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Hon Norman Moore; Hon Tom Helm; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon Norm Kelly; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Ken Travers

# ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

HON N.F. MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the House) [10.00 pm]: I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Cyclone Trust Fund, Onslow - Adjournment Debate

HON TOM HELM (Mining and Pastoral) [10.00 pm]: I want to expand on the question I asked this afternoon about the events I witnessed in Onslow on Thursday night. As I said, a public meeting was held on Thursday night and between 30 and 50 people attended. The meeting was called for the town to decide what it should do about the cyclone trust fund and whether to build a seawall, to upgrade the airport or to undertake various other repairs. I did not speak at the meeting because it was not my place to do so; I simply observed.

Like others at the meeting, I wanted to know why a concept plan would cost \$93 000. The answer was that the shire paid \$63 000 and \$30 000 came from the cyclone trust fund. A person at the meeting said he was aware of the building of the first seawall in 1942. As members know, the seawall was destroyed two years ago by cyclone Vance, but it lasted 58 years. I bet there was no concept plan then - the Public Works Department simply built it.

Onslow was hammered by the cyclone about 18 months or two years ago. Since then it has gone through one cyclone season without seawall protection. The meeting was told that it could be three years before another seawall is built and the town once again enjoys protection from a storm surge, cyclone or any other natural event. I am concerned about that because I have been through the town and seen the devastated seawall and the sand dunes. I feel sorry for Onslow because, once again, it seems to be the Cinderella of the towns affected by cyclones in the north west. It usually gets a hammering but does not get the attention that places like Exmouth get. It is still waiting for an adequate response.

I also noticed that the people at the meeting were very concerned. I went through six or seven cyclones when I lived in Karratha and Port Hedland. The people in Onslow live very close to the water. The sea level rose sharply and caused trauma that they do not want to experience again. Surely something should have been done before now to give these people a main line of defence. The trust fund contains about \$400 000. A proposal to upgrade the airport was put forward. The airport is adequate for twin-engine, six-seater aircraft, although on odd occasions I have seen heavier planes land there. It has always been an inadequate airport. Although the aspirations of the people of Onslow may be to improve the airport, from conversations with people there and questions raised by them, it appears that they see little point in having a good airport if the town can be washed away by a dangerous storm surge, even without accompanying strong winds.

The people of Onslow believed the airport upgrade would come from a different fund. The State has a responsibility, as a matter of priority, to see that the people of Onslow, whose town has been moved three times in its history, have that frontline defence. I have complete faith in the President of the Shire of Ashburton, Mr Brian Hayes, who has lived in Onslow for a while and is a well-respected member of the community. The shire will meet soon to make a decision on this matter and to take on board the concerns of the people of Onslow. However, it is totally inappropriate for the people in that town, living virtually next door to Exmouth, to see a glass and steel monument at an airport that has just had its flights reduced. The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition visited Exmouth to express their concern and sympathy to the community. The town of Moora get all the assistance it deserved; however, the town of Onslow is again the poor relation. The people in Onslow must make a decision in this matter one way or another. As a community we owe it to them to provide the best defence we can possibly give them and to not talk about expensive concept plans. They need to see as soon as possible a seawall that will replace the one that existed for nearly 50 years. The \$1.7m that was recommended to replace the seawall should be provided right away and the repairs and development of the seawall should take place soon.

Mr President, I do not apologise for taking this House's time. This is an essential matter that had to be aired and I hope some action can be taken somewhere down the track.

Technical and Further Education, College Management Information System - Adjournment Debate

HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan) [10.08 pm]: On numerous occasions in this place I have raised my concern about the technical and further education sector. I do so again tonight in relation to a number of issues, the first being the college management information system. The system, commonly known as the CMIS, was initiated in 1995 by the Department of Training and Employment. The cost of the system has blown out substantially since that time; in fact, the total cost spent on the system is in the order of \$20m. I am concerned that the department is providing misleading information about the value of the CMIS. One of its internal documents dated 30 April 1999 clearly states -

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The existing CMIS is based on a South Australian system that was implemented in Western Australia in 1995 but soon found to be inadequate for Western Australian requirements.

