.16 pm]: I present the report and minutes of Estimates Committees A and B and move -

That the report of Estimates Committee A be adopted.

[See papers Nos 1029 and 1030.]

MRS ROBERTS (Midland) [12.17 pm]: I will raise a few matters in relation to Estimates Committee A insofar as the Police portfolio is concerned. I reiterate my concerns about the Police budget, which is insufficient. The way that the global figure was given for policing and justice was almost dishonest. It was an attempt to pretend that there had been a massive increase in the policing area. Clearly the Government did this to obfuscate the fact that there is a cut to the policing budget. It overloaded the global amount with the cost of building the prisons which are required in Western Australia. Obviously a substantial amount of money will be allocated within the justice area to build prisons. That cannot be regarded as money being spent in the area of law and order. Although it appeared that over \$50m would be spent on capital works in policing, we see that it is reliant on the sale of two properties within this financial year; that is, the police academy in Maylands and, as we found out for the first time during the Estimates Committee hearings, what is commonly called the old Perth Girls School in East Perth, where traffic operations are based currently and where the booze buses are often parked. Currently those premises are used for traffic operations. There has not been sufficient explanation of what is going on. The minister has made no formal announcement of the proposed sale of the old Perth Girls School site or where the traffic operations will be housed in the interim. In the long term, many of those operations will be located in the proposed police operations complex site at the Midland workshops. However, at this stage that seems to be at least a couple of years away. Unlike the situation with the police academy in Joondalup, for which a sizeable portion of money has been allocated in this financial year, insufficient money has been allocated to the police operations complex in Midland. The costings for that are about \$42m, and only \$1m has been allocated in this budget. That will mean that we will not see any work commence. I do not see how any of those traffic operations could be moved out to Midland immediately, and I wonder where they will go in the interim.

We have yet to receive a proper explanation from the Minister for Police. It may be that as part of their sale or tender process, the police may attempt to rent or lease back those premises for potentially up to a couple of years, until such time as they can move those operations to Midland. That needs to be made clear. When I questioned the minister during the Estimates Committees as to how the police envisage recouping all of the money from the sale of the Maylands site in this financial year, it became quite obvious that the police academy in Joondalup would not be completed within this financial year and nor would all of the operations of the academy be moved to Joondalup in the course of this financial year. The answer was to the effect that the police intended to sell the site in a conditional kind of way, insofar as they would continue to use the current police academy site in Maylands well after it had been sold and the money recouped.

I have a couple of concerns about what may happen. One is that it is all very well to say that the Government is spending more on police capital works than it spent previously, but if it is doing it through the sale of assets, it is not really putting extra money into policing but is cashing in current assets to purchase new assets. Another concern is that given the tardiness of the minister in other areas, given that we have had no formal announcement with regard to the old Perth Girls School site and given some of the difficulties with the sale of the site in Maylands, I have doubts about whether the Government will be able to recoup that money in this financial year in order to fund many of its capital works programs. It would then become a matter of how much we can rely on capital works as listed. In recent years some capital works have been listed year after year. It may be that in six, nine or 12 months' time the Government will say that it did not sell those assets within the set time frame and, therefore, it is unable to proceed with the capital works projects that it announced in this budget. On that basis the Government will yet again re-announce them for the next financial year and subsequent ones. The operations centre at Midland has been announced several times, yet there is no money on budget for those works to commence. That is a matter of great concern.

My principal concern with the police budget is that effectively budget funds to operational policing have been cut. The front-line police officers who are located at suburban police stations and throughout rural Western Australia are finding it more difficult to do their jobs and to make ends meet. Contrary to what the Government has suggested, I hear of more and more cases where staffing at stations is brought down to lower levels. I understand that some nine police stations in remote locations in Western Australia have only one police officer. The Opposition has certainly raised the case of the Yalgoo Police Station, which has only one police officer. Although the argument might be able to be mounted that some country towns in the south west need have only one police officer because someone is on call from nearby, in the case of a station like that at Yalgoo there is no other police station for a large number of kilometres. Northampton Police Station no longer has a sergeant in charge but a senior constable. That sort of practice has occurred throughout rural Western Australia. Sometimes the number of police officers in a station has not necessarily been decreased but the most senior position has been removed and allocated elsewhere. In the case of Northampton, I think the sergeant's position was allocated to Geraldton where it is needed. Although I have absolutely no argument with the need for the position in Geraldton, it should not be at the expense of police stations like Northampton.

It is interesting to note the expressed concerns of the Government, the Office of Road Safety and people in the community at the road toll and that many of the road fatalities are occurring in country Western Australia, yet at the same time the reports I get from police officers and others in country areas indicate that they are under-resourced and cannot do the necessary road patrols. Fewer patrol cars are on the road because of the structural changes that have taken place in the Police Service. We now have policemen who are generalists and are required to do a wide variety of duties. Although this maximum flexibility allows them to target on a needs basis, it can mean that some of the more routine matters are overlooked. It is of even greater concern to hear that when officers are part of the Delta reform and devolution process and in charge of their local budgets, someone from the senior command group may point out that they must look at their electricity budgets and be mindful to switch off the lights and be aware of those kinds of things. Indeed, in some police stations petrol is being rationed. Cars are garaged because the funds are not available to put fuel in them and send them out on the roads. If that is the case, bearing in mind the number of road fatalities in Western Australia, it is of great concern. It is all very well to have police officers focused on balancing their local budgets, but they need to be focused on community priorities and areas of need.

The Government professes to be strong on law and order and to have some comprehension of the community's desire for effective policing, but it is failing to deliver. When we look at the Police Service budget in isolation from the Justice budget, we find, once we take into account the consumer price index and population growth, there is an effective 4 per cent cut. It is of further concern that effectively the cut is even greater because of the enterprise bargaining agreement. The Opposition has been fully supportive of the wage increase as part of that EBA. We have been critical of the Government because it has been slow to put it in place. The figures put forward by the Minister for Police and the claims of the Police Union (WA) vary, but, from what I can gather, the budget needs an additional \$15m or \$20m to fund that wage increase.

As is the case with many other government departments, the staffing cost of the Police Service is the biggest part of the department's budget. If an enterprise bargaining agreement increases the cost of wages, the budget needs to be topped up by that amount. An additional \$15m or \$20m should have been added into the budget. If it is not added to the budget to pay for the wages of existing police officers, it must come from within the present budget. If it is taken from the present budget, it means that it will be taken from the coalface of policing; that is, from local stations and various police divisions. That is an alarming state of affairs. Previously I have documented in this place the effective cuts to the operational budget of police in this State over the past few years. I do not think that is acceptable. Most people in Western Australia have the highest regard for police officers and the job that they try to do. Like us, they are becoming more and more aware that police stations are short-staffed, and in many cases ill equipped. Budgetary constraints are preventing police from doing the effective job they could be doing. It is interesting to note that in the context of some of the issues raised at the police conference in the past couple of days there seems to be a cost-shifting arrangement with the Government now allocating to local government \$4m for law and order and crime prevention matters. We have also seen the engagement of private security firms by local governments. Although security firms are ostensibly paid for by local government, they are ultimately paid for by the ratepayers. Those people are paying twice, through state taxes and again through local government taxes.

On talkback radio recently a couple of callers made the point that if the police responded more quickly we would not need that service. That is exactly my point. In the past few years due to the under-funding of the operational side of policing it has been difficult for patrol cars to respond sufficiently quickly to cases of need. The City of Bayswater instigated its security patrols some years ago because the response times by police were poor, particularly at night. Only about two police cars were available between the City of Bayswater and areas as far away as Scarborough. On occasions one or both of those police cars could be called to problems at Scarborough beach or wherever and residents of the City of Bayswater were left without a local patrol vehicle that could respond in a timely fashion. That being the case, the City of Bayswater stepped in to fill the vacuum. However, generally people want to have real police officers doing a real job. It was interesting to note that the American commentator, Ron DeLord, brought here for the policing conference, said that security guards would not put their lives on the line for anyone; and that we must have real police officers to do that.

It is all very well to say that these people can be the eyes and ears but the experience from overseas appears to be that private security guards do not fool anyone. Someone who is intent on committing a crime will not be put off by a couple of people wearing flash uniforms who do not have the powers of police officers to deal with offenders. As was confirmed in the Estimates Committee hearings by the senior police who were present, private security guards do not have very much power to deal with people, even to detain them or to use citizen's arrest. With reference to a security company that was promoting the idea that it could undertake citizen's arrest, I think one of the senior officers said that the position was nowhere near as clear-cut as it thought and was fraught with danger.

As part of this debate the Government must better fund the Police Service in this State. It should not be engaging in a cost-shifting exercise by putting the costs onto local government or getting the community to pay twice for policing services in this State.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [12.35 pm]: I thank the Chairman of Committees and the other Chairmen of the estimates committee process for the work they did during the estimates committee week. I also thank members of the committees, particularly the member for Bunbury, the Whip for the Government, and the member for Girrawheen, the Whip for the Opposition. Over the past few years the Estimates Committees have worked better each year and that is a credit to the organisation, the Clerks and staff from parliamentary services who helped put the program together. Some issues - usually similar issues - always arise during Estimates Committees. Supplementary information is sought in committees from ministers or ministers representing other ministers who have an obligation to provide it. We amended the rules this year to allow two weeks for supplementary information to be supplied. That was a more reasonable period. I am advised that despite some delays, from today all the supplementary information will have been provided, if not by now it will arrive during the day.

Mrs Roberts: Some information is still outstanding.

Mr BARNETT: Yes. I am advised that it will be delivered today. The timeliness has been better. Often questions are detailed and require a considerable amount of information. I thank ministers for expediting supplementary information. Another issue is questions relating to government trading enterprises. Comments were made yesterday in the House about loans relating to Westrail, for example. Sometimes members of committees do not think carefully enough about their ability to question ministers on those issues. We must appreciate that the management of properly corporatised government trading enterprises, such as Western Power and AlintaGas, are accountable to a board that is appointed by the minister. The board members and the senior management are accountable under the Companies (Western Australia) Code, the Australian Securities Commission regulations and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Like any other privately listed company they must comply with many regulatory arrangements. We should not interfere with or compromise that because that level of accountability is far more demanding than the form of accountability that might occur through a parliamentary process.

Mr Thomas: There is no substitute.

Mr BARNETT: We have a different view. However, there is an ability to question ministers about policy issues relating to government trading enterprises without delving into their commercial transactions. Ample opportunity is available to challenge ministers on policy issues, decisions, discussions, work being undertaken through independent agencies and policy, for example, on extending transmission systems or underground power. Generally members who often complain about not having chief executive officers of GTEs here fail to think about the issues or take the opportunity to raise policy issues. They can and should be raised in this House and ministers can be challenged on them. However, members should not challenge the detailed commercial operations of those agencies because although they are independent they are subject to a detailed and more onerous regulatory and accountability regime.

The other issue that arose and that was more obvious this year was that difficulties occur when a minister is representing another minister; for example, the member for Warren-Blackwood representing the Minister for Transport. This year many issues arose in the Transport portfolio, which is large and complicated. It is difficult for the non-substantive minister to effectively respond in an estimates process with all the detailed knowledge. Transport is an extreme case, but even in my capacity representing the Minister for Mines, a portfolio which is closely related to my resources portfolio, I am unaware of the intimacies and some of the details regarding mine safety and the regulations of the Mining Act, which I neither administer nor have anything to do with on a day-to-day basis.

Mr Thomas: Do you think we could amend standing orders so that ministers from other places can come here during those committee debates?

Mr BARNETT: I was about to say that we should seriously consider holding joint Estimates Committee hearings. Members, particularly from the upper House, might have views about an infringement on the autonomy or independence of the upper House; indeed some members of this House may see it that way. However, we must face reality that whatever our views about bicameral or single-House Parliaments, the one thing that can be said about this Parliament is that we have two small Chambers. There are 57 members here and 34 in the upper House, within which are a Government, a Speaker and President, Deputy Chairmen of Committees and various other office holders. When we hold an Estimates Committee it is thin on the ground in two respects: In probably half the cases a minister is representing a minister, a situation which is not ideal, and the number of members available to participate in any given Estimates Committee tends to be reasonably limited. The committees perhaps suffer a lack of numbers and a lack of depth on both sides of the House.

There is merit in the view - this is my view, and it may not be widely shared - that we should look seriously at the prospect of having joint Estimates Committee hearings. That would be more effective, would not result in any compromise or loss of independence for either House of Parliament, and would allow members to question the responsible minister directly and to have available the minister's CEO. I believe we would all agree that when a minister is representing another minister in the Estimates Committee hearings, it is something of a second-class show, because that minister does not have the real content and understanding and is often not in a position to answer questions in detail.

Mr Thomas: An alternative may be to allow the minister in the other place to come here. However, I imagine the smaller parties in the other House will not want to give up their -

Mr BARNETT: That is an alternative, but I believe it is a second-best alternative. Rather than have two Estimates

Committees in the Parliament over two weeks, it would be far better to have a joint sitting for the Estimates Committees. A greater number of members could be present, and a more robust, accountable and incisive process could take place. We should consider that matter. It was tried in New South Wales in 1991 under the Greiner-Fahey Government, and I understand it was supported by the Independents, who held the balance of power. The Carr Labor Government in New South Wales has not continued with that practice, but I believe it is being considered. The experience of that practice in New South Wales was reasonably successful.

Mr Speaker, you are known for your inclination to reform and modernise this Parliament, and I respectfully suggest that joint Estimates Committee hearings would be a sensible reform. It would be more effective and would save time, and even if such Estimates Committee hearings were run over two weeks, with perhaps a longer period of time for any given Estimates Committee, it would result in better parliamentary rigour and scrutiny than is currently the case. I thank members for their participation in the Estimates Committee hearings. I thank the Clerks, and the committee chairmen, who did an excellent job. I believe the Estimates Committee ran well, although these issues continue to arise every year.

MR THOMAS (Cockburn) [12.43 pm]: I raise a matter that I raised in Estimates Committee A under the heading "Western Power", namely the cost of the Collie coal-fired power station. That matter was not dealt with satisfactorily. I believe that the Minister for Energy did not use the opportunity that he had in that committee to answer some of the questions that I quite properly put to him.

The first issue is the discrepancy of \$20m between the figure that appears in a letter that was given to me by the chief executive officer of Western Power to explain the cost of building that power station, and the figure that appears in the *Budget Statements*. The minister was unable to explain that \$20m discrepancy, but he gave an undertaking to have that information provided. I acknowledge that that information was provided, and it appears that that item was for capitalised interest on the cost incurred in the construction of that power station, but that was not classified by Treasury as capital as such and therefore did not appear under capital works in the *Budget Statements*. I accept that explanation and I thank the minister and the officers who were responsible for providing it. However, that is small bickies compared with the large amount of money that needed to be accounted for with regard to the cost of the Collie coal-fired power station.

In a subsequent debate the following week in private members' time, I had some graphs incorporated in *Hansard*. The graph to which I refer today appears at page 8718 of *Hansard* of Wednesday, 2 June and compares the cost of the Collie coal-fired power station with the cost of other black coal-fired power stations in Australia. It shows that the cost of this coal-fired power station exceeds the average cost of other coal-fired power stations in Australia by a factor in excess of 2:1 and exceeds the cost of the next most expensive coal-fired power station in Australia by in excess of \$1 000 per kilowatt hour. To put that into some sort of context, the capital cost of black coal-fired generating capacity is generally \$1 200 per kilowatt hour. The cost of this power station is in excess of that. The Minister for Energy was quite evasive when I sought to speak to him about this matter. I wanted to raise a number of questions, but the minister resented the fact that his folly was being exposed and that he was being asked questions about this matter. The *Hansard* of Estimates Committee A of 27 May shows an arrogant minister who seeks to evade accountability. The minister said earlier that these government trading enterprises are subject to Corporations Law and to supervision by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, and other forms of accountability, and therefore it should not be necessary for the Parliament to exercise its powers in seeking to hold these bodies accountable. I reject that.

Mr Barnett: I did not say that. I said what you should do is challenge the minister on the policy side, and that gives you a wide brief, but members here do not seem to do that.

Mr THOMAS: That is what I am doing. I am challenging the minister on the policy brief. The policy is that the minister ordered Western Power, or the State Energy Commission as it then was, to build this power station. The minister took responsibility directly and personally for the decision to construct this power station. We said at the time that was an unsound way in which to proceed and that the project should be put out to tender. The minister said that was not necessary, he knew best, and he had had a consultant or two assist him in this process. The net result is that we now have the most expensive power station in Australia.

Mr Barnett: You made this speech two weeks ago, and twice in the same week. Why not move a notice of motion again, so we can debate it in private members' time? Do it for a fourth time!

Mr THOMAS: I used the estimates committee process of the Parliament entirely as it is intended to be used; that is, to debate the capital items that appear in the budget. Those items are broad policy. They are not the detailed operations of Western Power. This is the biggest single capital -

Mr Barnett: We debated it for three hours two weeks ago.

Mr THOMAS: Unfortunately we have not debated it. It was a dialogue of the death. I have made certain assertions. The minister has not answered those assertions but has simply made counter-assertions.

Mr Barnett: You moved a notice of motion two weeks ago, and I spent 60 minutes responding in detail to every point that you made.

Mr THOMAS: The minister did not respond in the slightest amount of detail. The documents that I made available, including the letter from Mr Eiszele from Western Power, indicated that, on my understanding, a \$77m cost escalation had taken place during the course of this project. It is entirely appropriate in an Estimates Committee to ask why this project experienced an escalation of 13 per cent over its contract cost at a time when the underlying rate of inflation was 6.5 per cent. That is a reasonable question. There may well be a reasonable answer. I do not know. I used the estimates committee

process entirely as it is intended to be used; that is, to ask the minister if he would explain that matter. The minister refused to explain it. He tried to take a point of order to suggest that it was in some sense improper for me to raise that matter. It is instructive to refer to *Hansard* and see the minister's arrogance and the answer that he gave. I refer to page 57 of the uncorrected *Hansard* of Estimates Committee A. The minister suggested that I was out of order. I said that I was not, and that I could ask questions that I felt were appropriate, and I referred to some pages, just before a ruling by the chairman of the committee. The minister said, "The member can ask what he likes, but I will choose to answer what I want". That is the hallmark of an arrogant minister. This minister has presided over the construction of the most expensive black coal-fired power station in Australia. I will say that again and again because the chickens have come home to roost. The Opposition has been vindicated on this project.

Mr Barnett: I am sure the member recalls the opening ceremony at which the chief executive made it very clear that the project was on time and \$20m under budget.

Mr THOMAS: He may be dead right when he said that, but the budget is such that we still have the most expensive coal-fired power station in Australia. In 1994 when the project was commissioned, we said that the methodology of the minister was wrong, that it should be operating on a different budget. Had he been able to comply with that budget, it would be much cheaper. I ask the minister again whether he will explain the escalation.

Mr Barnett: You have had it in writing.

Mr THOMAS: I have not had that at all. I have said that I have had it put to me - I surmise this from the letter; I gather it is correct - that there was an escalation in the cost of \$77m, which at that time was twice the rate of inflation. The starting price was pretty high. Looking at it from the outside - I have not seen the contract -

Mr Barnett: Surprise, surprise; neither have I.

Mr THOMAS: Perhaps the minister should -

Mr Barnett: I have no intention of doing that.

Mr THOMAS: This is the problem.

Mr Barnett: No. The member does not understand the distinction between the role of a chief executive officer, of a board and of a minister.

Mr THOMAS: If the minister were the chairman, representing the shareholders, does he think the shareholders are entitled to say, "Hang on, we now have the most expensive black coal-fired power station in Australia and, in part, that is due to the fact that it appears to be as a result of a very generous escalation clause which has gone up by over 13 per cent in this period"? When I asked the minister that question - it was either during the Estimates Committee or in private members' business; I cannot remember which because the debates tend to be very repetitive - he asked whether I knew what the Australian dollar was doing. He grasped at straws and said that maybe it was because of the movement of the Australian dollar. That cannot be used because that is accounted for separately. All I am asking is for the minister to give me a fairly simple answer, to explain whether the contract has an escalation that pegs it to some appropriate index. If it has, that is fine, and it may be the explanation. I looked at the consumer price index which, although it is a fairly simplistic index for these things, is a good starting point, and I found it to be 6.5 per cent.

Mr Barnett: I think you would be well advised to give up on this issue of the Collie power station. If you continue to persist and if you want a more detailed account in addition to the one I have already given on the nature of the escalation changes, I will undertake to provide that.

Mr THOMAS: That is all I wanted. I am very grateful for that.

MS McHALE (Thornlie) [12.55 pm]: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, that I did not stop speaking when you were on your feet. I will be brief in my remarks.

Mr Barnett: Certainly briefer than 19 minutes!

Ms McHALE: The minister should watch me, and trust me. If he does not interrupt, I will be even briefer. I will remark on the process and management of the Estimates Committees. We are talking about Estimates Committee A and there will be a report on Estimates Committee B. My comments are generic to both. I chaired about 11 hours of the Estimates Committees and was a member of the Estimates Committees for about 14 hours. This is my third opportunity to observe the process of Estimates Committees and, in that context, I make my remarks.

The change of accommodation vastly improved the overall outcome of Estimates Committee B. When it was held upstairs, there were great problems with the acoustics. I am pleased we have improved that. Conversely, the acoustics in the Chamber during Estimates Committee A were slightly less satisfactory than had been the case in previous years, particularly when large numbers of public servants were in the Chamber; for example, when Health or Education was discussed. I am not sure whether that was a technical problem, or because a lot of people were in here. It may well have been that the technicians -

Mr Barnett: The Chamber is not used to having so many people present. That is the problem. It is attuned to about half a dozen, not 20!

Ms McHALE: The representatives for Health took up all the bench space. Whether that can be resolved by limiting the

number of public servants who appear before the committee, or whether it is a technical issue, I am not sure. I ask that that be looked at next year because it inhibited the flow of discussion, and we can improve on that.

Concerns were raised about the inability of members to peruse the Housing budget, and we know the reason for that. That caused some difficulties for members who tried to pursue housing questions when the committee was dealing with other portfolios. I am not sure why we do not look at the Housing portfolio differently. It would be in the best interests of everybody if we could look at the Housing budget during the estimates process. There were moments of tension over and above that which usually occurs in Estimate Committees relating to the relevance of questions. Obviously that tension was along party-political lines. A number of members on the government side felt questions being asked by the Opposition were not relevant to the division being dealt with, or for that matter to any item in the budget. I was concerned about that; however, in general, the questions asked were relevant to the budget. Members may have drawn a long bow with some of them, but nevertheless they were able to go back to a point in the budget. Overall, members focused on the relevance of questions. Apart from the political banter that went on, which is inevitable, I do not think there was a problem with relevance.

There is a problem - the minister has raised it - when a minister is representing another minister. I welcome the Leader of the House saying that he is willing to look at how we might improve that. It is difficult for the representative minister to be able to answer questions. That is a reality of the current system. Either those ministers must be briefed more on the portfolio - I recognise that is not realistic in terms of time, because ministers have enough to do in their portfolios - or there must be other ways in which we can deal with it. That would vastly improve the outcomes of the Estimates Committees. The minister tends to say that he will have to provide answers by supplementary information and the public servants are not able to deal with the question. It limits the value of the Estimates Committees when a minister is representing another minister.

The Opposition would be willing to look at alternatives. I do not know whether the member for Cockburn's suggestion will be considered but I would welcome the opportunity to have direct contact with the ministers. In my view, Estimates Committees have several values. Having observed three estimates periods, I believe that if members on either side of politics are prepared when they come to Estimates Committees, they can derive considerable benefits. The Opposition looks for something on which to trip up the Government or for something that might embarrass the Government or lead to another line of inquiry; that is the role of the Opposition. Likewise, if they do the work, government members can use Estimates Committees to get good stories for their electorate. However, the questions looking at a target and asking how it will be met or noting the increase or decrease by 1 per cent of a target do not achieve a great deal in the scheme of things. The best way to get the maximum benefit from estimates is to do a bit of work beforehand, to study the *Budget Statements* well and to think about the key outcomes which one wants to achieve.

From a personal point of view, the time allocated for the Heritage Council and the National Trust was insufficient. Members agreed with the minister that we would spend half an hour on those areas but it would be advantageous if there was an opportunity to provide more time for heritage and the National Trust. We did not have an opportunity to deal with the National Trust and that was a lost opportunity. I conclude by thanking the staff for their management of the Estimates Committees. Their attention to detail was noticeable and as a Deputy Chairman I found both the Hansard and Chamber staff to be very helpful.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [1.02 pm]: Before I begin, could the clock be set at the time remaining for the hour; because I think there is more time left. I will make a few comments on the proceedings of the Estimates Committees and matters that arose in Estimates Committee A. My first point is my frustration at the conduct of some parts of the committees when government members clearly wanted to use up time. That may be a bit uncharitable because I am sure at the end of the proceedings they were better informed about a range of government programs. However, they could have been better informed simply by reading government publications or speaking to the minister or his staff before the Estimates Committee. I do not believe that is the purpose of Estimates Committees. They are not provided for members to become better informed about general policies which have already been announced through numerous press releases and publications and could easily be described by a minister or a senior person in the department. I believe the Estimates Committees give the Parliament an opportunity to go through the various programs and to critically assess their effectiveness and whether we are getting value for our dollars. In one or two parts of the Estimates Committees which I attended, I had the clear goal of trying to gather information about programs, in some cases involving tens of millions of dollars, on which I believe that money was not being well spent or was possibly even being totally wasted. However, when I tried to pursue those issues with a series of questions as one needs to do, some members thought I was taking up too much of the committee's time and tried to say I could not ask those questions because the items were not mentioned in the *Budget Statements*, even though tens of millions of dollars were involved; the wasting of that money had been hidden. The primary objective of Estimates Committees is to ensure that money is being spent on matters as it should be and that the final result of that expenditure is of benefit to the Government and the taxpayers of this State, because in many examples that is clearly not the case.

I have spoken previously about the layout of committee rooms but there are problems with a large Chamber like this. The smaller room is more conducive to open discussions across the table to try to bring out the net result of the expenditure of large amounts of money in particular portfolios and on particular programs. While the room next door is perhaps a bit small, it is a better forum for these Estimates Committees than is this large Chamber. The provision of supplementary information concerns me because in a number of areas ministers gave me an undertaking that they would provide supplementary information. We are now following up with debate about those committees and we will move to the third reading but I have not received answers to some questions asked by way of supplementary information. I will draw on one example as the responsible minister is in the Chamber. On page E348 of *Hansard* the Minister for Education made the following undertaking -

We will provide as supplementary information the number of FTEs in schools and central office and in district offices for those years.

I have not received that information.

Mr Barnett: I am advised that all of the information for Education has been supplied but I will follow up on that.

Mr KOBELKE: To best use the time available for debate following the estimates we really need to have that supplementary information in our hands. It is difficult to get full value out of the time available for this debate if we are addressing the issues with only the information we had in the Estimates Committee, which was often not the full information, and we are still waiting for further answers. I was keen to find out how much of the Education Budget is spent on administrative staff because in the preceding year there was quite a large blowout in administrative staff in that department. The figures the minister provided in answer to a question on notice indicate that from June 1997 to June 1998 levels 5 and above positions on the payroll increased by 153 per cent. In one financial year the number of bureaucrats in the Education Department increased by 153 per cent. That is an additional cost in excess of \$20m just on people who do not actually front up in a classroom and provide education.

Mr Barnett: You will probably find that most of those are teacher aides.

Mr KOBELKE: No, this is level 5 and above. We do not pay teacher aides at level 5; this figure relates to bureaucrats.

Mr Barnett: The so-called bureaucratic level in the Education Department has been reduced considerably.

Mr KOBELKE: Why do I not have an answer to the question? This is the answer the minister provided me some months ago and it shows that the number of people being paid at level 5 and above - who are not in classrooms in any way or form - in the district or central offices increased by 153 per cent in one year. I am a strong supporter of the central administration of education. It is very important that we have a strong central, effective and professional administration but no justification whatsoever has been made by the minister for increasing the bureaucracy by 153 per cent in one year. I estimate that would be a cost of some \$20m depending on the on-costs. If one put in the full on-costs suggested by the Treasury, the cost would be in excess of \$30m. However, I suggest the Treasury figures overinflate the actual cost because they were derived for another purpose.

Another comment I will make on Estimates Committee A relates to Treasury. The Premier said on page E198 -

Our revenues are sensitive to employment growth and wages growth.

I accept that that is true but it underlies the problem we have with this whole budget and the scrutiny of it; that is, the Premier as Treasurer is not willing to face up to reality and answer very genuine questions with direct, factual answers. We still have the Premier saying that the budget is not in deficit. Every Tom, Dick and Harry and economic commentator knows that this budget is in deficit to a major extent. The Premier will not face up to that, despite the fact that the Government has cooked the books to make it look as though the budget will be okay. The Premier is correct in saying that revenue is sensitive to employment growth. That is why we have a prediction in this budget that employment growth will be 2 per cent. That is extremely optimistic. In fact, even in the current financial year the projection of 2.5 per cent seems extreme. It is likely on the current levels of growth in employment that we will not reach even 1 per cent.

I have compiled a table using the figures in the budget papers back to 1993-94. The table shows the Government's estimates of employment growth for the year and the final outcome. We find that for the past four years the Government has consistently overestimated the employment growth for the year ahead. If we accept a growth rate of 2.5 per cent, which is very unrealistic, we will still be 30 per cent over the estimate from the previous year. In 1997-98, the prediction was 11 per cent over; in 1996-97, it was 20 per cent over; and in 1995-96, it was 1275 per cent over. That occurred because during the previous year we experienced a large growth towards the end of the year. Clearly, it was a considerable overestimate. For the information of members, I present the following figures -

Employment Growth Projections in Annual State Budget Papers

	+1993-94	+1994-95	+1995-96	+1996-97	+1997-98	+1998-99	+1999-2000	+2000-1	+2001-2	+2002-3
Actual growth	2.50%	5.50%	0.20%	2.30%	2.70%	2.50%				
Budget papers for										
+1993-94	no est.									
+1994-95	4.25%	4.00%								
+1995-96		4.00%	2.75%	2.25%	2.00%	1.75%				
+1996-97			2.00%	2.75%	3.00%	2.75%	2.00%			
+1997-98				2.25%	3.00%	3.00%				
+1998-99					2.50%	3.25%	2.25%	2.50%	2.50%	
+1999-2000						2.50%	2.00%	2.75%	3.25%	3.25%
Over estimation	70%	-27%	1275%	20%	11%	30%				

Figures in bold are the annual forward estimates and the actual growth achieved.

