

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS - CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Hon Graham Giffard) in the chair.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Twelfth Report - Petition on the Provision of Mental Health Services in Western Australia

Resumed from 12 November 2004.

Motion

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I move -

That the report be noted.

I will make a few comments on the report, in particular on the two recommendations. The committee recommends that the government ensure that there are adequate and appropriate mental health services to meet the needs of the people of Western Australia. The committee also recommends that an inquiry into the matters raised in its interim report be undertaken by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.

Our interim report canvasses a wide range of issues of significance to mental health. When the committee reconvened in 2005 we considered reopening an inquiry. However, shortly after we tabled our interim report in 2004, the Senate began a wide-ranging inquiry into mental health. At the end of April it released its final report. When the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs discussed the need for a further inquiry, we thought we would wait to see the evidence gathered by the Senate, a reasonable amount of which was taken from Western Australia. I have not as yet had a chance to familiarise myself with the detail of the findings of the Senate's inquiry, but I note that the Senate committee suggested a figure of approximately \$3 billion required for investment in mental health. The Howard government in its last budget did increase mental health funding, I think by about \$1.8 billion over five years.

It is also interesting to note that when this petition originally came before the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, there was no doubt that there was a great need for a large injection of funds into mental health services in Western Australia. The state government acknowledged that mental health services in Western Australia had been seriously neglected by both sides of politics for decades. Improving mental health services for patients and medical staff has now become a higher priority, and a range of initiatives are being implemented. Part of that was the state government's \$178 million for the Western Australian mental health strategy between 2004 and 2007. The petition that came before the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs was very much part of the community campaigning that was taking place in 2004 to raise awareness of the poor state of mental health services in Western Australia. That is an important part of what the committee acknowledged at the time. The committee noted in its findings the growing community awareness of mental health issues and the discontent with mental health services, as seen by consumer and carer advocacy, media attention and ongoing community campaigns. The committee is of the view that consumer advocacy has played an important role in having brought this matter to public attention. The committee encourages the raising of public awareness of mental health issues. The committee views increased awareness as particularly important because of the stigma that can be attached to mental health conditions.

In the past mental health has been a poor cousin to other health issues. That is in part because of the lack of visibility of mental health in the community and because of the stigma attached to mental health issues. Mental health issues have historically been viewed with a great deal of superstition and mythology compared with other health conditions for which there is therapy or surgery available and which are recognised by some kind of physical attribute. Mental health is often associated with psychology services, counselling services and other community support services as well as medication and psychiatry. There are some important historical reasons why mental health has been a poor second cousin. Organisations such as Beyondblue are playing a significant role at the moment in raising awareness about depression and other mental health conditions.

It is important to note that it has been a number of years since the Western Australian mental health strategy was implemented. It has five key areas of priority: mental health emergency services, increased access to adult inpatient beds; community and mental services; alternatives to acute admission; and the work force safety initiative. It is also important to note the kinds of issues relating to the petition that were raised in our committee. We heard a great number of stories of crisis and suffering of individuals with mental health issues. Services are struggling to deal with mental health issues. We heard from carers of people suffering from mental health issues. We now have the Consumer Outcomes in Mental Health Western Australia initiative, which benchmarks and measures outcomes within the mental health field. For further information, members may like to go to the Consumer Outcomes in Mental Health Western Australia web site. It looks specifically at outcome

Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich; Hon George Cash; Hon Kim Chance; Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle

management and has put together a framework of services relating to clinical training, psychiatric services, an online information system, clinical training programs and integrating the national outcome and case mix collection data into everyday clinical practice. It is benchmarking outcomes in a whole range of different areas of the mental health sector.

