

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Consideration of Tabled Papers

Resumed from 2 June on the following motion moved by Hon Nick Griffiths (Minister for Housing and Works) -

That pursuant to Standing Order No 49(1)(c), the Legislative Council take note of tabled paper No 2170A-H (2004-05 Budget Statements), laid upon the Table of the House on 6 May 2004.

HON JIM SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [10.32 am]: The issues that I will be referring to today are pollution and waste management. Hopefully, given time, I will also speak about an area that is within my portfolio in the Greens (WA) but also extends more generally into the agricultural area; that is, the requirement for more research into different areas of agriculture. In relation to waste management and pollution issues, I first met with the current Minister for the Environment three years ago, soon after she became minister, when I expressed my concern about the way in which waste management was being handled or not being handled in Western Australia. At that time a vast array of companies were offering solutions to various local governments around the State about how they would handle the waste for those local governments. Some of those companies were more credible than others, but some were the epitome of snake-oil salesmen, and had convinced a number of local governments that this was the way to go. Overall, there was a total lack of integration about the way in which the whole issue was being addressed. They were not sitting down and considering the basics, such as the total waste in the State, how it had increased, what percentage of plastics were produced and by whom, who would handle those wastes and what materials could be properly recycled and reused. Instead, a whole lot of people were competing. I daresay nearly everybody in this place has been lobbied by Global Olivine, which was claiming that it would take the whole of the State's waste and put it through this massive facility in Kwinana. The company was going to bring the waste in by train from Kalgoorlie and by truck from Geraldton. It was a totally illogical solution and it took no account of the existing waste. Originally the company proposed to burn the whole lot for energy and get a few by-products that had melted off at the bottom - metals and so on - but the proposal grew more and more magnificent as time went on, to include a lot of other things when it was realised that people were not entirely happy with just burning everything in the State. It is interesting that that highlighted the lack of coordination about how much paper or plastic should be recycled, whether we had the facilities to do those things and where these facilities should be sited.

My second meeting with the minister happened not long after and it was to do with a particular type of waste - the toxic and explosive type materials that had been stored at our waste control facility. Those who have been members of this place for a while will recall that the waste control facility exploded and, to my knowledge, produced one of the largest toxic fires in the Southern Hemisphere. That facility had been operating close to a local community in an area in which it should never have been built. It did not have state-of-the-art technology in place to properly deal with the waste. The area was overcrowded, very poorly regulated by the Department of Environmental Protection and, as we know from the inquiry that was held in the other place, it had received numerous warnings from just about every government agency that had anything to do with it, whether that be the Department of Minerals and Energy, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority or the Department of Environmental Protection. That facility had received pages and pages of warnings and smacks on the hand, but no action had been taken before it blew up. A lot of the material that was left over - the sludge that had drained from the exploded drums that had not burnt and some of the other material - was then moved to other facilities that were not adequate to handle it, such as the Brookdale waste treatment plant. There were huge public protests from the community about the material being stored at Brookdale, which initially was never supposed to handle that type of waste. The Brookdale facility was supposed to deal with organic-type wastes, and there was a huge amount of public angst about that. A whole lot of material was moved to Brookdale and to Kalgoorlie and put into another facility that was not really appropriate. Complaints were made at those places. After the fire that preceded the last election and since I met with the minister, all that has been done is we have talked about what we will do about waste management and pollution control in Western Australia. Very little has been done.

The latest budget figures show how seriously the Department of Environmental Protection considers this issue to be. I was looking forward to seriously tackling this issue. The budget for pollution regulation in 2003-04 was \$13.296 million. That budget has not been increased this financial year in line with people's concerns. In fact, that amount was not enough; the actual expenditure was \$13.912 million. This year the Government has allocated \$12.934 million for pollution regulation, which is a decrease in funding for that area. Similarly, the budget for waste management in 2003-04 was \$10.66 million, which was a drop of \$6.43 million. One would think from those figures that everything was totally under control and running smoothly in this State, which is far from the truth. Waste management in this State is an absolute mess. I am not pinning all the blame on the current Government. A lack of thought and direction has been given to waste management pollution for a very long time. That comes from an ethos that once upon a time the waste was dumped in a swampy area near the

river and was forgotten about. The State has not moved far from that point. I also note that although unlined landfill in the coastal plain in the metropolitan area is supposed to be phased out, and although brand new landfills are not being created, the existing landfills are being expanded. They are more than doubling in size. Rather than phasing out the total area of landfill, it is being massively expanded. The State is not dealing with the issue. We must get off our backsides and do something about it.