The point is that we have a budget that the Premier as Treasurer cannot defend. It is predicated on a range of assumptions that have no foundation; they will simply not stand up.

We are currently in a major downturn in the resources sector. That is a concern to the Opposition and to the Government. Members on both sides are confident that the upturn will come, and we hope it will be soon. However, this budget flies in the face of that economic reality. This budget does not include what the revenue is likely to be. Again, the deficit will be much greater than is stated in this budget.

Question put and passed.

MR BLOFFWITCH (Geraldton) [1.14 pm]: I move -

That the report of Estimates Committee B be adopted.

I thank the chairmen of committees who did such a good job during Estimates Committees A and B.

Mr Barnett: Particularly the Chairman of Committees himself.

Mr BLOFFWITCH: I did put in a few hours. This year members of Parliament prepared themselves much better than they have in the past, and I compliment members on both sides of the House. Members had prepared questions, it was easier for them to follow the new format - being alphabetical rather than random - and the performance indicators gave members a sense of how well agencies were doing. I compliment the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for providing a briefing during which questions were asked about performance indicators. As a result, members were able to understand what they meant. I was very pleased with that process. Last year was the first year of the new system. This year we had last year's figures to compare, and everyone was well satisfied with what they were doing.

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [1.16 pm]: I acknowledge the role that the Chairman of Committees plays in organising the Estimates Committees. As always, admirable professionalism was displayed in the chairing of those committees.

I have previously raised the issue of the allocation of time to divisions. I know I have raised this issue previously, and I hope I am not here in 10 or 15 years saying the same thing. I have had extensive dealings in a number of portfolio areas, notably Family and Children's Services, and it is extremely frustrating to have only three hours allocated to a very large and sophisticated budget. That portfolio area involves not only the Department for Family and Children's Services but also the Office of Women's Interests, the Drug Abuse Strategy Office and the Office of Seniors Interests. The latter will have its autonomy removed and will be subsumed into the Department for Family and Children's Services. Those areas affect huge sections of the Western Australian community, yet we have only three hours in which to examine those budgets.

I know that on a dollar basis there are much larger portfolio allocations. However, with the Police budget at least we are dealing with a particular set-up and one department, albeit a complex organisation. These individual offices are all distinct entities and have different modus operandi. It can be extremely alarming to find that there is 15 minutes left in an estimates committee hearing and one must try to glean some information from what are extremely scanty budget papers in some areas.

I note the Leader of the House is in the Chamber. I wonder how we can move forward next year in looking at the sophistication within portfolio areas. Portfolio areas can be very diverse. The Minister for Works and for Services also has responsibility for the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Office of Youth Affairs. It falls on different chairmen with different approaches, different committee members and government members whose views might be different from those of opposition members to determine the time allocated to each area. I was involved in four areas and in each at least five minutes of the scarce time available was devoted to trying to find a way through the complexities of the different divisions. It would be good for the smooth running of Estimates Committees if a convention or direction could be established.

The Deputy Premier's portfolio responsibilities presented another difficulty. He is responsible for Commerce and Trade, Regional Development and other small areas in those divisions. To his credit, he was able to answer most of the questions posed without the help of his advisers. He was probably the only minister I observed who was able to deal with issues himself without having to continuously defer to a range of advisers. Nevertheless, it would be helpful if there were greater direction. The small business development corporations are a significant issue within that area; it involves all the regional development commissions. It would be useful for all members and the smooth running of the committees if there were greater clarification.

I return to the Minister for Family and Children's Services. I think you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Baker), might have been present during those estimates committee hearings. Certainly there was a major difficulty with using the parliamentary services committee room. It was far too small. I do not know the simple answer to that. I realise that the Speaker faces considerable challenges because of the inadequate nature of committee hearing rooms in this place. However, the parliamentary services room, particularly when Family and Children's Services people were present, was absolutely unworkable. I found that I was totally squashed at the table. It was very difficult for Hansard; it was also difficult for the members of staff from the various offices of the minister, because each time a question was asked on a different division everybody had to stand up and swap places. There was this ongoing situation of musical chairs, which I found disruptive - I do not know if other people did. The parliamentary services room is not a good venue when a lot of advisers are present.

A simple way around that would be to have divisions agreed between the minister and the opposition spokesperson ahead of time. In that way quite a few dollars from the public purse would be saved because advisers from senior positions would not be spending three or four hours at Parliament House when they might be required for only 15 minutes to answer questions on their particular area of expertise. Although I recognise that it should not be too regimented, it would make sense to have some further streamlining.

Because so many different advisers from Family and Children's Services were present, the most awkward thing was that there was not always a continuous line of questioning on a particular issue. If, for example, one was dealing with the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office, it was not always possible to pursue a particular line. I was interested to hear the member for Geraldton and Chairman of Committees make the observation that members appeared to be better prepared. I certainly felt that from government members' point of view, there appeared to be some thought given by ministers to providing backbenchers with a list of questions. They obviously wanted an opportunity to make some form of brief ministerial statement. I recognise that I could be completely wrong in that; however, that was my observation. It is a shame that that detracts from the ability of opposition members, particularly, but also backbenchers, to ask questions that are specific to their interests and electorates.

I find it an overwhelming task to get information about my electorate, because one cannot attend every estimates committee hearing, and therefore one has to rely on one's colleagues to ask particular questions on areas which may be of significant interest. My experience in this estimates committee hearing was that not all of my colleagues were able to ask the specific questions I wanted to have asked. I do not criticise them for that, because having participated in so many estimates committees myself, I realise that a great deal of time can be taken on different matters.

I have other comments to make on the Office of Youth Affairs. Before doing so, I congratulate the Chairs of the respective committees on the way they handled what is a difficult job. Certainly in every hearing at which I was present, it was a job that was done well.

I will make a few observations on the budget papers of some of the Estimates Committee B portfolios. I find one of those somewhat perplexing. I refer to the Department of Contract and Management Services, which is part 16, division 75. Here we have a Minister for Works, Services, Youth, and Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. Within division 75, the Office of Youth Affairs is somewhat buried. As Labor spokeswoman on youth, I have a keen interest in the way in which funds will be expended by the Office of Youth Affairs. It is not terribly easy to get information from the limited budget papers on how youth moneys will be spent. The Court Government has injected a fairly massive amount into boosting the cadet program. Almost \$650 000 will be spent on increasing the capacity of the cadet program across Western Australia.

Another aspect of the budget that is new is the establishment of a youth leadership program. I was pleased to attend the launch of that recently. As is often the case with launches under this Government, it was a rather glitzy affair. Nevertheless, there was consensus that the youth leadership program has a lot of potential. However, the real test for both the cadet program and the youth leadership program will be what type of young people have access to these programs, because if only a particular section of young people are accessing these programs, there will not be increased opportunities for all young people generally. Although I acknowledge that the cadet program has filtered out into many regional areas, as a country member of Parliament I am always conscious that when it comes to programs such as the youth leadership initiative, it can be extremely difficult for young people from rural and remote areas particularly to play a major role.

At the leadership awards breakfast, a number of young people were presented with awards. However, not one of those young people was from a country area. Therefore, further detail is required. This goes back to the whole estimates committee process, because at the time the estimates committee hearings were taking place the youth leadership program had not been officially announced - it was announced the following day - and it was not possible to get details of it. Therefore, that is one area in which I suggest some stage managing of estimates figures is occurring, because unless something has been officially announced, notwithstanding that its budget is contained within the *Budget Statements*, one cannot get any real detail.

I am always fascinated by the particular measures of outcome that are contained in budget papers. I refer to page 272 of volume 1, which again falls under the Minister for Works and Services. Some detail is provided on output measures within the budget for youth policy development and coordination. Various outcomes and initiatives are set out. However, what intrigues me are the output measures. For example, there is a measurement of quantity under the units of strategic policy advice. There are 900 of those, whatever they might be; we did not get a chance to ask what they were. However, it is estimated that 900 units of strategic policy advice will have been provided in the current financial year, and that next financial year there will be 950. If one does not know what on earth the unit is or what it is measuring, it is hard to work out whether an extra 50 units of advice is of any consequence at all.

We see that 300 youth grant applications have been processed, and there is an expected increase to 350. Without further detail, it is difficult to know whether that represents a significant increase or whether, as the reason for variation states, there is simply an expansion of the grants program. As a country member of Parliament, I want to know what efforts the Office of Youth Affairs is making to get out into the general community to ensure that a significant number of relevant youth organisations and young people are making applications. Will the Office of Youth Affairs ensure that equity exists between different regions of the State and the metropolitan area, and that the maximum number of people, especially young people, have access to the programs?

A new measure will apply under quality, which is total nonsense. The quality of policy advice is to be assessed by the minister, with a rating of one for poor and five for excellent. No explanation is provided of how the minister makes an assessment. Does he put in a lot of effort? He gives a mark out of five. Surprise, surprise - the minister has given a good mark! Would we have expected the minister to give a bad mark? I think not.

Mr Barnett: He is a good minister.

Ms ANWYL: They are all good ministers over there, are they not?

Mr Barnett: Terrific.

Ms ANWYL: I am sure the ministers all rate themselves as good ministers - proof of that is found in the budget papers. The Minister for Youth Affairs assesses the quality of policy advice as four out of five as a target for next year. However, no mark was given for this year. That indicates the artificiality of the budget papers. The minister could have assessed the quality of advice provided this financial year, but he chose not to do so.

The quality of policy development and coordination is to be assessed by stakeholders. Again, one has a projection but no figure provided for this year. Significant money has been expended on consultants who distribute questionnaires regarding stakeholder perceptions. I am surveyed all the time as a stakeholder. It takes significant and ever-increasing time to complete the surveys in writing.

Mr Barnett: Do you give the minister high marks too?

Ms ANWYL: I usually do not receive questions about ministers, but about budget advice. Having recently spoken to a telephone consultant, I know that government backbenchers, not only opposition backbenchers, gave the budget papers a terrible rating. I would provide an assessment according to the quality I saw. I would give a good mark in some areas, and give ministers a bad mark in many areas. This process makes less information available to the public - namely, those who elect us and foot the bill through taxes - about how these funds are spent.

The output measures also outline estimates of costs. For example, a unit of strategic policy advice - whatever that might be - was estimated to be, for each of the 900 issued, a cost of \$468. The average cost per policy developed is \$65 000. No indication is given whether the policy was of any use to anyone or should be streamlined or changed. In effect, the bulk of the output measures for the Office of Youth Affairs are complete and expensive nonsense.

MR GRAHAM (Pilbara) [1.35 pm]: Few of us are left in this place who were here when the old Committee of the Whole deliberations were held on the appropriation Bills between the second and third reading stages. We sat around and asked questions about line items in the budget until all hours of the morning. From memory, that process changed after the 1989 budget. The then Opposition pressured the Government of the day over the dealings of the Western Australian Development Corporation, the Western Australian Exim Corporation and Northern Mining to the extent that the Committee of the Whole had no opportunity to touch on health and education. The then Government gagged the committee stage. To the best of my knowledge, that was the first time in history that a Government had gagged its budget.

A couple of elements were involved. First, legitimate filibustering by the Opposition took place as it felt it was not receiving the information it sought from the budget papers. The second deliberate and equally legitimate process became known in the back rooms as legislation by exhaustion; that is, allowing Parliament to sit on until people became bored with dealing with matters so no issues were revealed.

Dr Hames: What year was this?

Mr GRAHAM: I think it was 1988-89. It was similar to the industrial relations legislation dealt with when this Government first came to office. It is funny how things do not change much!

Leaving the partisan politics to one side, generally speaking, members of Parliament realised that the system of scrutinising the budget was not working as well the public would expect in contemporary politics. Therefore, we instituted what have become known as the Estimates Committees.

Much discussion has ensued on the Estimates Committees. I am not trying to be partisan or point at any leader. The current Leader of the House made nice comments about the staff, which were valid. He referred to the behind-the-scenes administration and the logistics of dealing with the committees. All those comments were valid. However, the real question is whether the committees provide Parliament and its members with the opportunity to scrutinise the state budget and its programs. I have been making this point for some years: I listen to debate and ultimately wait to hear a vocal supporter of the Estimates Committee process who demonstrates clearly that the process has placed a minister, his or her chief executive and the relevant department under some form of intensive legitimate scrutiny. When I finish my speech, I will listen with interest to see whether someone makes such comment. No-one to date has given vehement support to the system. It does not provide that scrutiny.

The estimates process contains a number of components. One thing it does well is allow individual members of Parliament and shadow ministers to raise issues and question ministers for the purpose of publicity. That may be publicity by way of their locally produced newsletters or letters to constituents or by way of local or state media. The estimates process provides a good vehicle for that to happen. In the real political world it is not kosher for government backbenchers to quiz, cross-examine or scrutinise their ministers in the Parliament during the normal processes of Parliament. It does not matter which party is in power, as the English would say, one does not do that. I do not know that I endorse that, but that is the way politics is played. The estimates procedure allows government backbenchers to do that within a cloak of accountability, and it gives them some opportunity to raise matters that they would not otherwise have. They must do things privately in the party room or by direct negotiation, but not in any sense that would inspire their electorates to feel that they have a representative fighting for their greater good. The publicity from the estimates does that pretty well for members. If members scrape behind the political rhetoric, they will recognise that as one of the major roles of the estimates procedure.

Does it provide a vehicle for accountability? In my view, no it does not, and that applies this year more than any other year. I have said previously that the budget format has changed six times in the past six years and it is now almost incomprehensible to anyone reading it. No matter on which side of politics members sit, nobody can convince me that they can pick out from the budget papers what a government department is doing. The information does not go down to program level or regional level and, on that basis, I argue that the estimates procedure fails dismally. Last year I said I could not

understand why I could obtain a CD-ROM explaining how to read the budget papers but not the papers themselves on CD-ROM. I give credit to John Langoulant, the Under Treasurer, and his officers for producing the budget papers on CD-ROM, but now I need the CD-ROM explaining how to read the information. That is not a criticism of John Langoulant and his organisation, but it is a criticism, if anything, of our parliamentary procedures.

The cynical side of my mind says that the information in the budget papers is designed by the Government to obfuscate and hide what is happening in government. The other side of my mind - the perfectly normal part - says that I should give the Government the benefit of the doubt, and perhaps it is trying to introduce a new system that will improve things over time. If that is the case, the Government and this Parliament have some key decisions to make. The first matter which the Government must consider is that it has shifted from a basis of accounting for full-time equivalents and programs to a system of performance measurement. It is interesting that it is probably the only place in the world where the people performing the function write about what they do, assess themselves and then report on it. That is not a bad outcome if people can get it.

Ms Anwyl: They always give themselves a good mark.

Mr GRAHAM: Yes. I would not mind, when going to the next election, having to confront myself to see whether I had done a good job, making that assessment and then putting myself back into the job.

Mr Brown: Some suggested they will get their own workplace agreement to reward themselves, having judged their own performance.

Mr GRAHAM: Exactly. That is an excellent point. This estimates process legitimises the contents of these budget papers. At the end of this process and the third readings, it will be the legitimate official government view of the State because the Parliament will have approved it. We had no say in the performance indicators and neither did anyone else, apart from in the surveys and polls to which the member for Kalgoorlie referred. I have adopted the opposite attitude to polling by government departments. It is unacceptable for them to poll me, as a member of Parliament, asking for my views on their operations, because the vehicle for me to present those views is this forum. If I need to make a judgment and assessment, for example, of the Minister for Housing's department, he will know. I do not need a confidential inquiry from a pollster to determine my attitude to the minister's department. With all due respect to the Government, that system has now become counterproductive and is nonsensical. People are sending out surveys containing between 30 and 50 pages, and members receive five or six of those a week.

I refer to the principles of government and, for example, the way the Government split the energy sector. It did not provide for the regulator in the energy sector to remain within the main body of the department. The Government created the Office of Energy that sets the rules, and then put in place a department whose job it is to implement those rules. That must happen with performance indicators. They should come out of the departments because the departments are in place to deliver services or to administrate. They are not in place to determine what they are to do. Parliament does that by legislation and regulation, and some link should be established between the Parliament and the performance measures that departments put in place. It is a huge industry. It is not just something about which people feel warm and fuzzy; it takes millions of dollars for people to work out whether the department's activities are in accord with the defined outcomes of the department.

I have listened to what the Leader of the House said about government policy. As I have said previously, his academic brilliance dazzles us all, but the reality is that Governments set policies and the departments go about their business. I am interested in both; they are not mutually inclusive or exclusive. This Parliament should not be set on a course because the Leader of the House says we should use the budget process to go through government policy. That is not the case. We should use the budget process to scrutinise the budget. It may mean sometimes that the Government's policy is examined, sometimes the dollars are examined and sometimes both are examined.

Another outcome of this process, and this year is probably the worst example, relates to ministers attending the committee with teams of people. Either inadvertently or by design, ministers now embark on a strategy of knowing little. If they know little they cannot be held accountable for what little they say. In response to questions, they do not provide hard detail which can be questioned later and may result in their being found to have misled the House. The weasel words have slipped into the ministers' vocabulary in the Parliament. They no longer say, for example, that the cost of something is \$50m. They now say that they are advised that the cost is \$50m. When the costs are revealed to be \$500m and they knew that beforehand, can it be said that the minister has misled the House? Clearly the minister did not because he said he had been advised. Some very good royal commissions' decisions and deliberations indicate that some people wish they had used that phrase. I understand why ministers do it. Nonetheless, in my view it is a political out for weak ministers.

Also, in the estimates process advisers and departmental people have been answering the questions put by members. There are mixed views on that. Some say that having those people improves the quality of information that comes into the Legislative Assembly, because ministers are not able to carry that type of information across the full breadth of their portfolio responsibilities. I am not one of those people. I hold the other view; I believe ministers are accountable and should be accountable across the detail of their portfolios. If they are not, the job of this Parliament is to expose that, and it has been thus for the 300-odd years that there have been Westminster-style Parliaments. Ministerial accountability is one of the fundamental tenets of the Westminster system. Of late it has changed to deniability, which became the hallmark of the Nixon years in the United States Congress, when it was a case of what to tell the boss, when to tell him and how to tell him. Deniability has become the hallmark of this Parliament. That is very sad. Politics is a bit soft when that happens. Ministers should be prepared to make decisions, they should be prepared to come into this place and defend them and they should be open to scrutiny.

The culmination of what I have said is that the system of delivering budget papers and the time constraints that apply to the estimates processes and the use of the guises of ministerial advice and supplementary information, which is never subsequently re-examined by this committee, militate against the estimates processes being an effective budgetary measure in this State. I make no bones about it. For many years I have been an advocate of oversight committees. I have been lucky; I have travelled with various committees from this place. I make a point of calling on other Parliaments and Congresses and looking at how they work in other parts of the world. I have seen Governments accurately held to account for their actions and expenditure only in those places where standing committees or oversight committees have powers and resources to call ministers before them and cross-examine them.

Some members may be aware of the report released by the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee some years ago after it travelled to New Zealand. For half a day we watched the minister responsible for the economic development of New Zealand being cross-examined by not only the Opposition members, but also academics, on the philosophy underlying the decisions he was making on the economic direction being taken by New Zealand. No such vehicle exists in this State. There is a limited application in the Federal Parliament, but it does not exist in this State. Ministers are now paid extraordinarily large amounts of money. There is no doubt that it is the perk of office to be a minister in our system of government. They are paid all and they control all. There is no reason why those ministers should not be brought into this place, examined about how they spend their dollars and questioned by the Parliament on whether the decisions they are making are supported and substantiated by all the good advice and evidence that is available. Our current system does not provide that avenue.

MR BROWN (Bassendean) [1.53 pm]: During the estimates hearings, Estimates Committee B considered Commerce and Trade, Small Business and a number of other portfolios. Today I received some of the supplementary information that was sought during that committee. Some of that information is related to the examination by the Small Business Development Corporation of the impact of the deregulation of retail trading hours. It is interesting to note that a survey of 446 small retailers in the Perth and Fremantle tourism precincts was conducted by SBDC in 1997, about 12 to 18 months after the tourism precincts were announced. SBDC found that two-thirds of retailers had experienced no improvement in their market share or sales turnover as a result of extended trading hours on Sundays and public holidays. The survey also indicated that extended trading hours had not increased employment levels. Interestingly, only 47 per cent of retailers surveyed stated that they would continue to open Sundays; that is, if they had an option to close. The survey also showed that small retailers do not benefit from extended trading hours and are against complete deregulation of trading hours.

That is an interesting and topical finding from the survey, given that in a microcosm we have partial deregulation in two discrete areas. There has been a test of what further deregulation of trading hours will do to small business. We have seen by that test in both the City of Perth and the City of Fremantle that small business retailers are opposed to the further deregulation of trading hours. This is not a theory; this is from a test that has been conducted, and small business retailers have indicated their position.

Mr Shave: You could also argue that those areas are in a privileged position.

Mr BROWN: That is the exact point I was about to raise. The minister is right on the button. The point that I was about to make, which the minister made for me, is that these people are in a privileged position because they attract people who would not normally come to either the City of Perth or the City of Fremantle if the local shops or larger stores were open. These people are attracted to these two tourism precincts. One can see what will be the impact of further deregulation of trading hours on small business retailers.

Another point that has been made by the Small Business Development Corporation in its examination of this issue is that if there is to be any extension of retail trading hours, it would need to be staged. Last year in this place and the other place the Parliament debated the commercial tenancy amendments. The Government insisted that most of the provisions of the amendment Bill not apply to existing leases, which some small retailers did not particularly like but they grudgingly accepted the rationale; that is, the law should not apply retrospectively. That was the Government's answer and that is why those changes should not apply to existing leases. If one applies that logic to the retail trading hours issue, one could say that if the Government decided to make a change, particularly an appreciable change to retail trading hours, it should do that only by saying, "This is the change we will make, but it will not come into operation for five years." If the Government makes a change to extend retail trading hours, those small retailers will be caught in a devil of a position. On the one hand, they will be caught potentially with a dilution of the sales they will receive as a result of deregulation and, on the other hand, they will be caught with a market rent or a rent under their lease which has been struck at a time when the value of the premises was different from the value of the premises under a deregulated or less-regulated market.

Mr Shave: The difficulty with that is that if a recession or severe downturn in the economy occurred and the Government made a decision today on something that would seem at today's trading to be reasonable, in five years' time that may cause difficulties.

Mr BROWN: That is true; it may. I accept the point. However, it is one thing for government to give notice. At least then when people are entering into new lease arrangements, during the next five years they can say that the Government had put it on the agenda. If the bottom fell out of the world economy and a range of other things occurred, it may not come about. However, at least people would go into lease negotiations with their eyes open and aware that a lease based on retail turnover will be far different if planned events occur.

Having regard to the survey results that have been published before, but which are, of course, repeated in the information provided by the Minister for Commerce and Trade through the estimates committee process, that is particularly apposite when government is considering the future of retail trading hours in this State. As the Minister for Fair Trading has this matter under consideration at present I encourage him to look at it very closely. It is one thing to call for liberalisation of

trading hours and deregulation in the broader state or national interest - there are many arguments about that which we will leave to one side for another day - if the extreme, dry, economic view is accepted that there is still an argument in any event not to do it tomorrow, but to do it in five years' time or with sufficient notice.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued below.]

QUESTIONS UNANSWERED

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland): After question time yesterday several members sought explanations as to why their questions were not answered. I believe that many of those have been answered so there is a much-reduced list on today's Notice Paper. The staff are holding answers to questions Nos 1976, 2060, 2240 and 2253. I think those replies are three months old. Some other answers are being held, most of which are for 17 March.

[Questions without notice taken.]

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 1) 1999

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 2) 1999

Estimates Committees A and B Report and Minutes - Presentation and Adoption

Resumed from an earlier stage on the following motion -

That the report of Estimates Committee B be adopted.

MR BROWN (Bassendean) [2.41pm]: The next matter with which I shall deal arises under the budget for Commerce and Trade. At page 184 of the budget papers the following statement is made -

Innovation is critical to achieving international competitiveness but business expenditure on research and development has decreased in response to the Federal Government's decision to reduce the tax concession from 150% to 125%.

That is true, and it is having an impact on Western Australia. A report recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics was the subject of an article in the local paper last week. It indicated that Western Australia had the worst fall in expenditure on research and development, with a decrease of 23 per cent. That is the reverse of the situation in South Australia, which shows an increase of 19 per cent. I raise this matter because it is also stated in the budget papers -

To further reduce or abolish the concession would be expected to exacerbate this trend and the effect of a GST on research and development is yet to be determined, but it is also likely to be negative.

That decision by the Federal Government to reduce the research and development tax concession has had a massive detrimental effect on research and development in Australia, and particularly Western Australia. About six months ago I went to a morning business breakfast, at which the guest speaker was Robert Gottliebsen, who needs no introduction in this Chamber. He said that in the past decade the worst financial decision ever made by an Australian Government was the decision to reduce the tax concession on research and development from 150 per cent to 125 per cent. In his view, approximately \$1b worth of research and development had gone offshore as a consequence of that narrow, stupid decision made by the Federal Government. What has it meant for industry and jobs in Western Australia and Australia? It has meant that the critical areas of job creation and economic development in research and development are now decreasing. The effort in research and development and the total expenditure on research and development is declining. This is at a time when the other powerhouses of the world, in the United States, Canada, Germany and the rest, are increasing their efforts and companies in those countries are increasing their research and development effort.

It is particularly disappointing for Western Australia because over the past couple of years the Government has put in place its science and technology policy, which contains a range of initiatives, including investment in incentives for centres of excellence programs, the Western Australian innovation support scheme and various others. It seems that, despite these initiatives by the State Government, which does not have as much money to spend in this area as the Federal Government, research and development in this State is declining at a rapid rate. The state budget is not of a size where it can provide the same incentives as a Federal Government can provide with tax concessions. The State Government simply does not have sufficient money. If the whole of the \$50m-\$60m budget for Commerce and Trade were allocated to research and development, it still would not be enough. Therefore, it is essential for this State to do what is advocated in some of the industry policy statements of the Department of Commerce and Trade launched by the minister; that is, actively campaign for the return of the 150 per cent tax concession. A single State, particularly one where capital expenditure and research and development are so critical, does not have the financial wherewithal to apply the sort of money necessary.

The Federal Government proposed five funds to manage the amount it would make available for research and development - on a one-for-one or two-for-one grant arrangement - and allocated \$200m in initial funding for the five entities to manage the funds. When I asked a short while ago how much had been allocated from those funds, I was told that it was only \$11m from the \$200m that had been set aside. The Federal Opposition said it did not have a problem with the Federal Government's plans for those funds and it hoped that the scheme would work, but it has not worked to any appreciable

extent. If this State wants to create new jobs, particularly for young people in industries using high technology, it must ensure that this State is at the cutting edge of research and development. The consequences can be seen from the figures now produced. We now see the results of that very narrow decision made by the Federal Government to reduce expenditure on research and development. I quote from the article to which I referred earlier -

Prior to the falls of the past two years, business spending in this area had been increasing strongly throughout the 1990s, the bureau said, with average annual rates of growth between 1991-92 and 1995-96 of 16 per cent in current prices.

That is, until that idiotic decision was made to slash the research and development tax concession, expenditure on research and development increased over those five financial years at the rate of 16 per cent in current prices. Over the last two years, that has gone into reverse as spending on research and development, as a proportion of Australia's gross domestic product, has decreased from a high of 0.86 per cent in 1995-96 to 0.72 per cent in 1997-98. The one thing that is missing from the budget allocations for Commerce and Trade is that which was included in the Transport budget five or six years ago.

Five or six years ago an amount of money in the Transport budget was designed to run a political campaign to put pressure on the Federal Government. It was called the "Fix Australia, Fix the Roads" campaign. We on this side of the House did not like it much because it was blatantly political. It used taxpayers' money to paint the Federal Government as the bogy and to ensure that the then Federal Government was defeated. Hundreds of thousands of dollars was allocated for significant political advertising damning the Federal Government for the small amount it had allocated to road funding. Since there has been a change of Government, the focus of the "Fix Australia, Fix the Roads" campaign has completely changed. The television advertising has been forgotten, and it is about more road safety and doing the right thing on the roads. If we want to know about the politics of that money and the blatant political use of taxpayers' funds in terms of the "Fix the Roads" campaign, it is there for all to see. It is quite naked, despite all the glitzy stuff and all of the money being spent, but without a political imperative. If it was good enough then for the State to run a major political campaign against the Federal Government for failing to provide funds which it needed, is it good enough now? Is it good enough now to allocate \$300 000 or \$400 000 to start running a major campaign against the Federal Government over its decision on the 125 per cent tax concession? Is it good enough now for the State to start campaigning for the reintroduction of the 150 per cent tax concession? Interestingly, this is not talked about in terms of party politics. As the minister would know, the idea of campaigning for the return of the 150 per cent tax concession for research and development expenditure is contained in industry statements produced by the Department of Commerce and Trade, after consultation with a number of industry groups. Industry sees this as a major deficiency. Dot point four on page 184 of the budget papers, which deals with expenditure on research and development, is a critical issue. I hope that when the next set of budget papers is produced, we do not see a further decline in research and development in this State. My fear, however, is that we will, unless significant decisions are made by the Federal Government. My fear is that they will not be made.

Question put and passed.

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 1) 1999

Third Reading

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [2.53 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR MARLBOROUGH (Peel) [2.54 pm]: I will speak about that part of the budget which directly affects my electorate; that is, the positioning of the proposed Claremont Speedway and Ravenswood drags on the Alcoa mud lakes. Yesterday an editorial in *The West Australian* touched on a serious problem that has arisen about the issue of the speedway location under the direction of the Minister for Planning, and/or the Minister for Sport; that is, the attempt by the minister to hide from the public the facts that he, as the Minister for Planning, and the Government have before them. I attempted to obtain those facts at a committee meeting last week. I asked the minister a number of questions pertaining to the placement of the speedway on the Alcoa mud lakes. I do not have the exact minutes of that committee meeting in front of me, but I asked the minister three or four questions. One was whether the minister would confirm that Mr Con Migro, the owner of Claremont Speedway, and Mr Gary Mioceovich, the owner of the Ravenswood drag strip, were on the committee that he had put together to advise him on the speedway. His initial response was that they were not. He then advised me that they were, but they did not have voting rights. I then asked the minister whether he thought there was a conflict of interest with these two gentlemen. He indicated that in his mind there was no conflict of interest. I suggested to the minister that if that committee is to make recommendations to Cabinet for the expenditure of between \$15m and \$20m on the provisions of a speedway and look at the future leasing arrangements, the running costs, the types of sporting activities which could be held at such a venue and who would have control over those sporting activities, surely these gentlemen, who have an existing involvement in speedways, would have a conflict of interest under any circumstances. The minister was adamant that they do not. I then asked the minister whether he had asked any other owners of speedways in the State to be part of the committee, and of course he had not.