Functionality was enhanced through a number of locally developed modules using various . . . interface standards. This has resulted in a system that is consequently sometimes difficult to use, has trouble adapting to colleges' changing needs and also higher maintenance costs.

I suggest that these are some of the reasons that the cost of this system has substantially blown out. Originally the system had a projected budget in the order of \$5m; therefore it has blown out fourfold. Obviously, the department believes the system is no good; that is demonstrated by this internal document. Clearly it is a problem system. It has been a problem since 1995, and it will continue to be a problem. For example, the other day I wanted to access some information. I wanted to know how many students doing a four-year plumbing apprenticeship had already completed a pre-apprenticeship. It was a very simple question. I was told that there was no way that that information could be accessed. I was also advised that the information is recorded through the training record system. I find it hard to accept that, after spending \$20m, something so simple cannot be supplied to me through the college management information system or, alternatively, through the training management system.

I put on record my disappointment at the excessive expenditure of taxpayers' money and the lack of results for that expenditure. In doing so, I also bring to the attention of the House just how silly some people within the Department of Training and Employment really are. I am not talking about the colleges; I am talking about the administration of the Western Australian Department of Training and Employment. Given the problems with this system, I find it absolutely laughable that in relation to the CMIS, the department's July-August 2000 edition of "Training Skills Jobs" reports -

It's a live system which never stops growing, never stops working and safeguards the records of all students who have studied at a Western Australian TAFE College.

It goes on to say -

Across the State, from Kununurra to Albany, CMIS manages all student enrolments, assessments, graduation details, timetables and other information vital to students and TAFE staff.

Says the Department's Manager for Delivery Support Systems John Kay: "It's as complex as a system can get, but it's highly functional and always responsive to the needs - including cultural needs - of students, staff and external clients. The people working with CMIS make sure of that, much to their credit."

That is a very different portrayal of the system from the very frank internal departmental note, which admits that there are major problems with the CMIS. The people who are putting this stuff together need to get their act together and stop fooling themselves and the minister - that is exactly what they are doing - into believing that everything is hunky-dory when the simple fact is that it is not. Unfortunately, I do not have time to go into the training records system in any detail, but I assure members that I will spend some time in the not too distant future going through it.

I will also touch on one initiative of the Department of Training and Employment, specifically in relation to the third horizon. As far as I can ascertain, the third horizon is some sort of restructure of the Department of Training and Employment. It has set itself some very high goals. The Department of Training and Employment in Royal Street has a function of allocating something in the order of \$400m to TAFE colleges and other training providers. It outlines in "The Third Horizon and Us" that its vision is for "the best trained, most employable people in the world". We are talking about an internal reorganisation. That is what it wants to do - internally reorganise itself so it can be the best in the world. It goes on to refer to the requirement to identify what this vision looks like, and in brackets it says, "what are the characteristics of a place which has the best trained, most employable people in the world?" When it finds out, I want to be the first to know what the most employable person in the world looks like. What an absolutely grand vision for the Western Australian Department of Training and Employment. It is very admirable but, given some of the nonsense it has put forward, it is an indication that it is starting from a very low base. "The Third Horizon and Us" is a very expensive glossy. I hate to think how much it cost. This is the great initiative which says -

# REMOVING BARRIERS (SURFING THE SILOS!)

Recently Rowan Maclean took new staff from her area to a number of different sections of the Department where she introduced them to key people they will be having contact with in their work. **Susan Kelly,** one of the people visited, was really impressed with this as a valuable thing to do. And so the idea spreads ...

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The department has put that nonsense on a glossy piece of paper for goodness how knows much money. I wonder what is the value of moving people around the department and introducing them to one another. Maybe the department could organise a more efficient system. Maybe they could all get together and have a cup of coffee. This is the sort of nonsense that goes on within the Western Australian Department of Training and Employment.

The next section is about streamlining processes. It states -

A lot of the work done in any staffing section is necessarily process driven. There are lots of compliance issues which can not be circumvented.