I do not shy away from the fact that we have a long way to go in mental health. We need to raise community awareness, have ongoing advocacy and an ongoing and continuing investment in government health services. It is important to note, at both federal and state levels, that growing awareness and growing community pressure have gone hand in hand with the responses from government that have seen greater funding in mental health. That has certainly been the case in Western Australia and recently with the Howard government's response to the Senate's inquiry into mental health issues. The Senate's report is entitled "A national approach to mental health - from crisis to community". Quite a strong message emerged that over the past 10 years the Howard government had failed Australians with mental illness. The neglect and ignorance of mental illness really needs to be addressed. The reform of mental health care can be achieved by the investment of more resources, more effort and national leadership.

Statistically, Western Australia is ahead of the other states in its investment in mental health services. About 14 per cent of the health budget goes towards mental health. Under the national health plan, the level of funding Western Australia received was about 9 per cent, which is a number of percentage points ahead of other states. I certainly hope that Western Australia continues to improve that position with the right level of funding to mental health. A total of \$178 million was invested in 2004 over four years. We now have a mental health strategy in place with a number of things coming together which will address the issues that were initially raised by the petitioners. I look forward to looking more closely at the Senate inquiry's findings. Perhaps in the future there will be a continued role for parliamentarians to raise awareness of mental issues both at a political level and in the community.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I support some of the comments made by Hon Louise Pratt, in particular her comment about the need for ongoing support for mental health services. Recommendation 1 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs reads -

The Committee recommends that the Government ensures that there are adequate and appropriate mental health services to meet the needs of the people of Western Australia.

That is certainly not the case at the moment. The second recommendation was about looking to see whether the work of this committee could be carried on into this new Parliament. That is something that we need to give some serious consideration to. I would like to pick up a couple of the issues. The outcomes that Hon Louise Pratt talked about perhaps show that things have not improved as much as they could have by now. The funding issues around the new strategy for mental health are actually quite a problem because of the lack of progress that has been made. That strategy covers the period from 2004 to 2007. We are not far away from the end of that time frame and not much has been achieved yet.

I want to pick up a couple of issues from the committee's report, in particular, some of the issues on staffing numbers. Initiative number five of the new strategy talks about the need for work force and safety initiatives to be undertaken. It mentions a major recruitment drive in Australia and overseas. Unfortunately, I do not think we have recruited enough people to cover those who have left the system in the last little while. I would like to know the actual figures. It is very clinically focussed. We are trying to recruit the most difficult part of the work force. There are another group of practitioners who work in mental health. They are the people who work at the subclinical level, providing services similar to the home and community care services. That is an area that we need to focus on.

I am pleased that the honourable member raised lots of issues about how well the Australian government is doing in its recent initiatives. In particular, it has ensured that mental health nurses will be funded in GP clinics and that patients going to see clinical psychologists will be able to get a Medicare rebate. We need to focus a lot more on the type of support that is needed at the ground level. I am thinking now about a mother who has been to see me on a few occasions. She has two sons with a mental illness. She cannot get the support her family needs for her sons to be able to participate in a normal weekly program of activity. Consequently, their father has now had to stop working and is now providing mentoring for one of their sons to go to a TAFE college daily. I am also aware of a young chap who was not able to get the support he needed immediately on leaving hospital, and his mother had to give up work so that she can provide the daily care for him in a way that will ensure that he stays out of hospital. I can assure members that there are many problems with staffing. Key initiative 5 has been met nowhere.

Key initiative 2 was about the shortage of beds in Western Australia. That is a problem; there is no doubt that there is a great shortage of beds for acute patients with mental illnesses. However, the real reason for that is the

Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon George Cash; Hon Kim Chance; Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle

poor ratio of supported accommodation in the community in Western Australia in comparison with that in other states. WA has four places of this type for every 100 000 people, while Victoria, for example, has 25 places per 100 000 people. There is a huge backlog to be taken up to arrive at the situation in which acute mental health beds can be freed up. They are currently occupied by people who could be living very successfully in the community, if we had the right places and the right level of support for them.