The reaction also to pollution issues has been pretty similar. Some significant concerns have been raised in the community, including concerns about Alcoa's Wagerup refinery. That issue is very well known and the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs is looking into it. The Cockburn Cement Ltd works are continuing to cause much concern in the community. I have already mentioned Waste Control Pty Ltd and the pollution that was caused by fires. There were problems with Omex, which also involved fires. I could go on citing problem areas from all over the State in which people have been very concerned about the impact pollution has had on their lives. The DEP has taken little action. It has come up with a brand-new solution that deals with the lack of importance given to this matter and the lack of funding the Government has provided for waste management. The department's great new solution is that because it does not have enough money to properly regulate the facilities that are causing pollution in this State, it has decided that many of those industries will not have to be regulated at all. The department will reduce the number of licensed premises that operate. That is a great budget-saving device; however, if we continue down this path, it will create more Waste Controls, Omexes, Wagerups and Bellevues. Those types of incidents do not cost the State less money; they cost it more. They cost not only the Government but also the surrounding communities. Every time incidents at one of those types of facilities occurs, the health and finances of the people who live in the surrounding areas are affected. The areas become known as contaminated sites and the land values drop significantly. In some cases the result is that banks tell people they no longer have sufficient equity in their houses. People have lost significantly on the investments they have made. Most importantly, many people have a deep concern about what is happening to their families, and to their children in particular. These types of facilities tend to be located in low socioeconomic areas. The waste facilities are not built in Peppermint Grove or even in Fremantle these days. They are not built in areas where outspoken and educated people live; they tend to be built in places in which people are still on Struggle Street. The people who live in those areas are concerned about day-to-day survival.

The officers of the DEP are unable to keep up with their workloads and are unable to properly regulate the polluting industries. The result of the Government's lack of funding and the department's lack of attention to waste management is that the department releases propaganda saying that everything is hunky-dory and that people do not need to worry. The Department of Health sometimes helps. I recall a Department of Health toxicologist who described polluted water in the northern suburbs. He said it did not matter that the water killed people's gardens because it was just a bit acidic, like lemon juice. An analysis of the water later showed that it was heavily laced with arsenic. When the fire involving Waste Control occurred, the same toxicologist said that the community should not be concerned about heavy metals. However, it was pointed out that there were high levels of mercury in the school grounds down the road. The toxicologist's altitude was to tell people not to worry and that everything would be all right. In fact, it is not all right. People do get ill and contract diseases from pollution and children suffer from heavy metals that pollute the areas in which they live.

I recall an instance in which a company had been allowed to increase the amount of pollutants it dumped into Cockburn Sound at a time when the Government should have been reducing the amount of pollutants that were allowed to be dumped. The minister of the day allowed an increase in the amount of heavy metals such as arsenic, cadmium and other toxic materials that were dumped into Cockburn Sound. When I made concerned noises in the media about the increasing amounts of heavy metals that were being dumped, the response from the department's spin doctor - whom the department had hired instead of using people with expertise in pollution protection - was that just because the department is allowing companies to dump more heavy metals into Cockburn Sound does not mean they will dump more heavy metals into Cockburn Sound. That is the sort of nonsense that comes out of the mouth of the DEP spokesperson quite often. The people in Wagerup and Cockburn who are affected by the industrial plants in those areas do not trust the DEP. The DEP is the enemy. The DEP uses spin doctors to prevent those people from doing anything about the pollution that they are suffering from. In the eyes of the community, the DEP is coming between the problem and the solution rather than facilitating the solution. The reason for that is contained partly in these budget figures. There is no doubt that the DEP lacks expertise and people with the necessary skills to do appropriate testing and it cannot, let alone will not, properly assess the pollution that people are being exposed to because the people whom it employs simply do not have the right training and credentials to do the job, particularly when it concerns a large complex industrial facility such as Alcoa Wagerup. As a result, there are significant problems. That is borne out by what people like Keith James from Stack-Air have said in evidence to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It is on the public record, so I can say it in this place.

