

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Max Trenorden; Deputy Speaker; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr Larry Graham; Dr Geoff Gallop;
Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan

REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): Today I received a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this House condemns the Gallop Labor Government for its failure to deliver a real, long-term vision for the future of regional Western Australia.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [2.54 pm]: I move the motion.

I begin by recounting some of the Labor Party policy prior to the last election. Under the ALP policy headed "a fair go for regional WA" the Labor Party leader and now Premier stated -

People, no matter where they live in Western Australia, have a right to expect equal access to quality education, police and health services. They have a right to expect that roads will be adequately maintained . . .

Under this Government the reality has been entirely different from that. This Government has not done what it promised to do in regional Western Australia.

I will start with health care services, and other speakers will expand on these points. Labor has decimated country health services; there is absolutely no doubt about that. It started off by silencing the voice of local communities. It downgraded country services and cut regional capital works programs. However, the symbolic measure - the one that stands out most to country people - happened in June 2002 when all country health boards were dismissed. The Labor Government sacked country health boards across this State. In one action it took away the right of local people to have a say in the running of their local hospital. Albany people do not have a direct say with regard to Albany Regional Hospital. If any group in the community should have a direct say, it is the people who live here and use the services of that hospital. Labor silenced its potential critics and then went around cutting services. Despite all the rhetoric of the health minister during question time about the Reid report, after just over three years in government, what do we get? We get a report; that is the consequence of Labor's commitment to health. The reality in regional Western Australia, as typified here in Albany, is the closure of 10 beds in the Albany Regional Hospital when there is a dire need for services. There are related problems in the Denmark District Hospital and in other hospitals in surrounding areas.

What happened to capital upgrades? The previous Government had a very strong program of investing in and building new hospitals in Joondalup, Armadale, Bunbury and Peel, and the job was not finished as other key regional areas needed to be developed. What has happened under this Government? Capital upgrades in regional centres have been abandoned. The redevelopments in Kununurra, Halls Creek, Derby, Margaret River and Denmark have all been delayed. Who can forget the Moora hospital? The Reid report recognises Moora as an important regional centre. This Government abandoned the longstanding commitment to develop a new hospital in Moora. The Shire of Moora had even purchased the site for the hospital above the flood plain. The community had acted and this Government took away that development in one fell swoop. We need to restore district health councils and we need to have local hospital management boards. Under a Liberal Government that will happen.

What did Labor say in its policy about regional education? Its policy was titled "education: the country is special". What has it done in the country? Let us start with Albany. Today, the minister, courtesy of the member for Albany, announced a \$400 000 upgrade to an administrative centre. That is terrific. There are 800 Government schools in Western Australia that all have administrative centres, and there is a regular program of upgrading them; there is nothing particularly new or innovative in that. I am glad it is happening; it is good for that school. Other schools in Albany have previously been upgraded, as modern technology in education has been required. The previous Government carried out a huge upgrade of the North Albany Senior High School. There was a similar massive upgrade of Albany Senior High School. The building of the new Albany Primary School in front of the Albany Senior High School created an education precinct. In Denmark a new high school was established, together with a new agricultural college in the member for Stirling's electorate, which was achieved by the member for Stirling I might add.

Mr P.B. Watson: What about the hospital in Denmark?

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Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the member for Albany wants to make some political mileage out of an administrative upgrade - a great thing, a good thing to happen - he should compare \$400 000 with the \$14 million spent under the coalition Government, or, if members like, under me as Minister for Education. I wish the member for Albany really had something to cry about. If he had achieved something stronger, he would have had a better result. So much for this Government's commitment to regional education - an administration centre, terrific! What about doing something real for the quality of education in our country schools? What about replicating the sort of program that we used in Kalgoorlie and the sorts of programs that happened in Esperance, Denmark and Manjimup? Right round the State there was more substantial work to be done. Today the minister said that the Government is spending \$133 million in capital works. When the coalition lost power it was spending about \$144 million. This is the lowest level of capital spending on schools in years. This Government has reduced spending on this State's schools, particularly in country areas, and that is the reality. Law and order -

Mr A.J. Dean: Wrong.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Bunbury said that was wrong; he should come up with something better. What has happened? This is the member for Albany's electorate. What is he doing about Amity House at Albany Residential College? An amount of \$5 million needs to be allocated to it, but under his Government it will be downgraded and downsized. It needs to be built on a suitable site so that it can take students from both the government and independent schools systems. That was the next step in the development of education in Albany. Albany is a key education centre; it serves the wider great southern area. Indeed, one future for this city is as a centre of learning and education, but it needs real money and real commitment. This Government has cut back projects and comes into this Parliament in Albany today and states that it will build a new administration office for the staff. That is great, but let us get real. Let us give our children a quality education.

The Australian Labor Party policy on law and order makes interesting reading. The Australian Labor Party policy is for more and better policing in regional Western Australia in some police stations in towns throughout WA that are suffering from chronic understaffing. Hang on! Chronic understaffing! The implication is that this Premier and the Labor Party would do something about it. The member for Kalgoorlie has asked a few questions about this matter in Parliament. What do we find?

Ms M.M. Quirk: Yes, but very few.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I tell the member for Girrawheen that the figures tabled in Parliament indicate the number of authorised police officers and that every single regional police district in the great southern, including this one, is operating below authorised strength. So much for this Government's commitment to policing.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Wrong.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Perth said that was wrong. I am so glad the member for Perth came to Albany. We are thrilled he is here; we are so glad he is here.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Crime is down, numbers are up.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think the people of Albany need to get to know the member for Perth a lot better. They need to know what this Labor Party is about here.