More importantly, I asked the minister at the committee meeting whether he was aware of the existence of a report commissioned by his advisory committee, whether he would give us the name of the consultancy group that carried out that report, whether he would allow us a copy of the report or give us the contents of the report and whether he would give us the cost of that report. At first he would not admit there was a report. Then he would not name the company, he would not divulge the report's contents and he would not tell us how much was spent on the report. I suggested to the minister that I understood that he would not give us the name of the company that carried out the report. He would not talk about the

contents of the report. He was not willing even to divulge whether the report was done for him. However, having recognised that such a report existed, surely the minister recognised that taxpayers' money was spent on the report. I asked him whether he would tell us how much money had been spent on the report. Again he refused. Setting aside all of the other problems that may exist with this speedway being located on the Alcoa mud lakes, is it any wonder that we continue to see public concern about a Government that was elected on the basis that it would be open and accountable? It came to office at the end of the WA Inc era -

Mr Kierath interjected.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I will come to that and I will ask the minister some questions about that system. This Government would be open and accountable. As the member for Peel, and as the local member involved, I asked the minister these questions at a committee meeting which intended to spend up to \$20m of taxpayers' money on this complex, I received no answers. That is why *The West Australian* printed that editorial yesterday. It becomes a broader issue than simply the problems of the speedway; it becomes another example of the unwillingness of the Government, and in particular the Minister for Planning, to divulge the type of information which should be applicable.

Mr Kierath: I did not say I would not divulge it; I said it was currently part of the cabinet process. No Government divulges cabinet details. During that public process, all of the issues must be raised. It will be out in two weeks; it will be a public document outlining all of the issues, such as noise, societal risk and individual risk. A range of those issues will be in the public domain for public consultation. Whoever wrote that article has no idea of the environmental and other processes that we must go through. I only assume he took your advice.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: It is the minister's playing with words that gets him into problems with the media and many of his colleagues. I will repeat what he said. He said that he did not refuse to provide the report; he said it was simply part of a cabinet process. He refused to give me the cost of the report, he refused to name the company which was asked to do the report, and he refused to divulge any of the contents of the report. He might like to say that he is doing that because it is a requirement of the cabinet process. I put to the minister that it is a lot more than that. The contents of this report, which was commissioned by the advisory committee, is so damning of the location of this facility in the Alcoa mud lakes that he has hidden it from public scrutiny.

Mr Kierath: What a lot of rubbish.

Mr Tubby: It is an absolutely ideal site.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: It is not an ideal site. Does the member for Roleystone want to go on record as saying that it is an ideal site?

Mr Tubby: In my view, it is an ideal site.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That is because he does not know about the site. It is a view in ignorance of the facts. I do not want to go to that now, but will come to the issue of the site location later. The minister may like to say that he will not give members of the public the information they demand because it is part of the cabinet process. I put this proposition to the minister: It has been put to me by people who have seen the report that it suggests - it uses these words; I have not seen it, so I am going on what people who have seen it tell me - that the placing of this facility within the societal risk contour of the Kwinana industrial area has the potential to create another Bhopal. The way to clear this up is to allow the report to be seen.

Mr Kierath: It will be. It has to be. The EPA has made a decision that there will be a public environmental review. Societal risk is not part of that process at this stage. The EPA has said that it is an issue to be looked at by the Planning Commission, but it must be addressed. All the other issues, the noise and everything else, are part of the PER, and that is a four-week process. All the documentation, the reports, must go out for public comment. The EPA will assess it and make its recommendations. At this stage, if societal risk is addressed satisfactorily, it will leave it to the Planning Commission to take on the issue. The noise regulations and all the other issues will be decided by the EPA. We gave an undertaking that we would release the societal risk report during the process of the PER, during the four weeks in which the public can comment. That is why I said that whoever made the editorial is in complete ignorance of the planning processes that must be gone through to get approval.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: We now hear what the public environmental review is all about. In how many of those reviews, which have involved the Kwinana industrial strip, has the Environmental Protection Authority not looked at the societal risk factor? I suggest none, up to this time. I want to know - we will be able to pursue this with some questions in the next week or so - under whose instruction is the Environmental Protection Authority carrying out a public environmental review report and not looking at societal risks?

Mr Kierath: The EPA made that decision.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: We may have the ability to pursue whether the EPA made that decision. To put it another way: Did the minister enter into correspondence with the EPA prior to its making that decision not to carry out the societal risk part of the PER?

Mr Kierath: It is on the public record.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Did the minister enter into correspondence or dialogue with it?

Mr Kierath: I sought dialogue. I will have to check the correspondence.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Did the minister suggest that the EPA not be party to the societal risk study?

Mr Kierath: I had a look at it. The societal risk is not the main criterion so far. It is an issue that must be addressed. I do not have the decision with me, but I can make it available to the member. The EPA has said the process of societal risk must be taken into account.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I did not ask that. The minister has already said that once.

Mr Kierath: That is the answer I am giving.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I asked whether the minister directed the EPA -

Mr Kierath: I do not have the power.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Is the minister saying that he did not enter into any dialogue with the EPA for it not to do a societal risk study?

Mr Kierath: The member asked me whether I directed it. I do not have the power to do that. I have the power to talk to it about that.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: It is clear what is beginning to happen. The minister knows that I and other people down there are concerned that this industry - not the speedway - will have a major impact on the societal risk contour surrounding the Kwinana industrial area. I suggest he has been involved already in discussions with the EPA to ensure it will not look at the matter in the PER. If the EPA, as the appropriate body, does not look at that issue in the PER, it is open for public condemnation. It will mean not a thing. That is the issue. The minister should come clean and let his involvement in that process be known.

MR MCGOWAN (Rockingham) [3.09 pm]: In raising issues relevant to my shadow portfolio of sport and recreation I will address the subject of a much-vaunted soccer-multipurpose sports stadium which has been promised now by the Court Government for a considerable period. I remind members that soccer has grown increasingly in popularity in recent years. I suppose along with athletics it is one of the two truly worldwide sports. It does not matter where one lives or what is our level of affluence, we all have the opportunity of participating in it. It is also growing immensely in popularity in Perth, evidenced by the support for the Perth Glory team. Large numbers of my constituents venture to the city every time the Glory plays and enjoy the sport.

Soccer is also increasing in national popularity, evidenced at the recent game at Homebush stadium where the Socceroos beat the World All-Stars before a crowd of about 90 000 people. It is very much in the public mind and growing in popularity which I do not think will decline because of its status as a world sport. We have a large overseas-born population in our city, particularly in my electorate of Rockingham and in areas north of the city, and large numbers of people from the United Kingdom have a real affinity for and love of the sport of soccer. Accordingly, when the Government announced its plans to construct a multipurpose sports stadium to cater for the needs of soccer along with Rugby Union and a few other sports - potentially athletics - I was very interested in the concept.

The other night the Premier most graciously invited me to a reception held in honour of the Perth Glory at his office on the twenty-fourth floor of 197 St Georges Terrace, where I was a token opposition member among a sea of government ministers mixing with the soccer stars. I am happy to report that I was mistaken for a soccer player by the people at the door.

Mr Barnett interjected.

Mr MCGOWAN: Of course that mistake would not have been made about the Leader of the House! I think they thought I was Scotty Millar, Bobbie Despotovski or one of those people. They were certainly not under the impression that the Leader of the House was a sportsman. I am trying to be gracious; I am grateful that I was invited to that function because it was most enjoyable. I was surrounded by members of the public and sportsmen so I suppose I can say that the Premier made a public speech. When he spoke he once again highlighted the Government's commitment to a sports stadium and to soccer. In doing so he intensely embarrassed the Minister for Sport and Recreation because he prefaced his remarks by saying that Hon Norman Moore said he should be very careful with what he says about the sports stadium. Nevertheless, the Premier went ahead with the usual spiel about how the Government is committed to the sports stadium and to soccer, etc.

Following that evening I had a look at what the Government said prior to the last election about a sports stadium. I remember it clearly.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Hodson-Thomas): I remind the member for Rockingham that the third reading debate is restricted to the content of the Bill and debate should not be as wide as it can be in the second reading debate. I hope he will keep that in mind.

Mr MCGOWAN: I take your point, Madam Acting Speaker. However, some funds were allocated for planning in the budget. I remember well the Government's commitment prior to the last election because it was the first story in the news one evening, about two weeks before the last election, when Minister Moore and the Premier announced that a new sports stadium would be constructed in the next term of the re-elected Court Government. It was a major promise that I am sure influenced a great many Western Australian voters.

However, it was a broken promise. I refer to the press release of 3 December 1996 put out by the Minister for Sport and Recreation. It reads in part -

Funds totalling \$40 million have been set aside in the Forward Estimates to allow for the construction of new facilities following the completion of the study into the multi-purpose stadium and the assessment of other sporting needs.

Forward estimates are four-year projections, although I think at that stage they were only for one year. They certainly have not gone beyond four years. That was a promise for a sports stadium. We are two-and-a-half years into this term of government and there is no sign of a sports stadium. The \$40m is no longer in the forward estimates. It is clearly a broken promise but one that no doubt thousands of Western Australians relied upon in casting their votes before the last election. The Minister for Sport and Recreation was correct when he suggested that the Premier should be careful about what he said at the function. He had to say that because the Government has not fulfilled its commitment. From anecdotal evidence among the soccer players to whom I spoke at that function, they are sick of hearing about it. They mistook me for one of their own, so I think they were confiding in me. They were cynical about the standard speech made by the Premier that it would be constructed in this term of government when it will obviously not be.

The next issue also relates to sport.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I remind the member for Rockingham to restrict his comments to the content of the Bill.

Mr McGOWAN: The last budget contained provision for a speedway complex, to which the member for Peel referred at length. The other day I visited the Western Australian Institute of Sport where I met for the first time a very competent, friendly and interesting fellow by the name of Wally Foreman. He introduced me to Graham Moss, the manager of Challenge Stadium. While at the stadium I saw some plans for the speedway complex which will be developed under the sports centre trust.

The speedway will be moved to the electorate of the member for Peel so it will be leaving Claremont, the heart of the safest Liberal seat, where it has been for 50 or 60 years, into the heart of a Labor seat, which already puts up with considerable noise and discomfort. However, that seems to be the way of this Government. The point I make is that the sports centre trust has been allocated \$4.5m by this Government for the construction of a \$12m or \$13m swimming complex in Joondalup. The community sporting and recreation facilities fund is contributing \$1.5m in addition to some money from the local council. For that project, half the money comes from the State. A place of equivalent size, growth and population to Joondalup is Rockingham in the south and it does not have an aquatic centre. It is one of the major strategic regional centres - probably the only one in Perth - that does not have an indoor aquatic centre. When the people of Rockingham applied to the Government for funding for an indoor aquatic centre -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Hodson-Thomas): I draw the member's attention to the fact that his contribution must be restricted to the content of the Bill. He would have had an opportunity during the second reading debate to address the need for a swimming centre in his electorate. I remind the member to keep his contribution to the content of the Bill.

Mr McGOWAN: I am drawing an analogy between the speedway, which has been allocated \$16m and which will be moved to the southern suburbs of this city, and the \$4.5m that has been spent in the northern suburbs on an aquatic centre. That sum is also referred to in this Bill.

An amount of \$4.5m has been allocated for an aquatic centre in the north and \$1.5m has been allocated from the community sporting and recreation facilities fund for an aquatic centre in the south. That is blatant favouritism. I implore the Government to show the same consideration to the people living in the south of the city as it has shown to those living in the north. Spending that money would go some way towards removing the feeling of alienation that exists in the south. It would also alleviate a major need in the south of the city because large numbers of people would use such a facility. The northern part of the Rockingham area has the oldest population profile in Perth and such a development would be a worthwhile addition.

I implore the Government to come up with a strategy, which I am willing to work towards. Of course, Kalgoorlie received money from local industry, and I am very keen to pursue that option to assist in the construction of an aquatic centre in the south. This issue must be taken up urgently to remove the perception that we in the south get the bad things such as the speedway, which cause all sorts of noise in the area, whereas those in the north get half the value of their aquatic centre provided by the Government.

I will have more to say in the future about the soccer stadium and the aquatic centre.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 2) 1999

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr Cowan (Deputy Premier), and transmitted to the Council.

LOAN BILL 1999

Second Reading

Resumed from 15 June.

MR GRAHAM (Pilbara) [3.26 pm]: In the week before the recent parliamentary recess I put on the Notice Paper a motion dealing with health in the north west and the preventable disease that is prevalent in that area. Members will recall that that

motion was not debated because the Government used up the private members' time in which it was scheduled to be debated. The Opposition has limited opportunities to raise issues with the Government, and private members' time is one of them. As usual, the government strategy of encouraging its members to speak during private members' time ate up the time available to me and left me with no option but to handle it another way.

In Parliament there is always another way to raise an issue. I chose to raise it as a grievance to the Minister for Health. I am glad he has returned to the Chamber because I am extremely concerned about his attitude to the grievance I raised. The minister interjected during my grievance by asking, "Are you going to say why they have a poor health service?" Knowing he is a new minister, in the seven minutes available to me I tried to express the serious concern about health outcomes in the north west of the State.

There is no doubt in any thinking person's mind about the size of the problem in the northern half of Western Australia. I will detail later for the minister the number of times that I have raised this issue formally in this Parliament and with successive Ministers for Health, including his immediate predecessor, who organised meetings between me and the Commissioner of Health so that I could express my concerns about the situation.

I was alerted to this issue by the Pilbara regional health plan put together in 1990-91, which had a life of five years. That plan pointed out clearly that, in every major indicator of health, the north west of the State was worse off than any other identifiable region by multiples; not by minor percentage points. If it were 0.1 or 0.2 of 1 per cent, we could deal with the issue according to the State's guidelines. However, it did not show that.

An excellent chap called John Blackwell moved into the Health Department and took control of health in the north west, and particularly in the Pilbara. The plan he implemented was jettisoned by Hon Peter Foss when he took over as Minister for Health. It was killed stone, motherless dead.

During my grievance the minister asked me what the Labor Government did. That is the standard rhetoric. He asked whether I wanted a meaningful response to the points I raised or whether I would continue to interject. He said that I expressed a lot of hot air about this issue and asked what I could point to that the Labor Government had done while in office to address the needs of the north west. I point to the 1990-91 regional health plan, which was intact, in place and funded when the Court Government came to office. It was jettisoned by Hon Peter Foss when he introduced the idiotic purchaser-provider model in the north west of the State, thereby effectively destroying health services in that area. The minister cannot say that we did not do it in government. We had an effective, workable plan which was funded and which the coalition minister destroyed.

Mr Day: You funded it all, did you?

Mr GRAHAM: It was funded and operating; it had forward estimates and forward budgets inside the Health Department, which was restructured on a regional basis. The regional director sat on the commission with the Commissioner of Health. The Government destroyed that structure when it came to government. It placed it down the pecking order of the bureaucracy. The Government fiddled with regional and rural health from 1993 until 1998. I will not conduct research for the Minister for Health. He should have one of his researchers check *Hansard* to see how many times I have raised health and health-related issues in Parliament. If the minister forms any view other than that I have been deadly serious about health matters, he should get rid of his researchers.

Mr Day: I never suggested anything else.

Mr GRAHAM: The minister did. He should not come that nonsense! He spent most of his response to the grievance attacking me and not dealing with the issues I raised. The minister said -

If the member for Pilbara wants to make a genuine contribution to this whole issue he should be out in his electorate encouraging people to smoke and drink less. He should be attempting to address the issues in a serious manner . . . rather than a flippant manner.

The minister's predecessors in the portfolio knew, as the minister should know, that the Pilbara receives less Healthway funding than any other identified area in the State, bar none. Healthway is the program designed to stop people smoking.

Mr Day: Healthway is run by an independent board. You should take it up with the board. I suggest you do.

Mr GRAHAM: Have I raised it? The minister does not know. He was being a smartypants.

Mr Day: You are such a sensitive little petal. You criticise the Government for funding not provided by Healthway.

Mr GRAHAM: Let me be clear as I do not want the minister to be confused. I raised legitimate health issues on behalf of the people I represent. The minister's response was contemptuous. The minister made no attempt to deal with the issues I genuinely raised.

Mr Day: That is not correct. You can read *Hansard* to see I dealt with the substance of important health issues in the north west.

Mr GRAHAM: Let me deal with that aspect. The minister needs to know that I have never politicised health in my electorate. He should ask his predecessors and people in the Health Department how many times the member for Pilbara has politicised health. It has not happened.

Mr Day: I have not done so either.

Mr GRAHAM: The minister has.

Mr Day: Rubbish!

Mr GRAHAM: A press release was issued by the minister's predecessor in February 1998, which was five years after this Government took office, to launch the instigation of a plan. It said that the Government was conducting a detailed analysis of the future health care needs of north west residents to ensure an expanded and improved health service to the year 2020. The press release outlined that the plan was expected to be finalised later that year. A bilateral agreement had already been signed by the State and Commonwealth Governments regarding the Aboriginal component. The press release referred to community meetings and the need for significant improvement, and outlined the topical issues in the north west. Reference was made to this being a key priority issue. Members should not hang me up on that comment, as I cannot find the exact reference.

The plan referred to the need to address alcohol and drug abuse prevention. What happened to that plan between February 1998 and when I raised it in Parliament as a grievance in June 1999? The Norhealth plan had reported to Government, an outline had been publicly released and initiatives had been announced. This paper produced all the evidence the minister needed to give the plan the top priority in his portfolio. It indicated that the Pilbara was worse off than anywhere else in the State in each of the nine core health issues, which accounted for 60 per cent of the sickness, morbidity, disability and loss of life in the north west. The paper outlined that each of those nine core issues was preventable. It also stated that the price of doing nothing was a deteriorating situation. Unless one deals with these issues in an integrated way, the problem will continue to deteriorate. The "ad hococracy" applied to health in the north west is exactly what placed us in this position in the first place. The minister's response in the Estimates Committee and grievance debate reinforced that "ad hococracy". He plucked out the provision of one renal dialysis unit - for which I have congratulated him on a number occasions - and claimed that it indicated the Government was committed to improving health outcomes in the north west. It does not indicate that at all, minister. It indicates that the minister is about to embark on a campaign which the Health Department wants to apply in the north west - that is, centralisation to Perth. I could go on for hours about telehealth, but I will not.

The motion I proposed, which we never debated, was factual and demonstrably correct. I could have substantiated every point, except maybe the last paragraph to which the Minister would not have agreed on political grounds. If the motion had been debated, I would have asked the minister to express concern at the high level of preventable diseases in the area, as outlined in the plan. If the minister cannot even do that gratuitously and meaningfully, we will not get anywhere. These are the worst health outcomes in the nation. If that is not cause for concern to the Minister for Health, to whom should it be of concern? It is certainly of concern to me.

Mr Day: Of course it is of concern to me, but one must look at the causes. It is not simply a matter of governments being able to fix these things by themselves, which is what you seem to be implying.

Mr GRAHAM: No, that is not true. Again the minister is being quite silly, simplistic and nonsensical in the way he deals with this issue. I have never said that to the minister. I do not know why he would arrive at that position. Nothing in my political life would convince him that I am saying anything like that. The minister sees it as a cheap way to have a quick shot across the Chamber.

Mr Day: Of course, you are not having any cheap shots at all.

Mr GRAHAM: No, I am not having a cheap shot; I am having a \$45m shot, because the minister is the bloke who can allocate the money to fix the problems.

Mr Day: You know that is a cabinet decision, and the \$45m is a major government issue.

Mr GRAHAM: If the Minister for Health wants to shove it off and say it is a cabinet decision -

Mr Day: I am not shoving it off, just as I did not shove it off in the debate. I said that the plan is being considered and we are looking at how we can fund it, together with the south west health plan and the metropolitan Norhealth 2020 project.

Mr GRAHAM: Okay. The minister has taken me exactly where I wanted to go, and I thank him for that. The minister said discussions are going on between the Health Department and Treasury, not only on the north west plan but also on the south west plan. I said to the minister that he should put the funds where the need is, which is in the north west. The minister said that undoubtedly there are needs in the north west, but there are also needs in the south west of the State. The minister then made the smart-alec comment that he would be interested to know whether the rest of the Australian Labor Party supports the comments of the member for Pilbara. I could not care less about them. Sorry, comrades. The Minister for Health has a document in front of him which points out that the greatest area of concern in this State is in the north west. It is quite simple. That is the area in which the minister should be educating and allocating his dollars.

Mr Day: I think you need to acknowledge, notwithstanding the fact that we have this plan which we are considering, the increases and improvements in services which have taken place over the past few years.

Mr GRAHAM: No, I do not have to acknowledge that.

Mr Day: No, you do not want to acknowledge it, but many other areas have been and are being addressed. It is not simply a matter of standing still and waiting for some magic plan to be put in place.

Mr GRAHAM: I will tell the minister the problem with the view that he puts forward. That is exactly the system that produced the worst health outcomes in the nation.

Mr Day: Why do we have the worst health outcomes in the nation in the north west of this State? Why do they exist?

Mr GRAHAM: There are a number of reasons, one of which is that the provision of basic services to communities is and has been in decline for many years.

Mr Day: Those services are not in decline at all; they have been extended. For example, mental health has been extended substantially.

Mr GRAHAM: Another reason is the reluctance of this Government to fund electricity and water supplies into Aboriginal communities, as well as its reluctance, until recently, to deal with the pragmatic issue of the shortage of medical practitioners in remote and rural Western Australia.

Mr Day: So you acknowledge we are making a genuine attempt to deal with that?

Mr GRAHAM: Absolutely. I am not bloody-minded. To continue, there is also the question of the cost of living and the nutritional standards. Incidentally, a separate study was undertaken which shows that the north west region is the area in which people eat less fruit and vegetables, which are one of the staples of life, than people in any other area in Western Australia. Interestingly, that is the area in which the Health Department spends a smaller percentage of its dollar in making people aware of the nutritional benefits of fruit and vegetables.

Alcohol consumption in the north west is higher than in any other identifiable region in the State, yet it receives less of the preventive dollar. When one goes behind the overall scene of alcohol prevention that is portrayed on television and identifies who abuses alcohol in the communities in the north west, one finds that none of the deterrent dollar is spent on the worst offenders, for want of a better word, or the worst abusers.

To turn to drug abuse, the north west area is well above the State level and it gets a smaller percentage of the drug abuse dollar. The WA Alcohol and Drug Authority, which comes under the minister's Health portfolio, at one stage had one officer to handle the north west of the State, in which the demonstrable need is greater than in any other region in Western Australia. That is absolutely ridiculous. There are now no officers because the system has been changed to a half-baked committee system. I could continue, but I will not. The minister asked me why the current situation exists. I think I have given him a satisfactory explanation. If he is not happy with that, I will give another speech, and if the Minister wants me to, I could dig out some of the speeches in which I have given the percentages and multiples of how far the north west is above the State averages for death and disease, both of which are entirely preventable.

Mr Day: However, you acknowledge that higher levels of tobacco and alcohol consumption are a cause of the statistics being worse than in other areas of the State.

Mr GRAHAM: Absolutely. However, I make the point that the minister has refused to come to grips with, which is that what has got us into this mess is "ad hococracy" -

Mr Day interjected.

Mr GRAHAM: Of course I accept that, but what a stupid retort that is. One does not say to city people, "We will not put the billboard at the end of St Georges Terrace or at the end of the bridge because you need educating about smoking. It is your responsibility." One does not say that; one gets off one's butt, funds it, and puts it out into the community as a message, because the Health Department has an obligation to make sure that people know what they are doing. However, when it comes to an identifiable need in the country, the minister sits there like a pompous prat and says to me that it is a personal responsibility. It is not a personal responsibility in the bush any more than it is in the city.

Mr Day: I agree that, as a government, we have a responsibility to fund prevention programs throughout the State, and we do that. You make an assertion that less is spent on prevention activities in the north west part of the State, but I would like to see clear evidence of that.

Mr GRAHAM: My job is to raise issues; the minister's job is to deal with them. If he cannot deal with them, he should get out of the job and someone else will deal with them.

Mr Day: I said you are making an assertion and I would like to see the evidence for your assertion.

Mr GRAHAM: I will tell the minister. I did the research and I will not do it again because I took it to Ministers for Health and was ignored. The north west has 3 per cent of the population and it got 0.3 per cent of the preventive dollar. I will not do the research again. The minister can do the research, get someone to ask a Dorothy Dix question and tell me we are getting more. Then I will go away happy. That is the Minister for Health's job.

I will return to the plan, about which I have reservations. What the Government has done to telehealth initiatives borders on the criminal. It is the greatest health initiative that is available in modern medical science, and this Government has largely ignored it. Perhaps I am being a tad unfair. The Government has not largely ignored it; it set out on what was recognised as probably the most appropriate course that the Health Department could take in respect of telehealth. It then changed it and did not deliver what it should have delivered. However, as I said, I have reservations about the plan.

I have no reservations about the planned assessment of the problem; I think it is spot on. I do have reservations about the Minister for Health's commitment to funding it and dealing with it. He gave me a lot of tripe in answer to my grievance. The minister said to me that discussions are going on between the Health Department and Treasury. He said in effect that the north west health plan must fit in with other plans that have been developed for the State. That is a political decision and not a health decision. Let me put the minister on notice that if he makes a political decision on this, I will have no option but to play politics with health in the north west.

Mr Day: You just said that you were not playing politics with it.

Mr GRAHAM: I said that I have not; that is right; I am still not.

Mr Day: You think you might?

Mr GRAHAM: I said to the minister that if he makes a political decision on the health plans, I shall have no option open to me other than to be political. I want to be standing in the crowd when the minister flies into Port Hedland, Broome or wherever and says that the Government is committed to the plan and will fund it in full and that it will be implemented. I have not sought to do anything along the way other than pursue that outcome. If the minister talks to the people on that committee, he will find that I have been more than helpful to that committee in its endeavours.

Mr Day: Are you suggesting that because you are a member of the Labor Party and your electorate is therefore represented by a member of the Labor Party, we will ignore it or that other electorates in this State have been ignored because they are Labor electorates?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes.

Mr Day: That is absolute rubbish. Ask the member for Armadale whether we are ignoring her electorate by building a new \$48m hospital.

Ms MacTiernan: We have yet to see the dollars.

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, I am suggesting that the minister will do that. I will tell him why I suggest that he will do that. It is because when I said that he needed to fund the north west health plan based on the health need, he came back with all of his smartypants stuff, saying that it must be considered with respect to the south west. He said that there were also needs in the south west. Then he charged off making smartypants political comments to see whether the rest of the Labor Party agrees with my view. Yes, I am suggesting very strongly that he is about to water down parts of the \$45m that is needed. That is the first thing I am suggesting.

Mr Day: You are talking rubbish. I have a very strong personal interest in improving health services in the north west of the State. Obviously we need to consider the needs of the whole State. We will not ignore the needs of any part of the State, least of all the north west. You are talking absolute, pompous nonsense.

Mr GRAHAM: The plan and the study group which the minister commissioned removed from him the need to consider anything other than the study group's report, unless he has a recent report somewhere else in the Health Department that says that his study group got it wrong and that the area of greatest need is not the north west. Is that the case?

Mr Day: I am not saying that it has got it wrong at all. The work done by the group chaired by Tony Finucane has been very impressive.

Mr GRAHAM: I agree. It demonstrates clearly and reinforces the information that was tendered 10 years ago that the area of highest need is in the north west of the State. Now fund it; that is all the minister needs to do. The group has told him what he needs to do and spelt it out chapter and verse. It is \$45m over five years. In that time the minister will have been allocated over \$5b. It is not a big ask but of outcomes for the State it is the number one priority. The minister may be dealing with it, to give him the benefit of the doubt, but his public comments do not engender in me a sense of confidence that he is about to give it the top priority that he should.

MR THOMAS (Cockburn) [3.55 pm]: I wish to use the short time available to raise the matter of the Cockburn Sound trust, which the Opposition has advanced in this House on a number of occasions. I had hoped that the Deputy Premier would be here because I understand that he is largely responsible for the proposal. He has been in the public arena saying that the Government is prepared to accept the proposal. He explained to me that he would not be able to be here while I am speaking but that he would have a look at what I say and reply to me. I am appreciative of that.

During the controversy which has surrounded the Jervoise Bay southern harbour project, I proposed that there should be a Cockburn Sound trust; that is, a management body entrusted with the management of Cockburn Sound. I based my proposition on the Swan River Trust. I have said that Cockburn Sound is essentially an inland water and subject to all sorts of use pressures and conflicts. It has residential and industrial areas abutting it. It has substantial recreational interests. Above all it has a very strong conservation interest. Therefore, it is subjected to conflicting uses and different pressures. They are manifest in the controversy that has gone on over the past 18 months or so and in some of the proposals that have been put forward for its use.

Some 10 years ago it was recognised that the Swan River is also an inland water and subject to a lot of use pressures by virtue of being located in a city. I suggest that Cockburn Sound is also effectively an inland water located within a city and has very special management issues. I put the proposition and the government spokesman, the Deputy Premier, indicated that the Government would be prepared to accept the proposition. I am concerned that no budgetary provision has been made in the budget legislation that we are passing today. No announcement has been made to create the Cockburn Sound trust. It concerns me greatly because it suggests to me that the Government may be planning to have a subsidiary body under the Waterways Conservation Act, such as the Peel Inlet Management Authority, the Leschenault Inlet Management Authority or even less, some technical advisory group. That is not good enough. The people of Cockburn want a specific management body with the power to manage Cockburn Sound and to safeguard the quality of the water and the marine environment. It is recognised that Cockburn Sound will be subject to industrial uses and pressures and all sorts of other uses and pressures. It can be managed in a way that is ecologically sustainable and consistent with maintaining the quality of the environment.

The current legal status of Cockburn Sound, the body of water itself, is that it is the outer harbour of the port of Fremantle. The titleholder, if one may use the analogy, is the Fremantle Port Authority, which has a legitimate interest in Cockburn Sound because, among other things, Cockburn Sound is its outer harbour and ships go through it to get to berths at Alcoa, BHP and some of the other industrial establishments to the south. However, that is only one use. Fremantle Port Authority is obviously a stakeholder with an interest in Cockburn Sound for many years to come, I hope. However, it is only one stakeholder and by no means the whole picture. In the same way, before we created the Swan River Trust some 10 years ago, the Swan River was literally vested in the Department of Marine and Harbours as a body of water for navigation. The function of transport at that stage was, if a minority use, only one of a number of uses that the Swan River was put to. The Department of Marine and Harbours in that sense was only one of the stakeholders.

