

HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND LAW AND ORDER SPENDING INCREASES

266. Mr BAKER to the Minister assisting the Treasurer:

Will the minister inform the House of how this Government has managed to make such significant increases in spending in health, education and law and order?

Mr KIERATH replied:

By the time the people of this State consigned the previous Labor Government to the dustbin of history, the real story of its hideous debt burden was beginning to be fully understood. For the benefit of members of the House, I remind them that in 1992 the total public sector debt stood at \$8 466m. It is now below \$6 000m. General government debt was \$2 543m. It is now down to 46 per cent of that. General government debt has been halved during this Government's term in office. When that is considered as a share of gross state product, it is only 29 per cent of what it was; that is, it is less than a third of what it was previously. To spend more on health, education, and law and order, the most pressing job - or I should say the most depressing job - we had was to reduce debt. Every intelligent person would know that interest payments really hurt, especially when Labor lost our State's AAA credit rating. Interest payments in 1992-93 were \$327m. That compares with \$138m now under the coalition Government. We have dramatically reduced those payments to 42 per cent of what we were paying eight years ago. Despite the growing economy and infrastructure, we are paying less than half of what Labor was paying in interest payments. Interest payments under the Labor Government took up 5.2 per cent of general revenue; under our Government they comprise 1.4 per cent - that is, a quarter of what it was eight years ago. That shows the yawning chasm between good government and the disastrous management of Labor when last in power.

The Leader of the Opposition wants what Steve Bracks has in Victoria. He hopes to get his sticky fingers on a full Treasury. Labor Governments took both States to the brink of bankruptcy and lost their States' reputations. When Dr Debt left office, we were not merely bleeding but haemorrhaging almost terminally. Only a coalition Government turned that around.

Mr McGinty interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Fremantle!

Mr KIERATH: The Government has lightened its financial management burden; at the same time we have doubled our State's assets and put more money into health, education and law and order. The Labor Party is upset because it is a record for which it would give its right arm. It could not achieve it then, it cannot achieve it now and it certainly will not be able to achieve it in the future.