I will now get onto regional transport. What did the ALP policy say on regional transport? It said it would get transport back on track. The Government is trying to build a railway in Perth for \$1.4 billion - probably \$2 billion. In its policy, Labor said -

Labor will ensure that road projects in regional areas and Perth's outer suburbs are given priority so that all Western Australians have access to a safe and efficient road network regardless of where they live.

What is the reality? So far, this Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has taken \$181 million out of road projects, mainly out of country roads. It has taken \$14 million out of shire road projects - out of local government funding. Local governments fund 85 per cent of roads by distance.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Absolute rubbish! We are spending more on country roads than you did.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Hang on, we would love to hear from the minister. She planned to take another \$160 million out of the forward estimates. She is therefore not stopping at \$180 million; she is taking another \$160 million. If we add that up, what do we get? It is about \$400 million. By what amount has the south metropolitan rail project blown out under this minister? It is about \$400 million. Therefore, country road funding has gone into a \$400 million blow-out on a rail project, the construction of which started only last week. That is where the rail project has gone. That is why country roads are not up to the standard they need to be.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 23 March 2004]

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Let us look at development around the State. Yes, the Government announced a great project today - the Ravensthorpe nickel project. It is a fantastic project and I think it has been well handled. It has about a six-year history. However, I say to the Premier that when a big project comes along, the Government must grasp the opportunity and do something for the communities and the people. Does the Premier know what he missed doing in Ravensthorpe? A group of people came to see me last week from the Shires of Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe and Gnowangerup. The problem in those shires is that the power supply is antiquated; it is 50 years old. Two businesses left Gnowangerup in the past few months because they could not get enough power, in one case simply to operate a normal retail business. The power supply required an upgrade to 132 kilovolts in a line going out through those three shires. Every now and again a great chance comes. The Ravensthorpe nickel project was a chance to integrate that power supply on the plant into the Western Power system and upgrade the power supply. This Government did not even think of it. It did not even think of the opportunity provided in one swoop.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Did you?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes.

In one swoop the opportunity was there to upgrade the power supply. That project was the obvious opportunity to do it. The Government missed the opportunity, like it missed the opportunity with Gorgon and like it is missing the opportunity in Geraldton by not developing an industrial site. That is what this Government is doing; it is missing opportunities. I could refer to fire safety and a whole lot of other areas.

Mr Speaker, I want to conclude with Albany, because we are in Albany. I want to compare the records of two Governments. In education, the former coalition Government spent a total of \$14 million on Albany Senior High School, North Albany Senior High School and Albany Primary School. Underground power to the suburb of Middleton Beach should have been extended to other regional areas of the State. Not one major underground power project has taken place in regional WA since the project at Middleton Beach. The wind farm at Albany, which was developed under the coalition Government, is sensational. The chip-mill project, bringing potential value adding to timber, the export of chips and a port upgrade were all completed under the coalition Government. A new mental health wing facility was provided at the hospital, with more work to come. A Liberal Government is committed to constructing a gas pipeline to the city, serving Manjimup and other centres along the way. That gas pipeline will be built and will bring further opportunity for investment in minerals, agriculture and in timber value adding. It will give a new dimension to Albany and will provide householders in Albany and centres throughout the region with a choice of a low-cost heating and energy supply. Finally, after three years, the Government will start work on the police station. It has not given enough funds to the aquatic centre - the Premier will not even go and look at it. It has closed 10 beds in Albany Regional Hospital. There is one good project here, for which I compliment Mayor Alison Goode and the City of Albany. The work that is being done by the City of Albany on a proposal for a convention centre is very well done. It is expensive - probably in the order of \$10 million or more with possibly \$10 million to \$12 million being required from the State Government. Albany needs a facility that can accommodate conferences of between 100 and 400 people if it is to develop its tourism industry and attract conventions and conferences. Albany needs that facility and why should it not get it? Bunbury has it, Mandurah has it and Geraldton has it. Albany has not had a major investment in infrastructure for conferences, the arts and public meetings. I hope the Premier will commit to supporting the convention centre project while he is down here in Albany, because it is the most important one. The convention centre and the gas pipeline to Albany are the two most important projects for building the economy and jobs in this city and in the great southern region.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [3.07 pm]: It was a pleasure to see the member for Albany hosting the arrangements in Albany yesterday evening and today. However, where was the member for Roe this morning when the Premier attended his great opening? Why did the Premier not take the member for Roe? The most basic and simple thing that he, as Premier of this State, should have done was to take the local member for Roe to the announcement of that fantastic project for the State. The Premier used taxpayers' funds, hired an aeroplane and went without him. The Premier will no doubt appear on all the television stations tonight, but where will the member for Roe be? What are the Premier's responsibilities? They were absolutely absent. This is an example of just how plastic the Premier is.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: All that Ravensthorpe was to government members was an opportunity to appear on TV tonight. If they had any morals, they would have included the local member in that process. Did the Premier have an empty seat on the plane? Did he take his press officer?

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Mr R.F. Johnson: Yes.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes, that is right. That was an appalling effort, Premier!