Cockburn Sound needs a proper management authority. The people of Cockburn want it very much. I have reported to them that the indications I have received from the Government are that it would support the notion of a Cockburn Sound trust. There will be great disappointment if it is not forthcoming. I say to the Government, and principally the Deputy Premier, who seems to be responsible for this, that there is a definite perception that it should be a proper management trust similar to the Swan River Trust with its own legislation.

Some matters occur away from the water; for example, some of the pollution entering the northern harbour of Jervoise Bay, which has caused algal blooms in the past, is coming from the Woodman Point sewage treatment plant and other industries, some of which are more than a kilometre inland. There is a need for a body such as the Swan River Trust which has the power, if not to prevent this, to make public recommendations about matters which take place away from the water - perhaps some kilometres away - but are likely to affect the water quality in that area. I ask the Government to look seriously at this problem. The Opposition is disappointed that so far there is no sign of the legislation, and it is disappointed that no provision has been made for it in the budget. A number of people are disappointed at some of the decisions made in relation to Cockburn Sound. Although I do not share some of that disappointment, I share their belief that a properly resourced management trust is needed for Cockburn Sound, covered by its own legislation. The Government will be subject to a great deal of criticism if it does not deliver on what is perceived to be an undertaking in that area.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Motion

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [4.01 pm]: I move -

That this House condemn the Government for failing to take any action to implement the Commission on Government recommendation that the State Supply Commission Guidelines should provide that it is a pre-condition for doing business with Government that tenderers must be prepared for details of contracts to be made public, even though prior to the elections in 1996 it pledged "to adopt a policy that would require contracts worth more than \$5,000 to be made available for public inspection and copying on payment of the prescribed fee and that all potential contractors be advised of the circumstances under which the Government contracts may be made public".

I make it absolutely clear from the outset that this is not a debate about the merits or otherwise of contracting out. This debate recognises that contracting out takes place, and has taken place at an accelerated rate, and has become a major part of the mechanism whereby the Government provides its public services. The concerns I raise today are that the Government has not adapted the accountability mechanisms to take into account the fact of this new reality. The accountability mechanisms in place are left behind from a previous decade, where contracting out was a very limited part of the Government's overall functions. I want to point out the dangers and the problems that will occur as a result of this. More importantly, I will point out that the Government has been incredibly duplicitous in this area. It has been dragged screaming by the Commission on Government to recognising that there must be a higher level of accountability. One cannot credibly argue in any other direction. The Government was forced to recognise this, and in 1996 it gave various undertakings which will be set out later. I will then show that the Government has not kept the pledges it made in 1996 to address this very real issue, while at the same time it has continued to step up the pace of contracting out.

I hope the Government's defence will not be simply that the Labor Party was no better when it was in government. I want to deal with that problem at the very outset. It is no secret that in the 1980s in the so-called WA Inc era, the Labor Government relied on the notion of commercial confidentiality. It is no secret, and I accept absolutely, that the Burt Commission on Accountability, set up by the Labor Government, condemned the Government for its reliance on commercial confidentiality. It is apparent that we have learnt that lesson and seen the consequences of the overuse of this notion of commercial confidentiality. If the Minister for Services is even thinking that this will be a legitimate defence, he should disabuse himself of it. Members on this side recognise that errors were made with the overuse of commercial confidentiality during that period of the 1980s, when indeed this issue became a very live one. There was a change in the way the Government did its business. Members on this side have learnt the folly of their ways and that there needs to be a much greater degree of accountability. It is a complete nonsense to rely on an overwrought doctrine of commercial confidentiality to keep secret from the taxpayers arrangements that are costing taxpayers billions of dollars each year.

I start with a survey of the extent of contracting out in this State. It is very disappointing that, notwithstanding the amount of contracting out that has been done, very little detailed work has been carried out by this Government to give people an idea of the scope of it. I also note that traditionally contracting out was limited to non-core goods and support services, such as cleaning, information technology, maintenance and security. It has now moved into a whole range of areas, previously considered to be core. The latest global figures available are those compiled by the Federal Government, relating in 1996

to an Industry Commission report which estimated that between the Commonwealth and State Governments, between \$8b and \$3.3b worth of services were contracted out each year. I suggest that those figures from 1996 are an underestimation of the current situation. Even in Western Australia, where the latest survey was carried out in 1995-96, the value of contracts at that stage was \$1b a year in Western Australia alone. Since that time we have had a massive expansion in contracting out in this State. We have seen an infill sewerage program which is worth about \$800m, and we have seen the privatisation of the Water Corporation. The Joondalup, Peel and Bunbury health services have now been contracted out and we have no idea how much is being paid to the private operators of those health services. Main Roads WA contracts out about \$450m worth of work each year. Transperth bus and ferry contracts are worth about \$120m each year. We have the Collie power station management; we have the Matrix Group Ltd vehicle leasing; and we have hundreds of millions of dollars of consultancy contracts, but we do not know the full extent of those contracts because of the incomplete list provided by the Government. We know that in the brave new world that the Government proposes, we will be contracting out our imprisonment system and we will have privatised prisons in WA, presumably within the next year or so.

We are dealing with a large issue. It is generally accepted that Governments must be accountable. We know that accountability is all about people having access to information. One could say that there are two arms to this accountability: Firstly, there is the democratic principle; that is, that members of Parliament are answerable to the community through the election process. Secondly, there is the trust principle that the Government stands in a fiduciary relationship with the community and it must act in the public interest. If both of those principles are to be enforced and acted upon, there must be access to fundamental information. In this instance it relies on the contracts into which the Government is entering.

There are many commentators on this issue, and they are not all left-wing commentators. This Government recognised that it was an issue. As I said earlier, it had been raised by the Burt Commission and again by the Royal Commission into the Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters. It made strong recommendations, and, arising from that, this Government saw fit to refer the matter specifically to the Commission on Government for consideration. People will remember the Commission on Government. It was set up by the Government to examine all of the issues arising out of the WA Inc royal commission. The Commission on Government duly called for evidence on this because it was an important issue to be examined. It looked at what was happening around the world.

Rather than necessarily repeat the excellent work that has been done by many people, I will refer to some of the non-Labor people who made submissions to the Commission on Government. The first person was Dan O'Sullivan from *The West Australian*. When talking on the views of the media, he said -

On the matter of commercial confidentiality, there is a common view that it is consistently misused and that its general purpose is to prevent the public from knowing what the public is plainly entitled to know. In other words, commercial confidentiality is broadly simply government secrecy.

Generally when journalists penetrate the veil of 'commercial confidentiality' they find a scandalous situation that somebody is trying to hide.

Where public funds are to be used the public is entitled to know how and why. Why was one company favoured above others? What are the details of a tender process? What are the costs to the taxpayers? Are there hidden costs? Is there cronyism?

Another non-Labor outfit, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, had a go at it. It stated -

As Government ties with the private sector broaden through privatisation and contracting out there is clearly a need for these relationships to be conducted in an accountable and proper manner . . .

Businesses must expect that their relationships with Government will often be more public and require the provision of more information than normal private sector contractual arrangements . . .

So government agencies have the right to demand information and to make it public if appropriate, but the requirements must be 'up front', so businesses know what information will be required and whether it will be made public, and can judge for themselves whether they wish to do business with the Government . . .

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia is saying that it is perfectly reasonable for company information to be made public. It is in the interests of the community. The only requirement it had, and a reasonable one, is that the obligation be made up-front to have that information made public so a company could make a decision whether or not it wanted to go into business with the Government, given that that would be a prerequisite. The next person who made an excellent contribution was none other than Mr Les McCarrey. Members will remember Mr McCarrey. He was the architect of the Government's privatisation plans. The McCarrey report, which was commissioned as one of the first acts by the Government when it came to office, set the Government's blueprint for contracting out. On the need for secrecy in contracting out, Mr McCarrey said -

. . . if the obligation of governments to disclose that basic information is known up front of negotiations, companies have a choice as to whether they deal with government agencies or not on those terms. I do not think many would decline to do so if the rule were universally applied . . . If I may give a single example of this but a very important one, you will all be aware of the enormous publicity given to the confidentiality of the terms and conditions of the north-west shelf gas supply contracts to the then State Energy Commission. I was at one point after I ceased to be under-treasurer, appointed as chairman of a committee to review that contract and report to government.

Mr McCarrey was appointed by the Government to review that contract. It continues -

It took me some considerable time to get my hands on the contract because of the commerciality provisions, even though it was rather difficult to review it without being able to see it. I don't make that point lightly. I make it in all seriousness, pointing out that the whole of this commercial confidentiality argument runs very deep, its roots run very deep in government, and I think it is very wrong.

He goes on to make a very interesting observation. He was a government appointee to review a contract and he could not even access the contract to review it. When he went overseas he found a very different picture. It goes on -

In the course of that review I had occasion to go to the United States and Canada to look at gas supply contracts, their operation and the terms under which they had been varied since the quite major recession of 1983.

I had no difficulty of course looking at all major gas supply contracts that involved interstate transmission of gas in the United States because they all have to be filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in Washington, and although it is a bit of a bureaucratic monster . . . nevertheless, they are available.

What is more, any hearings to review those contracts are open to the public and it's open to any member of the public to argue . . . that the price being charged . . . is inappropriate.

These are comments from the architect of the Government's privatisation plans. He concludes -

Because of that, it is my considered view that a requirement for disclosure of contractual obligations of the parties would in some cases result in the public getting a better deal, if for no other reason than because of the knowledge of the parties the terms of any agreement would be subject to critical scrutiny by external experts.

What is more, those are comments from Mr O'Sullivan, a senior figure from the media in Western Australia, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Western Australia and Mr Les McCarrey. I have endless documents from which we could quote more of the same from people around the world and Australia who are arguing very much the same principle. It has been well established here that the weight of business opinion indicates that there must be a much greater degree of openness with these contracts and that, provided businesses are advised up-front and understand at the outset that it is part of doing business with government, there should be no reason that these contracts are not made available.

As Mr McCarrey and many other proponents pointed out, in the United States, the land of free enterprise, it is axiomatic that, once signed, these contracts are placed on a public register. The same applies in the United Kingdom. Even under the conservative Government there all the contracts for the privatisation of the transport services, bus and rail systems, are subject to being placed on a public register on which they were fully examinable. It is not therefore surprising that the Commission on Government made these two recommendations -

1. Upon the awarding of a government contract, regardless of whether the contract involves the commitment of expenditure, the charging of a royalty, or the sacrifice of revenue rights, a copy of the complete contract should be lodged for public inspection with the State Supply Commission or tabled in a house of Parliament.
2. The State Supply Commission guidelines should provide that, as a pre-condition for doing business with government, tenderers must be prepared for the details of any contract to be made public. These guidelines are to be applicable across the public sector and include all GTEs and should encompass public sector agencies and GTEs not currently the subject of the State Supply Commission review.

That recommendation was made in August 1995. The Government dragged its heels on this matter. However, after much pressure in this place and from the media we received a government response in October 1996. I will read it to the House because it is the Government's response in a pre-election environment to the Commission on Government. It reads -

The Commission's recommendation to make copies of all government contracts available for public inspection would, if applied literally, add considerably to the cost of government administration, however, the principle of enhanced disclosure is supported by the Government which proposes to adopt a policy which would require that:

- (a) for contracts up to the value of \$5,000 the following information be provided in accordance with current requirements:
 - * contractor(s) name;
 - * brand and model of accepted item(s); and
 - * contracted price(s), not including imported content or settlement discounts;
- (b) contracts worth more than \$5,000, be made available for public inspection and copying on payment of a prescribed fee (with contracts between \$5,000 and \$1 million being held by the agency and contracts above \$1 million being held by the State Supply Commission); and
- (c) all potential contractors be advised of the circumstances under which government contracts may be made public.

The Commission on Government is given its terms of reference in 1994 and makes a determination and recommendation in 1995. In 1996 this Government responds.

Mr Board: From where did the response come?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I find it extraordinary that the minister asks me because this is a government document. It is the government response to the Commission on Government Reports Nos 1 to 5.

Mr Board interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is a document that was tabled in Parliament.

Mr Board: By whom?

Ms MacTIERNAN: By the Government. We have a profound problem here.

Mr Board: No we don't. Many documents float around government; not all are necessarily tabled in Parliament.

Ms MacTIERNAN: However, I am talking to the Minister for Works and Services. We have cited this document in our motion which has been on the Notice Paper now for a couple of months. I find it extraordinary that as minister responsible for contracting he is not across a document that the Government tabled in an area that centrally affects his administration.

Mr Board: That is not what I asked. I asked from which document the member was quoting.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I am quoting from the "Government Response to Commission on Government Report No 1", laid on the table of the Legislative Assembly on 31 October 1996. Surely the minister should know this document backwards.

The Government said that it does not like it; it would not take it literally and it would not provide much information for contracts under \$5 000. The Opposition does not have a problem with that. However, for contracts over \$5 000 all the information will be available. We will be able to go into either the agency if it is under \$1m, or the State Supply Commission if it is over \$1m. We have been trying to do that. We like to do a bit of field work and test these things. In February we tried to make appointments to have a look at the register. Guess what? It does not exist. There is no capacity to examine these documents whatsoever.

Apparently the Government believed that it was an impractical task. It made an undertaking to the people of Western Australia that it would do what every other western democracy does and make these documents available. However, behind the scenes in Cabinet it was decided that it was impractical. The Government then said that the material would be contained on a Contract and Management Services web site. Apparently this decision was made in the past six months. One could argue that it is not possible to physically go into an office and see them or photocopy them, but does that make any difference if they are on the CAMS web site? The Opposition is prepared to be flexible and to move with the new technology so we decided that we would go to the CAMS web site to find out about the bus contracts. The amount of \$115m of taxpayers' money is being spent each year and we know nothing of how those contracts are administered, nor what are the rights and obligations of the bus companies.

We know the people of Perth had no services when the bus companies were on strike. One day the minister was saying that he would fine those companies for not being able to get their industrial relations in order and because the people of Perth had suffered, although we had to drag him screaming to get him to say that. When we asked him yesterday whether he would fine them, he said no. When we asked why not, he said it was not appropriate. When we asked why not, he merely mumbled about the contract generally. We do not know what is in the contract; I suspect the minister does not know what is in it either.

We thought it would be excellent to go to the web site of the Department of Contract and Management Services and get the details of the contract. Can members guess what we found? The details are not there for any of these large contracts. We do not have details of the contracts for the health campuses at Joondalup, Bunbury or the Peel district. Not one of the contracts to Serco Australia Pty Ltd is there; not the one for the Water Corporation, nor for the provision of the transport service. They are nowhere to be seen. A few contracts are provided. I will show members the standard of what we are provided - a single sheet. It says that it is a Ministry of Justice contract. It is for building an offender management facility for adults and juveniles. This single sheet gives the details of the contract. This is what we are allowed to know about the contract given by the Government to the company responsible for maintaining all the prisons in Western Australia. These are the tender details given: We are told the date the tender closed, which is useful. It closed at 2.30 pm on 25 February. It then shows that five companies tendered; they are listed. This is more information than we get for most of the contracts. We are told the name of the person whom we can telephone for more information and we are given the award details - this contract was awarded on 22 June 1998 - and, interestingly, the contract value. This gives an idea of the seriousness attached to this document. The contract value of this document is stated to be \$7.50. Serco will maintain all of the prisons in Western Australia for \$7.50!

The contract commences on 1 July and will be completed on 30 June 2000. That is all we get to know. I presume it is not \$7.50, but it is more like \$7m. That is all the members of the general public have a right to know from the Government. It is an absolute disgrace. I have a pile of these one-page contracts with me. Although they are all worth hundreds of thousands of dollars or even millions of dollars, all we get are one-page summaries. Half the time we are not even told who the rival tenderers are. It is clearly an inadequate state of affairs.

This is what I really like about this process: The Government had the Commission on Government report for a year. It took a year to come up with a series of recommendations. In its response, the Government said, reluctantly, what it would do. The matter then went back to Cabinet and the Government said it could not do it, that it was too big. It will not tell the public that. It will not say, "Barleys, we have changed our tune; now that we have won the election we have changed our mind." It says nothing. It tells anyone who asks that this information is on the web site. There are a few hundred contracts on the web site but none of the big ones, none of those that require scrutiny. Even those that are on the web site are presented in such a piddling fashion that the information is completely worthless. Effectively, the Government has treated all these contracts as though they are worth under \$5 000.

I believe we have demonstrated our case: That contracting out is now a massive part of government operation totalling billions of dollars each year; that even business interests, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, demand that there be a greater degree of accountability and accept that these contracts should be made available; that the Commission on Government has made very clear recommendations in this regard; that the Government had agreed to implement those recommendations; and, finally, that the Government has done absolutely nothing to implement the recommendations. This is a complete and absolute disgrace and it just shows that this Government does not deserve to be in office.

MR BOARD (Murdoch - Minister for Services) [4.35 pm]: I welcome this motion because it provides me with an opportunity to put on the record the progress we have made over a number of years in contracting, what that is providing for the community, and what this process is doing for transparency and accountability. The member for Armadale has put on the record that she did not want to discuss the issues that led to the Commission on Government, and that we were not going to hide behind the fact -

Ms MacTiernan: I said I acknowledged it.

Mr BOARD: That is so. One of the main issues to come out of the Commission on Government was that the previous Labor Government had absolutely no accountability in terms of contracting. Although I will not go into the issues, the member would not hold her head high as a result of the things that took place within the previous Labor Government and the contracting arrangements it was making late in its term. The wording of the motion indicates that the Commission on Government was somehow casting some sort of reflection on this Government and not on the previous Labor Government. When we came to office, we inherited no accountability in the contracting regime. When we compare where we came from and where we are today, we find we have moved significantly.

Ms MacTiernan: You have contracted out far more.

Mr BOARD: I will explain exactly what we are doing.

Ms MacTiernan: Are you going to talk about your record?

Mr BOARD: I am. I have been speaking for two minutes, and I ask the member to give me an opportunity to continue. It is important to explain in this House exactly the workings of the State Supply Commission and the Department of Contract and Management Services, as well as the obligations of agencies and the way in which chief executive officers are now doing contracting for their agencies and how they report on contracting and what is available to both the community and those who are doing business with the Government. That is the totality of the accountability of government. In the end that is to the benefit of the community.

It is important to realise that the State Supply Commission creates the policy and direction by which government departments and agencies contract out and form a partnership with the private sector. The State Supply Commission has concluded its task of writing a whole range of government policies and guidelines which are now mandatory for government agencies to follow. The State Supply Commission has done an incredibly good job over the past four or five years in bringing a range of policies and guidelines to the public sector, which creates accountability - agencies must adhere to these guidelines - and a mechanism under which they are enforced.

The Department of Contract and Management Services is involved only in works areas, but has been moving into some service contracts. It acts as a convenience body, as an agency for other government organisations in their contracting. Over the past few years, we have seen the devolution of much of that contracting directly to agencies. As the member mentioned, the agencies within the responsibilities of the Ministers for Transport, Health, Police and Education will enter into many contracts directly. The Department of Contract and Management Services and the State Supply Commission play no role in those agencies, other than to make sure they adhere to the policies and guidelines which Government enforces.

Ms MacTiernan: Are you answering in this debate on behalf of all of the Government?

Mr BOARD: Yes. As the Minister for Services I have direct control of the State Supply Commission. Under the legislation, the commission works independently. I am responsible for directing the contracting out and ensuring the policies for the whole of Government are being adhered to. We have moved forward a great deal in that regard. Before I get to the detail of what is available and how we are dealing with it, I advise members that the Auditor General in Western Australia is now playing a very significant and important role in the monitoring of government contracts in Western Australia. No longer does he separate the general core business of Government with, perhaps, six projects being contracted out independently of what the rest of the government agencies do. It is now a general day-to-day business. Hundreds of thousands of contracts are entered by the Government on a yearly basis, whether they be for the simple purchase of pens or for significant, strategic matters such as the construction of a hospital and the delivery of a health service.

Ms MacTiernan: Have you read what the Auditor General said about contracting out and the need for greater accountability?

Mr BOARD: I agree with him. We have met to discuss accountability. I invited the Auditor General to play a stronger role in monitoring contracts and the performance of those agencies in relation to the contracts. Through Cabinet, I have said that ministers should indicate that CEOs report regularly on the maintenance and impact of contracts. That is the important mechanism which has applied over the last few years. The Government looked at how to better deliver services to the community through a better infrastructure. It needed to consider whether a service is best performed by government or the private sector. It is a requirement of all State Governments, under the competitive nature of government these days, to look at whether a service can be provided by government or is best provided by the private sector. This consideration is not an option any longer for government - it is mandatory. We must put all processes out to competitive tendering and look at how

the service can be best delivered. Members would agree that this process was not initiated by this Government, as the previous Labor Government was heavily involved in contracting, particularly for public works. We see better schools, police stations, hospitals and roads.

Ms MacTiernan: Come off it! Try driving along the Kwinana Freeway extension. It costs three times the amount it cost in 1993 to build a kilometre of road? It costs nearly four times the amount to maintain a kilometre of road in 1993? Get real!

Mr BOARD: I will not argue with the member.

Ms MacTiernan: Get some facts.

Mr BOARD: The member for Armadale knows that the figures are not correct.

Ms MacTiernan: They are Main Roads' figures.

Mr BOARD: They are not Main Roads' figures at all. Let us get to the substance of the debate. I will ask any member of the community today to judge the local primary school and consider the service delivery from this partnership. I will ask whether he or she wants all schools to look the same, or be environmentally friendly, state-of-the-art infrastructure and world's best practice in construction. The partnership in contracting out is delivering a good return for the community, which is cost-effective.

Mr Kobelke: Some are. It does not stack up overall.

Mr BOARD: It does stack up. Ask the community.

Mr Kobelke: All the time buses do not turn up as they break down.

Mr BOARD: I will not say we live in a perfect world. Instances will arise of buses running late. Before these services were delivered in a more competitive sense, was the world rosy and did buses never run late? No. We are getting more and better quality buses in a much better service, regardless of the efforts of members opposite to put a hole in the process.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Remarks should be directed to the Chair, not across the Chamber. I refer also to the minister.

Mr BOARD: The member for Armadale mentioned a great deal about the government information bulletin board. I am proud to talk about the development of that board, and how much information will be, and is, available to the community members through that board.

Before I move into that area, I refer to other areas in which the Government invites input with our total contracting regime, and how we ensure that it is available to the community. Since I assumed this portfolio, I have formed two substantial committees - namely, the Building and Construction Advisory Council and the Small Business Procurement Advisory Council. These bodies comprise non-government people from the private sector and community interests and advise government on the way contracting should be conducted. It indicates what information is available, how it is competitive and how to make it cost-effective for small business, in particular, to operate with government.

I have also moved to make all the Department of Contract and Management Services offices throughout Western Australia shopfront offices and, therefore, available for all in the community to enter and look at all the contracts.

Ms MacTiernan: Can they get copies of the contracts?

Mr BOARD: They can enter the offices and see all the contracts available in government -

Ms MacTiernan: We can get copies of them?

Mr BOARD: I will get to the contracts in a moment. I am talking about the contracts that are available if the member enters one of the CAMS offices. Does the member believe that a regional CAMS office in Kalgoorlie or elsewhere should have the totality of 100 000 contracts, be it for pencils or other matters?

Ms MacTiernan: Can they not be on the web site?

Mr BOARD: That is exactly what we are moving to, as I will indicate if the member gives me a few more minutes to provide the information she requires. The shopfronts are available for anyone in the community, particularly business people, to enter and access the contracts available in the local area, or anywhere else in Western Australia. As a result, we have seen many small businesses and individuals gaining access to government contracts and work through CAMS.

Ms MacTiernan: Could you clarify that? Are you saying that you have signed contracts that we can see?

Mr BOARD: I am saying that the contracts, the work, that is available -

Ms MacTiernan: That is not a contract.

Mr BOARD: It is a contract.

Ms MacTiernan: It is a tender for a contract.

Mr BOARD: It is a contract for available -

Ms MacTiernan: A contract is an agreement between two parties that is signed.

Mr BOARD: Exactly. That is available in those offices.

Ms MacTiernan: Minister, you're not telling the truth here. You will regret this. No contracts are available.

Mr BOARD: Let me clarify the point. They can then go to the government bulletin board and find information on the contract.

Several members interjected.

Mr BOARD: I will return to the substance of the motion. On the bulletin board, which has been progressively developed since July 1998, 91 agencies are currently registered. Seven thousand registered suppliers download their documents, and people from the community are visiting that site 2 000 times a day to get information on our contracts. All tenders and all contracts over \$50 000 are advertised on the bulletin board. All contract awards over \$20 000 are advertised on the bulletin board, as well as the awardees of the contracts. The Department of Contract and Management Services publishes on the Internet all contracts, both award and advertising, above \$5 000. To date, 2 500 contracts are contained on the bulletin board.

On behalf of Western Australian government agencies, CAMS manages the government contracting information bulletin board. The bulletin board provides suppliers with direct access to the latest information on current public sector tenders, details about recent contract awards and a historical database of awarded contracts. At present, suppliers must still obtain hard copies of tender documents which contain drawings, maps or plans. CAMS anticipates that in the near future these files will also be available to download directly from the bulletin board.

The CAMS Internet site provides an early tender advice service to suppliers. This page lists some of the expressions of interest, requests for proposals and requests for tenders that agencies expect to call within three months of the notification date. This service allows suppliers to plan their tender submissions and to consider joint ventures or subcontracting for larger projects.

Ms MacTiernan: This is not about providing information to tenderers; this is about providing contractual information on contracts that the Government has entered into. It is not about providing tender specifications. You are answering this as if you do not understand. You are the Minister for Works and Services, and you do not understand the difference between a contract and a tender specification.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Armadale had her chance to speak; she should allow the minister his chance to speak.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am asking the member to desist.

Mr BOARD: I will make it clear to the member what the Government has endeavoured to do. It has endeavoured to put all contract information relating to the awardee, the price and so on onto the Internet so that it is available for the community.

Ms MacTiernan: But not the totality of the contract.

Mr BOARD: No, not the totality of the contract.

Ms MacTiernan: That is not what you actually said you would do.

Mr BOARD: I did not interrupt the member when she was speaking. I gave her the opportunity to make her points, and I am making my points. I am replying to her about the sort of information which is available. The totality of the contract information is not published, of which the member is aware, and she knows the reasons why it is not published. What we are endeavouring to do is to be more accountable and to make our information more transparent. We are endeavouring to make the web site more extensive so that more contract information is available.

Mr Kobelke: You have been watching *Yes, Minister* too much.

Mr BOARD: No. I think the Opposition should be fair. It should consider where the Government has come from since it inherited government and the fact that we are now advertising all contracts that are available which are over a certain price. Opposition members will find that that satisfies all of the community.

Mr Kobelke: It does not.

Mr BOARD: It does indeed. Those contracts are now being examined by the Auditor General and, as members know, they are also available under freedom of information legislation, which is playing a significant part in making contracting more transparent.

Since we have come into government, we have provided more information on contracting, and its availability, than has ever been provided previously. We have endeavoured to put information on the extent of our contracting, the amount of money available and who wins those contracts onto the Internet so that businesses and the community have access to that information. Not only have we done that in the works area, but also we have published the tenders, the amounts of tenders and who won those tenders. It is a totally transparent system. This Government has much of which to be proud because of

the information that it is providing to businesses and the general community. I can assure members that while I am the minister, this Government will continue to make more information available on this Internet site.

Ms MacTiernan: Can you refer to that 1996 decision? Will you refer to that document which you tabled in Parliament?

Mr BOARD: I did not table it in Parliament; the Government tabled it in Parliament.

Ms MacTiernan: You told us that you had taken a whole-of-government approach.

Mr BOARD: Cabinet made a decision to support and promote all contracts over \$20 000 being placed on the Internet, as well as additional information on contracts over \$50 000. That is a total and accountable response to the Commission on Government. We are also playing a role in the Auditor General's looking at the detail of, and compliance with, contracts. There is also the involvement of the State Supply Commission. Between the State Supply Commission, the Auditor General, freedom of information processes and the bulletin board, we have made significant progress on accountability, and we will continue to make more information available to the community. I am proud of what the Government has achieved on accountability.

MR RIPPER (Belmont - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.56 pm]: I commence by reminding the Government of the promise it made. I refer to the "Government Response to Commission on Government Reports Nos 1 - 5", tabled in this place on 31 October 1996, and I quote the Government's exact promise -

contracts worth more than \$5,000 be made available for public inspection and copying on payment of a prescribed fee (with contracts between \$5,000 and \$1 million being held by the agency and contracts above \$1 million being held by the State Supply Commission);

That was the promise the Government made. The minister has gone all around this issue. He talked about a number of matters. One thing he talked about was the web site. I want to read what information on a contract people can get on this web site. This one is RFT102797 and it says -

Provision of express road freight services for the State Government of Western Australia.

Description/Scope: This Request for Tender (RFT) specifies the whole of government requirements for the provision of express road freight services for a period of twelve months with the option exercisable by the Department of Contract and Management Services of extending for two further periods of up to 12 months each period.

The contract will be for the delivery of goods door to door from the Perth Metropolitan area to nominated regions throughout Western Australia.

Region: Perth Metropolitan

Category: Transport; Storage and Freight

Tender Details

Date Closed: Thursday, 2 Oct 1997

Time Closed: 02:30 pm(WST)

Tender Enquiries

Contractual Enquiries:

Name: Don Parker

Phone: 08 9222 5412

Fax:

No number is given. It continues -

Award Details

Date: Monday, 15 Dec 1997

\$@ERRO

Supplier/s: Niteroad Express
Courier Australia
Comet Express
(after initial period)

No. of submissions received:

No information is provided on submissions received, and there is nothing under "Comments".

That information is virtually useless from the point of view of accountability. It is of no use to anyone in this Parliament. That is a long way from the promise that the Government made to show us the signed contract, to give it to the Parliament and to make it available for inspection.