However, that will not stop the Western Australian Department of Training and Employment because it will occupy some of its time in working out where it can circumvent or reduce the effort put into those compliance issues.

These are just very small examples of the sort of nonsense that goes on. I can assure members that that also operates at a much higher level. All sorts of things are happening within the Department of Training and Employment. Students are being passed purely and simply so that lecturers can retain their positions within the colleges. They are being passed without necessarily meeting the course requirements. They are going out into industry without necessarily having the skills to undertake the tasks expected of them. Managing directors are being reappointed, irrespective of whether they have fudged their qualifications. There has been rorting of the recognition of prior learning system. Unchecked, privately registered training organisations are helping themselves to the training dollar and acting as middlemen in training - not really contributing to the training effort but simply creaming some of the money off the top.

Government Vehicle Fleet, Use of Gas - Adjournment Debate

HON NORM KELLY (East Metropolitan) [10.18 pm]: I have risen in this place on a number of occasions in the past few years to comment on this Government's policy on the use of gas vehicles in its government vehicle fleet. It was with some bemusement that I noticed today in a media release put out by the Premier that the Government seems to be, in a sense, finally moving on this issue. I must admit that it was with pleasure that I read the heading of this media release which said that the Premier was taking delivery of a new LPG car. I thought that was good, because I understand that only three members of Parliament have liquefied natural gas vehicles. It is good to see the Premier -

Hon M.J. Criddle: Have you got one?

Hon NORM KELLY: Yes.

Hon Kim Chance: Two of those three members are in the Chamber at the moment.

Hon NORM KELLY: That is right.

Hon M.J. Criddle: How long have you had it?

Hon NORM KELLY: About a year and a half. I was not aware of the availability of such a car when I first came into Parliament, but at the first opportunity, I replaced my car with a dual-fuel LPG vehicle.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Is it efficient?

Hon NORM KELLY: It is efficient. It also costs me about \$100 a month because this Government is not willing to follow the lead of the Federal Government by providing LPG vehicles at no extra cost to members of Parliament. I am happy to pay that additional \$100 a month because of the savings to this State, both in fuel costs and to the environment. Therefore, it was with some pleasure that I saw that the Premier had put out a media release saying that he had taken delivery of a new LPG car. Unfortunately, the media release states that he took delivery of the car so that the Ministry of Housing in Busselton could use it. I am sure that the Premier covers many thousands of kilometres in his government-supplied vehicles, and it is unfortunate that he cannot show some leadership by using a gas-fuelled car himself.

It is with pleasure that we see that Ford Australia has released on the Australian market an LPG dedicated vehicle which does away with the problems of having the gas cylinder in the boot of the vehicle, which has been a deterrent to a good number of people.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Do you support the fuel-cell experiment that we will carry out with the buses?

Hon NORM KELLY: I support the fuel-cell experiment, but I do not support the Government's commitment to diesel fuel buses in the meantime. It would have been far better had the Government adopted the cleaner alternative of using compressed natural gas and LPG-fuelled buses while the fuel-cell trial was implemented. It

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is unfortunate that Perth is the only mainland capital city in Australia which does not have a significant number of gas-powered buses in its vehicle fleet.

From the media release it appears that the Premier does not get to talk to his Minister for the Environment all that much. It seems that they are at cross-purposes. I was fortunate enough to be at a luncheon today when the Premier was speaking. He referred to the issue of LPG-fuelled vehicles. In the media release the Premier stated -

We need to look at the issue from a number of directions - dedicated LPG vehicles, the cost of conversions and the price and availability of LPG . . . At the same time, across Government, we are reconsidering our fleet requirements with a view to increasing the use of LPG vehicles.

Hon Kim Chance: I wonder what sparked the Premier's sudden interest in LPG? Perhaps it was something Geoff Gallop said.