Furthermore, the DEP has been extremely reluctant to prosecute anyone. I remember that during the Waste Control Pty Ltd debacle, the excuse that was given up by the DEP was that it could not go onto the property and do testing without the permission of the owner of that facility, and it could not prosecute, because of the Palos Verdes case. The Palos Verdes case was used by the DEP as an example of how the laws under which it could prosecute people were totally inadequate, because in that case the DEP had tried to prosecute people but the case had been thrown out of court. Although that was the excuse that was proffered by the minister at the time - I think it was Hon Tom Stephens - what he failed to say was that the reason the Palos Verdes case was thrown out of court was that the department had totally misused the Act by trying to prosecute someone for causing pollution when in fact what the person had been doing was land clearing. It is no wonder, therefore, that that case was thrown out of court. However, that does not mean that the department cannot use the Act to prosecute a person for causing pollution. To my mind the department is simply using that case as an excuse to get out of doing what it should be doing.

We need to get a move on in this State in dealing with waste management and identifying who should handle what types of waste, and where that should be done. The State Government must take a lead role in the management of waste and not leave it to local government. It is particularly important that that be done for toxic waste. This State needs a state-of-the-art facility that will recycle, and, where necessary, destroy, toxic waste that is generated by the community. Also, the department needs to quickly identify which products we can get rid of so that we can reduce the toxic waste problem. There will always be a certain level of toxic waste, but a lot of the toxic waste that is being produced is quite unnecessary. One example is perchlorethylene, which is used by drycleaners but can be substituted with other more benign products that are used in places like the United States, which has banned that product.

Given that I have only six minutes left, I will quickly mention another issue that I have talked about previously; namely, agricultural research. That is an issue that was noted by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in its report on the Gene Technology Bill 2001 and the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2001. As members may remember, the committee was given a wider focus than just those Bills and was able to look at some surrounding issues as well. One of the outcomes of that inquiry was that the committee identified that this State is in a position to gain a significant advantage from marketing produce that can be labelled as clean and green; namely, produce that has not been genetically modified, and that may or may not be organic or be given one of those types of designations but for which no, or very few, chemicals have been used. However, in order to maximise the benefits of marketing this type of produce, the State needs to undertake significant research. For instance, I know from speaking to people at the University of Western Australia who are doing work on soil research that some fantastic work is being done, with very little funding, into soil fertility. Soil fertility offers far greater potential for increasing crop yields than does genetic engineering. The old days when superphosphate and trace elements, or whatever, were added to the soil are on the way out. The new form of soil research involves identifying the organisms that increase soil fertility and recognising that we need to change these organisms at different times of the year when certain organisms are more abundant than others, and we need different blends of these different organisms. Getting that micro culture right is an important tool for increasing agricultural and horticultural production. It has huge potential. However, it is receiving only a pittance in research funding. Massive amounts of money are made available for genetic engineering. However, that is only one of the many facets of biotechnology. I urge the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to look seriously at these other areas of biotechnology, in which we could be leading the world and at the same time provide huge benefits to our farmers and horticulturalists.

Hon Bill Stretch: A lot of work is going on in that field in Kojonup by individual groups.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Yes, but a lot of people are struggling for funds to do this work; whereas there is a huge largesse for people who grow Roundup Ready canola. Many people do not understand that most products of genetic engineering are produced for a specific purpose that has nothing to do with yield. Virtually no research is being conducted in other areas outside the areas in which those companies want to sell more of their products, such as Roundup Ready or whatever.

Hon Bill Stretch: That is a bit sweeping but, in view of the time, I will let it go for now.

Hon JIM SCOTT: There is other research but it is very small as a percentage of the total research. Quite simply, the main focus of those companies is to improve the bottom line in areas on which they are already focusing. Part of what they are doing is not about increasing yields; it is about weed control and so on. That is an important area - I am not saying it is not. However, we must realise that a vast area of biotechnology is being virtually ignored. We as a State could specialise and lead the world in that biotechnology if we only directed funding to those areas to enable it to happen.