What has the minister done in answering the justifiable motion put forward by my colleague, the member for Armadale? What he has done is typical of this Government's response to demands that it honour its accountability promises. He pointed to some sins of the past. He went back to the late 1980s to justify the behaviour of the present Government in the late 1990s. He talked about the Government's view that contracting out provides better services. That is quite beside the point which the member for Armadale has been making. We will argue whether contracting out provides a better service at a later stage,

and we will be assisted in that argument if the minister gives us the contracts so that we can see what the Government is paying for and what the obligations of the contract are. The minister has claimed a number of accountability improvements. He said that the Auditor General is taking a bigger role in auditing government contracts, and so he should be. There has been an enormous increase in contracting out under this Government. The only information available is from a 1995-96 survey, which showed more than \$1b of expenditure by this Government on contracting out services. Of course, the Auditor General should be playing a bigger role, but I do not think that is because the Government asked him to. Rather, he recognised the problem. That is only one answer to the problem.

The Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters said that this Parliament should be the centrepiece of improvements to accountability mechanisms, but how can this Parliament hold the Government accountable on the question of contracts if this Parliament cannot see the contracts into which the Government has entered? The minister then talked about shopfront offices. Whoopee do! We can all go to a shopfront CAMS office and get the same lack of information we always got. It is beside the point.

The minister then talked about the summaries available on the department's Internet site. It is clear that the minister is thinking about services to business; that is, how they find out what government tenders are available, when they close, and the price the Government paid in the end. It has nothing to do with accountability from a public or parliamentary point of view. The minister talked about the services his agency provides to the businesses benefiting from the big boom in contracting out. He has talked about everything except the basic improvement required and recommended by the Commission on Government and the Burt Commission on Accountability. This is the improvement required: End the secrecy. Show us every signed contract, so that we can see how the Government is spending more than \$1b a year on contracting out services. That is the recommendation. No wonder it has been recommended. It is a large and growing area of government expenditure. The minister said that under this Government it is now mandatory for agencies to look at competitive tendering, so every service provider must consider competitive tendering.

Mr Board: Competition policy requires all State Governments to look at services on a competitive basis.

Mr RIPPER: The minister said it is mandatory under this Government, so it will be a much more significant area. It is a growing and important area which is likely, at least under this Government, to become more important in the future. That means contract management is a much more important activity in government than it has been in the past. Contract management replaces management of internal resources. It replaces in-house management as an important activity. How can we judge the Government's performance in this critical area of contract management, if we cannot see the contracts? We cannot see what the Government is responsible for managing. How can we judge whether it has managed the contract well or otherwise? I now quote from a source which I think the Government will be happy with; that is, the McCarrey report quoted in the Commission on Government report as follows -

Under the terms of a well defined contract, the purchasing agency has to specify service standards that are measurable. Suppliers are accountable to the purchaser to provide a quality service, on time, and at an agreed price.

Competitive tendering supports the principle of open and accountable government because it provides accurate information about services and gives the community the opportunity to assess services provided against standards which are clearly specified.

I do not necessarily agree with the McCarrey report's judgment on the contribution of competitive tendering to the principle of open and accountable government. However, if that view is to have any validity at all, the only way is for the contract to be open and available for everyone to see. It is a growing area of government, and the management of contracts is an important area of activity. Even the way the McCarrey report viewed contracts, drives one to the conclusion that these things must be available and open for all to see. The minister is running in the face of a recommendation of COG which has been quoted by my colleague the member for Armadale. I will not quote the recommendation again, but I will quote COG's view on some of the reasons that contracts are kept secret. It stated -

We recognise that there are objections to the full release of contractual information. It has been argued that disclosure of information will reveal commercially confidential information that could damage the tendering company.

Later on it stated -

After considering all these arguments, we consider that the principle of public accountability of public funds should outweigh any concerns for commercial confidences.

COG considered all the reasons that contracts might be held secret and came down in support of accountability. The Government accepted that recommendation and made a promise to provide to the public copies of all contracts worth more than \$5 000, and make them available for public inspection and copy. The minister avoided the issue raised by the member for Armadale in her motion. He spoke on everything except that issue. Why cannot members of Parliament have copies of every contract the Government enters into? They could be made available electronically.

Mr Board: We are endeavouring to give you as much contract information as we can.

Mr RIPPER: Why can we not have the whole contract?

Mr Board: I will spell it out. The information that is required in the contracts in many cases is very commercial to that organisation, but not to the community or the Government. In many instances it is a requirement of that company that the Government respect its commercial confidentiality. That has been discussed in this Parliament many times before. It is not

a question of the Government wanting to give less information to the Opposition or the community. When members sit opposite and say that the Government has done nothing, they should look at where it has come from since 1993 and the extent of information it is providing publicly in relation to contracts.

Mr RIPPER: The Government has not implemented the COG recommendation or honoured its promise. The minister has returned to the argument of commercial confidentiality, which is a discredited argument in this State. It is interesting that the minister is still prepared to advance it. COG considered the question of commercial confidentiality and said that public accountability is more important than commercial confidentiality, and that the right of the Parliament and the public to know what is happening with these contracts is more important than commercial confidentiality. Yet, the minister still returns to that discredited concept.

Many businesses will say that commercial confidentiality is important but, if they are advised beforehand of the environment in which they must do business with the Government, they will adapt to that environment and choose to compete or not compete. In my view, they will choose to compete because the business is so valuable. There might be a trade-off and the Government might not get the lowest price possible, but we will benefit in terms of public accountability.

The minister can raise every concern he likes, but the Commission on Government considered all of these things. The Government considered all of these things; the minister accepted the COG recommendations; he made a promise which he is running away from; he is retreating behind the shield of commercial confidentiality - a much discredited shield in this State; and he will come under increasing pressure because of the volume of government business which has been contracted out. The minister should end the secrecy and show us the contracts.

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [5.10 pm]: As I have a right of reply, I must say that the Minister for Works and for Services, gave one of the most shocking performances I have seen in this place. Firstly, as Minister for Works, he was unaware of the document from which we quoted in which the Government pledged to the public of Western Australia that it would disclose these documents. Secondly, the minister quoted the Auditor General at length and said that it is OK now because the Auditor General is looking at these contracts. The Auditor General was reported as saying -

Well from an auditor's perspective, I would argue that that information should be publicly available in respect of the commercial interests of an operator; in the Joondalup Hospital case, they have a 20 year contract, and I think that provides adequate compensation or consideration for that requirement to disclose the cost of public sector services. And that comes back to the taxpayer is paying for the services and it is a big market, and . . . private operators . . . have a choice whether they want to participate in that market or not.

We have demonstrated that the United Kingdom and the United States, where the private sector and private sector ethic is very strong, do not have any difficulty with disclosing the contents of the contracts. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia has argued that the Government should be disclosing the contents of the contracts. The minister has absolutely no basis on which to stand, and he knows that he is using commercial confidentiality to protect not business, but the Government. Finally, if the minister believes that these flimsy one-page sheets from his web site represent anything of value to the community, he is totally wrong. This is not anything approximating a contract, and it does not go one-tenth of the way to fulfilling the promise he made before the last election. The minister must read the Commission on Government's report. He must read the undertakings that the Government made to this place and get on with the job.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (18)

Ms Anwyl	Dr Gallop	Mr Marlborough	Mrs Roberts
Mr Bridge	Mr Graham	Mr McGinty	Mr Thomas
Mr Brown	Mr Grill	Mr McGowan	Ms Warnock
Mr Carpenter	Mr Kobelke	Mr Ripper	Mr Cunningham (<i>Teller</i>)
Dr Edwards	Ms MacTiernan		

Noes (31)

Mr Ainsworth	Mr Day	Mr Marshall	Mr Shave
Mr Barnett	Mrs Edwardes	Mr Masters	Mr Trenorden
Mr Bloffwitch	Dr Hames	Mr McNee	Mr Tubby
Mr Board	Mrs Hodson-Thomas	Mr Minson	Dr Turnbull
Mr Bradshaw	Mrs Holmes	Mr Nicholls	Mrs van de Klashorst
Dr Constable	Mr House	Mr Omodei	Mr Wiese
Mr Court	Mr Johnson	Mr Pental	Mr Osborne (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr Cowan	Mr MacLean	Mr Prince	

Pairs

Mr Riebeling	Mr Kierath
Ms McHale	Mrs Parker

Question thus negatived.

HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE FOREST PROTECTION BILL 1999*Second Reading*

Resumed from 2 June.

MR PENDAL (South Perth) [5.16 pm]: At the very outset of this debate I indicate that I support this Bill as strongly as I am able because of what it seeks to achieve. The prime purpose of the Bill is to bring to the forest debate the one element that has been missing for probably a decade and a half; transparency and openness as we deal with the future of one of the truly great remaining native forests on the face of this earth. The Bill is important for a number of reasons: In the first instance, it demands that the Regional Forest Agreement come to this Parliament for approval. There is nothing terribly radical about that. For more than three decades, other state agreement Acts have come to this place so people and the Parliament of Western Australia will know just how much of a resource is being extracted at any one time. The Bill is also important because it deals with a number of key issues, including the protection of what are described as icons; that is, forestry blocks in the central forest region of Western Australia. For me, the real importance of the Bill is not so much in what is said, but in what is not being said. Sadly, the implied commentary says something like this, "Sorry government, but we don't believe you any more."

The Bill in another way says that we have lost faith in the capacity of the Government to find any solutions to this issue with any integrity; that we no longer believe that we are told the truth about a resource that is important on a global scale. Of all the aspirations expressed in a democracy, none is more pivotal or central to the very survival of that democracy than public confidence in the processes of government. I ask members to look for a moment at Indonesia. If the people of that nation were to believe that the recent electoral processes were unfair, democracy in that country would simply not survive. There is now clear evidence, not necessarily or only based on science, that public confidence in the forestry processes in Western Australia has gone.

A Bill of this kind should never have been necessary. The protest in the forest, this year and last year, should not have been needed. The mass demonstrations outside this Parliament should have been irrelevant. However, the Bill has become necessary, the protests were needed and the mass demonstrations outside this place became relevant. Why did all those events transpire and what made the demonstrations different from other environmental protests that we have seen in the past generation? The difference was the very essence of the demonstrations themselves. No longer were the protestors people from the fringes. No longer were they the people who were perhaps at one time marginalised by the political process. The difference was, and is, that the people making the stand against an agreement whose contents were denied to them were and are people from mainstream Western Australia.

I hasten to say that that does not necessarily make protests more so-called respectable. It does not necessarily inject into those protests any higher moral vantage point. However, it signals to government and to the wider society that the debate has shifted and that things have changed. It tells us and the Government that more and more of those from mainstream Western Australia are unhappy and uneasy about the way in which our forests are managed; that middle Australia has come to adopt what a generation ago was regarded as being radical, fringe-type politics.

So, why the shift? There are several reasons: The first cab off the rank is the lack of transparency. The Bill demands that a regional forest agreement be approved by this Parliament. The fact that none of us knew the contents of the agreement until it was signed by Premier Court and Prime Minister Howard on 4 May is the single biggest condemnation of that agreement. The process has fatally flawed the agreement itself. The Government has signed an agreement behind our backs. It signed a secret deal. The people and this Parliament were systematically and deliberately kept in the dark about its contents. This is 1999, not 1899 nor even 1949. There is no longer in existence the notion that benevolent government knows it all - that it knows best, or that the people are a bunch of ignoramuses. People are angered, and rightly so, about a process that took three years, cost \$10m of their money and then proceeded to signature before the elected Parliament got a look in.

The second reason for the shift in public opinion is that values and attitudes have changed. People no longer believe that it is necessary to log our forests to the extent that we do - forests that might be put to better social and economic use; for example, eco or heritage tourism, or simply to be admired for what they are. It is that same shift of values and attitudes that allowed a conservative Federal Government in this country a mere 21 years ago to ban commercial whaling. That was another pivotal moment in Australian politics. People finally abandoned the notion that it was acceptable to hunt those magnificent marine mammals to the point of either endangerment or even extinction.

There is a third reason that we have seen a massive shift in attitudes and that a Bill like this is timely. It is because people have reached the conclusion that they have been let down. It is that element to which I referred earlier; the element bound up in whether people maintain confidence in the system and its processes. People feel betrayed - I am but one of them - because the solution was in our hands 15 to 20 years ago. As long ago as 1978 we were promised a massive transition to plantation timber. It was to be a historic transition to decrease our reliance on jarrah, karri and other hardwoods and to turn towards plantations. That transition never took place. We have lost 20 years into the bargain. The target set by Minister Craig in this place in 1978 was simply ignored in the years ahead. We maintained a falsehood or, more correctly, Governments did.

We were left with a firm understanding that the transition was on the way when the truth was that the opposite was the case. The transition rested on the fact that a mere 22 years ago we were cutting something like 990 000 cubic metres of timber from our native forests, mainly hardwoods. The target was that by 2000 - I remind members that that is merely 290 days away - 50 per cent of the cut would come from the forests and 50 per cent from plantations. In 1978 terms, that meant

495 000 cubic metres each from the forests and from the plantations. What has been the outcome? Just over 20 years down the track the Department of Conservation and Land Management reported as late as 1996-97 that something like 660 000 cubic metres was coming from native forests, mainly of jarrah, and karri. That is not 50 per cent below the 1978 target; it is 34 per cent above it. The position is even worse alongside, I think, the EPA Bulletin 912 of November last year. That was the document that took Minister Minson to task for setting a cut of, I think, 490 000 cubic metres. Interestingly, that was the target set by Minister Craig in 1978, give or take a few thousand cubic metres.

Putting that aside for the moment and putting aside the fact that we were already cutting above that by 1996-97, the EPA took the view that the figure of the then Minister for the Environment, the member for Greenough, was simply not sustainable. What did the EPA say on that occasion? It said, "A cautionary approach would be to substantially reduce the cut level as quickly as possible to a level in the order of 250 000 cubic metres a year". That tells a dramatic story - a cut of 490 000 cu m set only four or five years ago is not only met with an actual harvest of about 660 000 cu m, but that neither is satisfactory and that 250 000 cu m is the desirable or the sustainable level. Even then, the Environmental Protection Authority report adds another cautionary note, saying that we must be pretty certain that even that figure of 250 000 cu m is sustainable. I, for one, will look with great care to see what transpires in the next three to four years. I will look at the 50:50 ratio of hardwoods to plantations by the year 2000.

In the same report of 1996-97, the Department of Conservation and Land Management told us that 667 000 cu m of the hardwood was cut and that 298 000 cu m of plantation timber was harvested. That means that of all the timber being taken as late as that year, we are extracting 69 per cent from native forests and 31 per cent from plantations. By any yardstick, that 69:31 ratio is a long way from the 50:50 target set 20 years ago. It is apparent to me that there is no plan, no vision, and at times there is very little truthfulness. I will demonstrate the aimless drift in this way: In May of 1997, the Department of Conservation and Land Management provided me with figures in this House to the effect that 36 000 ha of softwood plantations had been planted between 1981 and 1995, by both private and government interests. I was then cautioned not to take that too literally. The answer stated -

The figures identify the areas established. However, since that time, the areas may have been reduced due to failure, change in land use, or harvesting.

What an extraordinary admission to make: Of the 36 000 ha of land planted, we do not know and the Department of Conservation and Land Management does not know how much remains. At the same time I asked what proportion of current hardwood timber uses could be adapted from softwood timber. The answer I was given states -

The market for timber uses is so large, diverse and complex that it is not possible to answer this question definitively.

That is arrant nonsense. We can land a man on the moon, clone human beings, make blind people see, but we cannot work out how to shift more of our timber usage to softwood. That is why it is nonsense. The Government's policy document from 1993 demanded that the Department of Conservation and Land Management should know. One of the promises made, and one on which the Government was elected, was for the establishment of a timber research coordinating agency. Its task was to research those issues and to come up with solutions. These and other reasons represent my sense of anger and betrayal. In my view, they indicate abject failure on the part of the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

We have been let down by many people - the Government, bureaucrats and private companies. We have come nowhere fast in the past 21 years since the landmark 1978 statement. Nothing has been resolved - nothing. Nothing will be resolved until this Parliament plays a role in that Regional Forest Agreement. For that reason, I support the Bill. Before I resume my seat, I seek the leave of the House to lay upon the Table for the balance of this day's sitting an indicative drawing, a vinyl rubbing, of a tree - I ask members to assist carrying and unfolding it - to illustrate to members of the House the antiquity with which we are dealing with this Bill and the Regional Forest Agreement. As far as people can ascertain, the stump of this tree - incidentally, it was cut down a year ago - lies on the forest floor to this day, and nothing has been done with it. The tree probably first saw the light of day around the year of the signing of the Magna Carta. What year was that, the member for Kalgoorlie asks.

Ms Warnock: It was 1215.

Mr PENDAL: I think it was. It was long before my time. The illustration depicts merely the stump of the tree. I hope the rubbing is not covering up too many Government members because we want them to see the light!

[Interruption from the gallery.]

Mr PENDAL: It indicates that we are dealing with a sense of antiquity as old as this part of the globe. It is intended to indicate to people that that transparency and openness, which we desire to achieve through the passage of this Bill, should come about. I support the Bill.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is most unusual to have a document of that size laid on the Table. Of course, generally, members cannot table documents, but the Speaker is entitled to say that a document may lie on the Table for the balance of the day's sitting. Although it is unusually large, it is a document. While I am on my feet, I also take the opportunity to indicate to the members of the public in the gallery that we see people come to Parliament House, although we do not often get a group as large as this one. It is understandable that there is a high degree of interest in the Bill before us. Although we welcome people to come and watch and listen to the debate, the rules of the Parliament are quite simple - people are not to interfere with the proceedings. It is up to the members on the floor of the Chamber to make their speeches and so on.

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Leader of the Opposition) [5.39 pm]: I commence my remarks by referring to a book on

an individual who lived in Western Australia for only two years. He was sent to Western Australia as a convict, courtesy of the British Government. His name was John Boyle O'Reilly. After his arrival, he was sent to a work gang constructing the Bunbury to Vasse road. I will read an account of what happened in 1868 when O'Reilly was on this work gang building the Bunbury to Vasse road from a book entitled *A Life of John Boyle O'Reilly* by A.G. Evans, recently published by the University of Western Australia Press -

One story which illustrates O'Reilly's affinity with nature, his charm and the respect he must have commanded, has now become part of the folk lore of Western Australia: that of how the poet saved an especially graceful, giant eucalypt from destruction. O'Reilly had noticed that one of the surveyors had judged the tree to be an obstruction in the line of the road and had marked it down for cutting.

Roche, O'Reilly's first biographer, is referred to in the book as saying it was -

... 'a giant among its fellows, the growth of centuries towering aloft to the sky and spreading enormous arms on every side'.

Evans continues -

O'Reilly, with the enthusiasm of a modern-day conservationist, determined to save it from destruction and first obtained from Warder Woodman -

The warder in charge of the work gang -

- a postponement of execution. This allowed him time to plead his cause with Principal Warder Woodrow at the Bunbury depot. According to Roche's account:

He went - this absurd poet in a striped suit - to the commander of the district, and pleaded for the tree. The official was so amused about his outstanding audacity that he told his wife, who, being a woman, had a soul above surveys and rights of way. She insisted on visiting the tree, and the result of the visit was a phenomenon. The imperial road was turned from its course, and a grand work of nature stands in the Western Australian forests as a monument to the convict poet.

The exact location of the tree was, up until the 1950s, a matter of local argument.

I will not read the details of how people tried to determine the location of the tree. Those who travel the road will note that a bend has been created as a result of John Boyle O'Reilly's seeing the value of our old-growth forest in 1868.

The Government of that time, represented by Warder Woodrow in Bunbury, saw the value of a postponement to consider the future of that stand of timber. Here we are, in 1999, in a similar situation calling upon the Government to postpone that road which it is constructing through the south west of Western Australia and which will destroy more of our old-growth forest and put the State back instead of taking it forward into the twenty-first century.

The Government has a chance this evening to come back, to reconsider and to allow a proper debate on this issue. The Australian Labor Party supports this Bill for three important reasons: Firstly, it gives a chance to protect our remaining old-growth forest; secondly, it brings some accountability to the regional forest agreement process; and, thirdly, it will allow us to re-examine the approach being taken by the Government to worker assistance and industry restructuring.

As members of Parliament, we are here to represent the people of Western Australia, their hopes and aspirations. The community has asked the Government in many submissions, at many public rallies and in many letters to members of Parliament and to newspapers to protect our remaining old-growth forest. Unfortunately, the Government and the RFA process has let down the people of Western Australia. At this crucial point in our history, the Government has failed us.

While in recent times the spotlight in this debate has been on the Government and the Australian Labor Party at its state conference, the spotlight is now on every member of this Parliament. It has shifted from the Government, the Cabinet and the Labor Party and it is now on this Parliament and every member in this place. We are now in a position to individually vote on this issue.

The difficulty we have in Western Australia today is that the Government has let down the people. It refused to listen to them and to take account of their hopes for the future of our old-growth forest. It concluded the Regional Forest Agreement in a secretive and misleading way. Rather than releasing the draft for public comment and tabling it in this Parliament, it dealt with it in the back rooms of the Liberal Party in Canberra and Perth. That was their consultation. The people were not involved, nor was the Parliament. A few Liberal and National Party members of Parliament were involved, and who knows who else. It was a secretive process conducted behind closed doors.

This Bill aims to uphold the hopes and aspirations of our community for their forest, which is something that the Government has ignored in its RFA. It aims to remove the secrecy that has shrouded the entire process and to open up the RFA to proper parliamentary scrutiny.

There are three reasons to support this Bill. It gives us a chance to protect our old-growth forest. We know from polling that 74 per cent of Western Australians oppose the logging of old-growth forest in this State. We have only 347 000 hectares of old-growth forest left in this State, which is less than 10 per cent of Western Australia's original forest area. However, the Government chose to reserve only 232 000 ha in its comprehensive, adequate, representative reserve system. More than 100 000 ha, or nearly one-third, of our unique old-growth forest - including very rare and unique trees such as the yellow tingle that I saw last week - will be available for logging under the RFA. Under the RFA less old-growth karri is protected

in formal and informal reserves than was protected before the RFA was signed. So, the first and most important reason to support this Bill is that it gives us a chance to look again at the RFA and the future of our old-growth forest. In the event that this Bill is not passed, the next chance people will have to be heard will be at the state election. Between now and then, given its tactics, the Government will move to destroy as much of that old-growth forest as it can before the people get a chance to have their say.

The second reason we should support the Bill is that it attempts to bring the views of the community back into the RFA and to enable them to voice their concerns about the future of their forest. This forest is not owned by the current Government of Western Australia or the Federal Government; it is owned by the people of Western Australia, and their concerns should be foremost in this process.

The community has lost faith in the Government and its handling of the RFA. That is the reason for the tension in the south west and continuing protests about this issue. That is why extremely young people and very old people in this State are so motivated to protest about this issue. Of all the issues we have addressed in Western Australia in recent years, which has aroused the passion of senior citizens and school children, of blue-collar and middle-class workers from the western suburbs? Which issue has aroused the passions of the people in the north of the State and the south of the State? Which issue has aroused the passions of the people who work in the tourism industry, the timber industry, the beekeeping industry and many other industries? It is the forest issue. Why? We have only one unique south west forest in Western Australia and less than 10 per cent of it remains. That is why all these people are interested in the issue. That is why they are passionate. No matter what the conservatives say and how they moralise about this issue, they know there will be protests.

The Government needs to know that people are passionate about this issue and will pursue their protests. The difficulty is that the community has lost faith in the Government and its handling of the process. The Government has been secretive and has shrouded the issue in mystery and misinformation. When the Australian Labor Party tried to have a draft copy of the Regional Forest Agreement released for public scrutiny prior to signing, by raising the issue in this Chamber, the Liberal Party and its coalition partner, the National Party, refused to allow that to happen. When we tried to have the 30 000 public submissions released for public comment before the RFA was signed, the Liberal and National Parties again joined forces to ensure that secrecy continued and the community would remain uninformed about this issue.

This Bill is an attempt to open the RFA process up to parliamentary scrutiny. The people of Western Australia have a right to expect that their elected representatives will scrutinise the 20-year forest plan in an open and accountable way. This Bill attempts to do just that. This is the first time that we as members of Parliament have had a chance to have a direct say on the RFA because if we vote for this Bill, the RFA will have to come back to this Parliament for proper scrutiny. We have a real chance this evening to make a difference. We can make a difference to the future of Western Australia and to the way in which the State will be managed as it enters the twenty-first century. The upper House has voted for this Bill. We now have a chance to join with the upper House and vote for this Bill.

The third reason it is important to pass this Bill is that the Government's forest industry structural adjustment package has let down the Western Australian timber and tourism industries. The Government has let down the future of the timber industry through the way it will operate to market forces. The Government's financial assistance package is aimed primarily at the bigger timber companies through grants and low interest loans. There is no security for workers in the Government's RFA package - none whatsoever - despite the promises that the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Local Government gave at a public rally at this very Parliament. There is no security at all.

Mrs Edwardes: What is your package? You have none at all.

Dr GALLOP: I will tell the minister our package. It is individually tailored programs for individual workers and their families. That is not in the minister's RFA.

Let us turn to the tourism industry, one of the most important industries in our State. Let us look at the tourism assistance package. The Government has allocated \$17.5m for timber industry assistance, of which \$9.5m has already been spent on purchasing the Wellington Dam from the Worsley Timber Company to protect our water resource. Only \$1m in new funding was allocated from that package to help the Wellington Dam tourism. Of the remaining \$7m, \$2m was already allocated by Main Roads under its Transform WA program sealing Mowen Road between Nannup and Margaret River. This leaves \$5m in new funding for tourism infrastructure for our south west. Of this, \$2m will go to a tourist attraction in the Donnelly River valley, \$2m will go to camping and chalet sites near Pemberton, Nannup, Manjimup and Margaret River, and \$1m will be spent on a scenic drive in the Pemberton area. This is supposed to assist one of our fastest growing industries. In the United States, 65 million Americans every year seek to access wilderness areas. This is the new growth industry of the twenty-first century. It has to be properly managed and planned. This Government's vision of tourism is some advertisements from Elle Macpherson and expenditure of \$100m on a convention centre. We are getting a good example of egotourism down at the belltower. We do not want egotourism; we want ecotourism!

I was in Walpole last week looking at some of the enormous tourism potential in promoting the natural beauty of the tingle forest and the Deep River system. Not one cent of tourism money under this RFA will go into that region. This Government has no vision for the south west, the conservation of our old-growth forest and a restructured timber industry.

Mr Court: When you were down there, did you go for a walk on the treetop walk?

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind people in the gallery that they are not entitled to interfere with the debate. Everyone wants to listen to the debate; I am sure that is why they have come. However, it is up to the members on the floor to give their speeches. I am sure everyone present wants to hear what is being said.

Dr GALLOP: I will tell the Premier what I did see there. I saw some of our yellow tingle forest, which is only available to this world in the south west of Western Australia, being logged. If the Premier thinks that logging that forest will help the image of Western Australia and its tourism potential, he must re-examine the priorities he is setting for government as we approach the end of the twentieth century.

This Bill provides us with a real opportunity. It is another test for the National Party whose position paper on forests calls for the phasing out of clear-felling in old-growth forests. Its support for this Bill will go a long way to achieving the objectives we need to achieve in Western Australia today. It is a test for the Parliament. I hope we do not see any tricky little adjournment strategy today to avoid a vote on this matter. We should vote on this issue so that we can tell the people of Western Australia that this Parliament wants to put the RFA back on its right footing. The Labor Party is committed to reserving our remaining old-growth forest and giving workers in the south west a real, sustainable job in a sustainable industry. This legislation gives the Government a chance to restore some faith in the political process in Western Australia and to take some heat out of the present volatile situation. For those reasons we certainly support the Bill.

We could do two things to save our old-growth forests in Western Australia. The first would be to support this Bill and to put the whole RFA procedure back into the process of public scrutiny through the Parliament of Western Australia. Just as with agreement Acts and a whole range of government regulations that come back to Parliament for scrutiny, so should the RFA signed between the Commonwealth and State Governments come back to this Parliament. If the coalition parties in the Government of Western Australia vote against this legislation and do not allow the old-growth forests of our State to be put back into the context of the RFA argument, the people of Western Australia will get an opportunity in 12 to 18 months to consider this matter when there will be an election into which one of the major parties, the Australian Labor Party, will go with a very clear policy; that is, to end the logging of old-growth forests in Western Australia. The people of Western Australia will have their chance to save just 10 per cent of what we had when white settlement first began in 1826. We have destroyed so much of this unique asset that was given to us by nature. We have the opportunity to save some of that forest. If we do not take the opportunity, I assure members opposite that we will make sure that this is one of the major issues at the next state election. Members opposite can make a difference. If they vote for this Bill, it will be one of those rare occasions in our parliamentary system when we, as members of Parliament, can help structure, frame and determine a new and better future for Western Australia.

MR COURT (Nedlands - Premier) [6.00 pm]: The Minister for the Environment will be the lead speaker in this debate, if that is acceptable from a time point of view. The Leader of the Opposition said that he hopes the Government is not up to tricks to stop a vote from being taken on this matter. Government members have sat in this Chamber for an hour and a half during private members' time, when the Opposition could have brought on this Bill for debate. If the Opposition insists on a vote being taken tonight, it will deny many backbenchers an opportunity to speak in the debate. The Opposition controls the business of this Parliament on private members' day, and it chose to bring another matter on instead of this forestry debate.

Dr Gallop: We will offer to debate this through tonight until we reach resolution.

Mr COURT: No. The Leader of the Opposition knows the framework of this place and he has made that choice.

Several members interjected.

Mr COURT: I have sat in silence while members opposite have spoken in this debate, and I hope I am given the same opportunity to speak. This Parliament has come a long way in the forestry debate in the 17 years I have been a member in this place. I sat in this Parliament for 10 years when the Labor Party was in government. During that time I cannot recall any Labor members of Parliament ever giving a speech indicating they were unhappy with their forestry management and practices. I can recall members of the Labor Party speaking in support of their timber strategy. They kept referring to their timber strategy which was released in 1987. In one of the last speeches before the Labor Party lost government in 1993, its members said to the then Opposition that it was not supporting the Labor Government's great timber strategy. On Christmas Eve 1992, before the election in 1993 -

Dr Gallop: It is about time you got up to date. You govern this State by looking into the rear vision mirror of your car. Look ahead. Get up to date.

The SPEAKER: Order! We cannot have that level of interjection across the Chamber, particularly from the members on my right. The Premier is giving his address, and I want to hear it.