Hon NORM KELLY: I am sure it is the number of questions I have asked and speeches I have made in this place. It is interesting that the Premier is apparently oblivious of the government trial that was initiated in April 1998 when the Minister for the Environment and the then Minister for Works, Hon Mike Board, announced that 300 light vehicles in the Government's fleet would be converted to gas. I have asked a number of questions on the issue over the years. A couple of months ago the Government had managed to get 52 vehicles onto that trial of 300 vehicles. In her answers to my questions the Minister for the Environment talks about how the Government is gauging whether any environmental benefits will accrue from converting to gas. However, we are getting a little shift in government thinking at the top, even if the Premier chooses not to have a gas vehicle. It is unfortunate that in a sense the shift is due to the pressure of parties like the Australian Democrats, which are pushing this issue.

Hon M.J. Criddle: You will not even back us on the fuel-cell issue.

Hon NORM KELLY: Yes we will.

Hon M.J. Criddle: No you will not. Your legislation to do with the greenhouse effect did not include anything other than gas; you were not interested in looking at anything else.

Hon NORM KELLY: That is rubbish.

Hon M.J. Criddle: It is not rubbish; it is a fact.

Hon NORM KELLY: The Minister for Transport brings up a good point about more fuel friendly government buses. When I have spoken to my federal colleagues on this issue and about this Government's attitude to cleaner fuel choices for its fleet, I have had to tell them that the Government has distinctly thumbed its nose at the benefits of CPG and LPG for the bus fleet. It is disappointing that I could not give my colleagues better news about the Government's direction on more environmentally friendly fuels, for not only buses but also the light vehicle fleet. I have repeatedly spoken about the flow-on benefits of converting the government light vehicle fleet to gas. The high turnover of vehicles means that the benefits will quickly flow through to the private sector as those vehicles are auctioned off, which will mean a far higher demand. I have been talking to some of the gas retailers in Perth recently and discussing the impact. Unfortunately I do not have the figures with me today, but if the Government had a policy of putting even 1 000 vehicles onto gas, it would have a significant impact on the demand for LPG in this State. It has been made very clear to the Select Committee on Petroleum Products Pricing in Western Australia that as we increase the demand for LPG, we make it easier -

Hon M.J. Criddle: The price is going up. The price of LPG is 55.9¢ a litre in my part of the world.

Hon NORM KELLY: What is the price of petrol?

Hon M.J. Criddle: LPG has gone up by about the same ratio as petrol.

Hon NORM KELLY: It is about  $50\phi$  or  $60\phi$  a litre cheaper than petrol. That is not a bad saving when we consider it uses only about 10 per cent -

Hon M.J. Criddle: You need to look at a few more economies of scale than that.

Hon NORM KELLY: It is exactly the economies of scale that we are talking about. The reason for higher country prices is simply economies of scale -

Hon M.J. Criddle: That is why fuel was \$1.18 in Horrocks Beach last week. I suppose gas will be cheaper.

Hon NORM KELLY: I have never heard the minister be happy to come out and say that gas is a cleaner fuel. It is amazing that the Government is reluctant to show some leadership. The benefits are there. The minister has still not responded to basic questions that I asked in this place as recently as 7 September and 8 August -

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Hon M.J. Criddle: Get the right minister.

Hon NORM KELLY: It would be good if some of the ministers would talk to each other. Rather than have the Premier make this statement today, he should talk to the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Works and the Minister for Transport, and they should get together and say, "We have a great opportunity here. An election is coming up in a few months, and we can show some leadership and make a commitment - okay; it may be a couple of years too late - to put a significant proportion of the government light vehicle fleet onto gas." That could be either dedicated gas vehicles or dual fuel vehicles, which would probably be better for use in the country, where gas is not as freely available. Gas also allows vehicles to travel a greater distance. My vehicle has a range of over 1 200 kilometres if I choose to drive that far in one stretch, and that is very beneficial for country travel. I urge the Government to make a commitment before this election to make greater use of LPG in the government light vehicle fleet.

**HON M.J. CRIDDLE** (Agricultural - Minister for Transport) [10.28 pm]: I want to put on record what we are doing in Transport with regard to our bus fleet, and outline some of the initiatives we have put in place. Members would be aware that a review was done, which came out with a clear indication, and we will review what we will do over the few years up to 2003 and will then look at a change in the bus fleet from there on. Western Australia has led the way in introducing gas buses. That goes back to 1982 when we first introduced gas buses.