However, the way the government is going about achieving this is actually creating new problems in itself. Again, the consultation is really bad. We saw what happened at Hawthorn House, and we are now seeing what is happening in the places that are being considered in Hicks Road in Kelmscott. The local member of the Legislative Assembly, Hon A.J. MacTiernan, was with me at a meeting there earlier this week. She made a clear statement, with which I concurred, that the consultation process had been absolutely terrible to that point, and that she would speak specifically to the Minister for Health about it. Other places are also experiencing that poor level of consultation. I do not know why people just cannot recognise that consultation and ensuring good community involvement in these processes from the beginning is as important as the bricks and mortar when constructing new places. I was absolutely astounded by the poor understanding on the part of community members at the public meeting that I went to the other day at Armadale. The continuing prejudice against people with mental illnesses living in the community, and the stereotyping and stigmatising of those people outlined clearly that we must make a huge investment in promotion and community education about people with mental illness.

Apart from the deficiencies in the consultation process, the very concepts being put in place to address this problem in a very hurried manner are an opportunity lost for people with mental illness in this state. Establishing 25-place cluster homes in various locations around the state is simply moving people from one form of institutionalisation to a lesser form, but it is still an institutionalised setting. Twenty-five places in one cluster are far too many, when these people are capable, with the right support, of living in normal suburban houses in the community. It is an opportunity lost for these people to have proper integration in a community setting. Another problem with these 25-place cluster homes is that they are all being located on hospital sites, or land that is owned by the government and associated with an institution. It is a most unfortunate situation that these places are being located on existing hospital sites, when the idea is to try to get these people into the community in normal homes in normal suburbs. The government has taken the cheap, easy way out to try to fix the backlog, rather than the more difficult and obviously more contentious process of finding appropriate homes in the community for these people.

If there were a suggestion to follow up some aspect of mental health through one of the committees of this house, we should be talking about the culture of mental health. There is a problem with the recognition of carers for the mentally ill, including the mums and dads. On three occasions in the past 12 months I have been to local hospitals at the request of parents to ask for a family conference. Family conferences are not now done automatically with people who have been in hospital for a long time and are about to be discharged. Families do not seem to have the same relevance in the clinical setting as they could have, or should have. On one of the occasions on which I was asked to go along with the mother to a family conference at the hospital, the way that the mother was treated by the clinicians at the hospital was absolutely appalling. As I was leaving the hospital with the mother, the psychiatrist said to me, in the presence of the mother, "I cannot wait to be rid of this family." Her son was in the locked ward, or the secure area of the hospital. The psychiatrist was questioning the mother about why she did not come to visit. His manner of questioning was along the lines of "You can come and see him, you know. We will not lock you up." This was said in my presence. It was of no consequence to anybody that a psychiatrist could talk to a mother in this way. The mother in this case is the sole carer of this young chap when he is not in the hospital. The bricks and mortar reform of mental health is one thing, but a cultural reform is much more significant. There have been a number of other similar occasions that I do not wish to go into now.

Finally, I will talk about the funding, because Hon Louise Pratt talked about the \$170 million or so that has been put into this area. To be honest, I am sick of hearing about bricks and mortar as a solution to mental health problems in this state. The recurrent funding in mental health care this year was underspent by \$14 million. That was \$14 million that could have gone into recurrent expenditure on mental health care, but instead was used to balance the budget for the Department of Health as a whole. That is happening at a time when we are talking about there not being consultation and good community education to enable people with mental illnesses to live successfully in the community. We are talking about the problem of decent discharge planning for people with mental illnesses, so that they do not have to wait two weeks to see the community mental health nurse, or wait five weeks before the agency that will provide them with some home care is available to see them for the first time. That is happening to people who are being discharged at the moment from mental health facilities in Western Australia. We need more community-based services. Everybody talks about that, but I am not talking about bricks and mortar; I am talking about services provided by people who may not have a highly qualified

Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon George Cash; Hon Kim Chance; Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle

clinical background, but who can take someone shopping, help them with housework or cooking, or simply spend some time with them so that they do not feel so alone in the community. These services do not require people with high levels of mental health practitioner qualifications. These are people who are operating to provide something a little better than a good neighbour would. We need those services on the ground for people. The Aboriginal suicide prevention program has been pulled back this year because it ran out of funds. The Ministerial Council on Suicide Prevention has programs that it cannot now continue to provide because it has run out of funds. I just asked about the liaison staff at Mandurah, which has a fully operational hospital with general medical wards. Two or more psychiatrists work in the community health centre attached to the hospital, but they cannot admit patients to the hospital in their own names. Worse than that, they cannot actually consult on a patient admitted by a general practitioner, because they do not have enough additional hours to do the work in the community, as well as the consultation or liaison work in the hospital. These people are saying that if only they could have more funding, they might be able to achieve more. However, \$14 million was underspent on mental health services in this state in the past 12 months!

I think there is a problem because the Director of the Office of Mental Health in WA said, when talking about the intended pilot for a deliberate self-harm assessment tool -

It is intended to pilot the *Deliberate Self-Harm Assessment Tool* as soon as possible however extra resources are required to conduct this pilot project. . . . Consideration is currently being given to accessing the necessary resources to ensure the pilot project is completed.

If that was said by the Director of the Office of Mental Health, and the funds for mental health have been underspent by \$14 million, I do not understand how he would not know about that. I do not understand how, at the midyear review held six months ago, he would not have known that there would be an underspending in mental health services and started to make use of those funds appropriately.

The more I read this report, the more I recognise the same issues that have been raised in the not-for-service report that was taken to the Senate committee. This is another report that is a cry by people in Western Australia - the service providers, the people with mental illness and the people who care most for those people with mental illness, their parents and their families - for the government to do something because there is something desperately wrong with the way mental health service delivery is occurring in this state at the moment. I think we should take up the recommendation at the end of the report that states that the next Parliament should pick up on the issues that have been dealt with already and take them a further step forward. The two areas that need to be looked at this time around, in particular, are a culture within the service that needs to change, and the level of administration around mental health services.

Question put and passed.

Albany Education District Schools - Schoolyard Blitz - Statement by Minister for Education and Training - Motion

Resumed from 24 May on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier -

That the ministerial statement be noted.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have only a couple more comments to make. I have made most of the comments I wanted to make on this statement.

Hon Murray Criddle: Give us an indication of what you said previously.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I commended the Albany education district schools for the schoolyard blitz. It was a tremendous initiative. Twenty-five schools were involved in the holistic approach to get the community involved. It was a very worthwhile and commendable initiative.

Prior to concluding my remarks last week, I referred to the issue of asbestos in schools and in particular Hillarys Primary School. I reiterate my concerns about asbestos in schools and particularly Hillarys Primary School.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: What does that have to do with a schoolyard blitz in Albany?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am identifying an issue with a primary school. I am aware that there is a lot of community involvement with the schools in the Albany district, as there is with a number of primary schools. The problems at Hillarys Primary School are the government's responsibility. I represent the parents. I have tabled a petition on behalf of the parents, and the government has not acted upon the complaints contained within that petition. It is incumbent upon me, as their local member, to bring their concerns to this chamber and that is exactly what I am doing. Does that answer the minister's question?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Yes.

Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon George Cash; Hon Kim Chance; Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle

Hon PETER COLLIER: I asked a question without notice on whether there were concerns with asbestos at Hillarys Primary School, to which I received a response today. Part (4) of the question asked -

If yes to (1) and (3) what schools were found to have asbestos which constitutes a potential health risk and what strategies were introduced to overcome the problems?

The response was that asbestos was found at Hillarys Primary School and that three improvement notices were issued requiring the Department of Education and Training to -

- (i) identify and assess and provide an on site asbestos-containing materials register at the Hillarys Primary School - the notice has now been complied with;
- (ii) identify and assess asbestos-containing materials and provide on site registers at all schools - this notice is still current; and
- (iii) train all principals in their role and responsibilities in asbestos management - this notice is still current.