Mr COURT: At the end of the day Governments are judged on their performance. One of the last things the Labor Party did before it lost government was that on Christmas Eve Carmen Lawrence, as Premier, released the Government's forestry plan which provided for a jarrah cut of 520 000 cubic metres a year. It was one of the last decisions made by the Labor Government. Members opposite have said that this Parliament had no say in the RFA process, but for 10 years the Labor Government had the opportunity to manage this State's forests. It finished its term of government with a plan that provided for a jarrah cut that it told the people of Western Australia was sustainable, while it knew that it was not. In 1992 Carmen Lawrence was the Premier of this State and she initiated the Regional Forest Agreement process. When this Government came into office, one of the first jobs for the newly appointed Minister for the Environment, the member for Greenough, was to determine the logging levels. It was determined that the volume of jarrah cut should be reduced. The then minister said the industry must work down towards a cut of 300 000 cubic metres a year, and make plans to do so. That was done early in this Government's term of office. In 1996 there was a scoping agreement in relation to the RFA, which has now been completed. The logging levels in that RFA allow for a jarrah cut of 286 000 cubic metres and a karri cut reducing to 178 000 cubic metres a year. The Labor Government's last decision was to allow for a jarrah cut of 520 000 cubic metres, which it said was sustainable even though it knew it was not.

This Government has come down to a level which is nearly half that cut for jarrah, and it has independent advice indicating that it is a sustainable cut. The Government has secured a voluntary agreement from the industry that it will not cut to its contractual levels for the balance of its agreement. The Leader of the Labor Party has said that the industry can cut to its contractual levels until the end of this agreement. Even though it is cutting well below those levels, the Labor Party has said it can go into old-growth forests and cut to the level provided for in its contracts. This Government has been able to achieve a voluntary agreement that the industry will not do that.

A number of initiatives have been taken by this Government. I have already mentioned the logging levels. I will ask the Minister for the Environment to set out in more detail the restructuring of the Department of Conservation and Land Management. The Government has provided for 12 significant new national parks, and additions to 25 existing national parks. There will be a further 150 000 hectares in the formal conservation reserves, and more old-growth forest has been reserved. The Government will protect 100 per cent of rare and depleted old-growth ecosystems. This Government has been able to achieve that in six years. Members opposite had 10 years in government and they had the opportunity to manage this State's forest during that time. Now they are in opposition, they have a policy in which there will be no more logging of old-growth forests after the end of these contractual agreements.

After the RFA was released, to my knowledge, only one member of Parliament on the opposition side was prepared to acknowledge that some advances were made in the agreement. I do not want to embarrass Hon Christine Sharp, but she made these comments in the Legislative Council as well. At least she was prepared to acknowledge that some advances had been made. She had a dream that the jarrah cut in this State would be halved. Compared to earlier logging levels of 520 000 cubic metres a year, that target has been achieved with the new agreement. The member also wanted more national parks to be established. The Government purchased the Worsley timber lands at Wellington, but all members opposite could say was that it paid too much for the land. The Government was prepared to negotiate in the marketplace to buy those lands to enable a significant new national park to be established at Wellington.

In relation to the CALM structure, Hon Christine Sharp wanted the Government to go further. However, the basic structure put in place will separate timber production from the department, and the Government is prepared to divest all those reserves into a new body. That is heading in the right direction. When the RFA was signed, the Government at least received some acknowledgment from a person who has had a genuine commitment to conservation for some years, unlike members of the Labor Party. They were in government for 10 years and all of a sudden, they have recognised that this might be a popular issue to go with and they have produced a policy. The Labor Party has not even had the decency to tell its union members what the logging levels will be under its proposals. It is not prepared to tell Labor Party members what its policy will mean to their long-term employment prospects.

The one area in which Hon Christine Sharp does not agree with the Government is the reserve design, and the areas of old-growth forest that will be included in some of those logging designs. In many ways, this legislation is about the karri old-growth forest areas. This Government is the first to acknowledge that it is a very important and sensitive issue. However, members opposite must at least have the decency to accept that we have achieved many things in the Regional Forest Agreement which in 10 years in government the Labor Party did not attempt to address. It was also prepared to put its signature to forestry management decisions on logging levels etc telling the public that those levels were sustainable when it knew they were not sustainable.

Dr Gallop: Stop playing politics and deal with the issue! You are totally clapped out, Premier! What is your vision for the future of this State? You haven't got one.

Mr COURT: The Leader of the Opposition makes his smart alec comments about the bells. I just want to say that those bells were gifted to this State.

Dr Gallop: Yes, and they should have gone to the University of Western Australia, and you know it!

Mr COURT: The former Labor Government that accepted the gift said that it was prepared to have them properly housed and it could not even meet a simple commitment like that. The UWA people are on the committee that is making all of those decisions. The problem that the Leader of the Opposition has is that he and other members were senior ministers in the former Labor Government. They had the opportunity to deliver and they did not.

I summarise by saying that fortunately these days we are having a much more informed debate about these forestry issues. There is a much better understanding of forestry management and of the ecosystems that we are talking about. As a result of the RFA, for the first time we now have detailed knowledge on which forestry management strategies can be prepared. We have logging yield levels that can be verified now for the first time by independent, outside people. The Government accepts that this is a very important issue; it is often a difficult debate, and it is certainly a very emotional debate. Thousands of people make their livelihood out of the timber industry. The former Labor Government for 10 years used the words "balance" and "sustainable industry" knowing that it was not. This Government has taken a major step forward to try to ensure that this State genuinely has a sustainable industry. I am the first person to acknowledge that the karri icons are of concern to a great many people. However, if members opposite want to have a reasoned, rational debate on this issue, they must first acknowledge what they did in government, and the steps that have been taken under the RFA process to propose a better forestry management strategy for the long term future. All they did for so many years was hold up the document I am holding telling us, "This is the Labor Government's timber strategy" and that it was sustainable under their plans when they knew that it was not.

I want to make one other comment. During this debate there has been a great deal of denigration of Department of Conservation and Land Management officers. I defend the CALM officers because there are a number of very professional

foresters in CALM who are true conservationists at heart and who have a genuine understanding of forestry management practices, of growing trees and of protecting our forests. It concerns me that in this debate there has been a denigration of many of these professional people, and I put it on the record that these people are incredibly important in ensuring that this State's conservation areas will be properly managed. It is a difficult and skilled job and we should be behind these people instead of using them as political pawns.

The Government does not support this legislation; we believe there are many things wrong with it. However, we appreciate the opportunity to have another debate on the issue. I reiterate that in the 10 years that I sat in opposition I never heard a member of the Labor Party in government get up and say that there was anything wrong with their forestry management practices, when they knew at the time they were pulling the wool over the Western Australian public's eyes and did not have a sustainable industry. The Leader of the Opposition nods his head now. He knows, as he was a minister, that he agreed to these strategies, and he gets up in this Parliament today and tries to make a big deal out of the fact that he has belatedly decided that it is an issue that he will latch on to. However, the problem he has is that the Labor Party's credibility is such that no-one believes that if it got back into government it would do what it says it would do, when it does not even have the decency to tell people working in the industry just what its policy means to their futures.

MRS EDWARDES (Kingsley - Minister for the Environment) [6.15 pm]: I am pleased to be able to rise in this debate and again attest to this Government's commitment to preserving our State's forest. The Regional Forest Agreement establishes a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system. It also improves the protection of the environmental and heritage values in our state forest and it provides for a more certain future for the industry; in other words, it provides a balance. The RFA was signed on 4 May this year but that is not the end of the Regional Forest Agreement. From here on a second independent scientific panel will assess the expected sustained yield figure which is contained in the Regional Forest Agreement according to ecologically sustainable forest management principles. That will be an extensive process and the method by which that will be achieved has already been discussed with the Chairman of the Environmental Protection Authority and the executive director of the Department of Conservation and Land Management. It was one of the issues that followed the tabling of the EPA report last year and is referred to in the Regional Forest Agreement.

Further, a draft forest management plan will have contained within it the expected sustained yield figure, following the report of the second independent scientific panel. That draft forest management plan will go out for public consultation. It will also be subject, under our Acts, to assessment by the Environmental Protection Authority. It is therefore important when people are talking about transparency and openness to recognise not only the economic, environmental and social assessments that have taken place in the past three years, but also the 30 000 submissions that were received and the document that was published at the same time as the signing of the Regional Forest Agreement. That document analysed the particular concerns that were highlighted in those 30 000 submissions and where those concerns were addressed, if it was possible to address them, within the Regional Forest Agreement.

From here on we will be talking about the implementation of the Regional Forest Agreement. The attachments to the Regional Forest Agreement not only have not been read by members opposite but also are not understood by many people. There are a number of important attachments to the Regional Forest Agreement, not the least of which is the national estate attachment. I will go through that in some detail because that has been lost in the whole of the debate. However, there is also another very important attachment which deals with ecologically sustainable forest management principles. It results from a report produced by an independent expert panel and published in December 1997. The method and time frame for implementation of each of the recommendations has been highlighted in that attachment. Further, the Regional Forest Agreement establishes reviews every five years. Further forest management plans will go back out into the community for environmental protection assessment and further public consultation at the 10-year mark. Therefore, there will be many opportunities to send it back out for public consultation and environmental assessment.

It must be recognised that the Regional Forest Agreement improved and increased the level of old-growth forest; 45 700 hectares were added to our forest reservation. Three areas are highlighted by what this Bill seeks to achieve in high conservation values: Old growth, the National Estate and areas of community attachment. It is important to recognise that there were increased areas of old growth protection. The formal reserves have been increased to 67 per cent on average, and old growth protection in all reserves, including informal reserves, is at 71 per cent. One hundred per cent of ecosystems in which the old growth is rare or depleted is reserved wherever possible. Sometimes it has not been possible because the old growth is contained within private property and is not available for reservation. It means the protection of between 60 and 98 per cent of old growth in 12 forest ecosystems and the protection of all old-growth forest in seven other forest ecosystems. A fact sheet detailing the total break down of that is available on the Internet. We have increased the level of reservation for old growth. Not all old-growth forest is regarded scientifically as having high conservation value. There is a difference between the recognition of old growth and the recognition of those other values which we want represented in a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system.

Another issue I will deal with in some detail is the National Estate. The continuing role of the Australian Heritage Commission has tended to be forgotten or not understood. It still has an ongoing role in terms of the forests of the south west region through a partnership with the Commonwealth. Section 21 of the agreement recognises the undertakings and commitments in attachment 2 of the agreement. It refers to the protection and management of the national estate values. It details how that will be achieved on public land. It also deals with those matters which are already listed in the register of the National Estate and in the interim listed register. It also deals with what will happen with future listings, the listings inside the CAR reserve system, the areas outside the CAR reserve system which are either listed or interim listed and how some of those values will be taken into account or protected as well as on private land. Attached to attachment 2 is a table which highlights clearly the protection of the national estate values. It deals with where it has been reserved in the CAR reserve, whether it is formal or informal and, importantly, the protection mechanisms operating within and outside of the

CAR reserve system on how those national estate values can be protected. I bring that to the attention of members because it is important to recognise that the Australian Heritage Commission has an ongoing role in partnership with the Commonwealth in terms of the forests in the south west.

Attachment 2 describes the arrangements which will be put in place for the protection and management of the national estate values in those areas. If members listened to what I said about the monitoring of the agreement and the five-year reports and reviews that will take place and the development of the forest management plans for the CAR reserve systems and the state forest, they would know that the Australian Heritage Commission, through the Commonwealth, will continue to provide advice on each of those in respect of the consideration of national estate values. When we talk about the Bill, it is important to recognise that the national estate values have been addressed through the Regional Forest Agreement. It must also be recognised that there is more protection for the National Estate in our region under the Regional Forest Agreement. There has been improved identification and definition of the National Estate, which has been based on the assessment of both natural and cultural values. There has been an enhanced protection of up to 81.2 per cent of the National Estate through the increased reservation. There has been an increase of nearly 7 000 hectares of national estate reservation, particularly of a number of localities significant for their biodiversity values. At the regional level there is improved protection for each of the national estate values through both formal and informal reserves. Each of the identified national estate values will be afforded an increased level of protection by the combinations of reservations through both formal and informal management, including the forest management plans. The commitments in the ecologically sustainable forest management attachment to which I referred also provide for continuing research and conducting of surveys to identify cultural heritage values plus a range of biodiversity values such as rare flora. Again that will continue to be protected.

I will come back to how that will be protected in areas which are outside the CAR reserve system. During the life of the agreement, timber harvesting will occur in areas outside the CAR reserve system. That will include areas in which national estate values may occur in a number of cases, whether they are on the register or the interim list of the register of the National Estate. In all, 118 places in the register of the National Estate are located in the RFA region. Most of those places are listed for their natural value and include many localised sites for endangered plants which may occur outside the CAR reserve system. Those plants will be protected by a combination of the commonwealth-state threatened species legislation and through forest management planning. In essence what people want preserved and reserved - the national estate values and the old-growth values - can be done and has been achieved through the Regional Forest Agreement.

There are also areas of community attachment. Unfortunately, due to the earlier debate, I do not have time to go through them all in detail. I wanted to detail how the particular areas of community attachment which have been included in the CAR reserve system have been identified. Specifically, the RFA has resulted in an increased level of new reservation of 24 per cent in the Hester block. That means that 74 per cent of Hester, and if the informal reserves are added it brings it to 75 per cent, is protected. About 13 per cent of Kerr forest block is protected in the CAR reserve system, and with the informal reserves it is 17 per cent. In terms of the Wellington national park, through the purchase of the private land, we will now have a new formal reserve national park of 3 900 hectares and a forest conservation zone of 720 hectares, which will be added to what was previously proposed as a reserve of 5 050 hectares. The issues which have been identified in this Bill as being of particular importance, such as old growth, the National Estate and areas of community attachment, have been assessed and addressed by the Regional Forest Agreement, and the levels of mechanisms for protection and management and reservation have been improved. It is not possible to support this Bill because of a number of legal and technical reasons, and it cannot achieve what it seeks to do.

Mr Graham: What are they?

Mrs EDWARDES: In a number of areas, and in particular a recent case of Bass, demonstrates that the advice that the member for Churchlands raised in terms of section 4 is not quite correct. Therefore, the extension of what it would bind is not exactly true. Apart from that, delays would occur and it would impact on the certainty for the timber industry. It would be very difficult to support. The standing orders of the other place demand that it be in that place for up to nine months at any one point and that any of the motions or resolutions referred to in this Bill are activated. How can there be certainty in an industry when its operations will be held up and no logging will take place for nine months at a time which can continue ad infinitum? We have identified that no logging in these areas would affect directly and indirectly in excess of 3 000 people in that region. A number of questions should be posed to the Labor Party, not the least of which should be posed by timber industry workers themselves because of their betrayal by the originators of their party. John Curtin was the secretary of the Victorian -

Dr Gallop: You would not know anything about John Curtin.

Mrs EDWARDES: Was he the secretary of the Victorian Timber Workers' Union?

Dr Gallop: Of course he was. What year?

Mrs EDWARDES: The Labor Party has betrayed the timber workers in this State. The questions that should be posed to the Labor Party are: Given the fact that the Labor Party cannot meet its commitment to honour existing contracts and protect old-growth and high conservation value forests without harvesting around 5 000 hectares of old-growth karri before 2004, which of those areas would the Labor Party log to meet those contracts? What is its position on minerals exploration in old-growth areas which have been identified within this Bill? What are the specifics of its industry and employee assistance measures? We do not know and neither does the member for Eyre. How does it intend to explain to the south west communities the devastating effects of its policy on a number of towns? In excess of \$100m a year would be ripped out of that south west region as a result of its policy. Who will be prepared to go there and tell the people in those towns that they

will not be supported, that the workers will not have jobs, and that without those people the towns will close? The most important question is: What is the cost of this Labor Party never-never plan and how will it be met? How can the community of Western Australia support the Labor Party when in the past it has been well known for putting the State in perpetual debt and is likely to do so in the future if it continues with its policies? It cannot deliver this. All the Labor Party is after is short-term political gain.

MR BRIDGE (Kimberley) [6.33 pm]: We witnessed in the last hour the reason that this Bill should be supported. The substance of the Bill is as far away from the debate as if I were on the other side of the moon. This Bill simply calls upon us as legislators and members of the Parliament who have sworn by oath of allegiance or affirmation that we are the advocates of the community. It is a consequence of that advocacy that we should have our turn in debating this issue as part of the democratic process within the community and make a proper evaluation of the matters of importance, and then deal with them within the parliamentary process. Today we should be agreeing to debate this matter in Parliament in such a manner that the democratic process has an opportunity to function in this State and then, in the end, in our political wisdom we should determine the proper course of action to take on this important issue for the State.

This is a classic example of what I have been speaking about in this House for countless years with little or no support; that is, the transfer of the power of attorney from us as legislators into the hands of others. Certain elements in our society believe they should determine the outcome of a range of important issues. When accountability and checks and balances exist, these issues do not need to go through the parliamentary process. These people will make the decisions and adjudicate on the important matters of public interest. These people will usually find that the Parliament is so disinterested that there is no reaction.

As an Australian, I am absolutely and steadfastly opposed to this process that has encroached on Australian democracy. Left, right and centre we are handing over the fundamental obligations and duties that, as parliamentarians, we have taken an oath of allegiance to perform. We have handed over the rules and the right to rule to a group of people who have been appointed, not elected. This debate is an example of this very dangerous process that is converging upon our society. It is occurring at a time in Australia when we are striving to retain the remnants of a magnificent country. That is what we are doing.

When one considers the decisions that have been made recently to sell off our assets and the way in which we have lost the ability to control them, one must ask where we sit in respect of our long-term future as a society and nation. I can tell members where we sit: We are a cowardly bunch who have given up our obligations and duties to the people in the community. This is not about whether the minister says this is good, the Leader of the Opposition says it is bad, or the Premier says it is something else; this is about each one of us here standing up and expressing ourselves, not politically, but parliamentarily. When we speak politically we stand up and say that, as the Government of the day, we must preserve its integrity; but this is not about that. This is about recognising that the forests are a critical and vital issue for this State, and, therefore, we should have some say in the ultimate fate of it. That is what we are dealing with here and nothing else.

We do not want to hear all the data that I have had to listen to for the past hour. That can be introduced when we debate the issue; that is the time to do so. The process that we have gone through today is disgraceful. As a politician, ageing as I am, it has been an insult to me to have to listen to this rubbish for the past hour. This is a simple piece of legislation that calls upon every one of us to either commit to what we preach, what we have sworn on oath or affirmation to do, or to simply ignore it. It seems that does not mean anything, because politically we have another agenda. I support this legislation purely for that reason. It is about time Australian politicians realised that the quangos out there must be stopped. These administrative decisions that are made outside Parliament must be stopped in the best interests of the survival of this magnificent nation.

We must be brought to account because if we make blunders here we can be tossed out in three years. Unelected members have permanency of employment whereby nobody can get at them. We do not even see them; they are just names to most people and to us. I say to all politicians that they should forget about the party structure, the Government and the Opposition and think of themselves today for a change as parliamentarians, pledging themselves, as they have done before, to be advocates of society and to ensure that the democratic process to which they purport to aspire is given a fair chance of occurring in this Parliament. That is what should result from this debate today.

DR EDWARDS (Maylands) [6.41 pm]: I will make brief remarks supporting this Bill and the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. There are two purposes of this Bill. The first is to rectify the damage done in our community by the signing of the Regional Forest Agreement. As the member for Kimberley said, it needs parliamentary scrutiny and we were promised much more scrutiny than the Government has delivered. It has reneged on the scoping agreement by which the Environmental Protection Authority would examine the draft RFA.

The second reason we need this Bill is for the heat to be taken out of the forestry debate. The Bill imposes a moratorium over high conservation value old-growth forests and other extremely important forests. Protests in the south west have escalated and they will continue to escalate. The heat has been turned up. Why is that so? It is due to the signing of the RFA and to the actions of CALM since its signing.

Earlier this evening, the Premier said that the RFA and its process gave us all an opportunity to have a better informed debate. That is not true. In my estimation, the community is now extremely well informed and the people who are the least well informed are members opposite. They must open their eyes, listen to the community and see what is really going on. During the RFA process, scientists came out of the woodwork to tell us what was wrong with the process and how science was being misused in it. The stakeholders complained that they had been ignored, whether they were local government, beekeepers or the conservation movement. The debate was not a truly informed debate when all those significant stakeholders were left out.

Thousands of people concerned about the RFA rallied in protest last July. From that flowed 25 000 submissions to the Government. That is an inordinate number of people who put pen to paper, put stamps on envelopes and tried to influence a government outcome. What happened? They were not heard. The worst thing about the RFA is that for the next 20 years it will allow continued logging of old-growth forest. Yes, the Government has set aside a further 45 000 hectares of old-growth forests into reserves, but it has left 100 000 ha to be logged over the next 20 years. That is disgraceful. Any agreement signed between a Premier and a Prime Minister that locks in the Parliament for the next 20 years deserves parliamentary scrutiny. That is what we are attempting to achieve tonight.

Last week I had the privilege of travelling down south and seeing blocks that are being logged. The scene down there is a tale of woe and destruction. The Leader of the Opposition and I visited blocks near Walpole. One must walk in what were once magnificent forests to see the truth. The first block was Swarbrick, parts of which are on the register of the National Estate. Irrespective of what the minister says about trying to protect the values of the National Estate, we saw them logged. We entered Swarbrick and saw old-growth tingle trees logged. As the Leader of the Opposition said, tingle grows only in a tiny area surrounding Walpole. The only part of the world in which we can find that type of eucalypt is in a small area around Walpole. What are we doing? We are logging it. What are we doing with the logs? We are sending nearly two-thirds to the chipper. It is an absolute disgrace. CALM's literature spells out the biodiversity and other values of tingle; yet it is being logged and sent to the chipper.

We also visited a block called Wye which is also on the interim list of the National Estate and which has high conservation value. It should be protected, but what did we see? We saw utter destruction. Wye was logged about a year ago. I have two things to say from my visit to Wye block: It has been scuttled. There is no other word for it. I saw one tree standing; it was old, dead and ragged. All the other trees were lying on the ground.

Mr Omodei: That is what happens when you cut them down.

Dr EDWARDS: What about the habitats? The foresters and the loggers have been in and removed what they wanted. We have been told that only waste timber was to be woodchipped. That is nonsense. If I were not in Parliament I would use much stronger language. We saw enormous logs. I have photographs of me standing next to a log which was taller than me and which had been left on the floor. They had not even bothered to chip it. It was waste and wanton destruction. We will continue to see that for the next 20 years. We will also continue to see the protests and unfortunately an escalation in the passion that goes into those protests.

Earlier today I was shown an Internet site that documented a family's trip to the south west. It showed graphic photographs which are available on the Internet for everybody to see. They show scenes similar to that which I have described of the blocks down south. They make two telling comments: One is that in Gardner block the 50 people in the group who visited the block stood on a tree stump. That is an indication of the size of the trees that are being cut down. That demonstrates the age, the magnificence, and the reverence of the trees that we are ignoring. That stump was nearly as big as the one in the graphic illustration shown earlier by the member for South Perth.

This issue has generated much correspondence. I refer briefly to a letter I was given today by the member for Thornlie which spells out clearly what we should be doing. The author says that the Government should govern in the wishes of the majority; this is its moral obligation; indeed its only obligation and the RFA clearly disregards submissions received and is ignoring the moral issues.

At the end of the Internet site I saw today is a message to politicians which reads -

Dear Politicians, is the following photo your idea of the tree house of the future? Is this the forest you want to leave our children?

It shows on the Internet a photograph of a small boy in his tree house, a huge stump that is hollowed out, and behind him there are no trees in sight. The area has been devastated. I have a son about the same size as the boy in this photograph. I do not want his tree house to be this tree stump. I urge all members who have a brain to support this Bill.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

MR HOUSE (Stirling - Minister for Primary Industry) [6.50 pm]: Few issues in my time in this Parliament or in public life have generated as much public debate and, indeed, as much passion as the debate about the future of our forests. I have been very proud to be part of that debate, and the organisation that I represent - the National Party - has taken a very strong position on those issues. A great deal of that debate has been generated because our constituency has demanded that we do certain things.

If I may digress slightly, 70-odd people occupied my office today to make their point of view known. I welcome that input from people who want to make government aware of what they want and what they believe is needed. I draw a parallel between what is happening in the forest and the sort of evolution that farmers have undergone over the past 15, 10 and perhaps 20 years. Prior to the time, most of us were knocking down trees and had little understanding of the damage that we were causing to the environment, and we acknowledge that, and most of us were going about our business thinking that production was created by having more inputs and greater acreages. We have come to realise over the past few years of that evolutionary period that there are many other dimensions to the way we manage our land, and to the great credit of farmers and many of the people whom I represent, that evolution has almost brought about a revolution. That revolution has led to the planting of thousands of hectares of trees throughout the wheatbelt areas of Western Australia and to the adoption by many of what I could refer to as the redneck farmers of the past of a very different point of view about the environment. It did take 10, 15 or 20 years for us to get that sort of understanding across to the farming community, and it did not happen

overnight, but few farmers now would disagree with the view that we needed to take, and have taken, a different approach. That is the sort of evolutionary process that we are now going through with our forests.

The Regional Forest Agreement establishes a set of principles that have been agreed to by the Prime Minister and the Premiers by which management of our forests will move forward in the future. We are interested in the detail that is contained in those principles. We will be working through that detail with the community, with the people involved in land management, and with all the people who are involved in this decision making process. In case anyone thinks that the Regional Forest Agreement did not achieve anything, I will repeat what the Minister for the Environment said. The crucial point is that the amount of timber that is being logged in the forest will be reduced substantially. That is the first part of the process. That has come about because many people have demanded that that happen. As I say, part of that evolutionary process is to get to a point that the community at large finds acceptable.

The RFA does a number of other things. It commits to an independent review by an expert panel, which will involve not members of the Government or the Opposition, or the Parliament, but people who are well versed and studied in those issues and who will make a recommendation to government. It provides the beginnings of a new process of forest management. That is a substantial change from what has been done in the past, and anyone who thinks that will be a failure should be aware of the reduction in the timber cut, which will be a huge step forward. I, along with many of my colleagues and many members of the community, do not deny that we need to do more things within those parameters. The parameters and framework that are set up by that Regional Forest Agreement will allow us to move forward in a structured way.

The Government is committed to reviewing the royalties that are applied to timber production, because that is the key to much of the future of the forest. I do not believe anyone would disagree that the royalties need to be increased and that we do not need to cut down good timber to make railway sleepers, for example, but that an acceptable amount of logging can continue for high-value products such as furniture. That creates the sorts of jobs and employment that the Minister for the Environment talked about, and that is acceptable. I do not think anyone would disagree that the Government's proposal to divide the Department of Conservation and Land Management into two separate entities to deal with the management of the production side of the forest and the management of the conservation estate is a step forward. That has been publicly committed to by this Government.

The Government has also publicly committed itself to making the forest management plans available for public debate so that everyone can have an input into those areas that they consider to be important; that is, the icon forest areas. Few people in the community would disagree that we should preserve those icon forest areas. Indeed, I believe that this further debate will provide an opportunity for the greater preservation of those icon forest areas that are important not only to the heritage of this State, as a number of speakers have said, but also to the people in the tourism industry, who want people to be able to enjoy those forests in the future. This Government has done a great deal to shift timber production to plantation. That has not happened as quickly as it should have, but we have a structured plan, and that is happening and will continue to happen.

The amount of plantation timber is increasing every year. A number of state agreement Acts have come before this Parliament that deal with that matter, and some of those Acts are outlined in this Bill. Many individuals and private companies have committed themselves to planting thousands of hectares of trees per year to take the pressure off the old-growth forests and turn to plantation timber. That is part of the evolutionary process that I was talking about. We cannot achieve overnight or at one fell swoop everything that many people in the community want, and still preserve the jobs and the employment that goes with the forest, but we are trying to get there, and many people are committed to doing that.

I understand what this Bill is seeking to do, and many people would agree that this Bill is motivated by the best of intentions. However, even with the best of intentions, this Bill will not achieve the things that need to be achieved. The map of the old-growth forest estate, which I have in front of me, along with some schedules that go along with it, will not achieve the sorts of things that this Parliament will be able to debate. It will bring to a halt immediately timber production in this State and will set in place a chain of events that will have a dramatic effect on employment. There is a different way of doing that. We cannot run a business from the floor of this Parliament. That is not achievable, and most of us would agree with that. There is lot of goodwill, and there is a way by which most of the things that people want to achieve by the passage of this Bill can be achieved. I repeat that much more remains to be done. The RFA is a framework on which we can move forward. The way to move forward is to address the royalty, icon block and plantation issues, and the issue of having independent management plans for the forest, and to make sure that the public input and scrutiny of those issues is positive. I believe out of that process and the general goodwill and input of people -

Dr Gallop: You have just produced an argument for not signing the RFA!

Mr HOUSE: Not at all.

Dr Gallop: You should be over here!

Mr HOUSE: The RFA sets down a framework by which we can move forward on this issue. The Leader of the Opposition wants to bring things to a halt. He has neither spelt out what he will do. It is very easy to sit there and be critical. He has neither demonstrated where he will stop logging, nor what will happen, and that is the deficiency in his argument. This Government is moving forward positively and has made a commitment to ensuring that the issues that the public have brought before us are addressed.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [6.57 pm]: Under the Sessional Orders, private members' business normally concludes at 7.00 pm, and that will still be the case. However, I am conscious of the importance of this issue, and

given that a significant number of members wish to speak on this Bill but have not yet had the opportunity, I propose to members opposite that I will now adjourn this debate, and I will bring this matter on for debate again tomorrow at 2.30 pm, or thereabouts, following question time, for a further one hour of debate, with contributions and speeches by any one member limited to 10 minutes. I take it that is agreed. I therefore move -

That the debate be adjourned.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.58 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

BUSINESSES, TAXES AND CHARGES

1976. Mr BROWN to the Treasurer:

- (1) Since 1 January 1997, what action has the Government taken to relieve the burden of inequitable taxes, rates and utility charges on business?
- (2) As a matter of policy, what inequitable rates, taxes and utility charges would the Government like to remove from business if the economic circumstances permit?
- (3) Does the Government have a timetable or plan for the removal or lowering of such rates, taxes and utility charges?
- (4) If so, what is that plan or timetable?

Mr COURT replied:

In relation to utility charges, I would note that reform of prices charged by government trading enterprises has been an ongoing initiative of the Government. This reform is driven by two principles:

- as government trading enterprises (GTEs) embrace commercial practices, efficiency gains in the form of lower costs and/or a better quality of service are achieved. The Government is committed to consumers benefiting from these gains through higher quality of service delivery and lower real prices. For example:
- between 1992/93 and 1998/99 average non-residential electricity bills on the South West Interconnected System are estimated to have fallen by 22% in real terms;
- gas tariffs for commercial customers have remained virtually unchanged in nominal terms since 1992/93, resulting in a decrease in real terms in excess of 10%. (Deregulation of the gas market has also resulted in reductions in gas prices throughout the Pilbara of around 50%);
- water costs for an average medium size commercial business have fallen by almost 50% in real terms since 1992/93. For large commercial and industrial customers the decline has been significantly larger - 58% cent for industrial and almost 80% for large commercial.
- With the continued reduction of cross-subsidisation between business and residential customers, the Government is working towards bringing GTE prices more into line with the "user pays" principle.