Hon Ken Travers: Another great Labor initiative.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We have led the way, and we are continuing with it. The recent review indicated clearly the economic, environmental and operational benefits of the diesel fuel that we are using with the reduced sulfur content of the Euro II and Euro III fuel, and we will be moving to Euro IV in the near future, and that will be a major improvement. From the point of view of the environment, the cleanliness of those Euro II, III and IV fuels has been improved, and the catalytic converter assists in reducing the particulates that go into the air -

Hon Kim Chance: Hasn't the validity of that report been questioned?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: It was certainly questioned, but we need to look at the outcomes of that with regard to pre-GST and post-GST and compare them in a reasonable light.

Interesting conclusions could be drawn from the financial impacts as they do not provide a direct comparison of the information.

Also, the Government is about to sign an agreement to conduct further experiments with gas-powered buses. A multipoint fuel injection system designed by a local company will be put into five buses and three engines. The company was called Transcom Engine Corporation Limited but is now Advanced Engine Components Limited. It will conduct an experiment on the system and send it to Europe to be tested according to world standards, which is the only way to get a real comparison. The system will then be put into our buses. We will have a clear comparison between carburettor, fuel-injected gas and diesel fuel, and a reasonable understanding about the State's future requirements and the best outcome for our bus fleet. The fuel cell bus was brought here. It was disappointing that none of the members opposite travelled on it.

Hon Norm Kelly: I looked at it outside.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Did the member travel on the bus?

Hon Norm Kelly: I did not have an opportunity as Parliament was sitting.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I was on the bus, as were a number of other people who bothered to look at the technology. People appreciated that it is a good bus and a possibility for our fleet. Such buses are employed in commercial operations in Vancouver and Chicago.

Hon Ken Travers: Why aren't any here now?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Western Australia will be the first city in the southern hemisphere to put those buses into the commercial field. We will have three buses.

Hon Ken Travers: When?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: It will be a couple of years before they arrive. The point is that we will be experimenting with guilt-free motoring. Water vapour will be the only emission.

Hon Ken Travers: How many diesel buses will we have by the time we get the first fuel cell bus?

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Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: There is much talk about gas-powered buses around Australia and thousands of buses on the road, but only 400 of those buses are gas powered. When the fleets are compared on percentages, it becomes plain that all the talk about Western Australia being left behind is rubbish.

Hon Ken Travers: You are responsible for our fleet and our technology.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We are conducting experiments that will provide the best outcome for the future. There is no point buying a gas fleet and installing gas outlets around the place when we could leapfrog it with guilt-free motoring through a bus that produces no emissions. Is that not the best alternative for the future? The member does not appreciate that we are onto something that will be the best outcome for the Western Australian environment.

Hon Ken Travers: Why don't we have gas buses in the meantime?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: The member is not taking into account the improvements in diesel fuel as a result of the Euro II, Euro III and Euro IV emission standards.

Hon Ken Travers: We have only just got Euro II-standard buses.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We will move to Euro III.

Hon Ken Travers: When?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: In the near future; a couple of years.

Hon Ken Travers: You are a real "gunna", aren't you?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I am not a "gunna", because we are putting these things in place. These outcomes will be of real benefit to the Western Australian environment in the long term.

Hon Ken Travers: How many Euro II-standard diesel buses will Western Australia have by the time the Government moves to Euro III?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I need to look those figures up, but the fleet contains about 160 or 170 Euro II buses and we are putting on about 65 a year. The member can work it out himself on a yearly basis. By 2003, we will be able to make a decision about the best outcome for the State. We will not make interim decisions; we will make the best decision for the long term. That is what is required in Western Australia and what the people of Western Australia look forward to. A bus that produces no emissions apart from water vapour is surely better than anything gas or diesel could do.

Hon Ken Travers: What year will that be?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I have just told the member. We will have the hydrogen fuel cell buses here in a couple of years and we can introduce them into our environment. They are already working overseas in Vancouver and Chicago.