Once again, I would like to isolate the unique position that exists at Hillarys Primary School. The parents and citizens body at that school is a very active and vibrant body. It is concerned about asbestos in the school, and has concerns about a number of issues at the school. The parents are active, as are those in the Albany district, but I would like the government to do something more about their very real concerns.

Having said that, I once again acknowledge the initiatives taken in the Albany education district schools and particularly the schoolyard blitz. As I have said, a number of primary schools, through the parents and citizens association and through the community, do a tremendous amount of work for their schools. I opened an art show at North Woodvale Primary School last week, in which the parents had got involved and raised \$27 000 for security fencing for their school. It is a sad indictment of society that we have to raise funds through parents and citizens associations to provide security fencing, but I guess that is testimony to the age in which we live. I again commend the Albany education district schools on their tremendous initiative with the schoolyard blitz.

HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan - Minister for Education and Training) [5.37 pm]: I endorse the comments made by Hon Peter Collier on the contribution made by parents and citizens to the schools in Western Australia. When I visit schools, I am met, generally speaking, by the head boy and the head girl and am then introduced to the principal. In about 90 per cent of cases I also meet a representative of the P&C. Representatives of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations tend to be there most of the time, and are proactive and demonstrate a very high level of community interest in the school. As Minister for Education and Training, I am very pleased with the level of community participation, interest and contribution, all of which benefit the schools and the students. Obviously, some communities are more problematic; the communities may not be as harmonious as others and may face many problems and challenges. In those cases, it is hard to get very much parental participation. However, we are very lucky, and programs such as the schoolyard blitz are very effective and, in terms of positive outputs, result not only in the beautification of many schools for only a small sum of money, but also are leveraged by the schools in many cases to attract other sorts of support. The results have been very positive. Communities have pitched in to make sure that the presentation of the schools is made more attractive. However, when I visited Albany for the prize-giving ceremony, I thought the real benefit of the schoolyard blitz program was not necessarily that schools were presented nicely but that it brought parents together who perhaps would not have otherwise come together, and they did. In the course of the work they were involved in they formed genuine friendships, they met new people and they networked cohesively etc. I think some of those friendships will be very long-lasting. That is a great thing, because even in some country towns people do not know everybody. We cannot assume that people know everybody and certainly in a place like Albany, which is growing very rapidly, it is becoming much harder to know everybody. So it is a great thing when the community gets together and establishes those sorts of relationships. At the end of the day, irrespective of what we do, at the heart of whatever we do, whether it is the heart of the work we are involved in or economic activity between states and nations, virtually everything hinges on personal relationships. If personal relationships are not there, all the benefits that would flow from them simply do not flow. We cannot underestimate the importance of good personal relationships. We can certainly appreciate the merits of a program like that which resulted in the formation of those personal relationships. Mr President, I support the motion that the ministerial statement be noted.

Question put and passed.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Thirteenth Report - Petition on Primary Midwifery Care

Resumed from 16 November 2004.

Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon George Cash; Hon Kim Chance; Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle

Consideration of report lapsed.

Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2005 - Statement by Minister for Education and Training

Resumed from 21 June 2005.

Motion

Hon GEORGE CASH: During debate on the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2005, I asked various questions about the supplementary funding requirements that were discussed at that time for the \$750 million limit in the 2004-05 Treasurer's advance. The minister handling the bill on behalf of the government, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, tabled a document that set out the composition of the \$750 million Treasurer's advance authorisation that was required during 2004-05. That document also included a breakdown of the \$234 million portion that had been already drawn from the original \$300 million Treasurer's advance authorisation for 2004-05. The document was used at the time of the debate and in that regard no further discussion is required on it. If I did not move then that the statement be noted, I certainly now move -

That the ministerial statement be noted.

Question put and passed.

Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges - Eighth Report - Matters Referred to the Committee and Other Miscellaneous Matters

Resumed from 10 May.

Consideration of the report postponed until the next sitting, on motion by Hon Kim Chance (Leader of the House).

"State of the Fisheries Report 2003-04" - Statement by Minister for Fisheries

Resumed from 21 June 2005.