Mr J.N. Hyde interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Perth!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: We support the member for Albany promoting his community. Why does the Premier not support the member for Roe promoting his community? This is a fantastic issue. I do not have time to range through all the issues that I want to -

Mr R.C. Kucera: Pick on a really important one.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I will pick on a really important one - power to the Avon industrial park. Last week 140 jobs were lost to the town of Northam because there is no power in the Avon industrial park in Northam to carry an industry. Where is that industry going? It is going to Cockburn. Is that the right place for it? The minerals will be mined in Wickepin and were to be processed in Northam, but that cannot happen. Why can it not be done? There is no power! Do members know the amount of money we are talking about? It is half a million dollars.

Mr R.C. Kucera: You always say that when you are blocking the reform process.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: What reform process are we blocking? That is very interesting.

Mr R.F. Johnson: He doesn't know what he's talking about over there.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: We will not worry about him. The whole of the south west interconnected system in the great southern has major problems. As members know, the SWIS extends from above Geraldton through the regions to this part of the world. I have not gone to a single community in which there has not been a story about a lost opportunity because power is not available to regional people. That can be wiped off. The minister who unfortunately just left the Chamber laughed and said that the Government was doing great things with police stations. We were in Williams the other day. Those who have been to the Williams Police Station - certainly no members opposite have been there - would find that they would not get any change from \$200 000 to fix the problems with the cells at that old station. The sergeant at Williams actually sits -

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members, there are too many interjections and conversations going on. It has become very difficult to hear the person who has the call. I would like members to respect that. It is difficult enough to hear the speaker in these conditions.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The police sergeant at the Williams Police Station operates from a cupboard. That is a true story. He operates from the storeroom. It is like a cell, except it is a lot smaller than a cell.

Mr J.B. D'Orazio: What about when you were in government?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: We built police station after police station after police station.

Several members interjected.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: We are happy to show it to members. Also there are 58 unfilled police positions in regional WA. Where are the officers to fill those positions? They are on the trains in Perth. There are 70-odd police officers on trains in the metropolitan area. That is where the police officers are. That is the great commitment this Government has to police.

We have all heard about the Moora District Hospital, but the hospitals at Bencubbin, Beacon, Hyden, Gnowangerup, Busselton and Dumbleyung also have serious problems. That could go on forever. It is appalling that the Department of Health has told the people of Hyden that there must be a local tax of \$100 per family so that a Silver Chain nurse can be provided. That is the lowest possible level of health service and the Minister for Health has said to each of those communities that families must come up with \$100. That is over and above the \$15 000 that the shire already comes up with for the Silver Chain nurse. I can tell the minister that that does not happen in Fremantle.

I turn to roads and issues like the Peel deviation, the coastal road between Lancelin and Jurien, Muirs Highway, the roads down here, which the member for Stirling will talk about tomorrow, Chester Pass Road, the bypass at Mount Barker, all the woodchips that are being transported on Albany Highway, and the Albany roundabout, which the people of Albany know is a major problem. They are issues that have just disappeared, as the Leader

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of the Opposition said. A sum of \$400 million has disappeared. Where has it gone? It has gone straight down the train!

Many opportunities are being lost in regional WA because of Western Power and the Water Corporation. A great scheme was operating out of Merredin in which slightly saline water was being treated with the prospect of putting it into the pipeline to Kalgoorlie. That was a fantastic scheme and just the sort of opportunity that should be happening. What did the Government do? It removed the funding. Why did it remove the funding? It did so because the money was needed to go down the train! They are the facts. The \$2 billion that is going down the railway line represents a loss of opportunity in the regions. Jobs will be lost everywhere. We heard about the Jerramungup plant from the Leader of the Opposition. A group in Jerramungup has been trying to put that scheme together for three years. It has put the scheme together and is in a highly acceptable position. It is moving to a business plan, but it always has the spectre that it cannot cover the power, a resource that is taken for granted in the metropolitan area. The creation of 40 or 50 jobs in Jerramungup would be substantial for that community. Even more importantly, the produce of the plant would help sustain the movement of agriculture into a more efficient and profitable mode, particularly in the development of both cattle and sheep meat. Where is the Government on that issue? It has been absolutely silent. The Minister for Energy can yawn away, but he received the same deputation that I received.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Say something interesting.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister is having a good laugh. He should tell us about the Narrogin oil mallee plant. That is a fantastic scheme. Why is that not going ahead? The last group that refused to put money into the scheme was the Western Australian Government. It was to put in \$400 000.

Mr E.S. Ripper: An amount of \$9 million has been put in already by the Western Australian Government.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The plant has been sitting there mostly built for two years, waiting for the Government to put \$400 000 into the scheme so that it can actually crank up. That plant will produce pure carbon.

Mr E.S. Ripper: May produce. It is an experiment.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It will not produce it unless the Government puts in \$400 000. There is no chance of that happening if it does not. The Government has no interest in it. The developers of that plant have been at the Government for 18 months to put in that money. Where has the Government been? A non-operable plant is just sitting there. If pure carbon and mallee oil could be produced out of that plant -

Mr E.S. Ripper: If! It is an experiment.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister has just told me that he has no interest in that project. Another eight or nine of those plants will be established in regional areas. Those plants would be knocking out power that would help to do the things that Jerramungup and other communities are trying to do. The minister has totally abrogated his responsibilities.

MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [3.16 pm]: I have only two minutes in which to put my position on this motion, which I support. On Liam Bartlett's radio program a couple of weeks ago, David Martin from Western Power explained that there are 800 000 power poles in Western Australia, that 200 000 are inspected annually and that 2 000 would be replaced each year. How many years would it take to replace the infrastructure? My quick calculation is that it would take 400 years. Most of those poles are already more than 50 years old. Every time I have my photograph taken standing next to a power pole that is falling over, it gets fixed the next week. However, I do not have enough time in the day to fix up the mess that exists in rural Western Australia today. It is a state disgrace. Three weeks ago on Wednesday, the lights went out in Western Australia. What has the minister or the Premier done about that? They have sat there with their teeth in their mouths and done nothing about it.

What is happening with medicine in Western Australia? The number of health service managers in the South West Health Service will be reduced from 17 to eight. What is the Government doing about that? It is doing absolutely nothing. Has the Minister for Health made a commitment to maintain the positions of those health service managers? No. Is there a commitment to ensure that the positions of those senior health people in Busselton and Bunbury will be protected? No. That is the situation in Western Australia. It is a state disgrace and this Government should be ashamed of itself.

MR L. GRAHAM (Pilbara) [3.18 pm]: Firstly, I congratulate the Government and the Parliament on meeting in Albany. I do that unreservedly. I have for some time been a strong advocate of regional parliamentary sittings and I encourage the Government, the Parliament and the Opposition to make it a regular feature of the parliamentary calendar and not just a one-off. The last time I was in this hall was some years ago when my

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uncle did a re-enactment of Edward John Eyre's march across Australia, which finished up in Albany. Back then I thought that it was interesting that Albany was the first white settlement in Western Australia. I make the trite point that it is my view that since Perth or the Swan River Colony discovered Albany and settled itself in Perth in about 1829 - it started down here two years prior to that - Perth has shown an insatiable appetite to shift things towards the Swan River and to consume all the produce of the regions of Western Australia. It still does that. As I said in a *Sunday Times* article some time ago, in my 30-odd years in the north west this is the worst Government I have seen in the sense of regional development. That is sad. I get no joy out of saying that. People say a whole lot of things about me.

Mr P.B. Watson: Don't you?

Mr L. GRAHAM: No, I do not. I get no joy out of it at all.

Mr R.C. Kucera: No-one takes any notice of you either.

Mr L. GRAHAM: I have to tell you, Bob, that if no-one takes any notice, why is everyone knocking on my door to work for Hon Tom Stephens?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Pilbara! The member knows the rules about addressing members in this place.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Two Bob!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Pilbara! I will call to order the member if he does not address the member in the correct form.

Mr L. GRAHAM: I make a quick point about regional development and the area I represent. It is interesting that the Port Hedland Port Authority met yesterday in Fremantle because there are now more non-Port Hedland people on the port authority than there are people from Port Hedland. The chair of the Pilbara Development Commission -

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: As you know, quite often people move out of the place where they are appointed. Quite often they do, including the mayor and the local member. You, of all people, should understand that.

Mr L. GRAHAM: That is not true.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Quite often they do.

Mr L. GRAHAM: That is not true.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr L. GRAHAM: When the minister asked me to find two local residents to go on to the port authority, I found them. The minister balanced that by appointing a chairman from Perth and a member from the ex maritime unions in Fremantle. They are now meeting in Fremantle, but that is cool. The chair of the Pilbara Development Commission is based in Perth at Woodside. The chair of the regional development council is Ian Taylor, who lives in Coolbinia. The Minister for Local Government and Regional Development lives in Perth. The Premier, who is the chair of the subcommittee, lives in Perth. The key to the Government's regional development policy -

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Where does the local member live?

Mr L. GRAHAM: Between Port Hedland and Toodyay. Does that answer the minister's question? I make the point because the minister keeps saying it publicly: had my wife not died I would never have left Port Hedland. End of story - full stop. I would have remained in Port Hedland from that day to this.

I make the point about the cabinet subcommittee. I asked a series of questions about it. It is the cornerstone of the Government's regional development policy. It is interesting that, in the first two years it existed, it never once had all the regional ministers in attendance. Not one of the 25 meetings had all the regional ministers in the room. Its primary reason for being was for the ministers to take responsibility, but it never once got them all together in a room. It has no jurisdiction over energy; the Treasurer is not on it. It does not have the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure on it, and it should. Not having that minister excludes transport and infrastructure. The Minister for the Environment is not on it. Planning, health and education ministers are not on it. Members should ask themselves about the value of that committee.

I finish on this note. How different would Western Australia be if the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre being built in the city had been put in Broome? What if the police academy being built in the northern suburbs was located in Kalgoorlie? What if the fisheries research centre was located in Geraldton or Esperance? What if

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the minerals and petroleum research centre was located in Karratha, or the \$1.5 billion being spent on the Mandurah railway was used to connect the Pilbara railroads to the national grid? That is regional development.

DR G.I. GALLOP (Victoria Park - Premier) [3.24 pm]: I oppose the motion moved by the Opposition today. I begin my response by referring to what I believe to be one of the greatest political speeches ever delivered in Western Australia. It was delivered in 1890 by John Forrest to seek election to the newly created Legislative Assembly of Western Australia. In that speech he put forward his view of where the colony of Western Australia, which became a State in 1901, would go in the future. In response to some of the interjections to his speech, he made the observation that it was very easy to focus on a narrow interest here, a particular interest there and the interests of this region or that town. However, he said that, in the end, there must be a vision for Western Australia and where it was going. He was quite frank with the people that his vision meant that people had to prioritise. One of the priorities he believed should be set was to consolidate and strengthen the role of the port of Fremantle. I must say that that worked against the interests of Albany at the time because Albany was the destination for the mail steamers that came from Europe. He made it clear that, in order to develop Western Australia, people have to set priorities. People have to make sure they emphasise their investment in those areas that will produce real value for the people. A political argument cannot be produced by simply saying that, in a particular area, town or region, people do not have everything they want. That does not sustain a proper argument about where the whole community will go. Of course, in this context, the whole community is Western Australia. I make the observation that all the Opposition contributed to this debate was complaints about particular items of expenditure in particular locations. That does not represent a vision for the regions or Western Australia. The Opposition did not put forward to the Parliament its views of where Western Australia is situated and where it should go in the future.

I will put forward such a vision and indicate that this Government is backing up that vision with its policies and programs. Our view is very simple: when we assumed government in early 2001, Western Australia was behind the times in many respects. As a result of that, it was not maximising the value it could get as a community. That value might come in terms of the society in which we live. It might come in the jobs and opportunities we create. It might come in the environment we all share and celebrate. It might come in the arrangements the Government has put in place. The Government inherited the situation in which Western Australia was way behind the times in its approach to these issues. Our vision for Western Australia was to lift it up; to raise the standards that apply in the way we develop policy so that everyone in Western Australia can share in the future. In order to do that, the first thing we faced was the ideological prejudices of the previous Government. Rural Western Australians remember them only too well, such as the privatisation prejudices, which work directly against the interests of regional and rural citizens in Western Australia. We have reversed that; we have reversed the privatisation madness. Secondly, we remember only too well the attitude that the then Minister for Energy took to the provision of electricity supply and the pricing arrangements that should operate for that supply. We remember it well. The now Leader of the Opposition was the minister who undermined the uniform electricity tariff, which is so fundamental. The first thing the Government had to do was to reverse the ideological directions that were undermining rural and regional development: privatisation and the user-pays principle for electricity. We came to government. Our vision for Western Australia incorporates rural and regional Western Australia. I say very clearly that we cannot have a vision for regional Western Australia unless we have a vision for Western Australia. In the early twentieth century the Labor Party used to have a philosophy that the fundamental driving force in society was class versus class. That gets people nowhere. What is needed is a policy that brings elements of the community together under the banner of social justice. That is the policy.

Segments of the Opposition are now saying that we must have a policy of city versus country. They define their thinking in terms of that division. We must have a policy that brings city and country together in the interests of the future of all Western Australians. That is the policy of the Government. We have a vision for rural and regional Western Australia. It is to make sure that our Government's arrangements involve all sections of our community. I will deal with how we are doing that in a minute.

Our policy is to make sure that the window of opportunity that Western Australia currently has in the world market is realised, with investment in this State creating jobs and opportunities. We now see throughout rural and regional Western Australia a new hunger and desire among our indigenous people to reverse the directions that have been set in this State over many decades and to deal with the issues of child abuse and oppression in Aboriginal communities.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nedlands!

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Dr G.I. GALLOP: We now see a new desire in our community to raise the profile of the environment and incorporate it more fully in our policy making. That is our vision for Western Australia. It incorporates all sections of our community, including rural and regional Western Australia.

How does that vision work for rural and regional Western Australia? First, let me talk about governance. We are very conscious of the fact that we need to incorporate rural and regional opinion in our decision-making processes. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government has created regional ministers. We know that if we are to have a good Government, at the centre of government - that is, the Cabinet - we need functional ministers on one side and regional ministers on the other, so that we protect the interests of our regions. Secondly, of course, the Government has had a policy of frequent cabinet meetings throughout the State. We have had 18 cabinet meetings throughout Western Australia. Each one of those cabinet meetings has been heralded by all sections of rural and regional Western Australia as a major basis for incorporating them in decision making. Regional development commissions are playing a significant role. The Government has raised their status and given them financial power so that they can assist in the development of their regions. Of course, they are the voice of the regions.

I point out to all the people here today and everyone in the Parliament that the position of the Opposition on regional development commissions is a little unclear. The Leader of the Opposition said in 2001 that he thought they should be abolished. Since then he has been arguing that we should reformulate the way in which they operate. He is a little unclear on where he stands. I will tell members where the Government stands. We support regional development commissions as an important voice of regional Western Australia. We have delivered exactly what we said we would do by involving rural and regional communities right at the heart of government. We will continue with that policy.

Let me now turn to our regional economies. When the Government of Western Australia looks at the current world market, what does it see? A couple of features of the market are very important for Western Australia. The first is the rise and development of China as a major market. We have made it very clear that we can realise enormous numbers of jobs and opportunities for our people if we can access those markets and get investment in Western Australia. The second and most important feature of the modern world market is the desire of many people around the world to take in a clean and green experience. The environment has now emerged not just as an environment issue, but also as an economic issue. The United States does not have enough wilderness for the number of people who want to access wilderness. Demand is so heavy that it must be rationed. We must make sure that we respond to that change in sentiment throughout the world and create a market here in Western Australia for that investment and that interest. How do we do this? We have implemented our regional investment fund. Some \$75 million has been invested in regional projects. One thousand projects have created 3 100 jobs throughout regional and rural Western Australia directly from that excellent program.

We have had regional investment tours. I note in the gallery today colleagues from New South Wales. Mr Harry Woods, a former minister in a New South Wales Government, gave me this idea. We have taken it up and introduced regional investment tours. As a result, \$58 million has been invested in regional Western Australia. We have committed to our regional ports. We have tabled the information in the Parliament. We have made a \$360 million investment in our regional ports since we have come to government. This is a commitment to our rural and regional economy to make sure that we get the jobs and opportunities that we know can come.

Let us look at specific areas of rural and regional Western Australia. For the first time, a project is up and running in the Burrup Peninsula that uses the State's gas in the creation of ammonia for the world market. The Opposition talked about it but we did it. We will make sure that we do more of it. Reference was made to the Gorgon project, which will be, alongside the North West Shelf, one of the major projects of Western Australia. If the Opposition were in power, that project would not be where it is today. We have seen that attitude from the Leader of the Opposition repeated again today in the comments that he made.

Let us look at the commitment we have put into the Geological Survey to create information that will lead to investment in our mining industry throughout Western Australia. We understand the opportunities that exist in our economy. We are investing in the infrastructure to make it happen. People can see development occurring today in Broome and Exmouth as a result of our infrastructure commitments. They can see it occurring in the port of Geraldton in the mid west. They can see what is happening in the south west of the State as a result of our new approach to old-growth forests in Western Australia. They can come to Albany and see the infusion of investment in the infrastructure of this economy to create new jobs.

Let me talk about the second part of our vision - the environment. Unlike the opposition parties, we understand that our old-growth forests should be protected for future generations, and we have done it in a way that has protected the interests of those affected by the policy. We in the Western Australian Government have a clear

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vision for our forests. We will not touch the old-growth forests; we will develop our timber industry on the basis of regrowth and plantations. That is what is happening in our timber industry today in Western Australia.

There is a clear difference between the two sides in respect of Ningaloo. We will protect Ningaloo Reef. The Opposition wants to create a marina and resort development at Mauds Landing that will undermine the integrity of Ningaloo. Our vision for Western Australia is to protect the environment for future generations.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We have done all those things, with surplus budgets, in a financially responsible way. What else? We have done it without privatising government utilities.

Let me turn to the issue of our communities. Many aspects of communities in rural and regional Western Australia need attention, none more so that our indigenous communities.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nedlands!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We are capable of dealing with this issue for two reasons. First, we have the will and the capacity to confront a problem and deal with it. For eight years the previous Government swept child abuse under the carpet. We are confronting it.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Where?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I point out to the Leader of the Opposition that we closed the Swan Valley Aboriginal camp, and we did it in the interests of the women and children at that camp. We initiated the Gordon Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities, which has made a range of recommendations. The Government understands something about Western Australia's indigenous communities that the Opposition does not. Within those communities, particularly amongst the women, there is a new desire to bring about change. The Government is now partnering with those communities to bring about a reversal of the abuse that has occurred, and will spend \$75 million throughout the State. I commend the work of the Minister for Community Development, the Minister for Police and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, for the roles they are playing in making sure that this scandal is reversed, and that the Government deals with the communities. That is the vision of the Government.

We have heard no indication of vision from the Opposition. Members opposite complain about this project here, that expenditure there, and the other issue over there. Where is their vision? They do not have one. The vision of the Government is clear. Firstly, its vision is to make sure that the window of opportunity we currently have on the world market leads to investment in infrastructure - the Government is doing that. Secondly, we must make sure we protect our environment for the future - we are doing it. Let us make sure that we build strong communities throughout Western Australia, particularly those that have been undermined by child abuse. Western Australia is on the way to realising those objectives.

The Government is very keen to see the great southern region play its role in the future of Western Australia. We understand that, with the economic development currently occurring, some stresses and strains will need to be dealt with, particularly the relationship between the plantation timber industry and the port, and all the transport issues that need to be considered. We understand that there is a new interest in the tourism potential of this region, and the Government has invested in major projects here to make sure that it can be properly realised. We also know that there is great interest in this region in higher education, and we are delighted that the work we are doing here will create opportunities for young and not-so-young people to obtain degrees from the University of Western Australia in Albany. The Government has put forward the vision. The Opposition has put forward no vision; it put forward a series of complaints about a series of projects. That is not a vision. The Government has put forward its vision and is implementing it step by step. The results are the strongest economic growth performance in our nation; the greatest investment level of any State in Australia; unemployment below the national average of 5.6 per cent; and the creation of massive interest in the State in terms of new investment and new opportunities. The Opposition has completely failed today to indicate why it believes that the Government is not delivering a long-term vision for the future of Western Australia. I have put forward a vision and the policies that back up that vision, and I am very proud of our achievements.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members on my left!

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Dr G.I. GALLOP: Earlier today, I was in Ravensthorpe. As a result of the \$18.4 million commitment of this Government, the jobs for that project will exist in the shires of Ravensthorpe and Esperance. That is the result of the work done by my Government to make sure that fly in, fly out did not occur in that area. That is the commitment of the Government illustrated clearly for all to see. I oppose the motion.

MS A.J. MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [3.44 pm]: Madam Deputy Speaker -

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members on my left, the conversation and interjection is more appropriate to a football oval than a Parliament. Members know the rules of the House. I ask members to desist so that we can hear the minister, who has the call.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I am very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition has recognised that the contracts under which we have given bus drivers \$16 an hour, rather than \$13 an hour, truly makes me the bus drivers' friend. I am very proud to see that.

I welcome an opportunity to go through some regional development issues, because regional development is a major issue that the Government in Western Australia must address. Western Australia has the most centralised and concentrated population distribution of any State in Western Australia. It is quite extraordinary that it has the city of Perth with 1.5 million people, while its next biggest city has a population of around 30 000. That is a huge difference. We all recognise that work must be done to ensure that we deliver opportunities to the regions to create a more sustainable distribution of our population and a more sustainable economic environment throughout Western Australia. I will focus on a few areas in my portfolio. An enormous amount of work is being done in the health and education portfolio to bring about much better regional outcomes but, in the brief time I have available, I will speak about the approach the Government is taking to address the very real issue of regional development. The Government is trying to develop a strategic approach here. We recognise that the problems are different in each centre.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: This is our first opportunity to have a session of Parliament in a regional centre, and a serious issue of regional development has been raised. I ask opposition members to give the Government an opportunity to set out what it is doing, as the Opposition had the opportunity to set out its vision.

The Government has been asking what the strengths of Albany are. One of its great strengths is its magnificent natural environment and landscape. The Government has worked with the local community and the council to develop projects that they really believe will add value and diversity to the economy and add to the amenity of this town. The project identified by the City of Albany and the Great Southern Development Commission is the development of the boat harbour. In its first year, the Government made a firm commitment to that project of some \$12 million. Since that time, the Government has been working very intensively to make sure that the project will really deliver positive outcomes to the people of Albany. It will create greater opportunities for the local fishing industry, attract the international fishing industry to the city, and provide facilities for the very substantial round-the-world yachting community. There is enormous potential for business spinning off from the project. It will also provide the opportunity for waterfront tourism development, with jobs and recreational opportunities for the local community.

Another city in which the Government has taken a similar approach is Geraldton. We needed to link Geraldton to the very rich belt of mineral prospects in the northern goldfields. The Government did not put in just one project; it created a series of projects to turn that city around. That includes a major road linking the city with the goldfields, a transport corridor into the centre of the town, and the redevelopment of the port. None of those projects, by itself, would have delivered a satisfactory outcome or any real turnaround. However, by thinking strategically about how it invests, the Government can create very real change. I am proud to say that that approach was adopted by the previous Labor Government in Bunbury. Sometimes it will take a long time to really make the turnaround happen, but we have now seen an enormous breakthrough in the capacity for Bunbury to become a very attractive alternative to Perth for major businesses. We are seeing Bunbury taking business away from Perth. We want that vision to happen around the State. I add, for the member for Pilbara, that the Government also recognises that very substantial issues need to be addressed in that region. The question of amenity for the community is a very important one, because one of the drivers for a fly in, fly out arrangement, according to the mining companies, is that people do not want to live in those towns. Part of the reason that they do not want to live there is that not enough effort has been made to ensure that the amenity of those towns is up to the standard of amenity in Perth. We are working very intensively now to see how we can turn that around.

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The issue of regional development is incredibly important. However, it cannot be solved by random pork-barrelling. The issue can be addressed only by proper strategic thinking and strategic investment in infrastructure. I am very proud to be part of a Government that has given such priority to regional development.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont - Deputy Premier) [3.50 pm]: The man who told the managing director of Western Power that the uniform tariff mentality had to be broken has come to country Western Australia and moved a motion on a vision for regional development. That is what has happened today. What a mean-spirited little contribution he made to the debate. His speech displayed all the vision and strategic intelligence of Wyle E. Coyote - the poor coyote that could never catch the roadrunner because of his complete lack of vision or practical intelligence. What did he say about a vision for regional Western Australia? He talked about education. His entire contribution on education was to whinge and moan about a \$400 000 upgrade to an administrative centre at a local school. That was his contribution to the vision on education. When it came to police, he talked about understaffing in country police stations. I remember the year 2000 and who made the commitment for 250 additional police officers. That was a commitment made by Labor that is now being implemented. The Court Government did not want to put on additional police officers. Only when Labor made the commitment did it say, "Oh dear, the Opposition is ahead of us. We had better make a commitment of our own." That was its commitment to the staffing of country police stations.

Let us look at some of the things that are happening in regional development. What a day for the Opposition to move a motion on regional development. The Premier has just announced a \$1.4 billion mining project at Ravensthorpe. That project did not come about without some government involvement; namely, an \$18.4 million commitment to infrastructure. That followed on from the \$180 million infrastructure commitment that the State Government made to the projects on the Burrup Peninsula. We did not make the commitment only to infrastructure; we also made sure that the project proponents had access to the land. The Leader of the Opposition asked by interjection during one of my colleague's speeches, "Who actually allocated the land to Burrup Fertilisers?" The Leader of the Opposition did not settle the native title issues regarding access to the land; those native title issues for access to the land were settled by the Labor Government.

Mr C.J. Barnett: There is no native title on the Burrup. The Federal Court found that there is no native title. You paid \$15 million and there is no native title.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: There are native title issues, my friend. The Leader of the Opposition's ignorance on this issue would have brought down those developments.

Mr C.J. Barnett: The court found no native title on the Burrup.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: There are native title issues. They have been resolved by this Government in the most comprehensive, development-related native title settlement ever participated in by any Government in this country. That commitment to the development of the mining industry, the resources sector and downstream processing has been backed up by an extra \$3 million a year on Geological Survey of Western Australia, which was announced earlier this year. It has also been backed up by new arrangements for protection of indigenous heritage and promotion of exploration, which were signed by the mining industry and land councils after more than 60 meetings involving the Government and those parties. It is backed up by a \$3 billion a year capital works program. Much of that occurs in the country; for example, the \$100 million for the Geraldton port expansion. It is also backed up by an additional amount that is available only for the country; that is, \$75 million from the regional investment fund over four years. That is regional development, not the mean-spirited little contribution we had from the Leader of the Opposition.

MR D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.55 pm]: When the Premier stopped telling this Chamber about a project in Ravensthorpe - which began six years ago, I might add, and he seemed to be wanting to claim credit for a project that started before he was in office - he began to talk about the fact that he had a vision for this State. However, he did not mention certain things. His vision includes gay law reform. Let us be honest. The vision of the Labor Party includes allowing homosexual men to conduct homosexual acts with children aged 16 years. It allows lesbians to have access to in-vitro fertilisation treatment. The Premier's vision, as he put it, includes the so-called plan for one vote, one value. What does that mean? It means that the Government will reduce country representation in Parliament and silence the country. The Premier's vision entails going soft on illicit drugs; and guess what? His vision - this is a beauty - even includes allowing rapists who are in jail to have a vote in an election. That is the vision that this Labor Party has - a social vision for this State.

I will tell members something: for three years, while the Labor Party has been following this vision, Albany has got nothing; regional areas have got nothing. However, do members know that suddenly, magically, every Labor Party minister possible is in town promising the world and giving out money here and there? We did not hear from them for three years, and I think I know why. It might surprise people in the audience to know that an

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election could be called as early as 24 June - three months away. Suddenly, after three years of doing nothing for regional communities, and Albany in particular, this mob has pulled out the chequebook and is going to the schools and the hospital - it is doing nothing for small business - and popping around the community here trying to buy the votes of the people in the region. I have news for the Government. People in regional WA are not that dumb. We understand and see through that sort of hypocritical approach. Three months away from a possible election date, this Government is going around pork-barrelling.

Where is the genuine attempt to look after regional WA? It is not around. I will give the House three examples. The first one is for the member for Albany. He will be very interested in this, because I know that he and others are very concerned about the enormous difference between the price of fuel in Perth and the price in country areas. I have news for those members who fill up their car today in Albany. The average price in Albany today is 14c a litre more than they would pay for fuel in Perth. The minister is smiling. However, I have a little picture here of the Premier holding a couple of petrol pump hoses. There he is saying that he is going to kill the gap; he will do away with the gap - the difference in price between Perth and country areas. Guess what?

Mr J.C. Kobelke: We have reduced it by about 4c.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I can tell the minister that that is not what I hear around Albany.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: The people know the facts, though.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: They do not believe the minister. The minister is happy with the 14c difference, is he?

Mr J.C. Kobelke: No, but I am happy that we have reduced that margin by nearly 4c.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: The Government is not doing anything about it. Do people know something else the Government is not doing anything about? A while ago the Government announced a \$1.8 million plan for three call centres in regional WA. It sounded great. A business in my home town of Bunbury has done quite well out of it. However, when it comes to the Government's bona fides on regional development, what has it done in Albany? Two businesses could have tendered for a major component of that \$1.8 million project in Albany. Neither of them was given the opportunity. There was an opportunity to generate genuine jobs for people in Albany, and the Labor Party did nothing. It was not interested in genuine regional development.

I will give members opposite another fact. More than one in five young people in this State today cannot get a full-time job. Members opposite gloat about regional development. However, they are obsessed with gay law reform and social reform and so on, while our kids are on the dole. They have no vision. In the past three years, our leader, our shadow ministers and our members have been getting out into regional Western Australia. I have been to Albany a number of times. The Leader of the Opposition has been to over 100 country areas. We have been listening to country communities, and we have been putting together some very constructive and positive proposals for regional development in this State. Come the next election, I will be proud to compare the Liberal plan for regional development and improved government services in regional areas with the miserable attempt by the Labor party to pork-barrel and buy people's votes. I have a great deal of sympathy for the member for Albany. He is probably an honourable person. However, he has had to oppose a gas pipeline to Albany simply because the Liberals suggested it and his ministers will not support it. He has come out publicly and opposed a lifeline for economic development for Albany. That sums up the Premier's vision.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

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Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Max Trenorden; Deputy Speaker; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr Larry Graham; Dr Geoff Gallop;
Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan

Ayes (24)

Mr R.A. Ainsworth	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr M.G. House	Mr P.G. Pandal
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mrs C.L. Edwardes	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr M.W. Trenorden
Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan	Mr J.P.D. Edwards	Mr W.J. McNee	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr M.J. Birney	Mr L. Graham	Mr A.D. Marshall	Ms S.E. Walker
Mr M.F. Board	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr B.K. Masters	Dr J.M. Woollard
Dr E. Constable	Ms K. Hodson-Thomas	Mr P.D. Omodei	Mr J.L. Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (29)

Mr P.W. Andrews	Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr A.D. McRae	Mrs M.H. Roberts
Mr J.J.M. Bowler	Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr N.R. Marlborough	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr A.J. Carpenter	Mr R.C. Kucera	Mrs C.A. Martin	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr A.J. Dean	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr J.B. D'Orazio	Ms A.J. MacTiernan	Mr A.P. O'Gorman	Ms M.M. Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)
Dr J.M. Edwards	Mr J.A. McGinty	Mr J.R. Quigley	
Dr G.I. Gallop	Mr M. McGowan	Ms J.A. Radisich	
Mr S.R. Hill	Ms S.M. McHale	Mr E.S. Ripper	

Question thus negated.