We have what I believe is the best possible outcome with the alternatives of hydrogen fuel cells, multi-point injection and carburetted gas, and we are also working on improvements for the best outcomes for diesel fuel at the lowest emissions. That is the best possible result we can achieve for Western Australia.

**HON KEN TRAVERS** (North Metropolitan) [10.35 pm]: I should not have been in the Chamber when this debate commenced; I knew I could not resist. I was amazed that the minister and the Leader of the National Party attacked Hon Norm Kelly for raising the issue of gas-powered buses.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I am not attacking him. I am pointing out what the Government is doing.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I would have thought that the Leader of the National Party would support the Australian Democrats for catching on to the initiative started by the Australian Labor Party and the National Party member for Collie. We should congratulate Hon Norm Kelly for that. The member for Collie and I were the first members to set the trend by getting gas-powered vehicles, and it is good to see the Democrats coming on stream.

Hon Norm Kelly: It took me a while to replace my car, because I used my pushbike so much.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: We should be encouraging members. Obviously the minister is feeling particularly defensive about his gas-powered buses, or the lack of them -

Hon M.J. Criddle: Not at all.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: - and it is no wonder. We have all these great initiatives for some time down the track, but before we get these trial gas buses, about a third of our fleet will be replaced with the old technology Euro II

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diesel buses. By the time we get the diesel fuel bus, we will have about 160 of the older buses on the road, and 65 a year will take it to about 300, which is about a third of the fleet. By the time we get onto Euro III we will have our first hydrogen fuel cell buses. If the hydrogen fuel cell buses are already operating, why does the Government not have them out here now? That is the problem with this Government's strategy: This Government has allowed the bus fleet to run down and it is now compacting all this -

Hon M.J. Criddle: You did not replace the buses.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No. The minister did not replace a bus for the first seven years he was in this place.

Hon M.J. Criddle: You did not replace the buses.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Look at the age of the fleet. I used to drive them; I know how they worked, because they were getting replaced when I was around and they stopped when the members opposite came into government. We will have all this wonderful technology going into the remaining fleet and there will also be all these buses with an approximate 25 year life expectancy sitting there using old technology. I agree with the minister that we should be jumping the gun, but we are leaving it too late.

Hon M.J. Criddle: At least you have a bit of vision; you have followed us.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: We would be doing it a lot better than the current Government. Hon Kim Chance asked why the Premier was suddenly interested in this. It is the same reason the Premier was suddenly interested in this prior to the last election. That is when the Government produced its last proposals about getting LPG fuel powered vehicles. The Government has done nothing about it for four years, and, surprise surprise, just as those on the government side are about to lose the next election, they trot the matter out again to try to get some brownie points. As Hon Kim Chance said, the Leader of the Opposition put forward another positive initiative to give this Government a lead as to how it could get people onto gas. There is something else the Minister for Transport did not talk about: It is not just about price when it comes to LPG fuel, it is about environmental benefits.

Hon M.J. Criddle: It is also about reliability and the buses those opposite introduced. What did they do? They overheated.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What will the fuel cell do?

Hon M.J. Criddle: It works. We know that. You are stumped.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: There must be trials. We started a trial and the Government stopped those ongoing trials. The minister started comparing prices between pre and post-goods and services tax, and I thought he was really saying that the GST had forced up the price of gas as well.

Hon M.J. Criddle: That is not what I was saying. One must compare apples with apples. The member would not know how.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It means that the relative price of gas has gone up as a result of the GST. Not only are people paying more, but also the environment is suffering more as a result of the Liberal Government's GST. It does not surprise me that the Government is yet again jumping on the bandwagon. It promised 300 vehicles but delivered none.

About two years ago the Minister for the Environment told everyone she was trying to obtain a gas-powered vehicle. When I asked a question a few months ago as to whether she had finally got a gas-powered vehicle she said she had not. This Government will not put in place the necessary financial structure to encourage the use of gas-powered vehicles. This Government does not have the leadership: The National Party showed the leadership; the member for Collie showed the leadership; I showed the leadership; and Hon Norm Kelly jumped on the bandwagon.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.40 pm