As a result, businesses in the State are benefiting significantly from pricing reforms, particularly in the energy and water industries which provide essential inputs to business.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

2060. Mr BROWN to the Minister for the Environment; Labour Relations:

- (1) How many contracts (other than employment contracts and contracts for less than \$50,000) did each department under the Minister's control enter into in the months of -
 - (a) November 1998; and
 - (b) December 1998?
- (2) What was the amount of each contract?
- (3) What is the name of each person/entity with whom the contract is been awarded to?
- (4) What is the nature of the work or services required by the contract?
- (5) What is the completion date of the contract requirements?
- (6) Was each contract awarded to the lowest tender?
- (7) If not, why not?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

WorkSafe Western Australia:

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

Commissioner for Workplace Agreements:

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

Department of the Registrar Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission:

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

WorkCover WA:

- (1) (a) One.
 (b) Nil.
 (2) One - \$74 060.85.
 (3) Marketforce.
 (4) Media promotion - Injury Management Education Campaign.
 (5) 24 April 1999.
 (6) No.
 (7) Marketforce has been appointed under a mandatory Common Use Contract administered by CAMS.

Perth Zoo:

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

Department of Productivity and Labour Relations:

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

Kings Park and Botanic Garden:

- (1) (a) One.
 (b) One.
 (2) (a) \$225 365
 (b) \$53 171
 (3) (a) DME Contractors.
 (b) CJD Equipment.
 (4) (a) Supply and erect safety fencing.
 (b) Supply and deliver a Ride on Reel Lawn Mower.
 (5) (a) 28 May 1999.
 (b) 1 February 1999.
 (6) Yes.
 (7) Not applicable.

Department of Environmental Protection:

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

Department of Conservation and Land Management:

- (1) (a) 2
 (b) 3
 (2) (i) \$109 697.50
 (ii) \$84 000.00
 (iii) \$246 000.00
 (iv) \$536 000.00
 (v) \$1 190.00 per day to average 3 days per week with any month capped at 15 days.
 (3) (i) JSW Holdings Pty Ltd.
 (ii) JJ Archibald.
 (iii) Muchea Grading Contractors.
 (iv) Dunns Aviation.
 (v) Brian J O'Brien and Associates Pty Ltd.
 (4) (i) Upgrading Piccaninny/Cathedral Gorge Road at Purnululu National Park.
 (ii) Dry hire wheel loaders and dozers for jarrah silvicultural operations.
 (iii) Plantation road/firebreak maintenance grading.
 (iv) Aerial Water Bombing (Fire Suppression), for and on behalf of the Fire & Rescue Service and Bush Fire Services.
 (v) Provision of specialist scientific advice.
 (5) (i) 10 December 1998.
 (ii) 30 June 1999.
 (iii) First year complete November 1999 - possible annual renewals to November 2001.
 (iv) 17 November 1999.
 (v) 1 December 1999.
 (6) Yes. The State Supply Commission approved the waiver of tenders as Dr O'Brien was a sole source of supply for the required advice.
 (7) Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, ELECTORAL ADVERTISING

2240. Mr RIEBELING to the Minister for the Environment; Labour Relations:

With regard to section 175ZE ("the section") of the Electoral Act 1907, for all government departments and agencies under the Minister's control will the Minister provide a breakdown of how much was paid in 1997-98 to each person, agency or organization which provided the following services -

- (a) advertising;
- (b) market research;
- (c) polling;
- (d) direct mail; and
- (e) media advertising?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

The Electoral Commission has advised that this information is available in each agency's Annual Report as it is a reporting requirement. Therefore the member can access this information in each agency's Annual Report.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, ELECTORAL ADVERTISING

2253. Mr RIEBELING to the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

With regard to section 175ZE ("the section") of the Electoral Act 1907, for all government departments and agencies under the Minister's control will the Minister provide a breakdown of how much was paid in 1997-98 to each person, agency or organization which provided the following services -

- (a) advertising;
- (b) market research;
- (c) polling;
- (d) direct mail; and
- (e) media advertising?

Mr OMODEI replied:

The Hon Minister for Transport has provided the following response:

The Electoral Commission has advised that this information is available in each agency's Annual Report as it is a reporting requirement. Therefore the member can access this information in each agency's Annual Report.

COCKBURN SOUND TRUST

2373. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) What progress has been made toward the establishment of a Cockburn Sound Trust as recommended by the Environmental Protection Authority?
- (2) Will the Minister assure the residents of Cockburn that the Trust will be operating before the completion of the development at Jervoise Bay?
- (3) If not, why not?
- (4) If the answer to (2) above is no, when does the Minister envisage that the Trust will be operating?
- (5) Will the Minister assure the residents of Cockburn that the Cockburn Sound Trust will include significant community representation?
- (6) What form will community representation take within the framework of the proposed Trust?
- (7) How is it proposed to undertake the remediation of the two nutrient plumes flowing into Cockburn Sound which the Minister has referred to in relation to Ministerial Appeals?
- (8) When will remediation of these nutrient plumes begin?
- (9) Who will pay the cost of this remediation?
- (10) Is remediation of nutrient plumes limited to the two plumes referred to in the Minister's response to the Appeals on this issue?
- (11) If further nutrient plumes are identified, will these nutrient plumes also be subject to remediation?
- (12) If not, why not?
- (13) Will the Government commit to the remediation of all groundwater plumes identified as containing chemical contamination flowing into Cockburn Sound?
- (14) If not, why not?
- (15) Who will pay for the cost of regenerating seagrass in Cockburn Sound?
- (16) How will the cost of seagrass regeneration be divided between the respective parties responsible?

(17) On what basis does the Minister accept that seagrass regeneration will be successful?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(6) A steering committee has been established comprised of representatives of State Government agencies and the Commonwealth Department of Defence, to identify and evaluate options to establish a management body to coordinate the environmental management of Cockburn Sound. The Government is considering the most appropriate organisational and administrative support arrangements for a Cockburn Sound Environmental Management organisation. However I support the intention to establish such an organisation, which allows for community and local government membership. It is my expectation that the management body for Cockburn Sound will be in place well before the completion of the development of the Southern Harbour at Jervoise Bay.
- (7) The Department of Commerce and Trade has committed to the preparation and implementation of a Groundwater Recovery Plan to intercept and treat contaminated groundwater flowing into the Northern Harbour. The plan, which will describe how this will be undertaken, will be prepared before the end of June 1999.
- (8) Following approval of the Groundwater Recovery Plan.
- (9) The Department of Commerce and Trade will be funding the initial phase of the remediation.
- (10) Yes.
- (11)-(13) Based on existing groundwater monitoring, there is another plume discharging into Cockburn Sound south of James Point. This plume is being addressed by source reduction and groundwater withdrawal. If on-going monitoring indicates that further remediation action is necessary this will be considered by Government.
- (14) The necessity for remediation of groundwater plumes is determined by the Department of Environmental Protection. Wherever possible, the responsible industry is required to conduct the remediation.
- (15)-(16) The Department of Commerce and Trade has the responsibility for revegetating an area of 2.1 ha within Cockburn Sound with seagrass.
- (17) The current seagrass transplantation trials being undertaken by Cockburn Cement suggest that it is possible to revegetate suitable areas by transplanting seagrass.

ECONOMY, GROWTH RATES

2376. Mr BROWN to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is the Treasurer aware of an article that appeared in *The Australian Financial Review* on 10 March 1999 under the heading of "Growth rates disguise fragile economy: ACCI"?
- (2) Does the Treasurer/Treasury share the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry assessment of the Australian economy as described in the article?
- (3) If not, why not?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(3) The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's assessment of the outlook for the Australian economy as described in the article is that the economy will become "...more fragile, [and] less robust...".

The Australian economy is in its eighth year of the current expansion, and has, to date, proved to be resilient in the face of the downturn the Asian economies experienced. Over the past five years, the Australian economy has grown at an annual average rate of 4.2% per year, well above growth of 2.5% in the OECD countries over the same period. These are indications that the Australian economy, is indeed, a strong, robust economy. That said, the Australian economy, as with all major developed economies, experiences cyclical fluctuations in growth. The Commonwealth Treasury has indicated in its latest mid-year review that it expects the economy to grow by 3.25% in 1998-99, with growth easing to 2.75% in 1999-00. The latest survey of private new capital expenditure expectations does indicate that the level of business investment is expected to decline modestly in 1998-99 followed by a more substantial decline in 1999-00. While the expectation for 1998-99 is likely to be achieved, past experience suggests that expectations of expenditure for 1999-00 will be revised upwards over coming quarters. On the basis of this trend, Bankers Trust has gone as far as to say that "investment is more likely to grow than contract in 1999-00". The modest decline in investment in 1998-99 follows six consecutive years of strong growth in investment. In this context, the expected decline in investment should not be interpreted as being sufficiently large as to weaken the underlying structure of the economy. To summarise, activity is expected to slow, but the economy, on the basis of current information, can hardly be described as fragile.

ALCOA REFINERY, WAGERUP, HEALTH IMPACTS

2379. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Has the Minister received -
- (a) advice; or

- (b) a written report from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding the concerns of the residents of Wagerup over claims of health impacts from the ALCOA refinery at Wagerup?
- (2) Will the Minister table the advice or report received from the DEP?
- (3) If not, why not?
- (4) What action is being taken by the DEP in relation to the concerns of the residents of Wagerup?
- (5) What is the status of this action?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Yes. Briefing notes have been received.
- (2)-(3) The briefing notes provided internal advice to me however, I am prepared to provide a briefing to the Member on this matter.
- (4)-(5) The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in conjunction with the Health Department of WA has developed an action plan to specifically deal with each of the concerns raised by the residents at Wagerup. This action plan has been agreed to with the Community Action Group and many of the proposals have already been implemented.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, CREDIT CARD USE

2403. Mr CARPENTER to the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has the Minister's office received any comment, either directly or indirectly, from the Auditor General's office expressing concern about use of Government credit cards outside the Government guidelines?
- (2) If yes, when were the comments made?
- (3) What was the cause of the concern?

Mr OMODEI replied:

The Hon Minister for Transport has provided the following response:

- (1)-(3) Since the decision was made for the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet to assume responsibility for all expenditure in Ministerial Offices the communication between the Office of the Auditor General and the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet in relation to these matters is covered in the Office of the Auditor General's:
Report on Controls, Compliance and Accountability Audits 1997, Report No. 7 - November 1997; and
Report on Controls, Compliance and Accountability Audits 1998, Report No. 8 - October 1998.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, CREDIT CARD USE

2410. Mr CARPENTER to the Minister for Resources Development; Energy; Education:

In relation to the use of Government credit cards -

- (a) have any credit cardholders either working in the Ministerial office or with a Department/Agency for which the Minister has responsibility used their cards -
 - (i) for personal use; or
 - (ii) to gain frequent flyer points; fly buys or similar benefits;
- (b) if yes, will the Minister provide details of this use;
- (c) if not, why not?

Mr BARNETT replied:

Ministerial Office

- (a) (i) On occasions while travelling overseas, it has been necessary for personal expenditure to be included on hotel accounts as it is not normal practice for hotels to provide separate accounts. On each occasion, the officer responsible has reimbursed the Government for all costs.
- (ii) No.
- (b)-(c) Not applicable.

I am advised:

Department of Resources Development

- (a) (i) There have been 3 occasions where Department of Resources Development staff have inadvertently used the Corporate credit card for personal use. In all cases the mistake was realised by the employee and the money was repaid immediately.
- (ii) No.

- (b) Amounts of \$87.15, \$44.95 and \$153.10 were used to purchase household items by three different staff members between 1/7/96 to 30/6/98.
- (c) Not applicable.

Office of Energy

- (a) (i) No.
- (ii) Frequent flyer scheme memberships only.
- (b) Frequent flyer scheme memberships have been purchased with government credit cards. The points accumulated through these memberships are utilised for future government business travel in accordance with government policy.
- (c) Not applicable.

Western Power

- (a)-(c) Western Power does not use Government Credit Cards.

AlintaGas

- (a)-(c) AlintaGas does not use Government Credit Cards.

Education Department of Western Australia

- (a) (i)-(ii) Yes.
- (b) An officer involved with marketing education resources overseas incurred expenditure of \$US96.62 during 1994/95. This, and matters unrelated to government corporate card expenditure, remain subject to actions being undertaken by external investigative body. Between November 1996 and April 1997 two officers accumulated fly buy points and one officer accumulated frequent flyer points on their cards. Consequently the Department has issued firm instructions to all cardholders that fly buy points cannot be accumulated and that frequent flyer points may only be accumulated for the benefit of official travel. On various occasions between May 1997 and July 1997 an officer, while travelling interstate, used the Government credit card to settle hotel accounts which incorporated amongst the total charges, private expenditure amounting to \$225.50. The expenditure related to food, beverages, accommodation and hair treatment. Between July and August 1997 this officer used the Government card for private purchases of \$539.19 while on official business overseas. The expenditure related to sporting goods, shoes/accessories and hair care/supplies.

During 1998, again while travelling interstate, private expenditures of \$258.00 were incurred against the Government card for items such as food, beverages and souvenirs. These expenses were identified and repaid by the officer upon the officer reconciling credit card expenditures after each period of travel. No action was taken against the officer because of the explanations provided and the voluntary disclosure of the expenditures. In November 1998 an officer, while on business, settled a motel account which included \$25.00 private expenditure amongst the total bill using the Government card. The officer drew this to the attention of the Department and repaid the amount upon reconciling the corporate card statement. The officer's explanation that it was expedient to settle the total account on departure from the motel was deemed acceptable and no action was taken.

During 1998 four officers paid mini-bar and room service charges with their accommodation costs at the time of settling their hotel accounts. The amounts ranged from \$3.00 to \$10.50 and were deducted from the officers' travel recoups when they submitted their claims. No action was taken against the officers in regards to these expenditures as it was expedient to settle the amounts with accommodation charges on departure from the hotels and there was no subsequent charge against public monies.

A recent incident involving an officer who was posted overseas using the Government card for arranging travel back to Perth is being investigated. At this stage the full extent of private card usage is yet to be determined.

- (c) Not applicable.

Department of Education Services

- (a) (i)-(ii) No.
- (b)-(c) Not applicable.

Curriculum Council

- (a) (i)-(ii) No.
- (b)-(c) Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, CREDIT CARD USE

2412. Mr CARPENTER to the Minister for the Environment; Labour Relations:

In relation to the use of Government credit cards -

- (a) have any credit cardholders either working in the Ministerial office or with a Department/Agency for which the Minister has responsibility used their cards -
 - (i) for personal use; or
 - (ii) to gain frequent flyer points; fly buys or similar benefits;
- (b) if yes, will the Minister provide details of this use;

(c) if not, why not?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

(a)-(c) I refer the member to the answer to Assembly Question Without Notice 627 asked on 16 March 1999.

PUBLIC SERVICE, APPOINTMENTS PURSUANT TO SECTION 64(1)(a) OF PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT ACT

2536. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for the Environment; Labour Relations:

- (1) At any time since 1994, has the Minister, or the Minister's office, requested the appointment of a person to the public service pursuant to section 64(1)(a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994?
- (2) Were any of the people the subject of such a request actually appointed pursuant to the Act?
- (3) If so, for each such appointment, will the Minister specify -
 - (a) the officer's name;
 - (b) their classification and position at appointment;
 - (c) the date their appointment took effect; and
 - (d) their relevant employing authority?
- (4) Were any of these officers subsequently seconded to work in a Ministerial office?
- (5) If so, for each secondment, will the Minister specify -
 - (a) the officer's name;
 - (b) the classification and position to which the officer was seconded;
 - (c) the date this secondment was requested;
 - (d) the date this secondment took effect; and
 - (e) the Ministerial office to which the officer was seconded to?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

WorkCover WA:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

Department of the Registrar, Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

Perth Zoo:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

Department of Productivity and Labour Relations:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

Department of Environmental Protection:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

Commissioner of Workplace Agreements:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

WorkSafe Western Australia:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

Kings Park and Botanic Garden:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

Conservation and Land Management:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

PERTH THEATRE TRUST, SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING

2696. Ms McHALE to the Treasurer:

I refer to the supplementary funding of \$947,000 to the Perth Theatre Trust and ask -

- (a) how much was allocated to the one off transition payments;
- (b) how is this amount broken down;
- (c) what is the management fee to Ogden IFC;

- (d) what are the set up costs for the Ogden IFC Perth office;
- (e) how much was allocated for "improved venue management services";
- (f) will the Treasurer confirm that an additional \$970,000 per annum above the PTT's current budget allocation has been identified; and
- (g) has this supplementary funding been approved?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for the Arts has provided the following response :

- (a) \$268,000 was allocated to staff transition payments.
- (b) \$165,000 for leave entitlements and \$103,000 for transition payments.
- (c) \$25,000 per month.
- (d) \$100,000.
- (e) "Improved venue management services" is not a separate line item but is a result of the management input and performance.
- (f)-(g) Only in principle.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, IMPACT OF FRINGE BENEFITS TAX IN REMOTE LOCATIONS

2729. Mr RIEBELING to the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

What action, if any, has the Minister taken to ensure that employees who receive an incentive in the form of a fringe benefit to work in the remote areas of the State will retain the full value of the incentive under the Commonwealth's new fringe benefit tax arrangements?

Mr OMODEI replied:

The Hon Minister for Transport has provided the following response:

As part of its tax reform package released last year, the Commonwealth Government announced a number of reforms to the fringe benefits tax (FBT) system. One of these reforms, which the Western Australian Government strongly supports, is to provide an FBT exemption for remote area housing benefits provided to mining industry employees (from 2000-01 FBT year). Not only will this measure reduce the tax impost on the mining industry, it will also reduce the incentive for mining companies to use fly-in/fly-out operations, thereby providing a potential boost to regional development. One of the other FBT reforms announced by the Commonwealth was to include the "grossed-up" taxable value of fringe benefits on employees' group certificates, where the value of the benefits exceeds \$1,000. While the tax liability for such benefits will remain with employers (under the FBT system), they will be included in employees' income for determining liability for tax surcharges (such as the superannuation contributions surcharge) and entitlement to certain government benefits (such as family allowance). The legislation to implement this second measure was recently passed, with amendments, by the Commonwealth Parliament. As a result of the amendments to the draft legislation, benefits relating to remote area housing are defined as "excluded benefits", and do not need to be included on employees' group certificates. This will largely ameliorate the impact of this measure on employees working in remote areas.

MINISTERIAL STAFF, PRESENTS AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

2739. Mr CARPENTER to the Minister for Planning; Employment and Training; Heritage:

- (1) Did the Minister use taxpayers money to pay for staff presents and/or for staff social functions during the 1998 calendar year?
- (2) If yes -
 - (a) on what date;
 - (b) for what purpose; and
 - (c) how much was spent?

Mr KIERATH replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.

CONSULTANTS, NUMBER, PURPOSE AND COST

2993. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Planning; Employment and Training; Heritage:

- (1) How many consultants are currently engaged by each department and agency under the Minister's control?
- (2) What is the name of each consultant?

- (3) What is the purpose or the nature of the consultancy?
- (4) What is the cost of the consultancy?
- (5) What is the anticipated completion date of the consultancy?

Mr KIERATH replied:

The member would be aware that a six monthly report is tabled in Parliament, which provides information on consultants engaged by Government agencies. The member should access this report when it is tabled to obtain the information sought in his question.

CONSULTANTS, NUMBER, PURPOSE AND COST

2995. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Lands; Fair Trading; Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs:

- (1) How many consultants are currently engaged by each department and agency under the Minister's control?
- (2) What is the name of each consultant?
- (3) What is the purpose or the nature of the consultancy?
- (4) What is the cost of the consultancy?
- (5) What is the anticipated completion date of the consultancy?

Mr SHAVE replied:

The member would be aware that a six monthly report is tabled in Parliament which provides information on consultants engaged by Government agencies. The member should access this report when it is tabled to obtain the information sought in his question.

CONSULTANTS, NUMBER, PURPOSE AND COST

2996. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Housing; Aboriginal Affairs; Water Resources:

- (1) How many consultants are currently engaged by each department and agency under the Minister's control?
- (2) What is the name of each consultant?
- (3) What is the purpose or the nature of the consultancy?
- (4) What is the cost of the consultancy?
- (5) What is the anticipated completion date of the consultancy?

Dr HAMES replied:

The member would be aware that a six monthly report is tabled in Parliament which provides information on consultants engaged by Government agencies. The member should access this report when it is tabled to obtain the information sought in his question.

CONSULTANTS, NUMBER, PURPOSE AND COST

2997. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Local Government; Disability Services:

- (1) How many consultants are currently engaged by each department and agency under the Minister's control?
- (2) What is the name of each consultant?
- (3) What is the purpose or the nature of the consultancy?
- (4) What is the cost of the consultancy?
- (5) What is the anticipated completion date of the consultancy?

Mr OMODEI replied:

The member would be aware that a six monthly report is tabled in Parliament which provides information on consultants engaged by Government agencies. The member should access this report when it is tabled to obtain the information sought in this question.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, RESEARCH PROJECTS

3019. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Local Government; Disability Services:

- (1) Are any research projects being undertaken by the departments and agencies under the Minister's control?
- (2) What is the nature of each research project?
- (3) Who is conducting each research project?

- (4) What is the anticipated cost of each research project?
 (5) What is the anticipated completion date of the research project?

Mr OMODEI replied:

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

(1) Almost all the activities undertaken by the Department of Local Government involve an element of research and could be viewed as research projects. A more appropriate answer could be provided in response to this question if the definition of research project was more precise.

(2)-(5) See Answer 1.

DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSION

(1) Yes.

(2)-(3) The Disability Services Commission undertakes clinical and non-clinical research either alone or in partnership with other agencies or universities. See the following:

External Activities supported by DSC staff

Autism Diagnosis in Western Australia 1986-96	Gervase Cheney
Paediatric Physiotherapy Standards	Raewyn Courtney
Developed by across sector agencies for ratification by the Australian Physiotherapy Association (WA)	Glenys Davies
Diabetes Course for Carers in Residential Facilities for the Aged and Disabled	Michelle Lane and Diabetes Australia (WA)
Nutrition Project - Disability Services	Michelle Lane
Nutrition policies, procedures and best practice guidelines for pilot testing in disability services (NSW Dept of Community Services)	
Curtin Sexual Health Centre	Gareth Merriman
The Centre is being established to undertake research and provide co-ordination and sexology courses for professional groups.	
Evaluation of Tympanoplasty in Aboriginal Children in WA and factors associated with successful outcome	Donna Mak Alastair MacKendrick Francis Lannigan Harvey Coates Sharon Weeks
Study of Repetitive and Stereotyped Behaviours in Autism	Nicole Petterson Joachim Hallmayer
Suggestibility Differences in Children with and without Disability	Rebecca Porcham and Edith Cowan University
Stepping Stones - Program Evaluation	Lisa Studman and Curtin University
Quality of Life Perceptions in Adults with Intellectual Disability	Mark Rapley Renee Dobra Amber Price Halka Schmidt
Social Interaction Experiences on People with Intellectual Disability Living in the Community	Mark Rapley
An Investigation of the Social Construct of Disability within Formal and Informal Social Domains	Mark Rapley
An Investigation of how People in Group Homes spend their leisure time.	Margaret Morris
Clinic Based Study of Consanguineous Marriages and its outcomes in WA.	Alan Bittles June Crowhurst Philip Montgomery

Internal Activities undertaken by DSC Staff

Hydrocephalus in Western Australia: Survival, Functional Outcome and Aetiology (I)	Amalia Burmas
Multiple sources were used to ascertain the survival and functional outcomes including intellectual disability, cerebral palsy and epilepsy in children born in WA between 1980 and 1997 with congenital hydrocephalus.	
Hydrocephalus in Western Australia: Survival, Functional Outcome and Aetiology (II)	Amalia Burmas
The aims of part II of the study are:	

- a) to use parental questionnaire to obtain information about functional outcome in the surviving children, the services which they are currently using and any unmet needs.
- b) to investigate the relation of data from ultrasound records plus other information available antenatally to survival and functional outcome in the children.
- Manual Handling Refresher Training Package
- A refresher package for Social Trainers and Client Assistants Raewyn Courtney
Glenys Davies
- Development of Database Profile of DSC clients in the Justice System. Rosemary Cowper
- Epidemiology of Autism in Western Australia Emma Glasson
- a) To use established sources to ascertain cases of autism Spectrum disorders, born in Western Australia after 1980, and to link these data to the Maternal and Child Health Database. A description of the epidemiology and investigation of possible associations of pre, peri and postnatal factors to this spectrum of development disorders will be undertaken.
- b) To establish a Statewide Register for Autism Spectrum
- Obstetric Factors Associated with Autism: A State-wide Analysis Emma Glasson
- Ascertainment of Smith/Lemli/Opitz Syndrome Jenny Hanna
This uncommon malformation syndrome can be difficult to diagnose clinically but following the detection of a biochemical marker involving cholesterol metabolism, a new diagnostic test is being established in WA to be utilised both retrospectively and prospectively for families. Athel Hockey
- Development and Trial of Pelvic-Rib Wedge Ann Land
- An orthosis to separate the lower ribs and pelvis for people with severe scoliosis.
- Trial of Foam Mattress Overlay for a High Support Need Client Case Study Ann Land
- Replacement of standard mattress with pressure care mattress
- Dysphagia Recipe Booklets Michelle Lane
- A booklet of family recipes suitable for someone who requires smooth thick consistency foods
- Mealtime Management for People with Disabilities Michelle Lane
- Five module training package for Speech Pathologists in rural & CPA and remote areas
- A Preliminary Analysis of Assessments for Eligibility at Five Years of Age. Mairead McCoy
Katherine Rowell
- Stereotyped and Repetitive Behaviours in Autism Nicole Petterson
- An investigation of the effect these behaviours have on the family and the individual Joachim Hallmayer
- The Relationship of the Genotype at the FRAXA Locus on Reproductive Function in Western Australian Women Naomi Renton
- One of the major findings of this study was that menopause occurred, on average, 5 years earlier, in carriers of the fragile X premutation and full mutation than in all WA women
- A Review of Structural Chromosomal Abnormalities Harinder Singh
This research will proceed in two phases, initially confirmatory diagnostic work using the new technology of FISH analysis; then further studies of cases with dysmorphic features will be undertaken to improve diagnostic accuracy for families where a micro deletion cause is suspected.
- An Investigation of the Effect of Specially Designed Boots on Toe Meredith Wilkinson
- Walking in Children in the Autism Spectrum Denise Luscombe
- A Survey of Toe-Walking in Children in the Autism Spectrum Meredith Wilkinson
Denise Luscombe
- Behaviour Management Standards Paul Wilson
- Skills training and behavioural strategies, including Matthew Bell
aversive procedures for people with developmental disability Trevor Mazzucchelli
Dianne Reidy
4. Clinical research typically is included on professional staff's duty statements. The cost of research is therefore a salary or time cost.
5. Clinical research projects range from 6-12 months for most projects but others, such as the Autism Register, is ongoing.

KEEP AUSTRALIA BEAUTIFUL COUNCIL

- (1) No.
 (2)-(5) Not applicable.

METROPOLITAN CEMETERIES BOARD

- (1) No.
 (2)-(5) Not applicable.

FREMANTLE CEMETERY BOARD

- (1) No.
 (2)-(5) Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, IN EXCESS OF \$50 000

3037. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Planning; Employment and Training; Heritage:

- (1) How many contracts of \$50 000 or more (excluding employment contracts) has each department or agency under the Minister's control entered into between 1 January 1999 and 31 March 1999?
 (2) What was the amount of each contract?
 (3) What is the name of each person/entity with whom the contract has been entered into?
 (4) What is the nature of the work or services required by the contract?
 (5) What is the completion date of each contract?

Mr KIERATH replied:

PLANNING

Western Australian Planning Commission

- (1) One
 (2) \$86 443
 (3) Alpha West
 (4) Computer equipment
 (5) 31 March 1999-06-08

Ministry for Planning

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

East Perth Redevelopment Authority

- (1) One
 (2) \$51 752
 (3) Georgiou Group
 (4) Subdivision works for Lot 49 Haig Park, East Perth.
 (5) 14 May 1999

Subiaco Redevelopment Authority

- (1) Two
 (2) (a) \$7 595 124
 (b) \$767 809
 (3) (a) Multiplex Constructions Pty Ltd
 (b) Elegant Landscapes
 (4) (a) Major road works
 (b) Station Square Forecourt Upgrade
 (5) (a) 29 November 1999
 (b) 20 October 1999

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Western Australian Department of Training

- (1) Four
 (2) (a) \$112 632
 (b) \$59 945
 (c) \$50 000
 (d) \$247 986
 (3) (a) Synergy Computing
 (b) Stanton Partners
 (c) Worley Ltd
 (d) Alpha West Pty Ltd
 (4) (a) Analyst programmer services for the College Information Management System.
 (b) System based audits for C Y O'Connor and Kimberley Colleges.
 (c) Services to assess the skill needs of Western Australian resource development infrastructure projects and implications for Vocational Education and Training.
 (d) Supply of 5 Enterprise 450 Sun Servers.

- (5) (a) 2 March 2000
- (b) 30 June 1999
- (c) 23 March 2000
- (d) April 1999

Central Metropolitan College of TAFE

- (1) Two
- (2) (a) \$100 000
- (b) \$209 291
- (3) (a) MJB and B Advertising and Marketing
- (b) Macworld
- (4) (a) To assist with advertising, direct marketing, public relations and printing requirements.
- (b) To provide various Apple computer equipment, including hardware and software.
- (5) (a) 31 January 2000
- (b) 15 March 1999

West Coast College of TAFE

- (1) One
- (2) \$264 000
- (3) Westline Security Pty Ltd
- (4) Services for security guard services, cash collection and banking services and alarm response to West Coast College of TAFE.
- (5) 22 February 2002

South East Metropolitan College of TAFE

- (1) Five
- (2) (a) \$54 036
- (b) \$53 776
- (c) \$52 116
- (d) \$128 741
- (e) \$900 000
- (3) (a)-(d) IBM Credit Australia
- (e) Fire Emergency Service Australia
- (4) (a)-(d) Computer lease
- (e) Pre-employment training
- (5) (a) April 2002
- (b)-(c) March 2002
- (d) May 2002
- (e) March 2005

South Metropolitan College of TAFE

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

Midland College of TAFE

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

South West Regional College of TAFE

- (1) One.
- (2) \$92 675
- (3) Delron Cleaning Busselton.
- (4) Provision of cleaning services.
- (5) 31 January 2004.

Great Southern Regional College of TAFE

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

Central West Regional College of TAFE

- (1) One
- (2) \$135 303
- (3) Crothers Construction Pty Ltd
- (4) Science laboratory refurbishment.
- (5) May 1999

Hedland College

- (1) One
- (2) \$86 790
- (3) Stamfords Accountants Advisors Consultants Pty Ltd
- (4) Financial management.
- (5) 11 April 2002

Karratha College

- (1) One
- (2) \$141 374
- (3) Y Micro
- (4) Purchase of 49 personal computers and associated network cards.
- (5) 31 December 1999

HERITAGE

Heritage Council of Western Australia

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

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, IN EXCESS OF \$50 000

3039. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Lands; Fair Trading; Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs:

- (1) How many contracts of \$50 000 or more (excluding employment contracts) has each department or agency under the Minister's control entered into between 1 January 1999 and 31 March 1999?
- (2) What was the amount of each contract?
- (3) What is the name of each person/entity with whom the contract has been entered into?
- (4) What is the nature of the work or services required by the contract?
- (5) What is the completion date of each contract?

Mr SHAVE replied:

LANDCORP

- (1) 30.
- (2)-(5) See paper No 1031.

MINISTRY OF FAIR TRADING

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

DEPARTMENT OF LAND ADMINISTRATION

- (1) Three.
- (2)-(5)

Amount of Contract	Name of Person/Entity with whom Contract has been Entered Into	Nature of Work or Services Required	Completion Date of Contract
\$750,000	MITS (Managed Information Technology Services)	Support and services for LAN-WAN and Desktop applications	1 March 2003 with a 1 year extension option
\$200,000	DEMS Pty Ltd	Geometric Scanning of aerial photography negatives	1 February 2002 with 2 x 1 year options
\$90,000	Ernst & Young	Internal audit services	30 June 2000 with a 1 year extension option

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION

- (1) One.
- (2) \$235,000.
- (3) Zipform.
- (4) Printing and production of local government postal election packages.
- (5) 29 April 1999.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, IN EXCESS OF \$50 000

3041. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Local Government; Disability Services:

- (1) How many contracts of \$50 000 or more (excluding employment contracts) has each department or agency under the Minister's control entered into between 1 January 1999 and 31 March 1999?
- (2) What was the amount of each contract?
- (3) What is the name of each person/entity with whom the contract has been entered into?
- (4) What is the nature of the work or services required by the contract?
- (5) What is the completion date of each contract?

Mr OMODEI replied:

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- (1) None.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSION

- (1) 2
- (2) (a) \$179,289 over 5 years
(b) \$61,500
- (3) (a) Charles Service Company
(b) Software Plus Pty Ltd
- (4) (a) Cleaning DSC Central Office, 146-160 Colin Street, West Perth
(b) Conversion of WANG applications to personal computer based systems application and render them Y2000 compliant.
- (5) (a) 13 February 2004
(b) 31 August 1999

KEEP AUSTRALIA BEAUTIFUL COUNCIL

- (1) None.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

METROPOLITAN CEMETERIES BOARD

- (1) One
- (2) \$247,800
- (3) Goldfields Contractors
- (4) Road Construction
- (5) 31 March 1999

FREMANTLE CEMETERY BOARD

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

COMMITTEES AND BOARDS, FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

3059. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Planning; Employment and Training; Heritage:

- (1) Since February 1993, what Former Members of Parliament have been -
 - (a) appointed to a Government Board, Commission, Committee or other body; and/or
 - (b) appointed by the Government to any Board, Commission, Committee or other body; and/or
 - (c) employed or appointed within the Government in any capacity, paid or otherwise, under the Minister's control?
- (2) In each instance -
 - (a) what is the -
 - (i) name of the Former Member; and
 - (ii) the title of the position,to which they have been appointed;
 - (b) which organisation/department is responsible for the position; and
 - (c) what remuneration is paid for each position?

Mr KIERATH replied:

Ministerial Office

- (1) Hon Richard Lewis
- (2) (a) (i) Hon Richard Lewis JP.
(ii) Chairman of the Planning Legislation Consolidation Ministerial Advisory Group.
(b) Minister for Planning.
(c) This appointment is on an honorary basis, but travel and sundry expenses would be paid.

Ministry for Planning

- (1) Ms Kay Hallahan; and
Hon Ian Laurence
- (2) (a) (i) Ms Kay Hallahan.
(ii) Member of the Araluen Park Management Board; and
(i) Hon Ian Laurence.
(ii) Chairman of the Shark Bay Region Plan Review Steering Committee.

- (b) The Western Australian Planning Commission and Hon Ian Laurence was appointed by the Ministry for Planning.
- (c) Both are paid at the standard rate for members of Commission ad hoc committees, which is currently \$86 per half day or \$131 per day meeting, and incidental costs where expended.

East Perth Redevelopment Authority

- (1) Hon Richard Lewis JP
- (2)
 - (a)
 - (i) Hon Richard Lewis JP.
 - (ii) Chairman, East Perth Redevelopment Authority.
 - (b) Minister for Planning.
 - (c) \$24,000

Western Australian Department of Training

- (1) Mr George Gear.
- (2)
 - (a)
 - (i) Mr George Gear.
 - (ii) Deputy Member of the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Board - Nominated by the Builders Labourers, Painters and Plasterers Union.
 - (b) Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Board.
 - (c) No remuneration was paid.

Heritage Council of Western Australia

- (1) Mr B R Blaikie
- (2)
 - (a)
 - (i) Mr B R Blaikie
 - (ii) Member of the Heritage Council of Western Australia
 - (b) Heritage Council of Western Australia
 - (c) \$4,800 per annum

COMMITTEES AND BOARDS, FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

3063. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Local Government; Disability Services:

- (1) Since February 1993, what Former Members of Parliament have been -
 - (a) appointed to a Government Board, Commission, Committee or other body; and/or
 - (b) appointed by the Government to any Board, Commission, Committee or other body; and/or
 - (c) employed or appointed within the Government in any capacity, paid or otherwise, under the Minister's control?
- (2) In each instance -
 - (a) what is the -
 - (i) name of the Former Member; and
 - (ii) the title of the position,
 to which they have been appointed;
 - (b) which organisation/department is responsible for the position; and
 - (c) what remuneration is paid for each position?

Mr OMODEI replied:

Department of Local Government.

- (1) None
- (2) Not applicable.

Disability Services Commission.

- (1)
 - (a) Hon Ray Young
Mr Barry MacKinnon
Mr Keith Wilson
 - (b)-(c) Nil.
- (2)
 - (a)
 - (i)-(ii) Hon Ray Young; Chairperson, Board of Disability Services Commission (1994)
Mr Barry MacKinnon, Chairperson, Board of Disability Services Commission
Hon Keith Wilson, Member of the Advisory Council for Disability Services
 - (b) The Disability Services Commission
 - (c) Hon Ray Young - 100% of Public Service Level 8
Mr Barry MacKinnon - 100% of Public Service level 8 on appointment. Following a remuneration review, current remuneration set at \$32,000 per annum.
Mr Keith Wilson - \$2,291.63 per annum

Keep Australia Beautiful Council

(1)-(2) Nil.

Metropolitan Cemeteries Board

(1) (a)-(b) None.
(c) Not applicable.

(2) (a)-(c) Not applicable.

Fremantle Cemetery Board

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

PARNPAJINYA COMMUNITY, FUTURE

3112. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the following statement published in *Newslink* a newspaper published in Newman "If the Minister for Housing, Aboriginal Affairs and Water Resources and his Department of Aboriginal Affairs had done what they said they were going to do at the Parnpajinya workshop between Martu people and Government agencies, Newman Community Centre 7 November, 1997, and I quote 'it was agreed that specially designed houses would be constructed at the current Parnpajinya site' - conditions would have improved"?
- (2) Is this an accurate summary of commitments made by the State Government at the November 1997 meeting?
- (3) If not, what is the Minister's version of the outcomes of this meeting?
- (4) If the *Newslink* statement is correct, why has the Minister not honoured the commitments made in November 1997?

Dr HAMES replied:

(1)-(2) No.

(3) The Minister was not present at the Parnpajinya workshop on 7 November 1997. A draft action plan was developed by government departments, agencies and the Parnpajinya people at the workshop which provided a number of options for the future of Parnpajinya residents. This plan was not agreed to by the Minister or formally endorsed by his departments.

(4) Not applicable.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CRIME RATE

892. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

- (1) Is the Premier aware that the Australian Bureau of Statistics report on recorded crimes for 1998 released this morning reveals that Western Australia has the highest victimisation rate in the country for car stealing, burglary and theft and the second highest victimisation rate in the country for armed robbery and unarmed robbery as well as the greatest increase in the country in the rates of assault and sexual assault?
- (2) Is this not further evidence of this Government's fundamental failure to tackle crime in our community?

Mr COURT replied:

(1)-(2) I am aware of the statistics that have been released for 1998. I am also aware of the statistics released today for the first quarter of 1999.

Dr Gallop: You do that every year. You live in a great big balloon that conceals reality.

Mr COURT: We live in 1999.

Dr Gallop: No, you live in 1966.

Mr COURT: I am aware of the statistics. As far as I am concerned the crime levels are always too high. However, I am encouraged by the figures released by the Police Service which for the first quarter of this year compared with the same quarter in 1998 show some encouraging trends. For instance, the number of reported motor vehicle offences has decreased by more than 26 per cent, burglary by more than 10 per cent and unarmed robbery by almost 16 per cent. Those percentages are a comparison of crime rates in 1999 with those in 1998. I hope that downward trend continues.

Dr Gallop: You are sitting on drug abuse in our community, on young people dying and you do nothing.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not think the Leader of the Opposition saw me on my feet so I will accept that without formally calling him to order. I am trying to give the call to the member for Geraldton who wants to ask his question.

GRAEME GRUBB, FINANCE BROKING ACTIVITIES

893. Mr BLOFFWITCH to the Minister for Fair Trading:

Yesterday in Parliament the minister acknowledged that he had received a copy of material issued by Graeme Grubb to the clients of Mr Grubb's liquidated finance broking business. Will the minister inform the House what action has been taken?

Mr SHAVE replied:

The Commissioner for Fair Trading is concerned at the turn of events regarding Mr Grubb. Accordingly he issued a press release yesterday which the Government and I support and which reads -

The Ministry of Fair Trading has become aware that Graeme Grubb, a director of Rowena Nominees Pty Ltd formerly trading as Graeme Grubb Finance - now in liquidation - has written to a number of past investor clients encouraging them to transfer their business to an unnamed finance broker associated with Graeme Grubb.

The Finance Brokers' Supervisory Board recently successfully applied to the District Court for authorisation to appoint a supervisor to Rowena Nominees.

That is, Mr Grubb's company.

Fair Trading Commissioner Patrick Walker said this afternoon finance brokers needed both a licence and a business certificate in order to practise in the industry.

Mr Ripper: It is a good thing for this State that we have the member for Armadale.

Mr SHAVE: I would have to debate that the State was well off having the member for Armadale here; that is drawing a very long bow. To continue -

"This is so that only suitable and qualified individuals can offer finance broking services to the community. These type of transactions often involve people's accumulated savings, including those of retirees," Mr Walker said.

Mr Grubb, whilst holding a licence, does not have a business certificate and therefore cannot operate a finance broking business. However, there is no law that stops Mr Grubb from working for a finance broker.

"In Mr Grubb's letter to investors, he indicated that his past clients could be serviced by an unnamed finance broker," Mr Walker said.

"Inquiries by an investigator and the Ministry's records show this person is not currently licensed as a finance broker."

Mr Walker said people considering investing their money were wise to seek appropriate professional advice.

The Ministry has produced a brochure for potential investors called *Finance Brokers and Mortgage Investments; A Guide for Private Investors* which is available free by telephoning 9222 0911.

As members are aware the Australian Securities and Investments Commission under Corporations Law administered by that agency, successfully applied to the Courts for the liquidation of Mr Grubb's finance broking business.

The Ministry contacted the Commission regarding the actions of Mr Grubb. I am advised that in response the Commission indicated it is considering what action, if any will be taken, but is unable to comment further on the matter at this stage.

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, OVERSEAS APPOINTMENT

894. Mrs ROBERTS to the Premier:

(1) Why is it that after being in government for nearly six and a half years the Premier does not believe the WA Police Service has been able to produce an officer capable of fulfilling the role of Police Commissioner?

(2) Is it not an indictment on the reform process the Premier started, as well as a vote of no confidence in senior police personnel?

Mr COURT replied:

It certainly is not. The Government will be introducing the person who will become the new Commissioner of Police, Mr Barry Matthews, in a press conference to be held following question time this afternoon. Mr Matthews will be appointed as the new Commissioner of Police for Western Australia.

Dr Gallop: What about answering the question asked of you?

Mr COURT: I will. When Commissioner Falconer announced he would retire for family reasons, we were very keen for him to continue in the position. It was a hard personal decision for him, and he made it. We then announced that we would advertise nationally and internationally for a replacement. The responsibility of this Government is to appoint the best possible person for the job. It is not our responsibility - in fact, it would be irresponsible to do so - to make a decision that might be seen to be popular.

Dr Gallop: That was not the question.

Mr COURT: The question is whether this is a vote of no confidence in the Western Australia Police Service. The answer is no.

Dr Gallop: Why, after seven and a half years of this Government, is there not one person who it thinks is good enough? What a Government! It is an absolute joke!

Mr COURT: A recommendation was made by a selection panel which comprised four members - the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, Commissioner Michael Palmer; Dr Irene Froyland, the Director for the Centre for Police Research at Edith Cowan University; Professor Timothy Rohl, the Director of the Australian Institute of Police Management; and John Langoulant, the Western Australian Under Treasurer. They gave a clear recommendation that Mr Matthews was the outstanding candidate in this process. The Cabinet deliberated carefully and took the responsible approach. It has appointed the most outstanding candidate for the job. Mr Matthews has had 34 years' experience in policing. He started at the bottom, going through the normal recruiting processes.

Mrs Roberts: Mr Kucera and Mr Brennan have significant experience as well.

Mr COURT: During his policing career, Mr Matthews has obtained a legal qualification and a masters degree in business administration. The New Zealand police union representative said that Mr Matthews was easy to get on with and up front. He is regarded -

Dr Gallop: Are you saying the local people are not easy to get on with?

Several members interjected.

Dr Gallop: Why are you saying that then?

Mr COURT: I am saying it because the Opposition spokesperson and the Labor Party have come out today and said that this appointment is a disgrace.

Mrs Roberts: Local people could have, and should have, been appointed, and you know that. You should have developed the people here so you could have appointed them.

Mr COURT: After an independent panel made a very clear recommendation, the Labor Party has come out and said that this man's appointment is a disgrace. If those opposite are not prepared for the Government to accept the best possible person for the job, they do not seriously support the police in this State.

This morning the Minister for Police and I met with the Deputy Commissioner, Mr Bruce Brennan, and we explained to him what occurred in the appointment process. In a very professional way, he has said -

Mrs Roberts: He is a very professional person.

Mr COURT: He is. He said that he is very supportive of the decision that has been made.

The SPEAKER: Order! All members can understand the sensitivities of the situation and what is being said, and they all have a right to hear what is being said. Some members are taking the opportunity to interject from all over the Chamber, including those on my right. Far too many members are interjecting. Let us hear the response to the question. If members want to get further questions up on this issue, I will give them the call.

Mr COURT: Currently the Minister for Police is meeting with members of the police command.

Dr Gallop: He should be in this Parliament explaining this to the Parliament. That is where he should be; just like the minister for drugs. Half the cabinet members are not here during question time.

Mr COURT: We have been very fortunate to have an outstanding field of candidates for this job, and we have been able to select an outstanding person.

MINING, IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON WESTERN AUSTRALIA

895. Mr BAKER to the Minister for Employment and Training:

Can the minister explain to the House the impact that employment in the mining sector has on training and employment in the broader Western Australian community?

Mr KIERATH replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I would like to inform the House that according to the latest figures from the Western Australian Department of Training, 27 900 people are employed directly in the mining and minerals industry; that is, 3.1 per cent of the total work force. Of the total Training budget, 7.5 per cent is allocated to metals and mining workers. That represents roughly 1.7 million student hours each year. It is far greater in relation to the amount of training places than it is for direct jobs. All members will agree that the use of a large amount of resources shows the importance the Government places on that industry and why it is very concerned if it is damaged.

Recently research undertaken by the Economic Research Centre at the University of Western Australia showed the mining employment multiplier at about four; in other words, for every job in mining there are three jobs in other areas. I am trying to say that if 100 jobs in mining are lost, 400 jobs will go from Western Australia; 400 people will lose their jobs. If

members look at the gross state product over the past few years, they will see that mining growth was 5 per cent, and without mining it would have been 2.6 per cent. Without that growth in mining, 50 000 Western Australians would not have work in this State. That is why most members on this side of the House believe mining is very good for Western Australia. It is probably more important for this State than for any other State in the country. That is why this Government has been committed to trying to ensure those jobs stay here. We expect the Leader of the Opposition to join with us in making sure that mining jobs stay in this State for Western Australians. We ask him to put the benefit of the State before his own political grandstanding.

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, CANDIDATES FOR POSITION

896. Mrs ROBERTS to the Premier:

I refer to the answer of the Minister for Police on 1 June to the effect that an inquiry would be undertaken into whether malpractice occurred or laws were broken in relation to the complaints made to the Anti-Corruption Commission about two of the local contenders for the position of Commissioner of Police.

- (1) Can he give an assurance that the inquiry will take place without delay?
- (2) Will he guarantee that he will table the results of the inquiry?

Mr COURT replied:

(1)-(2) I cannot comment specifically on the inquiry. I will get the information for the member. I can advise the House that the Minister for Police received a recommendation prior to the matter becoming public, so it had no influence on the recommendation made.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, MARGARET RIVER

897. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Youth:

When will the regional youth development officer be appointed in Margaret River, recognising that a similar position in Manjimup has already been filled?

Mr BOARD replied:

I am pleased to announce that that position has been filled, and Malvina Nordstrom will commence duties on 22 June. In addition, Suzanne Fleming will take up a full-time position in Kalgoorlie-Boulder next week. We are also considering a position in Esperance and, as I announced this morning, a full-time position in the West Kimberley region.

These positions are very important in that they involve the coordination of youth programs and activities on the ground. I do not believe that they need to be long-term positions; coordination of programs, initiation of new activities and bringing agencies together can be successfully completed over two years. If the need arises for the continuation of those activities, I will review it. I am pleased that the majority of officers have now been appointed.

PROSTITUTION LEGISLATION, INTRODUCTION

898. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

I refer to the claim in today's *The West Australian* by Police Commissioner Bob Falconer that the Government lacks the courage to introduce prostitution legislation before the next election and ask -

- (1) Is it not the case -

Mr MacLean: Is it not the case that you did not have the guts to do it either?

Dr GALLOP: The member should talk to his colleagues in the Legislative Council about that matter.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that it is question time not debate time. Perhaps we should finish the question.

Dr GALLOP: They have given up the mantle of government and I am keen to take it.

- (1) Is it not the case that Commissioner Falconer's assessment of this Government, while crude, is very accurate?
- (2) Is it not true that the consequence of the Premier's weakness in this matter is, as Commissioner Falconer warns, blackmail, robbery, thugs, drugs, underage prostitution, street walkers and other serious health and safety concerns?
- (3) When will the Premier accept his responsibilities and do something about this major problem in our community?

Mr COURT replied:

(1)-(3) Well before the Labor Party does. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I do not think the commissioner would have used that language.

I have said in this House on many occasions that this is not an easy issue for any Government to -

Dr Gallop: But you have the support of the Opposition; that is the difference. Why not get on with it?

Mr COURT: We have put much effort into drafting legislation.

Dr Gallop: Six times.

Mr COURT: Yes.

Dr Gallop: This is a Government of inaction.

Mr COURT: One of our major concerns is that we do not want to introduce a legislative change that may make it easier for organised crime to be more involved in this area. I have said on many occasions that we do not have all the answers, but we are at least drafting legislation. After 10 years in government, the Labor Party did nothing.

COMMERCIAL TENANCY LAWS, CITY OFFICE BLOCKS

899. Mrs HOLMES to the Minister for Fair Trading:

A recent article in *The West Australian* referred to an opinion expressed by a property lawyer about changes to the commercial tenancy laws. The lawyer believes that Perth city office blocks with retail shops could be caught by the changes because these buildings would be shopping centres under the Act. Has the minister taken advice on the matter and what is the Government's position?

Ms MacTiernan: Do you have another press release from Pat?

Mr SHAVE replied:

It would be negligent if I had not taken advice, and accordingly I did. The advice that the Ministry of Fair Trading has received from the Crown Solicitor's Office and other prominent commercial property law practitioners does not support the opinion referred to in the article. That advice is to the effect that city office blocks with a retail shop component would not be retail shopping centres within the meaning of the Act, and that is consistent with the intention behind the amendments. As the member for Armadale will attest, there has been exhaustive consultation between the Government and industry stakeholders over an extended period in developing these amendments. There was no intention to catch office buildings, and during that time no-one raised concerns about this issue. The commercial tenancy laws in respect of retail shops are complex. If court decisions or disputes down the track establish that we need to rethink this or other areas, I am willing to introduce amendments. At this stage, however, having gone through a long process of consultation, the Government's position is that small business about to enter retail shop agreements should enjoy the certainty of those laws without introducing further unnecessary changes and complications.

MS VERA NOVAK, DECLARATION OF SHARE INTEREST

900. Mr RIPPER to the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's rejection of conflict of interest allegations against Vera Novak, a senior officer in his native title unit, and his statement that there is no conflict because she has previously declared her share interest to his department. I ask -

- (1) Why is it that his department can provide evidence of such a declaration having been made only as recently as February this year, after media inquiries about her interest commenced?
- (2) When did Vera Novak declare her interest, and will the Premier table her declarations?

Mr COURT replied:

(1)-(2) I am amazed that the member is continuing to try to discredit a public servant who has been loyal to this Government and to the Labor Government.

Several members interjected.

Mr COURT: Once again, I will outline some of the background.

Mrs Roberts: It is your problem.

Mr COURT: There is no problem because Ms Novak has always declared her interest. She declared her interest prior to taking up the position. Again, in February 1999, she declared her interest in relation to a claim.

Mr Ripper: Will you table the declaration?

Mr COURT: The member should let me answer the question. Ms Novak has not been dealing with that claim. She has fulfilled all her obligations in a proper and professional manner. Her role is to manage the native title and strategic issues division and to provide policy advice. She deals predominantly with legislation, commonwealth-state negotiations and general policy on how to deal with claims and future acts. She has no role in deciding whether any company can or cannot access land. She has no statutory or regulatory role that allows her to grant interest or favour.

Members opposite also know that the interest they are referring to has absolutely nothing to do with the responsibilities that she has been undertaking. All of that information has been provided. I find it interesting that on one of the most difficult and unresolved issues in this State - that is, unworkable native title legislation - instead of playing a constructive role, all members opposite can do is attack a person who, as I said, is a loyal and professional public servant.

MS VERA NOVAK, DECLARATION OF SHARE INTEREST

901. Mr RIPPER to the Premier:

Will the Premier table the documents in which Vera Novak has declared her interests?

Mr COURT replied:

I do not have any such documents. I will speak to her boss in the Public Service, obtain that information and provide it to the member.

PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS, PROTECTION

902. Mrs HODSON-THOMAS to the Minister for Planning:

As there has been much public debate about issues such as the protection of public open space, which parks and recreation areas have been protected under major planning amendments?

Mr KIERATH replied:

I think I can speak for all the people in the metropolitan area, even for the members of the Opposition! We need areas for parks, recreation and the conservation of our natural bush. I am pleased to report to the House that this Government has been taking the initiative in providing thousands of hectares of such land. The first way was by the major amendment program, which has been running since 1993. An area of 31 105 hectares of land has been reserved for parks, recreation and bush protection that will be able to be enjoyed by future generations. One of the several other government initiatives, which is currently open for public comment, is Bushplan, which is a \$100m 10-year plan to protect a further 52 000 hectares of land, almost double the amount that has been protected by the major amendments. It must be acknowledged that they are some of the largest conservation initiatives ever undertaken by any Government. I also acknowledge the Minister for the Environment for her cooperation. It has been a good example of cooperation between the Planning and Environmental portfolios. Two other initiatives are the Peel region scheme and the Leeuwin Naturaliste ridge statement of planning policy. The Peel scheme is attempting to get certainty for landowners to provide enough residential and industrial land for the future. I notice that the member for Mandurah mentioned in his speech yesterday the need for adequate industrial land in the Peel region. The scheme does exactly that as well as establishing a major regional park. The Leeuwin Naturaliste SPP has similar provisions but goes further in providing several special conservation categories to enable valuable tracts of land to be preserved for their landscape and conservation values. This is an example of the win, win situation that this coalition Government stands for, in which we give a win for the certainty for the landowners, a win for those interested in conservation, and a win for those wanting enough land for people to live and work. Even the Opposition will agree that these initiatives will go a long way towards ensuring the continued high quality of life which we in Perth have perhaps taken for granted and for which we are famous, and the high standard of living which will continue in the future.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, EMPLOYMENT OF FAMILY MEMBERS

903. Mr RIPPER to the Premier:

Does the Premier support the decision by the presiding officers to allow members of this Parliament to employ family members in their electorate offices?

Mr COURT replied:

It is not for me to criticise a decision that has been made by the presiding officers. I appreciate that in some cases it may be appropriate, but I would not do it myself. I have always been uncomfortable with that practice in the Federal Parliament. I accept that some circumstances can arise for a member when it may be appropriate. The presiding officers have made that ruling, but I would not like to see it become a widespread practice.

ROAD TRAFFIC FINES, MEANS TESTING

904. Mr BAKER to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

Will the Western Australian Government consider adopting the Labor Party's proposal of means testing fines issued under the Road Traffic Act, or is it the Government's view that there should be one law for all people?

Mr OMODEI replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following response.

The short answer is no. Fines for breaking the road rules are set according to the risk associated with breaking the rule. People who break the road rules may be responsible for deaths and serious injuries on our roads and the social trauma that this creates. The victims are not means tested. The suffering affects both the rich and the poor equally. Speed limits are set on the basis of the speed at which it is safe to travel on a given section of road. There is no such thing as safe speeding according to the Office of Road Safety. Travelling at 5 kilometres an hour over the speed limit in a 60 km/h speed zone doubles the chance of having a crash. Breaking the road rules is an offence under our laws. All people are treated equally. Means testing penalties would minimise their impact. The overwhelming majority of Western Australian drivers abide by the rules of the road and are aware of the danger of not doing so. It is a minority who believe that the system is unfair.

GOLD MINING INDUSTRY, RELIEF

905. Mr GRILL to the Premier:

- (1) How does the Premier account for his total failure to give some relief to our State's biggest export industry, gold mining, which is suffering from the lowest real price in decades, while the State Government continues with its gold royalty and a whole host of new and increased taxes?

- (2) Is the Premier asserting that the Government has no responsibility to help this hard pressed sector? How does he intend to quarantine this dramatic decline in one of our most important industries from the rest of the State's economy?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(2) By trying to talk the Labor Party into supporting workable native title legislation, and by ensuring that the industry has access to some of the most competitive energy in the Asian region. The member knows that the second phase of the royalty structure does not kick in if gold prices are below a certain amount.

They are three answers to the member's question. I would suggest that he spend more time with his members of Parliament because he knows that as long as access is unavailable to lands for exploration, as long as the unworkability of native title legislation continues, the future of not just the gold industry but all of mining industries is under threat.

BUSSELTON CENTRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE

906. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Education:

Can the minister advise when the old Busselton Central Primary School site is likely to be put up for sale, and whether all three corner blocks will be offered for sale or just the two lots on the east side of West Street?

Mr BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I am sure he is delighted with the new Busselton Primary School, which I look forward to visiting shortly. The old school site had many inherent problems, the main one being that the buildings were on three different pieces of land. The school was in the central business district area of Busselton and it could not be expanded. It produced safety problems for children. Discussions have taken place since late last year with the Busselton Shire Council about how that land should be disposed of and how it could be used. The two eastern parcels to the east of West Street will be sold through an expression of interest process, which is expected to start shortly. The remaining piece of land on the west side of West Street which contains the preprimary centre will be retained and the building will continue to be used for that purpose.

LITERACY TESTS, FOLLOW-UP

907. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the minister concerned that the Education Department can produce no evidence that its management has followed up schools whose students achieved below average results in last year's literacy tests?
- (2) What is the point of spending public money on these tests if there is no follow-up?
- (3) Will schools whose students perform poorly in this year's literacy tests be subject to any remedial action?
- (4) Will these schools be offered any additional resources to improve the literacy standards of their students?

Mr BARNETT replied:

- (1)-(4) I find the tone of these questions rather curious. When the literacy assessment was undertaken, I made it clear that it was about assessing the literacy standard of the individual children at year 3, and then to assess them again in year 5, and again later, and to give feedback directly to parents. All of that has happened. The media, particularly *The West Australian*, at the time was totally hellbent on producing so-called lead tables and has freedom of information processes underway to do that. It is totally erroneous and absolutely ridiculous in terms of educational content, yet we find that the Opposition, which supported my position in not producing or making available lead tables, is now asking what criteria we have for ranking schools. We have not ranked schools; we have not done that at all. The Opposition wants to say that this school is a bad school and that school is a medium school. The testing is not about that. It is about the individual boy and girl, assessing their literacy, and helping them. The schools have a responsibility to respond to help the individual child. If members of the Opposition think that follow-up is not happening, they know nothing about schools and education. The schools and the principals have a responsibility within their schools to raise literacy and to help the individual boy and girl. They are working with the district directors on doing that. Throughout the whole curriculum there are literacy nets and a range of other processes. This Government does not want, although members opposite seem to want, a centralised bureaucracy ranking schools and, presumably, putting information into the media about whether a school is good or bad. This Government is not about that. Members opposite have completely misunderstood what these literacy tests are about. The Education Department was bemused and amused at the question asked by members opposite and thought it was hilarious, because it never occurred to the department to have a regulatory, down from the top, regime on eight year old boys and girls.