Motion

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: I move -

That the ministerial statement be noted.

We got to the report quicker than I had assumed we would, and I was just busy trying to get the report out of my papers. The minister seemed pleased to table the report on 21 June last year. I guess since then a lot of water has flowed under the bridge within the fisheries. It is true to say that all fisheries, whether they be Western Australian, Australian or overseas fisheries, have quite significant pressures on maintaining their sustainability. It is nothing new. Western Australia takes great pride in the way in which its fisheries are managed. The first accredited fishery in Western Australia was the rock lobster industry under the guidance of the Marine Stewardship Council. Western Australia has a reputation for quality seafood. It was interesting to note that one of the most sought-after functions at the European Seafood Exposition in Brussels was the one organised by the WA Fishing Industry Council and the WA Agent General. Attendance at the function was limited to 200 people, simply due to the size of the facility that was available for the function. I took great pride in watching what actually happened there. Each fish, whether it was abalone, scallops, ice-fish or western rock lobster, which was presented to people on a tray along with some beautiful Western Australian wine, had a little flag flying on it to explain what it was. The function had to employ a security person and the small entranceway to the function was taped off; otherwise, probably 2 000 people would have been there. Tickets to Western Australia's function, which is on the A-class function list, are the most sought-after.

I was talking recently to the Leader of the House about the Western Australian fishing industry. It is probably the most highly regulated industry in the state, yet it is very difficult to see how else it could be controlled. Whether or not we like it, it must be highly regulated. One would love to see an industry free of red tape and bureaucracy, but it just cannot happen. It is very important to manage the industry if Western Australia wants to say in 25 years that it still has sustainable fisheries. Another interesting part about the fisheries, and something for which I have had a great passion, is aquaculture. I think successive fisheries ministers have discovered that fact, even as far back when the Liberal Party was in government and Monty House was the Minister for Fisheries.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: A passion for eating it!

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: Yes, a passion for eating it as well.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Monty House went to great lengths to do it, too - South Africa on one occasion.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: Yes, absolutely, and Norway.

Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich; Hon George Cash; Hon Kim Chance; Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle

It is interesting to acknowledge the amount of farmed seafood that was very much at the forefront of the displays from the 80 countries represented at the European expo. I think currently, if I recall correctly, about 60 per cent of daily sales at Sydney Fish Market is farmed seafood in some form. China last year produced 23 million tonnes of farmed seafood; that is a quarter of the wild capture fish caught annually around the world. Although 23 million tonnes of farmed seafood is produced in China, its demand is insatiable because of its population. Members know that if there is a puddle of water in China, something is thrown in it. A lot of shrimp and prawns are grown that way. There will be a growing demand in Western Australia too, because of the growing expectation among the community. People eat a lot more fish today than they used to. Our icon fish, such as filleted jewfish, is sold in fish shops for \$50 a kilogram. I am very pleased that a group in Jurien Bay that now has a processing licence sells jewfish fillets for \$30 a kilogram, which is a very good buy. Until recently the group charged only \$13 for a freshly cooked or frozen lobster. The price has probably increased by now, because the beach price is about \$28. The group is probably now charging \$14 or \$15.

Hon Jon Ford: I would be straight down there if it was being sold at that price!

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: I could not buy enough lobster or jewfish either. Unfortunately, I said the wrong thing to the man selling the lobsters when I told him that Kailis would charge about \$20 more per kilogram. His eyes lit up. Next time I go there, he will probably tell me that I told him to charge \$50!

I will not say much more, although I will add a comment about the European Seafood Exposition that Hon Sheila Mills, Hon Murray Criddle and I attended in Brussels. It was quite an eye-opener for all of us to see the size of the expo. I had been to a big aquaculture expo in Norway, but I could not have envisaged the size of the expo in Brussels. There were 1 650 exhibitors who represented 80 countries. No-one under the age of 18 years was allowed into that expo - it was not an R-rated expo. I did wonder why people under 18 years old were not allowed there. The people who attended the expo were registered as either exhibitors or visitors, and everyone was checked at the entrance. Each visitor's bar code was scanned to record the number of visitors who entered one of the 10 massive buildings, which gave the organisers an idea of the number of people who visited the expo. Hon Murray Criddle, Hon Sheila Mills and I noted that by Wednesday, despite the quite wide corridors between the exhibits running lengthways and crossways, we could hardly move because of the many people there. The expo was not open to the general public, which gives members an idea of the unbelievable number of people from around the world who attended it.