Hon Bill Stretch: It is interesting that no till brought about by the use of benevolent chemicals is actually increasing soil organisms.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I am not saying that nothing good is coming from those areas. I am saying that in most cases we are following, not leading. There are areas in which some wonderful scientists are doing fantastic work but they cannot get sufficient funding to carry out the work in a way from which the State could derive significant benefits. We should look positively at this clean, green agricultural image that we are trying to portray, and develop it to its full potential. Many people have given evidence that it would give us access to a lot of markets. I support the Bill.

HON FRANK HOUGH (Agricultural) [11.02 am]: In this budget debate I did not know whether to restate the speech I made last year or hand up a taped copy of it. There are a few changes but for rural and regional WA there is really nothing.

The PRESIDENT: Does the member want to table it and incorporate it in *Hansard*?

Hon FRANK HOUGH: I will continue speaking, if you do not mind, Mr President.

One thing I must do is take my hat off to Labor Party members. They are quick learners; they are certainly not slow learners. "Good News Geoff" and "Grim Ripper" have worked out how to sell the sizzle; they have excelled in it! Even in this morning's paper I see a headline "Flashback January 25, 2001" and a subheading "Promises, Promises" underneath an article and a photograph of the Premier with a big smile on his face. One thing the Labor Party does well is sell the sizzle! The steak is tough and fatty but the Labor Party really sells the sizzle! I cannot get over that.

I recall looking at and listening to the Minister for Housing and Works when he presented the budget speech. I pictured him in my mind on the bow of a ship and a band playing. The band members strummed, fiddled and sang, and had smiles on their faces as the ship sank into the ocean. I caught a glimpse of the bow of the ship that had on it "*Titanic*" and wondered, as the minister made his budget speech, whether he had sank into the ocean. I must say that Labor Party members have certainly learnt something in their time in this place. However, I pictured the minister continuing to smile as he made his budget speech, even as he sank into the cold waters and the annals of history. I thought that was courageous. I saw the movie *Titanic* and I recall there was a smile on the face of every band member on that ship as they strummed and drummed. I should say that the minister has abrogated his responsibility to the people of Western Australia by not starting his budget with, "Dear mushrooms, I will present the budget. While we will keep you in the dark and feed you manure for the next year, this is the budget."

I will talk about positive matters first, because positive things make one happy; then I will go into the negative area. I will talk briefly about the budget speech, but I will not go into the nitty-gritty of it. The exemption of stamp duty for first home buyers is a great move. It was probably funded by the increase in stamp duty prior to that, and all the Government is doing is giving back the money it took in the past couple of years. However, at least it has the courage to hand it back. That is a very good move and I compliment the Government on it, as it will assist home buyers. I believe the minister said, in the budget speech, that the Government expects to get another windfall next year. The Government must have budgeted on the boom in the real estate market, but I hope it has factored into the equation that the boom is over. The market is not bust, but it will slow down. Although the Government's estimates are positive, my opinion is that next year's budget will show them to be exaggerated. The minister can shake his head but I feel that will happen.

Hon Nick Griffiths: Appropriate forecasting has been done.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: I appreciate that. The pundits took that forecasting into consideration only last week when they re-factored the marketplace - well after the budget. I think the minister, being also the Minister for Racing and Gaming, might be punting on the system if he thinks he will get the windfall he said he would. I say up front that I do not believe the windfall will be forthcoming because the market is toughening up. As I look at the photograph in the paper of the Premier with his hands up under the heading "Promises, promises", I must say that the Government has not addressed the fuel issue. Underneath the photograph of the Premier, the article states -

Pumping policy: Opposition Leader Geoff Gallop visits Bunbury in January 2001 to spell out Labor's petrol pricing policy.

The article goes on and on and, in part, states -

Dr Gallop said the Petroleum Retailer Rights and Liabilities Act should be amended to give petrol retailers the right to buy . . .

It goes on blah, blah, blah. Today fuel at the bowsers is 108c or 109c a litre in the city, but is 116c in the bush, which is a high. The State Government benefits substantially from those high rates because of the goods and services tax factor. The higher the price goes, therefore, the bigger the grin on the Government's face. That is a fact of life. It is unacceptable for fuel to cost 110c or 116c a litre, particularly in country areas. The Government

has done nothing in this budget to assist rural or regional Western Australia. In my opinion, the price of petrol in Port Hedland should be the same as it is in Perth. That would be fair for all Western Australians. The Government could factor in one cent more a litre for Perth people than for people in the country, which would give rural and regional Western Australians at least a fair crack of the whip. We must bear in mind that between 20 and 27 per cent of the population live in the country. Rural and regional Western Australians are the losers in this budget. There is no good news in the budget for rural and regional Western Australia - the minister can shake his head - like there is for the city. This budget is an election budget. We can kid ourselves, but a Government that is nine or 10 months out from an election brings down a budget not only for the good of the State, but also for the good of the Government so that it can get back into office. Anyone who denies that is telling fibs. There is no question that this budget, like the federal budget, is purely an election budget. The federal budget - I digress for a couple of seconds - will begin to experience problems after 1 July when people see what they are getting back. It will be interesting to see what happens. I was surprised that the state budget did not give the Labor Party a bigger boost, particularly in the city which has the population and at which the budget was aimed.

The funding of non-government agencies in rural regional Western Australia, such as Silver Chain, has been stripped from them by the Government. Public service type agencies have to earn more money now to keep themselves going. I got a shock this morning when I was told that the Gull service station in Lancelin, which is the only left in the area, is closing down on 30 June. That will mean that the nearest place to get fuel will either be Gingin, which is 110 kilometres away, or just short of Joondalup, about 91 kilometres away. People in the city do not understand this. I do not know why the service station is closing down.

A dentist usually visits country areas one day a month. Therefore, a country person should not get a toothache on the 29 or so days of the month that the dentist does not visit. Similarly, if a person hurts their back, they should do so on the day that the physiotherapist visits so that he or she can be treated, otherwise they have to get in their motor cars and drive to the closest centre. In country WA that can sometimes be a long way away. For instance, people in Lake King have to drive to Esperance or Narrogin. Similarly, it is difficult in such areas to nick down to the local pharmacy. I will never forget when I was crook on the last field day in Newdegate. Something in the wine must have led to my developing a headache. I said to the farm stay people with whom I was staying that I needed something for my headache.

Hon Norman Moore: It was more likely to have been something in the water!

Hon FRANK HOUGH: It could have been something in the water.

I told them that I needed something for my headache so I would nick down to the chemist and grab something. They said I could not do that until after 10 o'clock the next morning because the nearest chemist was in Lake Grace, which was 80 kilometres away. Obviously by that time I had come good. People accept these things in rural regional WA, but they should not have to. Everything Governments do is a part of a numbers game. This is an election budget; it is a part of a numbers game. Where are the numbers? They are inside the barbed wire fence that extends around metropolitan Perth! Who really cares about rural and regional WA? No-one does, because there are no votes in rural and regional WA.

Everything is geared towards volume. I understand that. I have listened to health minister after health minister, but I do not believe that the health system will ever be fixed unless someone takes it by the short and curlies and borrows more money than they should to address the problems. We try to patch up the health system. We use a bandaid system that involves throwing a few more beds into our hospitals and we move the goalposts around. If one group in the health system is not complaining, we move the group that is complaining into that area to try to address the problem. That is a part of the paper shuffling that goes on. No Government has been able to fix the health system.

The Government has allocated \$6 million to cycleways. I have had good experience with the cycleways in Perth. Six weeks ago when I was driving out of my driveway, I ran into a woman who was on a pushbike. She ended up underneath the car. I checked the bullbar but it was okay. The woman was lying curled up in the foetal position. I thought "God, I have killed her."

Hon Nick Griffiths: What did you check?

Hon FRANK HOUGH: She hit the bullbar on the car as I was pulling out of the driveway. I panicked. She was curled up on the driveway. I checked her out and eventually she overcame her shock. She stood up and said "I am sorry, I did not see you." She had bruises and cuts. I said "Why were you riding on the footpath and not on the cycleway on the other side of the street?" The cycleway is on the other side of the street but she was roaring along the footpath. The Government spent millions of dollars building a flash cycleway. She replied "I can't be bothered crossing the street; it is easier to use the footpath and run into cars!" Do members know where she works? She works for the Department for Planning and Infrastructure on cycleways. What a joke! She is not even using them! I could not believe it. I am glad she came good. She was a lovely lady. She bent the front

wheel of her bicycle, hurt her knee and suffered scratches and shock. She was off work for two days. The Government will put another \$6 million into cycleways. I hope that woman uses them. I have not seen her since. When I drive out of my driveway and onto the footpath, I proceed carefully like I did before because, God knows, I do not want to run over someone else who is not using the cycleway because it is on the other side of street and, therefore, inconvenient.

I recall Richard Court's \$800 million plan prior to the last election to put in a couple of power houses and address the electricity problems. This Government has been going for three years. The electricity situation is disgraceful. I cannot understand why no-one has addressed the situation. The Government, which is on its way out, will put up \$1.5 billion to address the problems. It will probably never get around to addressing the problems because in February next year it might not be in government. That is a courageous decision. The Government has committed the next incoming Government to that plan. If the Government gets back in, I will be curious to see whether it fulfils its obligations. Richard Court put up an \$800 million plan. I do not know whether he was right or wrong. However, the electricity problems arose several years ago and I would have thought that this Government would have fixed the infrastructure problems. If that had happened, the Tenterden deaths would not have occurred, and the Ledge Point, Lancelin and Gingin fires would not have occurred. There was a death in the Lancelin fires. Some months ago, I asked a question without notice of which some months' notice had been given. In it I stated that the main lamppost in front of the Salmon Gums Hotel was being held up by the two posts on either side of it. The post in the middle was hanging. On a very windy day, people would sit out the front of the pub and bet whether the lamppost would fall over and land on the hotel or the cooperative. I was there the other day and it was still swinging. I pushed it a couple of times and it wobbled as usual. I guess it will be fixed when it breaks and inconveniences everyone in the town by cutting the power. That is the obvious way to do things. Why fix something that is half broken when we can wait until it completely breaks, hurts someone and inconveniences the whole region?

Hon Robyn McSweeney interjected.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: That is the best idea; what a great idea! A Rhodes scholar would pick that up, but we mere mortals would not think of it!

I will congratulate the Labor Party if it moves forward in this area and fixes up Western Power. Why the State Electricity Commission name was given up has me beat. As a corporation, Western Power can probably charge more and get more dough. Nevertheless, I liked the old SEC.

I have been speaking on the subject of salinity for three years. Salinity is like cancer. Many cancers are terminal and cause death. Salinity eats the earth; it consumes good ground and turns it into nothing. However, salinity is a cancer that can be cured. Some systems have worked. I see that the budget addresses this area, but, Mr President, not one dollar has gone into drainage in the wheatbelt. A lot has been done, and I commend this Government and previous Governments for the reclamation of forest in the Blackwood area at the Denmark River. That program has reversed the waterway from 1 500 or 1 600 parts salt per million down to 700 parts salt. It is said that it will be further reduced to 500 parts salt, which is incredible; it is a great recovery. More than 36 and a half square kilometres of forest have been planted, and another 20 square kilometres is needed. With cancer and any other disease, medical solutions are needed. It is all right to treat salinity environmentally, but mechanical or engineering solutions are needed.

I was at the Georgeff property a couple of months ago; in fact, I was talking to Michael Georgeff this morning. His drainage system is the same as John Hall's, and that drainage system has reclaimed 1 000 hectares of unusable, dead, cancerous saline land. By reclaiming 1 000 hectares and running the water off into the Baandee lake system, that land is now under cultivation. When factored out, they have reversed a further 5 000 hectares of once affected land. Do you know, Mr President, how much support these people have received from the Department of Agriculture? I will tell you, Mr President, even though you did not ask: nothing - not a penny. Their money was used. This process works. I see that the budget allocates \$156 million from the State and \$156 million from the federal Government to this issue, but how much will go to engineering salinity solutions?

Also, a number of salinity forums are run. I send along a tape recorder now because I know what will be said: I can answer questions asked on the tape recording. The forums talk about nothing. Forums on salinity are set up in the bush, and their terms of reference are designed purely to give the Government a good feed into the community, but they achieve nothing. Every three or four weeks, all the boys head to the forums to have a cup of tea; they head off for an afternoon at Quairading and York, have a chat and then go home. I went to the forums for about three years, but I do not bother any more because they are an absolute waste of time. I recently spoke to a very prominent farmer in the Newdegate area who was a chairman of one such forum committee. The Minister for Agriculture rang him the other day and said that he would like him to step down as chairman of that body, although he would like him to stay on as a committee member. The farmer speculated that because he is a hard wheeler and dealer, he would have made things happen and put pressure on the Government; therefore, a

bureaucrat has been appointed as chairman. It has been set up to fail. If I were a bureaucrat, consultant or member of one such forum, why would I want it to succeed? I would want more work, and I would make sure it kept failing. That is what it is all about.

Talking to people in the bush indicates that they worry about presentations. I look at the submissions farmers make, and they do not make good submissions. Unfortunately, I do not think they know how to do presentations - maybe they do; maybe they do not. Some farmers' submissions need tidying up. In frustration, I did one submission for them, which I was looking at on the way to Parliament House today. This submission relates to the Avon National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality strategy. The submission outlines that the following point was indirectly substantiated by Barbara Morrell, chair of the Avon catchment council, in her interview on Earthbeat on Radio National on 27 October 2000 -

In my catchment, the greater catchment that I'm involved in, there's been over a million dollars grant money come into our community in the last four years which has been matched about four times over by farmers so approximately five million dollars has been spent on land care if it's within this particular catchment over the last five years and while we probably have made ourselves feel better because we've got a lot of trees planted now, our salinity level has actually has increased two per cent in those five years.

They pumped in five million bucks through the strategy committees and the salinity level has increased by two per cent. That is a great achievement; I am sure!

The operating expenses in the 2004-05 budget for agriculture, fisheries and forestry represent two per cent of the total budget, yet multiculturalism and sport and recreation received three per cent of the State's budget. I question the allocation of two per cent to agriculture, which produces 80 per cent of our exports from this country. Priority wise, that is not a good move.

I will address water shortly, but, as you know, Mr President, rural and regional Western Australia have suffered immensely from insufficient road funding. The Lancelin-Cervantes road does not exist; it is only a survey through the bush. The Chester Pass Road, which I spoke about yesterday, needs addressing. I hope Hon Kim Chance is nodding his head in agreement that it needs passing lanes. The Lancelin-Cervantes road will tie Perth to Kalbarri. Members talk about promoting tourism. What can people do if we promote tourism when no road is available to a tourist destination? This is one of the most important areas in Western Australia in which a road should be built. It will create an ocean drive all the way from Perth to Kalbarri. The road from Cervantes to Kalbarri is a beautiful drive and carries many tourists. That small section of road from Lancelin to Cervantes would cost only \$30 million. I do not know when it will be factored into the budget; I cannot see it there. It would open up the whole coast road and increase tourism tenfold. It is a most important area. The potential for tourism stands out like a dog's ears - I almost said a dog's tail - and the linking of that road will increase tourism tremendously. Cervantes, Jurien, Green Head and Leeman are great coastal towns that would benefit from an increased volume of traffic. We talk a lot about the benefits of tourism. The gap in that drive stands out like a beacon and should be addressed so that people can get in their motor cars in the city and enjoy a beautiful drive straight up the coast through the Moore River region, past Seabird to Cervantes, where the Pinnacles, one of the great wonders of the world, can be found, and through Lancelin, where the sand dunes can be seen. That area offers excellent tourist attractions. If tourists want to visit the dunes, as do many Japanese and Chinese visitors - I see bus loads of them - they must drive to Lancelin and then travel back towards Perth before turning onto Brand Highway, where those bus loads of tourists are exposed to the road trains, and then head up to Badgingarra and return to the coastal area where they can see the Pinnacles, which is a beautiful site. It would be fantastic if the Government had taken the initiative to connect that road and open up tourism. It would create opportunities for not only increased tourism but also the development of infrastructure. I believe that infrastructure worth \$800 million for wind farms and development in those towns is outstanding.

I do not have sufficient time to address water and all the other issues that I had in mind.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Ed Dermer (Parliamentary Secretary).