Some of the countries represented spent a great deal of money on the exhibits. Admittedly, from year to year some of the initial capital outlay is reused for dressing up the exhibits. The number of exhibitors from Australia, including those from Western Australia, was down a bit this year. However, more than half of the exhibitors from Australia were from Western Australia. The other members and I spent a lot of time there and were able to talk to some people who recognised our badge. We introduced some people to representatives from the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council. They did a great job and the way they conducted their operations was a credit to them. Many meetings took place that enabled people to talk about business opportunities at the exhibits. I understand that WAFIC underwrote about \$15 million or \$16 million of sales in just three days. On top of that, the number of contacts made was enormous. Each importer who wanted to talk to our people was given a card, and their names, contact details and what they wanted to buy was recorded in a book so that they could be contacted later. It is a very worthwhile expo for Australia because other countries recognise that Australia has quality seafood. The government must consider the funding it provides to the expo. I recognise that the government currently provides some assistance, but the funding arrangement must be looked at carefully. The Brussels expo and the Boston expo are the two key expos at which much of our seafood is marketed to those areas. WAFIC will no doubt talk to the minister about a funding arrangement of about \$250 000. It would not have to come back to the government for more money because it could be set up as a revolving fund. WAFIC will put a proposition of that kind to the minister, which I support. I will allow Hon Murray Criddle to speak for himself on that matter.

The report is comprehensive. I started to read it but I never got to the end of it. I am a passionate supporter of the fishing industry, despite all its ups and downs and the troubles it runs into every now and again. It is a very intensively regulated industry. I take off my hat to the many people in the Department of Fisheries and to the scientists and governments of the day that have supported that very valuable industry. It is probably more valuable than many people in Perth realise, and it is a very regionally based industry. That is a key point.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: I endorse the remarks made by Hon Bruce Donaldson regarding the trip to Brussels. It was a wonderful opportunity to see the displays of the seafood industry. It was indeed a massive expo. Anyone who wants to understand how the worldwide industry operates should visit the Brussels seafood expo or the seafood expo held in Boston. The Brussels expo attracts some 1 700 exhibitors and is an outstanding example of the worldwide seafood industry. We had an opportunity to interact with people from around the world who wanted to buy our produce. I talked to some Americans about our lobster tails and the opportunities

Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich; Hon George Cash; Hon Kim Chance; Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle

that exist in the lobster industry. They emphasised that our wild fishery is free of chemicals, and that Western Australia has a clean, green image. Recently when I asked a question without notice in this house, I pointed out that that image enables the lobster industry to charge an extra \$8, \$9 or \$10 a kilogram for its product. We should always remember that.

On the Monday that we were in Brussels the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council organised a meeting at which members met with the Marine Stewardship Council. Rupert Howes is the chief executive officer of that organisation. That was a very interesting time for us. Nine countries were represented at the meeting, and Western Australia was heavily represented. The point was made that we can look after the environment and the ecology, but we must also look after the fishery and the fishers. To do that, the economic and social impact of the decisions that are made must be taken into account because the fishers pay for looking after the fishery. Some representatives of other countries told us that if the people in the fishery who catch the seafood did not receive money to look after the fishery, the sustainability of the fishery could collapse. That was a very strong message. It was certainly a message that Hon Bruce Donaldson and I impressed upon the participants when we had the opportunity to speak at that meeting. The message I delivered was that the fishermen have told us that they pay for the way the fishery is looked after, and that they must be acknowledged in all the decision-making processes.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm