

Mr Troy Buswell; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Miles; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Alan Carpenter; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Bill Marmion

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Amendment to Question

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Treasurer) [2.50 pm]: I cannot quite remember where I was up to—it may have been a discussion about the member for Rockingham, but no doubt that will come up again in due course.

Mr M. McGowan: We can always discuss you, my friend!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Plenty of that has happened!

I want to touch upon a few points. The member for Rockingham highlighted that the government in which he served as a minister was an activist government. I was thinking about that during question time and I reflected on some of that activism and the results it had produced for Western Australia. I will ask the member for Rockingham a couple of questions: Where was that level of activism when Inpex took its potential \$15 billion investment in this state to the Northern Territory? Does the member know where that activism was? It was in an office, refusing to be unleashed because no-one from the government would engage with that company. The former government allowed the Northern Territory to come and take it away.

Mr P. Papalia: You still haven't chosen the —

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Sorry?

Mr P. Papalia: It still hasn't been resolved! You still haven't done anything!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Anything about what?

Mr P. Papalia: From October last year the process has been —

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Is the member saying we have not chosen a site? Is he saying that we have not done anything? Is he saying the Premier has not been up there, been on the ground and stood in the area where the hub will go? Is that what he is telling me? He has done it! Ticked the box!

Where was the former government's activism when it continually put Gorgon through hoop after hoop after hoop during its environmental approvals process? Where was its activism there? It was a massive investment that could currently be happening in this state and employing Western Australians. How many Western Australians do members opposite think Inpex would employ if that investment happened on the Kimberley coast as opposed to Darwin? Quite a few! That project was lost before the election because the former government and the former Treasurer refused to do anything. In fact they refused to take telephone calls—an absolute abdication of their responsibility! A do-nothing government—that is what it was!

The member for Rockingham talked about doubling the number of mines. Where was the former government's activism when the queue of people waiting for licences to be approved blew out to 18 000? Where was its activism then? It was not an activist government!

When the boom hit this state in 2001, the former government never saw it coming. It spent the rest of its time trying to catch up and get its head above water. When the economy began to wobble in 2008, it did not see that coming either. It did not see the start of the boom, it struggled to keep up and it failed to predict the end of the boom —

Mr A.J. Carpenter: All I saw was you going on holiday, so I assumed everything was okay.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I did go on holidays, Premier—ex-Premier—member for Willagee; my apologies. I did go on holidays —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: At length!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: — and I will do it again! Do members know why? Because I have two boys, one 13 and one 15, and my view is that my family deserves time with me on holidays. We had a fantastic three and a half weeks. As a family we reconnected, because, I have to be honest, last year I put my family through a year that no-one would probably want to put families through very often. We went away and we reconnected. We put in place a platform to build on into the future. That is an aside.

Some opposition members have been on holiday. In fact the now Leader of the Opposition, the then Treasurer — Several members interjected.

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The SPEAKER: Order! I hope the Treasurer is going to speak to the amendment, because that is what is currently before the house. Once again I mention that word “efficiency”; for the efficiency of the operation of this place, I would urge the Treasurer to return to the amendment.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I am very focused on efficiency at the moment.

The former Treasurer was on holiday when the last state election was called. The member for Rockingham went on holidays to Sydney and drove Kim Beazley around.

Point of Order

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Speaker just issued an instruction—a ruling, if you like—to the speaker on his feet, the Treasurer, and he has just deliberately flouted your ruling. I request that the member adhere to the ruling of the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I appreciate what the member for Rockingham has said, and whilst I do not believe the Treasurer is doing what the member might be interpreting, I will again urge the Treasurer to return to the amendment. I would prefer not to hear about anybody’s holidays in this place.

Debate Resumed

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: As I outlined in question time, the state’s economy is facing a more difficult period. All the components of the aggregate economy—private consumption, private investment, the government sector and the export sector—have slowed. As I said, dwelling investment now is flat in Western Australia; private consumption is flat; business investment is positive but at a very low level of growth; and export growth has stagnated. The opposition’s amendment would have us believe that the Liberal-National government has failed to effectively manage the Western Australian economy and to protect jobs. That is quite simply not the case.

I will touch on a couple of things that the Liberal-National Party government has done in the six months or so since coming to office. Firstly, in the first six months of this financial year it has overseen some \$2.56 billion of government sector investment. I believe that figure is up from \$2.167 billion of government sector investment the year before. The government has seen the figures on the housing sector in this state and it understands the value of the housing sector as a short-term stimulus to the state’s economy. It has committed to building 1 000 new homes in the very near future. That commitment to build 1 000 homes is being backed up by a fundamental reform of the way the Department of Housing builds homes. Even if the former government had wanted to build 1 000 new homes in 18 months, it could not have done so because the system quite simply was not efficient enough to deliver the outcome. That is a fact. There is a fundamental reform occurring now of the way we procure social housing in Western Australia. I like the way the member for Perth put his hand up, so I will stop.

Mr J.N. Hyde: With respect, while I am very supportive, one of the changes seems to be the elimination of local consultation. I have written to you on this. People in the inner city want affordable housing, but if the Department of Housing isn’t consulting with the local community —

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Member for Perth, I have to say—I hate to be blunt—that we have a strong desire to build 1 000 homes to help the state economy to provide houses for the 20 000 people on the waitlist. We will do that and do whatever it takes to deliver on that outcome. I will look at the issue that the member for Perth has specifically raised with me, as I always do when I get letters from him —

Mr J.N. Hyde: You are very fair.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: — but housing is something we intend to deliver on. The reforms have delivered a complete change in the way we engage the private sector to build public housing. It is a fundamental reform that the private sector has embraced dramatically. We are also very active in the market now, attempting, where possible, to buy off the plan to get building projects on the ground. It is fundamentally important to the government. We have committed to 1 000 new homes.

What else has the government done? The Premier alluded to some of these earlier: it has gotten projects, such as Oakajee, moving in Western Australia. For eight to 10 years the Oakajee project has gathered dust on a shelf somewhere in government. The Ord River project is well on the way to fulfilling its potential. The Muchea saleyards have been approved by this government. It would have been impossible for the former government to have approved it in totality because the costs have risen dramatically. The Derby Prison has moved forward. We have approved hospitals in Joondalup, Albany and Kalgoorlie. The police complex in Northbridge is moving forward, as are a range of other capital work programs. The government is active in providing a measured and appropriate response to assist the Western Australian economy. It is also working very hard to partner the commonwealth. We see that as fundamentally important.

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The commonwealth has announced a range of incentives and funding programs to assist with capital works. This state will receive \$640 million over the next 18 months or two years to assist the state to build social housing. It is a massive amount of investment in social housing and we will deliver on that. Of that \$640 million, \$600 million is for social housing and \$40 million is to be used to refurbish houses that are currently unable to be occupied. The commonwealth government will invest a massive \$1.2 billion in public education in Western Australia. Our officials and ministers are doing a lot of work to make sure that that happens. As I outlined in question time, we are taking steps to make it easier to do business in Western Australia because we fundamentally believe in the value and significance of the private sector. We have been doing that by introducing important reforms to lessen the amount of red tape—reforms which I announced and which the shadow Treasurer embraced so wholeheartedly afterwards. There will be many more reforms that will help the Western Australian private sector through a difficult time for it.

I will also talk about the government's capital works audit. Some members opposite have commented on the state's capital works audit. Upon coming to office I requested a full audit of the state's capital works program. I wanted to have another look at any project worth more than \$20 million that had not gone to tender. Why would we do that? The answer is simply that, under the former government, the capital works program had completely escaped control. I will give members two examples. The Fiona Stanley Hospital project increased from \$420 million to \$1.8 billion, and Perth Arena went from being a \$50 million project to what we now estimate to be a \$450 million project. When we dug down into the Perth Arena project, we found on it the grubby fingerprints of the former Minister for Housing, the member for Midland, who lives in East Perth but represents Midland. Strange things happened to the awarding of that contract with decisions to rush in a retractable roof and to shift the car park. Strange things occurred that raise questions that we do not yet know the answers for. There were problems in the way that capital works programs were being managed in this state. That will not happen on our watch. We will control the capital works programs so that we know how much the projects will cost and when they will be delivered so that they can be delivered in a timely way that represents good value for money for the taxpayers of this state.

The capital works program is currently valued at around \$28 billion over the four years of the forward estimates. There is an increase in that amount over the next financial year but it is not a significant increase. We simply cannot afford to spend \$28 billion on capital works. The government has set about the task of reducing the aggregate size of the capital works spend. It is a very difficult process. Within that context, as I outlined earlier, we have announced that we will bring forward certain elements of our capital expenditure program to assist the state's economy. I do not shy away from the capital works audit because it is a fundamental component of a government that is intent on reining in the blowouts and the delays that have occurred in the capital works program over the past eight years. The government is determined to rein in the rate of growth of recurrent spending. That is the last significant challenge that we face. Much has been made today of the increase in the size of recurrent spending that was presented in the December financial estimates that were handed down recently.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Will you acknowledge that you are actually in such a totally different economic environment that you are less likely to have blowouts through cost pressures and that cost pressures are actually reducing?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I am happy to acknowledge that cost pressures in the construction industry impacted on the former government's construction program. However, there is a significant disparity in the rate of increase of the costs against even the most extreme cost index. Cost increases alone do not explain how the Perth Arena project increased from \$160 million to \$450 million or how Fiona Stanley Hospital went from \$420 million to \$1.8 billion. Some fundamental challenges were presented to government in the way that the capital works program was managed. That is why we have reformed the capital works program in this state and separated the works function out from the Department of Housing. The Department of Housing can now focus on new and innovative ways to house 20 000 Western Australians. In the past eight months more than 3 000 people have been put on the public sector waiting list. It is a very unfortunate situation and we have a lot of work to do to address that.

Mr J.N. Hyde interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: That is what we have attempted to do. Opposition members are queuing up to make interjections.

Expense growth, as recorded in the December quarter, was 13.1 per cent. That is not sustainable. We are attempting to rein in the rate of growth of recurrent spending, which is why the efficiency dividend is so important. Despite the claims of the opposition, a lot of work on that is occurring at the ministerial level. There is a lot of interaction between ministers and their departments to move that process forward. That will be

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completed and the information will be fully available for public scrutiny, as the Premier has indicated, by the time of the budget. However, that is just one step in the process and there is a lot more to do.

I am interested in looking at the components of the increase in general government expenditure. A significant amount of it—six percentage points of the 13—are attributed to increases in salaries. I repeat: six percentage points out of the 13. Therein lies one of the more significant challenges for the new government. How do we address the rate of growth of recurrent spending? The rate of wages growth accounts for 40 or 45 per cent of the total increase in recurrent spending. The rate of growth of the public sector wage bill is driven by the rate of growth of the public sector added to an average of the percentage of increases in wages. We have introduced a cap on the size of the Western Australian public service, as measured by full-time equivalents. That is one important policy response to the recurrent spending blow-out. There is still more to do. We are about to head into a series of wage negotiations, as governments do. That will present challenges for the government and for the public sector workers who will be engaged in those negotiations. We will do that openly and sincerely. I do not resile from the fact that we have a challenge to rein in the rate of growth of government sector wages because it is one of the fundamental factors driving the rate of growth of recurrent spending.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Have you had any advice from Treasury about the likely time frame—I do not expect it to be done overnight—of reducing the 40 per cent growth?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: It is a good point. Members opposite have become very civil; it is quite enjoyable. The principal advice I get from Treasury is the weekly updates about the core aggregates. Like a lot of the presentation of the core aggregates, they show a high level of recurrent spending in either the current or the subsequent year and then a significant drop away in the following years. That is how it has been reported forever and a day. I am not comfortable with that and we have a lot of work to do on it. However, I am confident that by next year we will rein in the rate of growth of recurrent spending.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Are you expecting the budget forward estimates in May to factor in not only the three per cent dividend, but also what your review committee will recommend, and therefore will we see a likely drop in the forward estimates?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The budget process will reflect some of the recommendations of the economic audit. The economic audit will report in two phases, including a report to government, which is due by the end of this month. Basically, some of those recommendations will be in the budget. I do not resile from the fact that we have a significant job to do. The economic audit is underway and the cap on the rate of growth of the size of the public sector is in place. The three per cent efficiency dividend is being implemented, and it is not difficult. The government has brought forward an appropriate investment package to respond to the economic situation. The government is engaged with the commonwealth in its response to the current climate. Any suggestion whatsoever that this government is not about managing the economy well and doing everything it can to protect Western Australian jobs is quite simply ridiculous and is not supported by the actions that the government has taken thus far.

I will close where I started—by acknowledging that we are currently experiencing a very challenging economic environment. The global economic environment, and the economic environment here in Western Australia, has changed in a way in which nobody, I suspect, could have reasonably predicted 12 months ago. Few people would have predicted it even eight months ago, but the fact is that the economic environment has changed and we have to deal with it. The government has been dealing with it and will continue to deal with it, but the volatility of the economic parameters impacts on government on an almost daily basis. The policy settings that the government is attempting to address are capital works to support the economy, and partnering with the federal government to do what needs to be done to manage recurrent spending growth to underpin fiscal stability.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Treasurer, is royalty revenue still going up?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The member will get accurate advice from the budget; it is very difficult to predict at the moment. As I said, the economic environment is very volatile. The exchange rate is moving and volumetric adjustments in relation to royalties —

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: So you've got one going up and one coming down?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I did not say they were going up.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: One's going up; the exchange rate —

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 11 March 2009]
p1647b-1685a

Mr Troy Buswell; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Miles; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Alan Carpenter; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Bill Marmion

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I did not say that at all. All I said was that exchange rate movements, price movements and volumetric movements make it very difficult to accurately forecast royalties. The government will take a position in the budget, but these things move on a constant basis.

This amendment is ludicrous, the words it uses are ludicrous, and it is ludicrous because it is quite simply not supported by the actions of the new government.

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [3.11 pm]: The amendment really is ludicrous, as the Treasurer has pointed out. In the lead-up to the last election there were massive waiting lists and delays for mining approvals. A person with whom I have had dealings had great difficulty in gaining extension approval for a mining lease that he has been operating for more than 20 years. Under the previous government, it took four years for him to finally be told that he was not allowed to clear a further two hectares on his sandmining lease. Just before Christmas he put in a new application. He phoned me this morning to say that he was absolutely delighted with the response he had received. It is a fairly complex application; the lease is in the Mundaring water catchment area. The Minister for Water and the Department of Environment and Conservation had already addressed the issue, and there was cooperation from the Water Department on the issue of replanting offsets. He said that it was such a pleasant change to deal with a government that was determined to make things happen, rather than see how long it could string things out.

Another example from my own electorate of Southern River is Excelsior Primary School. The school was built by the previous government without any gutters on the roof. There were all sorts of flooding issues; Canning Vale is a fairly low-lying wetlands area. When teachers took classes from one block to another during winter, kids had to take off their shoes and socks to walk through several centimetres of water on a paved area. The previous government could not find the money to put gutters on the roof of that brand-new school. This situation continued for three years, but I am glad to say that the tender for the installation of gutters is being addressed, and Excelsior Primary School will have gutters before next winter. The government has been in office only since September 2008, and we have been able to accomplish that. The previous government was unable to do that in four years. This example highlights the folly and the lack of evidence in support of this amendment.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (27)

Mr A.J. Carpenter	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr V.A. Catania	Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr A.J. Waddell
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr J.A. McGinty	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr P.B. Watson
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr M. McGowan	Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mrs C.A. Martin	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr A.P. O’Gorman	Mr T.G. Stephens	

Noes (28)

Mr P. Abetz	Mr M.J. Cowper	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr C.C. Porter
Mr F.A. Alban	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr I.M. Britza	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr M.W. Sutherland
Mr T.R. Buswell	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Dr J.M. Woollard
Dr E. Constable	Mr A.P. Jacob	Dr M.D. Nahan	Mr J.E. McGrath (<i>Teller</i>)

Pair

Ms L.L. Baker

Mr I.C. Blayney

Amendment thus negatived.

Consideration Resumed

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Preston) [3.20 pm]: It is certainly my pleasure in many ways to speak today. The first issue that I will raise, which has been mentioned in the house previously, is Perdaman Industries. It is locating to Collie and undertaking a \$2.5 million project. Through this house, I would like to welcome Perdaman to the Collie region. Something that has been worked on very hard over the past 10 or 12 years is changing the industrial base for the coal industry and for Collie. This move of Perdaman Industries to Collie will certainly

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help that to happen. There will be a downstream process for coal, which will probably be a much cleaner process for the small power generation unit that will be on the end of the process. It will certainly result in the creation of jobs. There will be 1 500 jobs on the construction site, and when that is finished there will be 200 permanent jobs.

What is special about it is that it is on the east side of Collie in the newly announced Shotts industrial park—a park that has been mooted for quite some years. Certainly, a lot of work has been done by the South West Development Commission. That will make it easier for people to relocate to Collie, instead of on the coastal strip, which happens with Worsley Alumina workers. Of a workforce of more than 1 000 people at Worsley, only about 12 per cent are located in Collie. We believe that this is a major push forward for the Collie area. Along with that, light industrial blocks have also been released. There has been a call for that for some years. I thank the previous Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alannah MacTiernan, who was able to get that through before the last election. Everything is ready and we are moving forward. I give special thanks to Vikas Rambal, the chief executive officer of Perdaman Industries; Andreas Walewski; and Joseph McCarthy for the determination they have shown. In the two years since I first met them, they have done a large amount of work to jump the hurdles to get to where they are now. Some memorandums of understanding have been signed for the offtake of the urea. Certainly, work has been done with the Bunbury port and with rail and road transport providers. All in all, it is a very good project.

The process itself, which is the gasification of Collie coal, came about because the Coal Futures Group had sent premier coal to Germany for trials. The Coal Futures Group certainly copped some flak along the way, maybe because of its chair, for not handing out the money to the coal company so that it could get on with the job. I am not quite sure what that job was. However, I am sure that the way in which the group went about things, including looking at research to help the industry, was far better than having a one-off capital works program. The trials in Germany proved that Collie coal is some of the best coal in Australia to gasify and then turn into urea for use in fertiliser. The syngas that is left over is run through a turbine that produces electricity. That is certainly a downstreaming process for the coal industry.

It was disappointing to see the green groups attack this industry within moments of the announcement being made. The word “coal” seems to bring them out of the woodwork. However, if they had only taken the time to look at the process, I am sure that they would have been far more comfortable with it.

The process itself will use roughly two million to four million tonnes of coal a year, which again will bring jobs to the coal industry. I am sure that the downstream effect is that it will bring schoolteachers and their families to Collie. That will certainly be welcomed. The good thing is that Collie has the infrastructure in place. Collie has not had any major housing subdivisions, because there has always been a lot of vacant blocks. In Collie nearly every street has a new house now—if not one, a couple. The land was already there, the blocks were reasonably cheap, and people on lower incomes, as well as those on higher incomes from the mining industry, were able to relocate there. That has been excellent. To have that happen in my time as the member for that area is certainly—I do not want to sound like I am blowing my trumpet too much—fulfilling. However, there is more to come. My new name in Collie is the seven-billion-dollar man, because that is the worth of the projects since 2001. There has been \$7 billion worth of capital works in my area—mainly private. I will take some credit for that, but not all of it. Certainly, under the former Labor government, there was \$7 billion worth of investment in that area, whereas previously the area was certainly on a downward slide.

I have told this story previously, but I will repeat it for some of the new members. In 2001, I bought a block of land in Collie at an auction for \$3 500. I was very embarrassed about the prices. Eighteen months later I sold it for \$110 000—nothing to do with capitalism! Certainly, the demand for land has increased in that time. The previous auctions that took place —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): If the member for Jandakot wants to make a comment or to interject, he should do it from his own seat, please.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Previously, 40 blocks were auctioned in three or four years. If people bought one in the first auction, they also went into a raffle to win one. The average price for the first lots was about \$1 200. Now the median price for a block in Collie is about \$90 000, I think. I can say that Collie has moved forward, and it is still on the way up. The shire council, which was previously under the leadership of Rosanne Pimm and is now under the leadership of Wayne Sanford, has been a party to that. Although we have had many differences, as people do, we have always worked with the best interests of Collie in mind.

When the announcement about the Perdaman Industries’ urea factory was made, it was disappointing that the Leader of the National Party got there late. He reckoned he got caught in the traffic. I just think he got lost because he had not been to Collie previously. I think it is stretching it a fair bit for him to say that he got caught

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in the traffic around Collie, because even though Collie is growing, it has not grown that much. I thank the Premier for his acknowledgement at that announcement of the work that was done by the Coal Futures Group, which I mentioned before. The disappointing thing for the Coal Futures Group is that since the new government has come into power I have written to the minister concerned and asked him about its future—that was some weeks, if not some months, ago—and I have not received a reply. We have a couple of projects on the go at the moment that need funding and assistance to move forward. One of them is the geosequestration trials for the coal industry. The urea plant will have carbon capture technology. We need the geosequestration trials to go ahead so that, if possible, we can capture the CO₂ and then inject it deep into the earth's surface—about one and a half to three kilometres down—and store it. That is very important for the greenhouse effect. Also, major funding is available from the Coal21 fund. I think there is \$500 million in that fund. This would be a great project to fund. However, without any leadership and without anyone moving forward, it will be difficult to do that. Therefore, I beg the minister to get on with the job and help us move forward with those studies.

I thank the Treasurer this time for signing off on the Coal Futures Group project. It was great to see him come down and launch the Premier Coal aquaculture project. I also thank Premier Coal for its assistance. The amount of \$350 000 was invested in that project, which is being run by the local Nyoongah group under the stewardship of Phil Ugle. It is an excellent program. We have made sure that it is not a one-off program that will run out after the funding has dried up. It is one of the few commercial projects that will succeed into the future. Growing marron and silver perch in the one pond—research has shown it can be done—is near and dear to the Nyoongah group. It will provide both financial and social rewards. I am looking forward to that. It could not have been done without the help of Wesfarmers through Premier Coal. I am sure most people would get a shock at the scale of the project, which was not a backyard process. A D-11 Caterpillar can create a fair-sized marron pond, of which there are a number. The storage dam would probably supply Perth. It has been a great effort by all concerned. The amount of \$8 million remains in the coal futures fund budget. I would like to see the entire amount spent on what it was put aside for—that is, to change the industrial base in Collie—for which we tried very hard.

Today's announcement by Harvey Beef was no shock to me. I recently met the chief executive officer to see how the company was working and what the problems were. At the time, I was sworn to secrecy. The CEO put the figures on the table, some of which I disputed. It disappoints me that the Minister for Agriculture and Food did not do the same. Perhaps he did but did not tell anyone. It was no secret that some announcements would be made leading up to today about what it would do. What I have major concerns about now is that there could be a bottleneck of steers and cows waiting for slaughter, because the plant was killing 3 500 beasts a week. That could be reduced because the plant will be operating with a five-day shift. There will be 160 fewer workers, and I could not guess what number the kill will go back to. Some of the farmers will be caught with stock on their hands and not be able to quit them at the price they wish. We must remember that, in all this, Harvey Beef, as one of the major buyers in the industry, is paying roughly around \$120 to \$150 less for beef than their counterparts are paying on the east coast. It is not all about the cost of labour or the process.

Anyone who has been through an abattoir and seen the meat chain operating will know that it is one of the most boring, repetitious and difficult jobs on the floor. I was disappointed when it was suggested to me that people who work on the chain should not earn any more than \$42 000 or \$43 000 a year. I said that the company will not get workers for that amount; if it does, they will be burnt out and the industry will again suffer. It concerns me that, as a consequence, there may be a move to bring in migrant labour. If the company does not pay the right wages, it will not get local workers and it will hamper the industry, which will have consequences right down the line. Despite the cost cutting, we do not see cheaper meat in the butcher shops. A question I asked Harvey Beef, to which I did not get an answer, was: will everyone, from the CEO down, be taking a pay cut? We have recently heard of examples of millions of dollars being syphoned off by CEOs via salary packages that include share allocations, and termination payouts. I do not begrudge anyone who works the hours some CEOs work. However, executives should not be allowed to jump ship after stripping the flesh off companies that are going down the drain. They should share a bit of the pain themselves. The federal government must look very carefully at the attitude of all industries to that issue.

Harvey, in my former electorate, is a sad town at the moment. Immediately after the election, Gunns timber mill in Yarloop put off another 30 workers. The economic downturn is starting to sting a bit with the wind-back of the construction of the Bluewaters power station, for which many people travelled from Harvey to Collie to work on. The upgrade of Worsley Alumina has been wound back a little also. At one time there would have been 2 000 jobs on site, but it is being wound back to spread the costs over more years than it had initially planned. Worsley hopes that action will see it through the downturn and into an eventual upturn. When those sorts of things happen in the south west, we start to feel the pinch. That is why the proposed fertiliser project, while good

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for Collie, will be good also for the south west. There is no way that 1 500 workers can be found in just the Collie catchment area. The south west is facing a few problems. I hope the government of the day provides the support that is needed and starts some of the infrastructure projects that will stimulate industry down our way and make sure that a lot of those people have jobs. However, they may not be the same jobs as they had previously and they may not be as highly paid as some of the mining industry jobs they had previously.

All in all, there is a downturn in the abattoir industry and in the timber industry, less of a ramp-up in the alumina industry and the winding back of some of the coal-fired power stations that are being built. They had employed 1 500 people, but the number is now down to 600. The economic downturn is starting to bite in the south west, so I am asking members opposite to work hard to make sure that we create jobs through projects such as the Bunbury ring-road, the completion of the Perth-Bunbury highway and roadworks on South Western Highway. Those sorts of projects will stimulate the economy.

Something else I have found disappointing—I suppose it is politics at its worst or best, whichever way we look at it—is some of the announcements by the government, such as the announcement about the Muchea saleyards. Although the planning was done and announced by the Labor Party, it is a bit galling to hear the Minister for Agriculture and Food re-announce it and take the accolades for it. But I suppose that is politics and that we must put up with it.

A major announcement recently made by the Minister for Agriculture and Food, which I think is completely wrong, was on genetically modified crops. The groundswell that will result from GM trials is not to be underestimated. This morning I met a farmer from Canada and a farmer from America who put a different spin on what we have been told over here.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.P. MURRAY: They explained some of the problems that GM crops will provide, for farmers as much as for consumers. For instance, farmers will be locked into only one supplier. I was told this morning that some of the tactics that a particular supplier used to trace the GM crops was nothing short of American Central Intelligence Agency stuff. In fact, it was difficult to believe what has been happening. Those overseas farmers are touring some of the regional areas through Wagin and Narrogin to better inform the farmers there. It is my understanding that the Williams shire has voted to stay GM free. Williams is in the heart of National Party territory so the consultation process must have fallen apart somewhere. The Kellerberrin shire has not made a decision as such yet, but it is working towards a referendum. The indications are that its decision will be along the lines that Williams has taken. GM technology is not all well and good. Some call it new technology; others say that they do not want it. The interesting thing that has arisen from the process is the number of people who have sent emails, particularly young mothers, who are concerned about the effect of GM additives in food stocks that their children might be fed in future. While I would not profess to be anywhere near capable of predicting the future in that regard, concerns have been highlighted on many internet websites. We have to take note of those concerns.

Litigation is another matter that has not been considered, even though the minister has made his decision. It has been reported that if a farmer's crop is contaminated by his neighbour's genetically modified crop and the farmer takes his crop to the seed bin, he could be charged for having a contaminated crop because it has DNA from his neighbour's crop. That view is the total opposite of what anyone would have thought of.

Mr I.M. Britza: Is that a presumption or is that what has been said—that the farmer will be charged? Is that what it looks like?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Yes. If the product is licensed to, say, Monsanto, and a farmer's crop is contaminated, Monsanto essentially owns that crop. The farmer is not compensated for his crop being contaminated; he is charged for pinching Monsanto's licensed product. That is the wrong view. The member can understand why farmers are very nervous. Who wants to see farmer fighting farmer in this day and age? The basics need to be sorted out first; we need to get it right before we start any trials. This has now been recognised by the minister. At first he thought that a five-metre barrier would be sufficient to prevent cross-contamination. Anyone who has seen a willy-willy in the wheatbelt will know that it can go for five kilometres. There are also bees and birds. Now the minister is saying that it is nearly impossible to prevent contamination outside the trial sites. Even though I oppose the trials, in my view the trial sites are too large; a 1 000-hectare site is too large. Once it has been done, we will be in trouble.

An interesting observation was made at a recent Pastoralists and Graziers Association conference. The Premier had just come back from Japan. He gave the growers a veiled warning that the Japanese buyers had huge

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concerns about Western Australia losing its GM-free status. A small premium is paid for GM-free crops from Western Australia, and if we lose that status, there would be no way we could go back to our non-GM status because the contamination would have spread.

Farmers are also not allowed to collect seed for the following year's crop; they have to buy the seed from a recognised organisation. A farmer who used to put his seed away for the following year will now have to buy his seed from a licensed organisation. Again, there are many issues that must be worked through before we can move on. When I heard that statement from the Premier, I was certainly concerned.

I am concerned about a few issues in the racing industry. Racecourses will now have to apply for funding by way of a general funding grant. They will have to line up against the likes of the boy scouts and local community committees. I think that is a move in the wrong direction. The Labor Party established a dedicated \$20 million fund for racecourse development and other developments within the racing industry. Now racecourses will have to fight very hard with local community groups. That does not give proper recognition to a huge industry, as the member opposite would understand. Many people work in the racing industry; between 3 000 and 5 000 people work in that industry. It is totally wrong to make racecourses line up against community groups for funding. I was given a commitment by the previous minister that he would look after country tracks. That is not happening. We have seen some of the problems that have arisen, although they are not the total making of the current minister. There have been problems at Bunbury racecourse. Two meetings have been abandoned because of the state of the track. Funding is an issue. It should have been able to access the dedicated funding that was available to fix the problems with the track. The industry is suffering. That means that there is not enough money to go around. People are not being paid and the industry is suffering. I will be taking this matter up with the minister because it is one of the largest industries in Western Australia.

There are also issues in the timber industry. The Minister for Forestry has refused assistance for the timber industry. Although I do not think that is all bad, the minister has not given people in the industry any answers; he has just said no and walked away. He must revisit the Regional Forest Agreement. He must bring in all the parties again, because it has been quite a long time since the agreement was introduced in 2001. He must re-evaluate the agreement and determine how much timber is available and where. Logs are being carted out of the jarrah forests south of Perth to Northcliffe. Previously, they went to the mills in Yarloop and Mundijong; now they are going all the way to Northcliffe. We must have another look at this issue and determine whether there is any value in carting that timber to the south, when perhaps it would be better if we shut the mill. The timber industry is in dire straits. It is a major employer in many small country towns. I beg the minister to reconsider the Regional Forest Agreement and get the conservation groups and the timber industry involved. The time has come. Nine years have passed and I think it is time for it to be reconsidered.

Another announcement made today was the total deregulation of the grain industry. Although that looks fine on paper, under the previous regime farmers at least had a guaranteed payment for their crops. That will no longer happen. Previously, it went through the pool and the pool gave a base guarantee; farmers were paid that. I understand that, with total deregulation, it will just be farmer to buyer. If the buyer defaults, the farmer will be out of pocket. That is a very dangerous position to be in, especially for those people in farming areas that are really under the pump. A farmer could not afford to default on one lot of payments in any year. It would mean that there would be another broke farmer who would have to shut down.

I now refer to industrial relations. It is a firm belief of mine that politicians should have an enterprise bargaining agreement that runs for four years. Politicians should not be paraded down the street every year, when they have to go cap in hand asking for what they need. In time there will be four-year terms. Along with four-year terms, there should be a four-year EBA. Most analysts can provide the percentage increases in wages for the next few years. I think we should look at that. A politician could sign an agreement and he or she would be employed by the people of Western Australia. It would outline their terms and conditions. We can all predict the newspaper headlines when politicians are granted pay rises, because the papers get stuck into us. Not only is it demeaning for politicians to be paraded around every year with claims of yet another pay rise, but also it is a costly exercise. We keep the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal in a job for four years, but it is given only one job in four years, so what is the point? Why do we not just have a group that we can put submissions to at the end of four years? We all know that we get frustrated when we have to ask for new technology, telephones, mobiles and so on. Why should we have to do that every year? It is time consuming. An EBA would certainly bring us more in line with the general community. I would love an EBA to be brought in if we had four-year terms. I have talked many times about the people in the system itself. I want to take my hat off to a few, although I will not do what the member for Albany does and name everyone in the street from one end to the other!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Tune in tomorrow, member!

Mr Troy Buswell; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Miles; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Alan Carpenter; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Bill Marmion

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The member for Albany generally brings into Parliament a phone book and reads names out and anyone with the right number gets a run!

There are a couple of people I want to thank. I thank the staff in my office. I thank the South West Development Commission, with which I have worked very closely in the past eight years; it has been exceptional. It did not always have funding, but it certainly did the legwork. It helped me to work through it and make sure that some of these jobs came to the Collie area. As I said, a lot of the grassroots work was done by people in the commission to gain the \$7 billion and I thank them.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [3.50 pm]: Yesterday we listened to the Premier's visionary statement explaining the Liberal-National government's policy and legislative priorities for 2009. As we all know, we are governing in a very difficult global environment, with Western Australia facing enormous social and economic challenges. The global financial crisis combined with the credit crunch is continuing to send many world economies into recession. We in Western Australia find ourselves with some very challenging times ahead of us. Just this morning the president of the International Monetary Fund indicated that there will be a global contraction in the economy for the first time in more than 60 years. This is a very serious situation and will result in some countries experiencing a financial tsunami. Luckily I do not foresee Western Australia in that situation. However, we as members of Parliament need to work together collaboratively and we need to support initiatives that will deliver tangible results and outcomes in these times. It would be a very worthwhile effort for the opposition to put forward, on top of the challenges and ideas that the Premier has put forward, some strong suggestions and details on how those results and outcomes could be achieved.

The Premier stated that we are facing a loss of revenue that could be around \$1 billion a year, which means we will have to be very focused to ensure taxpayers' dollars are not wasted. The three per cent efficiency dividend proposed by the previous Labor government and being implemented by our government is one way of heading in that direction. I am not too sure why we get so many complaints from opposition members about that, considering it was something they supported. The Premier has also stated that front-line services will not be impacted on.

Mr P. Papalia: It is how you implement it.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Front-line services will not be impacted on. Unlike the opposition leader in his address, I do not believe that the Premier and the Treasurer should go through the public service line by line to decide where the three per cent cuts will be made. Having been a commonwealth public servant for 20 years, I know that ministers especially do not really understand how the decisions they make at that high level translate to the lower level delivery of service side of things. I believe public servants are in the best position to determine where those cuts can and should be implemented and that they should be feeding that information up —

Mr M.P. Murray: I think you had better keep that one for your party room!

Mr P. Papalia: So what is the minister's job then?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: The job of a minister is to set the directions, the guidelines, the parameters and the rules in which the public service operates, but they are not necessarily in the best position to know the work that 99 000 public servants do on a day-to-day basis and which particular line in that bottom line should be removed. I therefore believe that the views of public servants should be taken into account in that process, obviously in consultation with the minister and the heads of departments.

Ms R. Saffioti: Isn't that the minister's ultimate decision—what gets cut and what doesn't?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Yes, in terms of certain programs. However, when we were given a percentage for efficiency cuts in the commonwealth public service every year, the heads of departments determined from where that percentage came in their department by getting rid of outdated red tape or measures that were not adding any real value to the process so that we were still able to deliver services.

Ms R. Saffioti: I think ultimately it is the decision and responsibility of ministers to make those cuts and those choices.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It is, with feedback and input from the public service.

Ms R. Saffioti: Yes, there has to be input but the decisions are for ministers.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That is correct.

Based on the performance of the previous government in the past eight years, front-line services did not improve that much when it increased the public service by approximately 30 per cent. Recurrent expenditure has been increasing at an alarming rate, which makes the three per cent efficiency dividend even smaller relative to

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unsustainable spending growth. I believe it is a small price to pay in the current circumstances in which we find ourselves when countries and businesses are going broke and employment is at risk.

Government advertising has been reduced by 15 per cent. It might not seem like much; however, it is a significant amount when we consider how much the previous government wasted in this area. Let us not talk about long-term savings on consultants and the Fong saga of the former government. The public service has grown by 22 000 people in the past eight years to around 99 000 full-time equivalents; that is, not 22 000 more police, not 22 000 more nurses and not 22 000 more teachers. The public service is a very professional organisation and adds real value to our society. Public servants are committed individuals who want to do the best they can every single day. However, if they are not given leadership or direction, or more importantly if they are led down a tunnel that leads nowhere, unfortunately to some extent they will not feel that they are being valued for the hard work they do, particularly if it is not delivering real results. We must be very careful to ensure that we value our public service and that we give public servants leadership and direction so that they can deliver tangible benefits to the community every single day, especially in the tough times ahead of us.

I strongly believe that boards and committees play an important role in the community. However, I also agree that we must examine and confirm their usefulness. It would also be useful to confirm their existence in a lot of cases, as there are more than a thousand of them and nobody seems to have a record of them. As has been indicated, that list is being added to, but, luckily, the additions are actually on the record. Therefore fewer will need to be accounted for over time.

Our capital works priorities focus on schools, hospitals and housing, all of which have been significantly neglected in the past eight years.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Schools are being built.

I refer now to royalties for regions projects. Ord stage 2, the Oakajee port, the sinking of the rail line through Northbridge, roads around Perth Airport, and Pilbara housing are all projects that would probably have been delayed or not been on the table at all under a state Labor government; after all, the previous government's main focus was a new football stadium and a new museum.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Of course, it is in conjunction with the commonwealth. The commonwealth is going into more debt by \$42 billion.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: That is considering that John Howard put all the money there.

I have no doubt that the Liberal-National government will deliver an effective program to reform all sectors of government. Within the first few months of government we introduced the Surrogacy Bill 2008 and the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill 2008. We settled the long and protracted and deeply damaging teachers' pay dispute.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Did you vote in favour of the Surrogacy Bill or against it?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Against. When I say we introduced it, I mean we have done things. We are actually doing things but I am not saying that I necessarily supported them.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: No.

We introduced the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill, we settled the teachers' pay dispute and we introduced legislation for mandatory minimum sentences for people convicted of assaulting police officers. We will be introducing legislation, such as an amendment to the Criminal Code in a graffiti bill, stronger anti-hoon measures, stronger anti-drug laws, prohibitive behaviour orders and much more. I am proud to be part of a team that has such a great leader at this difficult time in our state's history.

It is wonderful to see the member for Mandurah in the chamber. He looks like he had a very comfortable night's sleep and a wonderful journey into the house today. I am assuming that on reflection of the Premier's vision and statement for this state that the member for Mandurah slept like a baby and knows that things are in capable hands! No doubt he will be encouraging the Premier to deliver those results. It is therefore wonderful to see the member for Mandurah.

Mr Troy Buswell; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Miles; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Alan Carpenter; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Bill Marmion

Mr D.A. Templeman: I had a torrid night!

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: He is a lot more subdued today because he knows things are progressing well.

I will also focus on a couple of local issues in the state seat of Carine. Many projects are progressing in the area. Some are progressing well and some need a lot more work to be done. Members may have heard me talk previously about the Carine TAFE site. Prior to the election I brought the condition of that site to the attention of the then government. To give members a bit of background, it was almost as though someone had said, "We're not coming to work tomorrow; let's close the doors and let's leave it at that." The site had many, many problems, with children breaking in, a lot of equipment was left behind, the electricity was left on and chemicals were left lying around, which all led to a whole lot of problems, such as things being thrown out of the third floor on to the ground. I must commend the Department of Education and Training for the wonderful job that it did in clearing that site very quickly after that. I have been onsite on at least three occasions to see how the clean-up has progressed. On my last visit the department had removed every single trace of equipment and every chemical, the electricity was under control and the water was not leaking. Together with LandCorp, St Ives Group and Cedar Woods Properties, they are progressing with community consultation for a retirement village and aged care facility on that site. Also, sometime in the second half of this year the buildings on that site will be demolished. Security has been increased quite considerably and people are focused on ensuring very positive outcomes for that location.

During my maiden speech I mentioned the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village. Unfortunately, there is still a serious problem for the residents. A number of avenues are being pursued to try to assist residents. As usual, a number of blockers have been presented in the way, as well. I am quite distressed and disappointed that we have not been able to progress that issue as quickly as I would like. I hope that the review of the Retirement Villages Act will go some way towards addressing some of the issues. It was mentioned in the house today that we will also review caravan parks. Having a caravan park in my electorate, I know that will be an issue as well.

Mr D.A. Templeman: That is a very good inquiry. I think it is a very important inquiry.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: I think so too and hopefully the members of that committee will be aware of the importance of the decisions that they will make from that inquiry. Maybe I will find them talking to some of the people in the caravan parks in the seat of Carine as well.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Just out of interest, do your caravan parks comprise mainly permanent residents?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: There are a number of those, yes. A lot of work needs to be done in that area as well because the rights of caravan park owners are definitely of concern.

I will give members an example of an issue at the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village—namely, mail delivery. The letterboxes were not built to standard and the residents have been told that, as of the end of this month, if they want to get their mail they must go to the mail exchange. These are 80-year-old people who will have to go to the mail exchange to collect their mail because the owner of the village will not build letterboxes that comply with council regulations. However, that is all being disputed at the State Administrative Tribunal. There are a number of concerns around a whole range of issues to do with the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village. I have not given up on that and I want to ensure that the residents with whom I am in constant contact know that it is still a key priority for me, a number of other members of the government and of the opposition who have expressed concern about what is happening.

I thank the Minister for Transport; Disability Services, Hon Simon O'Brien, for his assistance in reviewing Duffy Road South and Reid Highway. A number of officers from the minister's office, Main Roads Western Australia and the City of Stirling were on site with me the other day to review the situation. It was interesting to note that the number of accidents that occur at that site were much fewer than I assumed. I think Main Roads listed it at about 724 on its list of priorities, which gave me a picture of the battle I will have to mount to do anything on that front. However, in saying that, I think it is important to bring these matters to the attention of the relevant departments and ministers, and I commend the minister for finding the time to look at the concerns of the residents of Carine.

I also thank the Minister for Education, who will come to the electorate of Carine at the end of this month to talk at a function with presidents of the parents and citizens associations, principals, vice-principals, state council members and school council members. I look forward to some feedback from that meeting.

Another group that is doing a fantastic job in the seat of Carine is the Riding for the Disabled Association of Western Australia. I have looked at their facilities and must say that they are an amazing bunch of people who do an amazing job. I encourage anybody who has the time to get involved with local groups such as that. Rotary and

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Lions also contribute greatly in the area and I thank them for the wonderful work they are doing, especially in the tough times that we now find ourselves in. Organisations such as those will no doubt be called upon by the community to assist and to give more than they have in the past. I therefore encourage them to not only continue what they have been doing, but also seek support from the local government, the state government and the federal government.

In conclusion, it is great to be back in Parliament. I think it is fantastic to see that the government is focused on the job at hand. It is good to see that the opposition is as rowdy as ever. Therefore, no doubt we will have a lot of robust debate in the year ahead. It is also very, very positive to see that additional weeks have been added to the sitting year so that we have more opportunity to pass important legislation and obviously share the vision and future with everybody.

MR P. MILES (Wanneroo) [4.05 pm]: Like the Premier, I am proud of the Liberal-National government's achievements over the past six months. I concur with his statement that —

... the people of Western Australia should feel confident they have a government that can deliver.

I believe that the statement captures the spirit of what a good local member should do to ensure that he or she is in touch with the views, aims, goals and aspirations of the people in his or her electorate so that he or she can represent their views in Parliament. In keeping with that vision, since my election to the seat of Wanneroo in September 2008 I have met with a wide range of community groups and individuals in the electorate on many diverse matters. As we know, within weeks of my election I was approached by the residents of the Kingsway Tourist and Caravan Park in Madeley, who have received eviction notices to quit the park. These 80-odd residents are nearly all elderly pensioners who have very few options for future housing alternatives. On Thursday, 4 December 2008, I presented a grievance to the Parliament highlighting the plight of these residents, to which the Minister for Housing and Works, Hon Troy Buswell, responded. The minister, on behalf of the government, undertook to write to the Economics and Industry Standing Committee to request that it conduct an inquiry into the governing legislation, with particular reference to the issues raised in the grievance. The minister also detailed the objectives of the working group set up with representatives from several different departments: the Department of Housing, Building Management and Works, the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, the Office for Seniors and Interests, and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. The chief objective of this working group is to identify sites that could potentially be used as caravan parks within 12 months. Today I received the very welcome news that the Economics and Industry Standing Committee will now conduct a wide-ranging inquiry into the provision, use and regulation of caravan parks and camping grounds in Western Australia. In particular, the committee will investigate the structure, conduct and performance of the caravan park industry; the demand, supply and costs, and trends thereof, of caravan park sites and related services; the supply and demand for long and short-stay sites, including camping sites; and the impact of existing legislation, and state and local government policies regulating caravan parks, particularly relating to the maintenance of a viable caravan park industry, protecting the rights of operators and users, and providing an adequate mix of long and short-stay facilities and sites. The committee will report to the Legislative Assembly on 24 September 2009. I wish them well with that.

In addition to visiting the Kingsway Tourist and Caravan Park to meet with the residents on several occasions, I have also visited the other three lifestyle park home villages in my electorate: Pineview Lifestyle Village in Ashby, which has some 328 residents; Lake Joondalup Lifestyle Village, also in Ashby, which has some 430 residents; and Lakelands Leisure Village in Gnangara, home to 157 residents. These lifestyle villages are becoming a very popular housing choice for the over-50s market. They allow residents to purchase a modest but comfortable home with landscaped village settings at a much cheaper price than those on a normal suburban block. These villages often boast very high quality leisure facilities like swimming pools, function room, barbeque areas, lawn bowls and the like, offering the residents a very active lifestyle in a secure environment.

Since my election I have met with the principals of the state primary schools in my electorate to discuss any particular needs they may have. I have also met with the foundation principal of the brand-new Ashdale Secondary College in Madeley, and been briefed by the senior planner in the Department of Education and Training about plans for several new schools in the Wanneroo electorate.

In addition to meeting with local constituents on an individual basis, I have also met with a number of other people, including Assistant Commissioner of Police, Nick Staltari; the Ashdale Gardens Residents Association continually; City of Wanneroo Gold Program Seniors, who visited this house in October; the Banksia Grove Residents Association; Carramar and Tapping Residents Association; members of the Jandabup-Mariginup Land Action Group; members of the Main Roads Western Australia project team who briefed me on the dual carriageway works of Wanneroo Road north of the town site by Joondalup Drive; representatives from Trail

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Bike Management who briefed me on the trail bike issue; developers of the Banksia Grove Estate, which is set to expand, opening up the latest stage of developments which will provide 8 000 new homes.

I also met Brother Olly Pickett from Wheelchairs for Kids, a very good organisation based in Wangara. With the help of a small army of retirees—these retirees queue up to work in this facility—the organisation makes and distributes some 300 low-cost wheelchairs per month. They are distributed to the poor, disabled children in developing countries.

I have been to the West Coast TAFE in Joondalup, and I had a briefing from the Department of Conservation about fire management issues around the town. I visited the Wanneroo Trotting Club's facility, and I had a meeting with the chief executive of the WA Group Training Scheme.

It has been a real privilege to attend a number of community events in and around Wanneroo, including the Naval Association's annual service; the Remembrance Day service in Wanneroo; functions hosted by the Wanneroo Business Association; Wanneroo Primary School for the launch of the remodelled mobile learning centre, on behalf of the Premier; the official opening of the Mitchell Freeway extension; the annual Spring in the Grove festival at Banksia Grove; the end of year function hosted by the Western Australian Local Government Association; and the annual Wanneroo Agricultural Show, which this year is celebrating its centenary—a wonderful milestone and a great achievement.

I also attended a number of school graduation ceremonies; the final assembly of Blackmore Primary School, representing the Premier; and several citizenship ceremonies, including the City of Wanneroo, as well as the Australia Day function at Joondalup, hosted by the cities of Stirling, Joondalup and Wanneroo, at which 1 877 people took their oath of citizenship.

I also attended the Vietnamese Lunar New Year Festival in January, which was held for the first time in Wanneroo and was attended by several thousand members of the WA Vietnamese community. Both the Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, MLA, and the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Hon John Castrilli, attended this very popular event.

One of the most significant events I have attended in the past few months was the official launch of the NewGen power station in Neerabup in December 2008. With the Kwinana power station fully operational, the NewGen power partners—ERM Power and Babcock & Brown—have commenced construction of a second gas-fired power station in Neerabup. Located 35 kilometres north of Perth, the power station is expected to be operational before the end of 2009-10 for summer. It will add approximately 330 megawatts peak capacity during periods of high demand. The project will include a dedicated 30 kilometres of gas pipeline, and will be the fifth gas-powered station in Australia conceived, developed and project managed by ERM Power over the past four years.

Another significant project due to be opened on 27 March is the resource recovery facility at Neerabup industrial estate; a joint project between the Mindarie Regional Council and BioVision 2020 Pty Ltd. This new resource recovery facility will treat up to 100 000 tonnes of household waste annually, significantly reducing the volume of household waste sent to landfill, and convert about 70 per cent of recovered material into market-quality compost.

In August 2008 the Wanneroo Showgrounds clubrooms were all but destroyed by fire in an act of vandalism. In recognition of the importance of the clubrooms to the users and groups of the Wanneroo community, a pledge was made by the Liberal Party during the recent election campaign to contribute \$670 000 to rebuild these clubrooms. The Wanneroo Showgrounds Clubroom Reconstruction Working Group, of which I am a member, has already met and commenced planning on this task. The working group's role is to assist the City of Wanneroo in its advisory capacity in the design, development and implementation of the new clubrooms' reconstruction, and to assist the council in a broader consultation of the proposed design elements as required.

I have also had the opportunity to meet with various ministers, including a meeting with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Terry Waldron, MLA, to introduce representatives of the WA Sporting Car Club Association, who were keen to discuss the future of the Wanneroo raceway.

I also had a meeting with the Minister for Housing and Works, Hon Troy Buswell, MLA, with representatives from the Park Home Owners Association, at which they were able to raise their concerns about the Residential Parks (Long-stay Tenants) Act 2006. I also had a visit with Hon John Day, MLA, Minister for Planning, to the City of Wanneroo, at which various planning issues were discussed.

There was a visit to Wanneroo by the honourable Premier and Minister for Local Government in February to meet with representatives from the City of Wanneroo. This visit also included a bus tour of a large part of the Wanneroo electorate, to give the honourable Premier and the minister the opportunity to see the current developments and the sites for future planned projects.

Mr Troy Buswell; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Miles; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Alan Carpenter; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Bill Marmion

As a new member of Parliament in a backbench role, I have been impressed with the high degree of interest and involvement shown by the Premier and his ministers in the electorate of Wanneroo. The high level of communication translates into action for the benefit of the local community, as has already been demonstrated.

I am proud of what the Liberal Party-National Party government has achieved in just six short months, and I believe the people of Western Australia should feel confident that they have a government that will deliver.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [4.17 pm]: I rise to respond to the Premier's Statement. Today I want to reflect on the government's first six months, focusing on two main areas: what is happening in my electorate of West Swan, and what is happening to the finances of the state.

Firstly, to West Swan. Over the past six months I have pursued a wide range of issues concerning my electorate. Every day there are new issues to be addressed and I have been pursuing these issues with the new government. Every new government has before it a range of priorities at any one time, but new governments should bring with them a sense of energy, a sense of urgency and a sense of commitment to getting things done and resolved. When it comes to my electorate, I have not sensed any urgency, any priority, or any commitment to helping the people of West Swan. I have been working hard to get a number of issues resolved, and I have been surprised and dismayed by the attitude taken by this government on a range of issues. I want to go through some of those today.

My first relates to the Ballajura Youth Club. This club is in urgent need of some ongoing financial support. The club provides a place where the young people of Ballajura and surrounding suburbs can hang out in a safe environment. This club needs to have a future and it needs ongoing financial support.

The previous government committed funding to the club during the election campaign. Minister for Youth, Hon Donna Faragher, raised the issue of funding for the Ballajura Youth Club when she was in opposition, so I thought that now she is in government as the responsible minister she will look favourably at providing the club with a future, but it does not appear that she cares. I wrote to the minister on 26 September asking her to consider funding for the club. I still have not received a response to that letter. Yesterday I did get a response to a question I put in on notice. The answer still does not provide certainty for the funding of the club. There is no commitment from the government to sorting out these issues.

I will talk about bus services. The public transport services in West Swan are woefully inadequate. The residents in that electorate have no access to buses after 7.00 pm on weekends and there are limited east-west connections. Although Malaga is a major employment hub it is difficult to access public transport. In some parts of Caversham there are no off-peak services so the seniors, who should be able to now ride free during off-peak periods, cannot access any services. At the last election Labor committed to adding millions of extra bus kilometres. That package included improving bus services to every suburb in the metropolitan area, extending services in the morning and evening, and providing new east-west bus connections and more feeder services. Our package would have benefited every suburb in the metropolitan area. The Liberals too committed to increasing bus services across the suburbs during the election. When in opposition, the Liberal Party used to claim that the Labor Party was too train-centric and that there should be more buses in the suburbs. The Liberals promised to improve services across the metropolitan area. An advertisement in *The Sunday Times* on 31 August states that the Liberal Party would improve —

... **integration of feeder bus services** to train stations, making public transport work more effectively for commuters.

It was a clear commitment. With that in mind I wrote to the new Minister for Transport seeking improved bus services in my electorate. The Minister for Transport, Hon Simon O'Brien, flatly refused to improve bus services. He wrote —

... Transperth is not able to upgrade bus services in the Caversham area, without diverting services away from other rapidly expanding areas of Perth ... I trust your constituents would understand that this would be socially unacceptable and would draw strong criticism —

Mr D.A. Templeman: That's outrageous! Did he put that in a letter?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He put this in a letter. Can members believe it?

Mr D.A. Templeman: That is outrageous behaviour from a minister. I would not have done that if I were the minister.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I know that the member would not have. His statement concludes —

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... that this would be socially unacceptable and would draw strong criticism from the general community.

Mr D.A. Templeman: The minister is socially unacceptable.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I thank the member for Mandurah. Even worse than no increased services is my fear that further cuts will be made to services in our suburbs. The midyear review shows the funding allocated to the new government's election commitments. There is no extra funding for bus services in our suburbs. In fact, on page 100 of the mid-year review is a \$40 million cut to the Public Transport Authority. That will mean decreased bus services and fewer services in the suburbs, not more. For a government that committed to increase bus services, this will mean cuts to services in our suburbs.

The other public transport giant is the Ellenbrook railway line. Again, I have tried to ensure that this government does not walk away from its election commitment. Despite having given a clear commitment to the rail line, including committing to start construction in 2012, the latest response from the government shows a weakening of its position. I wrote to the Premier about this issue on 26 September last year. I received a letter on 3 February from the Minister for Transport, who provided the following response: A study of the cost of the project will be completed in July this year and then after examining the outcomes of this study, the government will be able to provide a definitive response regarding the construction of a railway to Ellenbrook. I thought a definitive response had been made when during the election campaign the member for Cottesloe said on television that the Liberal Party would build a railway to Ellenbrook, starting in 2012.

I will reinforce the comments made by the member for Nollamara regarding services for new migrants and citizens in the north eastern corridor. Each week new migrants move into suburbs in the north eastern corridor. The government needs to ensure that services are available to allow for good integration into Western Australian society. So far all we have seen are cuts to services for new migrants. I have no confidence that the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests has any idea of or commitment to provide the most basic services to our new migrants.

Another issue I raise today is the expansion of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline and its impact on the vineyards in the Swan Valley. I will not go through the details again, suffice to say that people's livelihoods in the region will be greatly affected. Despite raising this on four separate occasions either in correspondence or in this place, the Minister for Lands has refused to meet the vineyard owners. The Minister for Agriculture, who is meant to represent the grape-growing industry of this state, has again refused to meet the affected landowners. Obviously if they were genetically modified grapes he would be more interested.

Another key concern I will raise today is the mismanagement of the finances of the state. Moreover, the impact this mismanagement of the finances will have on the infrastructure, services and our future prosperity. We have heard a lot about the global financial crisis from this government. What we have not heard is what strategy or plan the government has to deal with the world's financial crisis. Yesterday the Premier was asked what strategy he has in place to manage the GFC. He said to wait until he gave his statement. He gave it, we read it and I re-read it; there was no strategy, no plan and no ideas. What is the government doing? One day it spends wildly, the next day it cuts infrastructure projects, the next day it increases household charges, the next day it cuts services, and the next day it spends wildly. The cycle seems to be continuing. The GFC is used as an excuse to cut either projects in the suburbs or projects that were Labor's ideas. The GFC is used as an excuse to spend money in the National Party and Liberal Party heartland. There is no strategy. In fact, there appears to be mayhem. In just a few months we have gone from having the strongest finances in the state's history to the budget crumbling around us. The mid-year review clearly shows that the government's massive spending spree, once elected, has caused the state's finances to crumble in just a matter of months. The mid-year review clearly states that the operating outlook deteriorated by \$5.2 billion in just a few months. While \$1.5 billion was due to falling revenue, \$3.7 billion was due to increased expenses. To put that into context, the operating impact of Labor's election commitments in 2001 and 2005 were both under \$1 billion. That is the comparison. Under this government, \$3.7 billion was committed to between October and December. That tells us why we are in a financial mess.

Other information recovered through a freedom of information request also shows that the government knew very well what impact its spending commitments would have on the forward estimates. Information from a briefing provided to the Treasurer on 24 September shows that the government knew that the AAA credit rating would be at risk, with net debt to revenue breaching the self-imposed target of 47 per cent. Within six months of winning government, it has turned the state's strongest financial position to one in which the AAA credit rating is at risk. At the same time, the government is cutting infrastructure projects and putting great uncertainty around others.

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Mr C.J. Barnett: Sooner or later you will come to realise that you have lost the election. Stop trying to rehash how good you were.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not rehashing.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Did you not accept the 47 per cent?

Mr C.J. Barnett: The 47 per cent was your figure.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Do you accept it or not?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Ask me that question tomorrow.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the Premier accept that he committed \$3.7 billion in expenditure between October and December?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, they are big commitments. The Ord River project is fantastic.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the Premier accept that that has impacted on the state's finances?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Ask me that question tomorrow.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the Premier accept that his government's spending has impacted on the state's finances?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Goodness me! You lost the election by 30 000 votes before we even started counting National Party and Independent votes. You need to come to the reality that you lost the election. It might take you 12 months to realise that. After you have realised that you might start to get somewhere.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You're a major reason for the election loss.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for West Swan has the call. It is not question time.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: At the same time, the government is cutting infrastructure projects and creating great uncertainty around other projects. The government has already announced that it will not go ahead with iconic projects that would really transform the state. The new major stadium would have given Western Australia a world-class venue for generations to come. We could have been actively involved in the FIFA World Cup soccer bid; we could have been actively involved in trying to attract international Twenty20 cricket matches. Along with these big-name projects, a range of other projects ought to be happening in this state, but are now under threat—projects such as the Midland health campus, road projects around the suburbs, and upgrades to essential infrastructure such as bus stations. At a time when the government should be creating confidence in the community by having an infrastructure agenda, it is actually creating uncertainty.

On 2 February the government put out a press release that included a list of supposedly new projects. Most of them were funded and committed to by the previous government; they were not all new. In fact, the media statement only created uncertainty about the billions of dollars in projects that were not listed and may not go ahead. There was a global financial crisis, and this government did nothing but release a media statement saying that it would go ahead with five or six projects that were already in the planning stage.

Mr C.J. Barnett: In the planning stage, but not funded. Did you fund the northern suburbs railway?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It was an election commitment; we funded the police station. There were about six projects, and we funded five. This government in its media statement said that they were new projects. Were they new projects?

Mr C.J. Barnett: They were decisions by the government to proceed.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Were they new projects? Was the police station funded and planned?

Mr C.J. Barnett: We announced —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Was the police station funded and planned?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, it was, and so was the southern suburbs railway. The previous government did that during its term. That's the reality—a change of government.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So they are new projects?

Mr C.J. Barnett: They were decisions made by the previous government.

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Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That rail line was not funded.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Apart from the \$300 million that kicked it off from the sale of Alinta. Those were the first stages—\$300 million cash. It will take another year for the opposition to get over it, so carry on.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Premier cannot handle the truth. It is just like one of those movies! He just cannot handle the truth; he never has and he never will.

The government has been creating uncertainty about capital projects around the state. How is the Midland health campus going?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Ask me a question tomorrow. Ask the Minister for Health.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Okay.

Over the past six months, the government has been spending wildly and cutting infrastructure projects. It then slugged Western Australian families a 26 per cent increase in electricity prices. It is an enormous impost on families in this state.

Mr J.M. Francis interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There was a subsidy there; where has the subsidy gone?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Why subsidise electricity to businesses?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The government has removed the subsidy for households.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Since you know all the answers, can you explain—the Leader of the Opposition and former Deputy Premier could not explain—where the billion dollars went?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a subsidy for an operating loss.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Where did it go? Who actually got the billion dollars?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a government entity, so it is an intra-government transfer.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, it is a billion dollars in cold cash.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Oh yes, it is gone; the previous government just lost it! I mean, jeez!

Mr C.J. Barnett: You did.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is an intra-government transfer.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You lost it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We did not lose it; it is a subsidy and it is in the books.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You lost a billion dollars in government on electricity alone.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, we did not. This government has removed the electricity subsidy for households, which means that households will have to pay a 26 per cent increase in electricity prices this year.

Since we are talking about the truth, the Liberal Party ran a campaign accusing the Labor Party of increasing electricity prices. I will tell the Premier about the truth. The Liberal Party ran this campaign and then a few months later it increased electricity prices.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Electricity prices are the first to increase; we are yet to see increases in other charges such as water, public transport and motor vehicle licences. Labor made a commitment each year to limit the increase in the basket of household charges to less than the consumer price index. Last year the Treasurer made a song and dance about the confusion caused when the Labor government used a four per cent reference rate rather than a three per cent reference rate. I am wondering which reference rate of inflation this government will use to compare the 26.5 per cent increase in electricity charges.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Probably Zimbabwe's.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Venezuela's, actually! The consumer price index in Venezuela in 2008 was 20.7 per cent. That may be the reference rate of inflation that this government will need to use to compare its increases in household charges.

I will not go over the arguments about bringing Synergy and Verve back together; I know that the Premier wants to do it, and that he will do it regardless of the economic facts. It is basically a false argument. It will not change

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the operating bottom line of Verve; it will just hide it. It will hide the operating bottom line in a different entity and will not change it.

We have heard a lot about the three per cent efficiency dividends being placed on the public service. Efficiency dividends are not new. It is not the first or last time they will be applied. However, never have I seen such an approach to the delivery of savings. What has the government done? It has appointed an economic audit committee. It has ministers who either do not know what they are doing or do not know what they should be doing. It has had to send the Department of Treasury and Finance to Western Australia Police to try to find savings. The Treasurer actually invited the Leader of the Opposition to do his work! On Friday I heard that the government sent other private sector accountants to Western Australia Police to try to find savings. It is hard to know who the Treasurer has not asked to help him do his job. When the Labor Party was in government, we were told that we had a lazy, inefficient public service, that savings existed and that they could be easily found. Given the performance of some of the ministers in the present government, I can imagine what the expenditure review committee will be like. It appears that the Treasurer who went on about inefficiency and waste has no idea about how to deliver savings without cutting front-line services.

I believe that there is worse to come. The midyear review released in December revealed net debt to revenue reaching 60.9 per cent in 2011-12. This is simply unsustainable; massive cuts will need to be made. The global financial crisis is not to blame. The Premier has accepted responsibility for increasing spending by \$3.7 billion in just over three months. The latest quarterly figures were released on 27 February 2009. The Treasurer again claimed that the latest financial results would set the stage for a tough budget process. I believe that there is a tough budget process coming, but I do not believe that the GFC is entirely to blame. The out-of-control spending, the mayhem and the chaotic processes that this government has in place for managing finances are causing budget uncertainty.

If one reads the first six paragraphs of a media statement released by the government on 27 February, it would seem that revenue has collapsed. A claim was made yesterday that revenue has collapsed by \$1 billion a year. I have not yet seen the Treasury figures, but it would be good if the Treasurer could perhaps show the figures to Parliament. The first five paragraphs of the media statement state that there is no revenue and that revenue has collapsed. The sixth paragraph reveals that revenue for the first half of 2008-09 was \$530 million higher than was the case at the same time the previous year.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Higher?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes. One would have thought from the heading and the first five paragraphs that revenue was collapsing, but in fact revenue for the first half of 2008-09 was actually higher.

In summary, Western Australia is in a very precarious position. We have a minority government that has to spend money on any given day to hold on to government. At the same time, the GFC is posing enormous challenges, and it is clear that this government is not up to the task of meeting these challenges. It did a deal to take government; at the time it was unaffordable, but now it is just reckless. The real losers will not be anyone in this chamber, but all Western Australians who will have to pay for decades to come for this government's reckless financial management.

MR I.M. BRITZA (Morley) [4.39 pm]: I am going to run at a tangent to what we have been hearing. I guess criticism is really easy when people are on the opposition side. It is a shame that the opposition is actually called that, because it implies that opposition members have to oppose absolutely everything that comes from this side of the house. I remember that in 2003 my wife and I spent three months in the gallery while members opposite, who were then in government—we were in opposition—were cynically throwing back the same kinds of things that they are doing right now. When I am listening to them, I can hear the natural criticism and the natural opposition, and I think, “Yes; okay. What’s that? It’s their job to oppose; that’s right.” However, I am looking for the criticisms that actually have substance and are not part of the game that I guess the public feels we are playing. I feel that when opposition members speak, it is their job, I guess, to knock everybody. A term was used in the house today—I will not use it in the house—to say that members were not telling the truth. I want to share with members two personal stories about my electorate of Morley. However, before I do that, I want to recognise that the Premier was told today that he was a person who did not tell the truth, even though the remark was withdrawn. However, the Premier told the ministers that he wanted them to support the backbench. Of course, in a lot of governments the backbenchers are ignored. I want to declare to the house that there have been only four occasions in six months on which I have had to approach four different ministers. On each occasion not only have I been heard, but also action has been taken on what I have said. I do not know what everyone else’s experience is, but I want to thank the Premier because his ministers have actually taken his advice and listened to me. I have not heard that story about the other side of the house; I have heard opposite stories. I have heard that

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when Labor was in government, the backbenchers were almost ignored. I want to state that. Members opposite can tell their stories, but I have heard that. I am just stating here today that the ministers have listened to me and I am a very grateful man. Morley is grateful, too, by the way.

I will get to the meat of my speech today. I want to talk about our local butchers, because they recently took out two national sausage titles in Adelaide. I want to get on to something that is really deep! Our Morley butcher, Joe Di Fulvio of Crimea Quality Meats, won the premier sausage king title when his produce was judged the best traditional Australian sausage. It was Mr Di Fulvio's third national win since 2000. He and his wife, Anna, have run their butcher shop since 1977. Without giving away his award-winning secrets, Joe said that the perfect sausage came together after years of experience and that temperature control is important from start to finish. I can tell the house that I want to use sausage sizzles in my election campaign! However, I want to acknowledge their fine example of maintaining a strong and positive attitude in very difficult and trying economic times. It was encouraging to me.

Because everyone was telling me that Morley was a red Labor seat, I thought that I had better go and find out and get my first missile. Therefore, I went into the butcher shop and said, "Tell me; how are you going?" Joe said, "Do you know what? It's tough, but we're doing all right." I went to the Noranda Shopping Village and saw three grandmas having a cup of coffee. I introduced myself, sat down and said, "How are you doing?" They said to me, "You know, we're not doing too bad." Then they said to me, "Mr Britza, do we need to be afraid of what is coming economically?" What prompted me to share this story with members is that we have been criticised for speaking positively about the economy. We all know that it is tough. We are not denying that it is tough. But here we are; we have been discouraged and criticised for being positive. The Premier was criticised for talking up the economy. I do not believe he was speaking an untruth. I believe he was being fair. We all know it is tough. We all know it is that way. I said to these women, "Sure, it's going to be tough, but I can tell you that it's better than living in Europe, it's better than living in America, and it's even better than living in the eastern states of Australia. Western Australia is the best state to live in right now during these very difficult times. Now, you be careful, stay true and you'll be okay." They said, "Thank you, Mr Britza." For me, I feel that this is what I am getting on the ground. It is difficult; we know that. I guess what these butchers have done means nothing to some people, but in trying times, people are remaining true to themselves and doing well. I know it is tough, but these butchers are doing well. I acknowledge them and I say well done.

I want to acknowledge a second person, and I do so with a great deal of pride, because not every time but a lot of the time when Indigenous people are mentioned, it is with negativity. That is plainly unfair. I am really proud to have in my electorate a young Indigenous man who has done very well. I want to acknowledge him in the chamber today. Mr Linden Brownley was chosen to attend President Obama's inauguration ceremony. Some members may have even given to his appeal so that he could get there. If they did, I congratulate them because I think it was well worth it. This young 23-year-old was one of 2 000 students from around the world who was invited to attend the inauguration after attending the Global Young Leaders Conference in New York in 2003 and the Global Young Leaders Summit in China last year. Former Australian of the Year Fiona Stanley described this young man as an inspiration to others. She said that this is a wonderful thing for him. He is a very good ambassador for Aboriginal people, and he is a great role model for Aboriginal blokes.

Mr Brownley, a Deakin University law student, wants to one day work for the United Nations and move into politics. If he did that, it would be excellent. Mr Linden Brownley said that he believes he has something to offer his country, Australia. He believes that as a young Aboriginal man studying law and doing the things that he has been doing, he could be a pretty good role model for others. I believe that too. He believes quite strongly, and so do I, that he will find a place in politics in the future. It may be on the opposite side of the house. Even so, it would be an advantage to members opposite, because he is a good man, and they need to take it as that. He has an enormous intellect; it is wonderful. His empathy is the basis on which he serves his own peers at this time. His father and grandfather—I believe this is a precious story—crossed racial barriers, recognising that opportunities for their sons were limited in the goldfields town of Coolgardie. Linden's father made the difficult decision to leave his family's traditional home and move to Perth with his sons to give them a better education. Linden's father said that one of the reasons was to give his sons more opportunities and more options. I will quote a reporter, Hamish Fitzsimmons, who said that Linden's parents have always encouraged their children to be leaders, inspired by their own parents who were involved in early Aboriginal rights campaigns. Linden's mother said, according to my notes —

We always used to mention as well, you know, what Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream," ...

Linden heard that as a young man and said that he had a dream. His parents encouraged their boys to have a dream and to make it come true. That is honourable. Linden's mother also said that at a young age he would sit

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up, and he would love to read a book rather than play. I believe that this laid the foundation for his desire to be involved in the law and to make a great difference for his own people. I feel that we need to not only encourage this when we see it, but also provide opportunity for it no matter what side people support. When this young man came to my office, I thought “Gee; we need young men like you. We need men who have the passion at his age to go forward”. One of his headmasters, Dr Ian Lambert, said that “Often we look for people who will set an example for others and, you know, when you look for a young leader and you look for a young Indigenous leader, Linden Brownley captures all the elements”. What a wonderful thing to have said about Linden. When the member for Pilbara spoke about Linden he said, “I think that the story of Linden Brownley is that anything is possible. He comes from a family that has not had vast opportunities in the past, but they’ve had enormous determination and that’s a parallel story with what’s going on in the United States”. Linden’s mother probably has the final say. I think it was a tender thing for a mother to say about her child when she said, “I get very emotional just to know, you know, that my son one day might be Prime Minister of Australia and that it’s very possible”. If this young man, coming from Morley, went down that path, I would be very proud. I am honoured that we have such people in my electorate.

MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee) [4.51 pm]: I, too, was looking forward yesterday to the Premier’s Statement to hear what strategy might be unveiled for delivering Western Australia’s financial economic security two years into the future. We must bear in mind that after the last election there was a period in which the Premier was required to make a statement here in Parliament outlining the government’s agenda, without a lot of time for preparation, it could be argued in his defence. I would have thought yesterday was the first time that the Premier had been provided an opportunity after a sufficient gestation period to clearly outline his vision for the state of Western Australia under his leadership and as we go into the future. It did not happen. I have to say that the document itself is very disappointing. There is very little in it to indicate that there is any idea of how to deal with the circumstances the state faces in the next 12 months, two years, three years or four years. There is certainly nothing we could describe as visionary. That is particularly disappointing because for four years, if not eight years, the now Premier spent time in opposition lamenting how governments around Australia, notably in Western Australia, had lost their courage and had no fight for the big decisions that had to be made to take the state forward in the way governments of past generations had done. Yet yesterday, when that opportunity was there, it was let slip with just a whimper.

To describe yesterday’s statement as pathetic in its lack of vision for the state’s future would probably be being kind. Not just the Parliament, not just our own teams or the opposition but the people of Western Australia need to hear where this state is heading under this new government and how it will deal with the challenges now confronting it. Those challenges are somewhat different from what they were 12 months ago. There was nothing like that whatsoever in the Premier’s speech yesterday. It is absolutely remarkable that there is seemingly a total lack of preparedness by this government, whose term is now six months old, for the challenges it faces.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We are working very hard.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In a period of 20 or 25 years of observing governments around Australia I have never seen so many newly elected cabinet ministers go on holidays. It is unbelievable that, within the first few months of coming into government after eight years in opposition, there would be a circumstance in which minister after minister went on holidays, not just for a break of a day or two but for weeks on end. They went on holidays. Can members imagine Barack Obama being sworn into the presidency of the United States and after a couple of weeks saying, “I’m off on holidays; I had something booked with my family”? It is only two or three days ago that the Treasurer lambasted the opposition because he said it did not seem to realise there was something called the global financial crisis—the biggest financial crisis the world economy has had to grapple with for 80 years. He went on holidays for five weeks after becoming Treasurer—five weeks. In fact, after the first three or four months, despite having been on holidays for five weeks, he said he was ready to go again. He must be worn out waiting to see how the three per cent productivity cuts will be made. He was not the only minister who went on holidays. A number of ministers went on holidays. This is a government that has been sworn in after eight years in opposition and in the midst of what the Treasurer described, probably quite accurately, as a global financial crisis, the Treasurer went on a holiday within a few weeks and then went on holiday for a further 23 days. That demonstrates quite clearly the inability of the government to grapple with the situation it now confronts.

It might seem a bit cruel to say this but there are quite clearly ministers in this government who, firstly, are struggling very badly or, secondly, do not really want the job because it is too hard. Some of them knew it would be too hard and others found out within a matter of moments that it is hard. They cannot just sit there as ministers and hope that no-one will be watching, because everyone is watching their performance. I think the Minister for Police, who is in the chamber, is one of those people who did not want to be a minister.

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Mr R.F. Johnson: I did not want to be a minister?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, because he knows it is too hard. He would prefer to sit, as he has done for eight years, and make silly comments such as “Cut off their hands” or “Hang them all” with no sense of accountability whatsoever.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Why don’t you tell the truth in this place? I have never said anything like that at all. Why don’t you be truthful? We had eight years of untruthfulness from you. Start telling the truth now, my friend.

Mr M. McGowan: He said that he wanted people who had sex with animals to be able to work with children.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I did not.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I believe the Leader of the House just said the member was untruthful. He should be asked to withdraw given what occurred at question time today.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: If the member for Willagee made truthful comments, I would not say that. Further to that point of order I did not use an unparliamentary term. The member acknowledges that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.M. Harvey): The statement stands. The accusation was not against any person in particular. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Perhaps the lack of preparedness for government is forgivable because yes, we called a snap election and there was not a lot of time for the then opposition to prepare its policies. That is why it had almost no policy agenda other than to copy what the government of the day was going to do, including the three per cent dividend it now finds itself strapped to, apparently not knowing why it is doing it. It seems it is pursuing it only because during the election campaign the then Labor government said it would pursue that policy. The now Treasurer was telling us for several years in a row that the public sector was growing uncontrollably and creating massive waste, yet now it seems he cannot find any of that waste to cut. He has been in government for six months minus a month or so on holidays, yet he has not been able to come up with an agenda for providing the three per cent efficiency dividend. Other ministers have also been conspicuous by their absence.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Have you been on holidays since the election?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Not even a week?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Let us make a fairer comparison. The Labor Party was sworn into government in February 2001. I do not know whether I had a holiday until 2003. I recall taking two and a half weeks off in 2003. I went to Exmouth, and Geoff Gallop asked me to come back after two weeks because he wanted a reshuffle and he needed to speak to me about it, so I came back to work early. There was no global financial crisis in the last summer that I was Premier, but I did take two weeks off. I went to Cheynes Beach in Albany and I took my two youngest daughters with me. I came back to Perth after a week to find reporters from *The West Australian* camped on my front verge, demanding that I return to work to deal with what I suppose could be described as the NFC—the Neale Fong crisis. It was not a global financial crisis challenging the state’s economic sustainability; it was the Neale Fong issue. They were demanding that after one week’s holiday—I think that I had had a holiday a couple of years prior to that—I should return to work to deal with the crisis. We have a brand-new government, facing what it and everyone describes as the global financial crisis of the century, yet the Treasurer takes a month off and goes on holiday. It speaks volumes for the Liberal Party’s inability to grasp the challenges of government or the inability of members with ministerial positions to do the job properly.

I feel a bit of sympathy for the Minister for Education, the member for Churchlands. There is no way that she wanted that job. After 18 or 19 years of service to the Parliament, the member wanted the Speaker’s chair. Every day she finds that it is tough work being the education minister. It is very easy to be an incoming education minister, sign a cheque giving teachers a pay rise and say that the government has solved the problem. Was it a problem solved or a problem created? I thought I heard the Treasurer today describe the huge challenges that the government is now facing because of the growth in the public sector wages bill. It is a problem of the government’s own making. That bit of political expediency that saw the teachers’ pay issue concluded a few weeks earlier than it would otherwise have been concluded has spun off into a much bigger problem—how to rein in the government’s wages bill and how to justify not passing on six per cent wages growth to everybody else in the public sector. It did not really solve a problem; it created a lot of problems. It is hard work being the

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education minister, and it gets harder every day. Unfortunately for the member for Churchlands, that will be her life from here on in. Life is not easy for accountable ministers.

The issues of the global financial crisis, accountability and education lead me to training. It is mind boggling that this government has no training policy. The state government of Western Australia, the state that is the powerhouse of the national economy, is confronting massive economic challenges but it has no training policy. It seems to have no concept of why a training policy is needed. It is exactly the same position that the previous conservative government had in Western Australia; there was no training policy back then either. There was no growth in traineeships or apprenticeships for years. While the economy ground along, the state government just sat there and watched, with the view that the market would determine whether people wanted to take on apprentices and trainees and that there was no need for government intervention. The Labor Party came in with an interventionist policy and saw the number of apprentices and trainees in Western Australia increase from 18 000 to 40 000. It was a massive increase that was required to meet the economic circumstances at the time. This new government is facing major economic challenges but it has no training policy and shows no signs of having one. It is lamentable that that should be the case, but it seems to be so.

Other governments around the world are working furiously to try to deal with the outcomes that they are confronted with because of what has happened to the world's economy. Treasurers, premiers, presidents and prime ministers all over the world are working furiously. There is no sign of that activity from this government—none. I challenge the government to produce one statement that indicates that it knows what it is doing, other than, “We are fixing problems.” I have heard the Premier say, “We will fix problems.” He has gone from a man of vision to a person who will fix problems if and when they arise, but they are not being fixed. He has to think big; he has to think about the big picture and about what his role is and about how to deal with the dynamics that impact on his part in that picture. There is no sign of that happening.

I applaud the Premier for going to Japan, but I do not applaud the intent of his trip. It was ridiculous for him to say that he was going to Japan to apologise to Inpex for any offence that it may have suffered because of the relationship it had with the previous government. I met with the chairman of Inpex in Tokyo. This Premier is not the only Premier to have done it. I met with the chairman several times in WA prior to that. I met with him in Tokyo and I met with him again in Perth after that. I had to explain to Inpex, which, as I understood it, had no experience in oil and gas—it got in Total, a French company, as a practitioner—that it would not get unfettered freehold access to the Maret Islands in Western Australia and it would have to meet environmental and heritage laws and requirements. I also had to explain that it would be granted access on a certain basis, including that the site would be big enough for a hub facility for gas processing. It could have its own processing plant, but it had to be a hub facility. It did not like that either. I and thereafter the then Deputy Premier when he became Minister for State Development were in regular communication with Inpex. We placed a lot of emphasis on our relationship with China. When we came to government, China was our second or third biggest trading partner. Outward trade to China—that is, exports—would have been about \$3 billion or \$4 billion a year. By the time we left government, China was our number one trading partner; it had passed Japan in 2006. Exports to China were in the vicinity of \$17 billion; from a \$2 billion or \$3 billion base, they had increased to \$17 billion in about seven years. Of course we paid China a lot of interest. Thanks to what happened in China, a lot of prosperity was gained in Western Australia. However—this is an interesting point—China also paid a lot of attention to us. The entire Chinese leadership, on individual visits, has come to Perth to meet the Premier and players in the resource industry. The President of China came to Perth before he went to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Sydney. He made himself available to speak to people at a dinner in Perth. The President of China sat with us at a dinner and talked about how important the relationship was for the future of both countries and how he wanted that relationship to develop. The Premier of China came here as well. The same dynamics were at play. The President and the Premier of China, Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, came to Perth. Wu Bangguo, who I think is the Chairman of the National People's Congress, came here in 2005; he is third in the Chinese hierarchy. He spent two days here. It was very enjoyable. These are the three most senior political figures in China. The fourth most senior political figure, the Vice-Premier, Mr Zeng Peiyan, also came to Western Australia, in March 2007. The entire Chinese leadership individually visited Western Australia. If they had the time, they visited mining and gas sites and our university facilities to talk about that level of interaction.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Of course, great benefit flowed from nurturing the Chinese-Western Australian relationship. I am struggling to think of a senior Japanese political figure who came to Western Australia in that same period. I went to Japan, the Premier has been to Japan and Richard Court went to Japan.

Mr M. McGowan: Geoff Gallop.

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Geoff Gallop went to Japan at least once. We went to Japan. I am struggling to think of a senior Japanese political figure who came to Western Australia in that period. We have nothing to apologise for. It is ridiculous for the Premier of Western Australia to say that we need to apologise to the Japanese. It is ridiculous for the Premier to grovel in that way. He does not raise himself in their estimation; he lowers himself in their estimation. I sat with the President of China. If the Prime Minister of Japan had wanted to come to Western Australia, I would have sat with him as well. I sat with the Premier of China. I escorted the Chairman of the National People's Congress around the state. We should be grateful that the Chinese took such an interest in our state and we should not be apologising to the Japanese for it. The representatives of the Japanese government and Japanese industry based in Western Australia on a permanent basis are brilliant people. They do a fantastic job, they are well intended and they have done tremendous good for the relationship between Western Australia and Japan over a long time. However, I repeat the point that I believe not a single Japanese political figure came to Western Australia in the time period I am talking about, and there should have been a visit.

I heard the Premier today characterise the request-for-proposal process for the Oakajee port as the state government of Western Australia pitting China against Japan. What nonsense! What a juvenile, immature perception of that process! For the Premier to try to project outwards to the state that that is what has happened is most unfortunate. Mitsubishi was the Japanese partner in Oakajee Port and Rail, which was the successful tenderer. The Chinese partner for Yilgarn was unsuccessful. There was no concept at all of pitting one nation against the other. It is a ludicrous assertion, poorly thought through, and it should never have passed the lips of the Premier of the state of Western Australia. I have to ask the question that was asked by the member for Armadale today of the Premier: what is he trying to do at Oakajee? What has happened to the proposal that went forward and for which Mitsubishi and its Australian partner, Oakajee Port and Rail, were the successful tenderers or proponents? Why is the state of Western Australia, under this Premier's leadership, so desperate to expend up to \$700 million of taxpayers' money on a proposal that the private sector—the partner I just mentioned—is prepared to expend itself?

If members listened to some of the speeches—my recollection is hazy but I listened—that the now Premier made in opposition about this issue, some enlightenment may start to filter through. First of all, he believes that Western Australia should control that port. We do not have to own it to control it; ownership will end up in Western Australia anyway. In my recollection, ownership was going to end up in Western Australia; certainly control was going to end up in Western Australia. The Premier said that he wanted clarity because the Oakajee development was too complicated and there were too many balls in the air. We got clarity. Has the Premier delivered clarity? Nobody seems to know what the ultimate outcome will be for that project. The Premier could not explain it today when he was asked to do so.

Another important point that the Premier made last year when we were experiencing record iron ore prices was that there was a window of opportunity that we should not allow to close without Oakajee being developed because some of the projects in the mid-west region were quite marginal—more marginal than the operations in the Pilbara; their viability was much more price sensitive; and a dramatic or substantial decline in the iron ore price would really test the viability of some of those mid-west projects. If that was the case, why then, when there is significant downward pressure on iron ore prices today, would the Premier commit hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money when he has acknowledged that price sensitivity could affect the viability of the projects? Why would he leave himself hung out in that way when private enterprise is quite capable, and has demonstrated its capability, of undertaking the work? I believe the state of Western Australia deserves an explanation. I am aware of the current Premier's passion for the Oakajee development, but I believe it is a passion for a model that is out-of-date. It is a model that echoes the times of the 1960s when there were dreams of steel mills along the Western Australian coast. That is not going to happen. I believe that part of the Premier's Oakajee dream is to be remembered as the man who delivered the industrial complex north of Geraldton, including some sort of steelmaking facility. Hundreds of millions of dollars of public money could be put at risk unnecessarily. I believe the Premier should rethink his position on this issue, or at least explain to the Parliament, and thereby the people of Western Australia, what the proposition is actually all about.

Although there is a willingness to spend hundreds of millions of dollars unnecessarily in that way, and billions of dollars are pouring out because of the royalties for regions agreement, I am yet to see any demonstration of that as an effective spend of public sector money on infrastructure development around the regions. Painting swings in Pingrup will not save the future of Pingrup, and that sort of project will not deliver long-term financial stability. The spend must be targeted wisely. The government needs to develop long-term infrastructure for the economic sustainability of the regions of the state, not just pour out billions of dollars because the Premier said he would.

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At the same time—I raised this matter by interjection during question time—there has been the cancellation of major infrastructure projects such as the sports stadium, which is a very sad turn of events. I urge the government to reconsider its position. The cancellation of that project is the cancellation of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver an international standard sports stadium for the city of Perth and for the state of Western Australia, including the regions, as people in the regions would come to Perth and enjoy it. If the government spends large amounts of taxpayers' money patching up Subiaco Oval, the prospect of ever spending large amounts of money to develop a new stadium will disappear forever. The cancellation of the new museum project was lamentably bad judgement. In any case, I do not believe that any work on the refurbishment of the current Western Australian Museum will be started by the time the next election comes around, so perhaps that situation is retrievable. Certainly there will be no work done on a major replacement for the sports stadium, so perhaps that situation will be retrievable by a future government if a future government arrives in 2013.

Another major project that we supported strongly was the Perth riverfront development, which was controversial and would have involved overwhelming private—not public—sector investment and which I believe would have significantly benefited the state of Western Australia and reshaped the city of Perth for the better. It is very sad that there has been a victory there for those people who are small of mind. They are small of mind—people whose vision could be painted on a postage stamp. We are back to square one on that issue and back to the days of arguing about whether it should have happened. We decided it would happen; it was a good decision and it should have gone ahead. Even in the face of the global financial crisis, which sent the Treasurer on holidays, the planning and environmental approval work should have gone ahead. It is a very, very poor decision and I believe the only reason that decision, the football stadium decision and the Museum decision were made was that it was a Labor government that ticked off those projects.

The Ellenbrook railway has been cancelled. That did not take long. During the election campaign the Liberal Party was gung-ho; we were going to put in a railway to Ellenbrook and the Liberal Party was going to match us. That has been cancelled.

A government member interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes it has. I guarantee the current member for that area that there will not be a railway while he is the member.

Mr F. Alban: It was not meant to be —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There is no intention of ever building it.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr V. Catania): Order, members!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Swan Hills and member for Albany!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is difficult to come to terms with the fact that we lost the election, of course it is. It is even more difficult to come to grips with the fact that we lost the election to an opponent that had no policy agenda for the state's future and still has none. It has no agenda for the state's future—none whatsoever. Ministers who do not want their job, are incapable of doing their job, go on holidays in the face of the global financial crisis and then when they are questioned about it —

Mr F. Alban interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Have you been on holidays? We are not in government. Get used to it; members opposite are in government and they must work and they must work hard. The people of Western Australia expect the government to work hard.

The Premier's statement yesterday was noticeable for its complete failure to provide a pathway for the state. His great opportunity went begging and that is very, very unfortunate. It simply showed up the hollow rhetoric that came pouring forth in those four years that he spent on the opposition benches. When it came right down to it, he had nothing to offer. We deserve better. The state needs direction and it needs a government whose members are committed to hard work and to developing, if they do not have one already, a vision for the state's future because without it we are going nowhere.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham) [5.22 pm]: I also take this opportunity to address some of the issues to do with the new government and some of the things that I observed taking place. Earlier today we had an opportunity to discuss the economy, jobs, some of the failures of administration and some of the silly things that

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the Premier has done in not only failing to solve some problems but actually making them worse. His commentary on Gorgon left me absolutely shocked by the extent of the irresponsibility being shown. However, I want to talk about some of the other issues of public administration and to trace the history of some topical issues and the varying positions that some of the major players have taken on them over the years.

The first point I make is about some of the mistakes that the government has made in the allocation of portfolios. It has not been widely commented on, but the Minister for Education has both the education portfolio and the tourism portfolio. A major commitment of the Liberal Party was always that tourism would be a stand-alone portfolio. In past election campaigns it always said that tourism would be a stand-alone portfolio and that is quite clearly on the record. I think putting tourism and education together is a mistake, but I do not think that tourism should be a stand-alone portfolio. I was Minister for Tourism for the entirety of 2005 and it was combined with the racing and gaming portfolio. The tourism portfolio does not have a large budget; it is about \$50 million. However, it is an important agency and it deals with 80 000 people in the industry all of whom are attuned to what the Tourism Commission does and who are very focused on making sure that it represents their interests. What they want and need is a minister who puts a lot of time into the role. The functions and the sorts of things one has to do with tourism are often denigrated, but another important role involves travelling and meeting what are called the “industry partners” in other states and countries. When I had the tourism portfolio in my first year as a minister, I loved that portfolio, but it took up a lot of time. It was complementary with the racing and gaming portfolio because in that portfolio I was able to put in place the liquor reforms, for instance, and some of the issues with racing were important to tourism, particularly tax cuts in the racing industry. Therefore, giving the tourism portfolio to a minister who has a far more senior portfolio—education—simply means that the tourism component is completely diminished. I suggest that it would have been far better to give that portfolio to a minister who has far more time and energy to devote to it and to the travel that is required.

The second thing that I think is a mistake is the split of education and training. We brought them together into the single education and training department because, of course, a lot of training is now done in schools and a lot of school students go to technical and further education colleges for years 11 and 12 these days. Therefore, it makes sense for the two portfolios to be in the hands of one minister because the agency will now have very busy, very capable people—I have the utmost respect for the people who run that department—who will have to serve two masters. Finding the time required to serve two masters with the additional briefings and meetings and so forth is difficult. Also, there will be disputes between the two ministers as to what their responsibilities are and where the boundaries are between the two portfolios. It is a mistake to split them and I do not quite know why it has been done. Reports I have read state that the Premier does not have a great deal of respect for Hon Peter Collier, the training minister, but to have split the portfolio to give him something minor—bear in mind that training is roughly a tenth of the department’s budget—solves an internal political problem but is not good public administration. That decision was a significant mistake because in light of what we are going through now with apprenticeships and traineeships diminishing, and people losing their apprenticeships, we want to have a minister devoted to that. What I would have done and what the government should have done is have a minister who wants to be the education and training minister for a start—not a minister who wanted to be Speaker—who is prepared to put in the work, and who will be responsible for both portfolios. It would be a sensible arrangement for the government to then have another minister who has the time and energy to be the tourism minister, perhaps combined with some other portfolios. The government has not done that and I think both sectors will suffer as a consequence.

Another matter I will comment on is the new Public Sector Commissioner. When the Premier made that announcement, I knew it was about solving a problem. The Premier’s friend, his best friend apparently, was head of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, but the Premier did not want him in that role. He wanted his political operator in that role and we know the course of events that got his political operator into that role. Of course he also wanted to have a job for his best friend, so without any advertising or competitive process that would have been appropriate, he created the new position of Public Sector Commissioner, a very senior and very highly paid job. The role of the Public Sector Commissioner that he came up with—leadership in the public sector and driving public sector reform—significantly overlaps with that of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. The Public Sector Standards Commissioner, Ruth Shean, is a woman who was for a brief period one of my departmental heads. She is a very capable woman and someone for whom I have a lot of respect. She has this role that is all about standards in the public sector; equity and probity—members can look at the Public Sector Management Act 1994; complying with standards and so on and so forth; ensuring that people appointed to jobs are appropriate for the position they are appointed to; and ensuring that the public sector is structured and organised to achieve maximum operational responsibility. It is about all those things. Her role directly overlaps the role of the Public Sector Commissioner. We will now have two people, one, the Premier’s best friend, who is

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running this office with a heap of new senior executive staff that he has appointed; and the other, another person in a role created by statute. We will have two people doing roughly the same job, all to solve an internal problem created because the Premier wanted to put his political operator in as head of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Premier has managed to hoodwink the media on this one. They think that a Public Sector Commissioner sounds good—they think that all sounds great. However, the reality is that the two roles completely overlap. Western Australia must have the most regulated public sector in the world when it has the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards, the Public Sector Commission, the Corruption and Crime Commission, the Ombudsman, the Auditor General and the Information Commissioner all there operating in an oversight sort of role on the public sector. I do not object to all the original bodies, but I object to the creation of a new one that is doing the role of another one. It seems to me that it was just a manoeuvre to solve an internal friendship and political problem that the Premier had.

As part of the response to the global financial crisis, the Premier has not only created the Public Sector Commission; he has created new departments everywhere. The Department of Industry and Resources was split into three, the Department of Housing and Works was split, and we now have a heap of new agencies. When the government says, “Roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty, get on with the job”, when we used to have two agencies, we now have five to do the job, and if one adds in the Public Sector Commission it is six. There has been an expansion in the number of agencies, an expansion in the number of directors general, senior executives and chief executive officers and so forth. As I outlined today, we are now up to 32 to 34 community reviews, inquiries and committees.

My second point is that the rhetoric of “rolling your sleeves up and getting on with the job” is there—great rhetoric, and in theory I agree with it—but the practice is all about more bureaucracy, more departments, more senior executives, more committees, more inquiries and more reviews. The evidence is there. Whilst the Premier glibly comes into the house and runs the lines, the reality is that the government has created more bureaucracy, reviews and committees, as opposed to doing the opposite.

In relation to the three per cent cuts, I have heard the Premier say on numerous occasions, “It’s only three per cent. Three cents in the dollar; it shouldn’t be hard to do.” Of course, when someone who has expanded his office enormously—I think he now has the biggest Premier’s staff in history—says it is all easy to do, we need to look back, because of course everyone has a history. On 29 July 1999, when the current Premier was then the Minister for Education, his budget for state schools blew out in the 1998-99 financial year by \$81 million. He was asked why he could not make the cuts and he said that the only way to do it was to close schools or sack staff—employ fewer teachers, close schools. In other words, the line that he was that he was running was that he was not going to do it because it was not possible.

When he had responsibility for a line agency, as I have done, he took the view that costs could not be cut, yet now, when he is in the exalted position of Premier and he can just issue instructions without having to carry them out and adopt a different view about his agency, his view is that it is easy. He is saying to the ministers that it is easy to do, even though he vetoes every initiative they suggest. When he had the opportunity as Minister for Education 10 years ago, he vetoed any initiatives designed to cut costs in his agency.

Having dealt with the Premier’s failures in public administration and the different view on costs that he adopted when he was a minister, the second point I want to make about his rhetoric relates to the Oakajee development. A number of members have commented on that issue. The point I want to address is that he now says there has to be significant government involvement. Basically, he outlined today that large elements of the project need to be built by the public sector, and \$350 million or so of state money and \$350 million of commonwealth money will go into it. Of course, it could be said that is only \$350 million of state money and the rest of it is commonwealth money, but if he had not designated that it come from the Infrastructure Australia fund, that commonwealth money could have been used for another project. In effect, \$700 million is being allocated from the state and commonwealth, but there is an opportunity cost there because that \$700 million could go to some other project around Western Australia, and, as we all know, there are numerous projects that money could be put into.

The Premier says that government investment is needed. He has now adopted a 1970s view of the world: government good, private sector bad. However, I go back to 12 November 1996, when the Premier announced the approval of the key elements of the state agreement with Kingstream Resources NL for Oakajee—the port was part of that discussion—in this house. On 12 November 1996 the then Minister for Resources Development, the member for Cottesloe and current Premier, made the following ministerial statement —

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The Government would also like to see the port developed by the private sector, while recognising that some state contribution to costs may be needed until the port attracts other users and becomes commercially.

The basic point was —

The Government would also like to see the port developed by the private sector ...

Thirteen years ago his view was that there should be some minor involvement by government in contribution—I think that was the arrangement he outlined today, which was \$20 million to get the project up and operating with approvals and so forth—but that the government would like the port to be developed by the private sector. Now his view is completely different. I think the reasoning behind his change of heart, his going back to the government good, private sector bad point of view, is that it was our project. It was the former Labor government's program; therefore, it must be bad. Under the former Labor government's project, the private sector would build the port. However, that must be bad; therefore, the Liberal government will go to a project in which the Premier interferes in a commercial arrangement that is already in place to put in place an arrangement that is completely different from the one he promulgated in this house 13 years ago. He has a very different view now from the one he had back then.

I will address another point. I heard the Premier allege today that there was some fiddling of the books at Verve Energy, or that people were beneficiaries of the cash injection to bail out Verve. Verve has, of course, been bleeding costs in its last few years of operation and there had to be a cash injection last year, or perhaps the year before, to keep it afloat. In 2005 the seating arrangement in the chamber was different.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was sitting in the front row and talking to the then Minister for Energy and the then Premier when the former members for Kalgoorlie, who was the leader of the Liberal Party, and Leschenault, who was the opposition spokesperson on energy, approached us and said that they would vote for the bill on disaggregation if we put a cap in place. They said that they would vote for it that day and get it over and done with but they wanted a cap put on prices. They said that they would agree to the bill and vote for it.

Mr J.H.D. Day interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We put downward pressure on gas prices. The member for Kalamunda keeps on babbling. We put downward pressure on gas prices, but that does not mean that the price would never rise. The member verbals me all the time about that. He knows exactly what I mean. He has manufactured a view in his head that competition in the energy sector is somehow bad. I think that deep down he knows it is good but he has somehow constructed an arrangement—it is a bit like an East German communist who has come up with an arrangement in his head to defend the system of which he was part—to defend the position he has been forced to take. The Liberal Party leadership at that time told us that if we put the cap in place, they would support it. Naturally we said yes. That is the genesis behind it. Members have seen that; it has been reported. The *Hansard* of the time shows that the now Premier said that he supported the cap.

Mr J.H.D. Day: You were promising at the very least that prices would not go up.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We put downward pressure on the price of gas. The member can keep on verballing me but we put downward pressure on the price of gas.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have a very good recollection. It was downward pressure. I was involved in the process. Does the member for Kalamunda not think that competition provides downward pressure?

Mr J.H.D. Day: Competition is a good thing.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Why did the member oppose it?

Mr J.H.D. Day: No-one was arguing against it. The private sector was coming in anyway. The point is that you were creating a very clear impression in everybody's minds that at the very least electricity prices would not go up as a result of the changes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously that was put into effect because the Liberal Party demanded it. I was sitting over there when Matt Birney and Dan Sullivan, both of whom have gone, God bless them, came to us and demanded that proposal on behalf of the Liberal Party. The *Hansard* has now appeared showing that the now Premier endorsed that. I note that he has gone very quiet in the debate now that the *Hansard* has appeared. I was there for that. I wanted to make the point that he has been saying that somehow \$1 billion disappeared because of

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us. It was a joint decision. We voted for it too. In one way, Western Australians would have paid for it either through higher electricity prices or through their taxes. In one way or another they would have paid for it.

Mr C.C. Porter: Does that mean you acknowledge that the \$1 billion has disappeared?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It was a transfer to meet a debt from one part of government to Western Power. I have heard the allegation that someone somewhere received a big cash payment. If the member has an allegation, it is his responsibility to take it to the Corruption and Crime Commission.

Mr C.C. Porter: You know that's not what I meant.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have seen the Premier rubbing his fingers together suggesting that someone has received a big cash payout. The underhanded allegation that there has been some sort of corruption is nasty and wrong and if he has some evidence, he should make the claim. He should send the matter to the agency and we will see what comes of it. One thing I wanted to raise in that context is that slightly less than \$1 billion went to Western Power to meet the losses that were caused by the cap being put in place by both sides of the house.

If we want to talk about losses, let us look at the arrangement entered into in 1999 regarding the commonwealth-state GST agreement. That was the time when the Liberal Party could have put in place an arrangement that defended Western Australia. What happened was that the Court government—I have a lot of respect for Richard Court—signed up to the agreement with John Howard that did not put a floor under the GST payments. Western Australian consumers pay their taxes, which go to the commonwealth, and that money is then redistributed to the states. No floor was put into the agreement. The government could have signed an agreement then to put a floor in place, but it did not. That was a failure.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr V. Catania): Order, member! I remind members that if they are not sitting in their own seat, they are not allowed to make any comments.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If a floor was put in place for five years, I was unaware of that. Western Australia has 11 per cent of the population and by 2011 our share of the revenue is predicted to be less than six per cent of the revenue of the national pool. That is estimated to cost us roughly \$2 billion a year forever more. Talk about financial losses! There is nothing corrupt or improper about it but it was gross negligence not to have put that floor in place. The people of Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria are the beneficiaries of Western Australia's economic good fortune because of a deal signed by the Liberal Party, whose current Premier was the then deputy leader to the person who signed it. The Liberal Party endorsed in the Parliament the provision of a subsidy to all the other states. Talk about financial incompetence and losses. That is the granddaddy of financial incompetence and losses. Under the agreement signed by the Liberal Party, we have to endure a loss of \$2 billion a year, year in, year out. It is not as though members opposite can say that that was them and not me. The current Premier was the deputy leader to the person who signed the deal. That was when they had the chance to put in the floor. I have heard the Premier say that it obviously needs to be renegotiated. Unfortunately, it was an agreement, so everyone has to sign up to the renegotiation. Obviously, the states and territories that are the beneficiaries will not agree to any changes, as far as I can tell. If I were the Premier of Tasmania, New South Wales or South Australia, I would not agree to any renegotiation. They would have to be mad. If rivers of gold were coming to them from Western Australia and the Premier of Western Australia said that it was unfair, yet he was the deputy leader to the guy who signed it, the other Premiers would laugh. They would not agree to any changes.

I could talk about daylight saving and other issues about which the Premier has had more positions than a famous book I could name. However, I will conclude on the relationship between the Liberal Party and the National Party. It is an interesting relationship. We will see some instability in government that we do not need at this point because of the world economy. We have already seen instability because of the local government council amalgamations being forcibly pushed through by that forceful figure, the Minister for Local Government, who is the hard man of the government. I am aware of the relationship between the National Party and the Liberal Party because I was at the conception of the relationship between the Premier and the Leader of the National Party. I was in a hall of some description in Merredin on the night of the election of the member for Central Wheatbelt. I found myself there as probably the senior ALP figure in the room on the night that we got 15 per cent of the vote, or thereabouts. After working on the Koorda booth, we received about 30 votes out of 300. I found myself in a room where at one end was the now Premier, who was looking very sunburnt and unhappy.

Mr T.K. Waldron: Was this after the by-election?

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Mr M. McGOWAN: This was the night of the by-election. At the other end was the soon-to-be-honourable Max Trenorden, looking pretty happy with his new recruit—that was to change, of course—the now member for Central Wheatbelt, who was sitting at the other end. The vote was coming in and the member for Central Wheatbelt, on Labor Party preferences, was successful in defeating the Liberal Party candidate. The now Premier went out there determined to destroy the member for Central Wheatbelt's political career before it had even begun. The member for Cottesloe wanted the Liberal candidate to win that seat because that would mean the Liberal Party would get the additional resources of the National Party—that is, an additional five staff. He would get them for the Liberal Party and he would be able to destroy the National Party, which he has always hated. That was what happened. I was there on the night, and he was wildly angry. He was sunburnt, and he looked a bit like a bulldog that had swallowed a bee; he was an angry man. I am not surprised that that relationship is not good, and that at some point in the future it might fracture. I have a copy of a letter that the then Leader of the Opposition, Hon Colin Barnett, sent to all the people in the electorate of Merredin.

Mr T.K. Waldron: What is the date on it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is dated 14 November 2001.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is still here in black and white. Throughout the letter, he keeps saying things about Liberal Party candidate Joanne Burges, such as —

I am confident she is the best person to represent you, your family and your community.

...

People were concerned at falling populations in regional towns and many felt they were not getting proper representation in State Parliament.

That is a dig at Hendy, by the way! The letter also states —

More than any other candidate in this by-election, Joanne is equipped for a senior role representing you in Parliament.

Not Brendon—Joanne. She is the one. The letter continues —

Her understanding of rural priorities makes Joanne the best choice when it comes to lobbying for improvements...

The next part is in bold —

With 14 country members, the Liberals are now the strongest country team in Parliament (the Nationals have just five country members).

That is what Hon Colin Barnett was saying. Throughout the letter, he is basically saying, “Brendon’s a dud; our candidate, Joanne, is really good. You’ve only got to vote for Joanne and you’ll get decent representation.” No wonder the Leader of the National Party wanted to come with us. That was the conception of his political career, and the current Premier was trying to destroy it before it had begun. We also saw the magnificent response from the National Party—from Max, God bless him—that went out to the electorate. I will not read it out; it has been read out before, but he thoroughly ran down the contributions of the Liberal Party in this house.

All I am saying is that it is a rocky relationship. The state does not need it at this point. It started very badly, and I have a feeling it might end very badly.

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton) [5.51 pm]: In my response to the Premier’s Statement, I would like to add to the Premier’s condolences and the condolences given by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday to the victims of the bushfires in Victoria. I lived for more than a decade in Melbourne and spent many wonderful weekends with my family at a friend’s home in Marysville. It was a lovely village, surrounded by large forests of mountain ash, with beautiful walks, lyre birds and excellent coffee shops. It is now all gone—the home, the town, the streams, the trees, and the birds are all dead and burnt. Hopefully, the town will be rebuilt, albeit at great cost and over time. Some of the region’s heritage, both built and natural, is gone for good. It is a tragedy, as both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition mentioned yesterday.

The lesson for us is that, but for the grace of God and luck, it could have been us this year. Indeed, the evidence is that unless we take action to reduce fuel loads in our forests, it is only a matter of time before we experience similar devastation in Western Australia. This year’s fire was not the first time Marysville has been affected by fire. It was also affected by the fire of 1939, known as the Black Friday fire, which devastated Gippsland. After that fire, the government of the day—in common with the current Victorian Brumby government—called a royal

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commission; this was the Stretton royal commission, a very famous one. A major finding of the Stretton royal commission was that Victorians should look to Western Australia for leadership in fighting forest fires and managing fire in forests, and specifically that Victoria should adopt Western Australia's recognition of the fact that fire is a natural—indeed, essential—part of the Australian environment, and that Australia's bush has evolved with fire. Aboriginal people have, for tens of thousands of years, managed the land with frequent fire. In fact, the evidence is that Aboriginals did not simply manage the land; they altered the environment to create an environment that needs frequent fires.

The royal commission also found that if fire is kept from our forests over long periods, fuel will build. If the fuel is not reduced, it will eventually cause catastrophic fires called crown fires. Anyone who watched television over the past month or so will have seen the devastating effects of crown fires. The fire does not go along the ground but gets among the upper reaches of the trees and spreads in a manner that overwhelms firefighters and towns. Crown fires in eucalyptus forests also throw out spot fires and burning embers that run kilometres in front of the fire. My friend's house was destroyed long before the fire front arrived.

This is what happened in Marysville in 1939 and 2009. The lessons of the 1939 fire were learnt and led to the implementation of an ongoing program of prescribed burning. The program helped to avoid major crown fires in Victoria for decades. However, by the 1980s the commitment to prescribed burning began to wane in Victoria, and by the end of the 1990s the commitment had waned significantly. In fact, the evidence is that the level of prescribed burning at this time was a third of the level recommended by experts and was inadequate. Large areas of the forests were not touched for decades.

The result was a growth in the number and intensity of serious fires in Victoria over the past decade. After each fire, the government would commission an inquiry or review, and each would conclude that there were inadequate levels of prescribed burning. After each inquiry the government promised to do something but did nothing. The level and coverage of prescribed burning in Victoria was not increased and fuel loads grew to dangerous levels, culminating in the catastrophic fires of last month.

The lessons for us in WA are real. The failure to act on prescribed burning as recommended by the scientists and experts will eventually result in catastrophic impacts; it will catch up with us. There is no running from it. It is better to act now, in advance of a disaster, than to try to act in the midst of a disaster. Important things get lost in disasters. Priority is given to saving people, building houses and roads, and making insurance claims, rather than taking preventive action. The problem lies with effective political leadership and effective management. We must heed and act upon these lessons or we will inflict upon ourselves a similar disaster to that experienced in Victoria this year. Although Western Australia has been, and is still, a world leader in prescribed burning research and management, the commitment to and performance of prescribed burning has waned to dangerously low levels.

For decades, the annual target for prescribed burning in WA was in the vicinity of 300 000 hectares a year. That was reduced during the 1990s without adequate debate and review. Since 2000 the Department of Environment and Conservation—the agency given carriage of the planning and implementation of the prescribed burning program—has failed to meet even this reduced target. Between 2000 and 2008 the average annual area of prescribed burning was only 149 000 hectares, which is 25 per cent below the target. This created a backlog of 400 000 hectares.

Mr M. McGowan: How much per annum?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The area was 149 000 hectares against a target of 200 000 hectares.

This inadequate program of prescribed burning has resulted in a large increase in fuel load. Large areas of Western Australia have fuel loads on the same scale as in Victoria prior to the recent fire season. Therefore, large areas are subject to an extremely high risk of crown fires or other catastrophic fires.

The Bush Fire Front, which is an association of forestry experts—largely ex-Department of Conservation and Land Management and Department of Environment and Conservation employees—carried out last year, right before the fire season, an analysis of a number of communities in the east and south of Perth to rank the level of bushfire risk. The areas of highest risk of crown fires are the Perth hills area, extending out from Walyunga to Armadale, and as far as Mt Helena and Chidlow, and especially the areas adjoining the long, unburnt national parks and the regional parks along the scarp; the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge, extending from Dunsborough down to Karridale, including Yallingup and Margaret River; and the town of Denmark and the surrounding urban residential and rural subdivisions. The Bush Fire Front says, according to my notes —

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Of these areas, the Perth hills has the best access to firefighters but the highest populations and most to lose. Denmark has a rather milder climate, but far and away the heaviest fuels—these include karri forest last burnt in about 1940—and very poor firefighting capability.

Leeuwin-Naturaliste has the worst problem during the summer school holidays, when packed with holiday-makers. The thought these people —

That is, the holiday-makers —

trying to evacuate themselves along the narrow twisting roads of the region (Caves Road), in the company of fire fighting appliances, and in the face of a large bushfire, is an absolute nightmare. Many people would die.

I think we saw this in the case of the Victorian fires, when people fled in a hurry on a single road and in a panic smashed into other cars. The fire then came through and killed them all.

The Bush Fire Front is also very concerned about forest towns such as Jarrahdale and Dwellingup. Both of these towns are highly vulnerable to fires sweeping from the ex-Alcoa mine sites. Pemberton is also vulnerable, as is the Warren National Park, parts of the tingle forest and important karri regrowth forests. We must act. We must learn the lessons from Victoria and from our past success. Failure to do so will result in loss of life, homes, communities and heritage, natural and man-built. The people in the Department of Environment and Conservation, in my mind, know what to do. Although the agency has lost a great deal of expertise in recent years—some left because of their age and others left in frustration—it still has sufficient expertise to set the right targets and carry out the appropriate scale and level of prescribed burning. Indeed, DEC is still one of the world's leading centres of excellence on the science and management of prescribed burning. The problem has been that it has been constrained or restrained from doing the right thing, from doing what it knows needs to be done and from undertaking adequate preventive burning of our state forests to protect us and the environment.

Clearly, prescribed burning is controversial and can be unpleasant. Understandably, I believe that the public has an innate fear and dislike of fire. Fires are dangerous, can do damage, can scar the environment, can pollute the air and can alter the environment. Anyone who has fought fires knows this. People have regularly and loudly complained about the smoke from prescribed burning, and politicians such as us have too often, I think, reacted by greatly restricting the times and areas available for burns. This must change. People hate to see and regularly complain about black-tinged bush caused by prescribed burning. They believe it is a sign of excessive rather than necessary burning. Government and its policymakers have responded with a weakened commitment to prescribed burning.

A growing number of people have also succumbed, I believe, to the false belief that less harm to the environment, life and dwellings will be achieved by adopting a hands-off or leave-it-to-nature approach to the management of our forests. These people are organised, vocal and political. They have acquired political influence, particularly through the Greens and their de facto coalition partner, the Labor Party. They have been given great influence over the policy governing the management of our forests, and they have used this influence to restrict and restrain prescribed burning.

Mr D.A. Templeman: What would be your optimum —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I will get to that. Of course, all these concerns and all these people must be listened to. Their arguments must be examined. They have the right to be heard and to participate. However, they should not have undue influence. Their views must be subjected to rigorous, independent, science-based assessment, and we must take due heed of the long-term consequences of delay in or lack of preventive burning. We must convince people in the metropolitan areas—that is a task for me in Riverton—that, as part of living in Western Australia and managing our environment, we must tolerate smoke from prescribed burning. It is part of life. We must convince people that fire is a part of the environment and must be a part of the management of forests, and that a charred tree is better than an incinerated tree. We must convince people that man and fire are integral parts of the management of our forests, that a hands-off approach will destroy the forest, that policy must be driven by science, not ideology, and that we must manage for the long term, and not with myopia. We must change the policy settings and the way they are set and enforced in Western Australia.

The Conservation Commission, which is the institution currently vested with the ownership of state forests, with determining policy settings for the management of forests and with auditing DEC's performance in carrying out the management of forests, is, I think, from its own statements and actions, not committed to adequate levels of prescribed burning. The Conservation Commission, in its submission to the Environmental Protection Authority review of the fire policies and management practices of the then Department of Conservation and Land Management, stated, according to my notes —

Mr Troy Buswell; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Miles; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Alan Carpenter; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Bill Marmion

It is concerned at the effect that the use of a prescribed burn annual area target (200,000 ha) has on further polarising stakeholders involved in the current fire management debate.

That is, it does not like the target because people do not like it. It went on to state —

it should not be seen as a target rather it should be viewed as a measure of the level of activity undertaken.

In other words, the 200 000 hectares target is not a target; it should be deemed as the amount achieved, even if it is not. The Conservation Commission went on to say that other indicators that are more aligned to fire management and fire suppression should be used as opposed to those targeting prescribed burning. In other words, the debate should be shifted from prescribed burning to fire management and suppression. I might add that fire suppression is a necessary ally of the management of the forests—but only an ally.

This view was pursued by the Conservation Commission in its audit of DEC's prescribed burning program. In its latest audit—that is, 2006 Murdoch University—it expressed no concern over the failure of DEC to achieve its 200 000-hectare target, nor does it detail the shortfall in prescribed burning. It was moot on it. I suggest that the Conservation Commission's statement and the response go a long way in explaining why the level of prescribed burning in WA is declining and why we have systematically failed to meet the targets since the creation of the Conservation Commission in 2000.

I was heartened to hear the Premier say that he intends to undertake a thorough review of the government's approach to prescribed burning and that more needs to be done. I support his decision. It is the main lesson to be learned from the recent disaster in Victoria. It is timely and needed. In this process, I urge the Minister for Environment to ensure that the Conservation Commission adopts and then enforces adequate levels of prescribed burning. I believe that the strong evidence is that we need to accept and enforce targets. The targets should be expanded from 200 000 hectares to at least 300 000 hectares for the long term. We need to make up for the 400 000-hectare backlog in the current decade to date. I urge the minister to ensure that any review, unlike the 10 reviews in Victoria over the past decade, does not gather dust. It must be acted upon.

The forest fires in Victoria were the worst natural disaster in our nation's history. We owe it to the Victorians who were deeply affected by the fires and to ourselves to learn from the mistakes in that disaster and to do what it takes to avoid duplication.

Mr M.P. Whitely: Member for Riverton, did you look at the report done by Gary Nairn when he was —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, I did.

Mr M.P. Whitely: I met with him when I was the member for Roleystone, so I had an obvious interest in it. He said that of the states, Western Australia had the most effective prescribed burning.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes. Fifteen studies have been done in this decade so far, covering the Victorian fires, the Australian Capital Territory fires and the New South Wales fires. All those studies state—just as I said about the 1939 study—that Western Australia is leading the other states in using best practice for prescribed burning, and that historically, particularly up until the 1990s, as I have mentioned, Western Australia has had the best and most thorough program for prescribed burning. There is no question about that. I believe that Western Australia still has the best system for fighting fires, and the best expertise. The same thing has been stated in the recent study about the Victorian fires. What I am saying is that even though the evidence shows that we are better than the other states in fighting fires, there is still an unacceptable build up of fuel, at a level comparable to that in Victoria. The commitment by the public to prescribed burning is waning.

Mr M.P. Whitely: I understand the dilemma that you are talking about. I have obviously been lobbied heavily by both sides of the argument, but I tend to support the comments that you are making. I would rather take the precaution of over-burning than have under-burning.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I think the commitment in DEC has waned a bit in light of the fact that many of the people who have been fighting forest fires are getting old. That is natural. However, we have a solid institutional and expertise base on which to build. We just need to enforce the targets.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Yes, and resource them appropriately.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I thank the member for Mandurah. Yes. I did not go into a whole range of allied issues. What I am saying should not be taken in any way as a criticism of the need to resource a fire-fighting force. That is absolutely necessary. However, for the crown fires that we saw in Victoria, most of the equipment that is

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currently being used is not useful. There is a raft of measures that, along with prescribed burning, can be used to inhibit the build up of fuel and manage the forests.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: As this state has moved out of logging, logging roads have been shut down. Many of the people who were the best firefighters were the people in logging communities. Those communities also had equipment such as bulldozers in place to help fight forest fires. That equipment is no longer there. A large number of the farming families that have made up the bulk of the people who fight forest fires are getting old, or are busy. Also, fewer people are now living in the bush. Therefore, there are many challenges.

Mr D.A. Templeman: The technology and the change to fighting fires from the air were not around 20 years ago. We did not have those resources and that type of response.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, but if we have a very high risk of crown fires, we need to have that type of equipment. However, in this case it is better to focus on prevention—as is also the case in health—than on putting out fires.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Are you aware of whether there is any intention, as part of the Premier's announcement, to review the emergency management legislation?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I do not know. I think that what has come out of the lessons of Victoria is that it is good to have these reviews, and they are all useful. However, even before the current royal commission, 10 studies have been conducted in this decade, and nothing has happened. I think the Premier of Victoria, Mr Brumby, has stated nothing less than that. This is not the time for more reviews on prescribed burning. It is time for action. That is my argument. However, we also need to look at the legislation. I hear that there are demarcation disputes between the various departments, as there always are, and that at times there is a lack of coordination. There is also a concern in the community about the lack of preventive burning on private land. The legislation to limit the clearing of native vegetation has led to an increase in the level of flammable material on private land. Indeed, as we saw in the Victorian fires, many people were able to save their farms or homes only because they had violated the legislation on the clearing of native vegetation. That is an issue that we clearly need to address. Again, all we would need is a period of no rain, two weeks of 40 degree-plus temperatures, and strong winds, and fires could break out in the Naturaliste area. We can just imagine what would happen if that were to occur during the peak of the holiday season, when hundreds of thousands of people are in the area. The roads are narrow. People would just not be able to get out. That is what we face. I urge the Minister for Environment and the government to act.

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta) [6.17 pm]: I was pleased to listen to the contribution from the member for Riverton. I am very impressed that he would use his contribution to this debate to make quite a well-founded presentation on fire and the problems it poses and the range of issues that we need to deal with, and I congratulate him for that.

I want to talk about a different type of burning—the global financial crisis and the problems that it is causing not only internationally but also across Australia, including here in Western Australia. Life has changed from what it was 12 months ago. There have been various stages in this crisis, ranging from the start of the sub-prime problems in the United States and the collapse of Lehman Brothers to the billions of dollars that have been spent by governments in the United States and Europe to help deal with this crisis. All these stages have driven home to us the depth of the financial problems that are besetting the world and the economic problems that flow from that. Although we in Western Australia are very well positioned because of the strength of our economy, we cannot escape the flames that are burning from that global financial crisis. We need to do what we can in Western Australia to offer protection to our businesses, our industries, our workers and our families. I believe we are in a good position to do that. That is largely because the legacy that has been left by the Carpenter and Gallop governments is a legacy that no other government in our memory has ever inherited on coming into office. That legacy is one of record low state debt, an economy that has grown by a massive amount in the past eight years, and a budget surplus. Of course, the global financial changes that are now taking place will create real problems for the government of the day. However, our starting point is very good. This government certainly has the opportunity to protect the people of Western Australia in ways that perhaps are not available to the governments of the other states.

Of course, the Western Australian government cannot do as much as the national government. The national government is able to make a much greater impact on the economy of Australia. It is very pleasing that the Rudd federal government has been proactive in taking steps to provide whatever assistance and protection it can during this global economic crisis. It clearly does not have the power to remove the problem. However, it is trying to alleviate the problems and lessen the impact of the global financial crisis on Australians and Australian industry.

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I was pleased to note an article in *The Australian* of 4 March that supports the comments that I am making. Many people would agree with me that *The Australian* is not a paper that normally supports Labor governments. The article, which is by Matthew Stevens and is headed “RBA and Rudd ahead of game”, states in part —

The crucial thing to appreciate here is that, to their great credit and our relative good fortune, the Reserve Bank and the Rudd Government have stayed ahead of this dire economic curve.

I do not want to go into all the things that have been done by the Rudd government, but there is ample evidence—despite what may be said by those people who want to be negative simply for the sake of being negative—that the Rudd government has been very active in trying to provide whatever protection the federal government can provide. People may argue about what the first economic stimulus package in December did and did not do. However, when we are on a slippery slope due to the world financial situation, we do not really have a benchmark to say where we should end up.

However, I think all the people who are looking at it carefully and objectively would have said that if the federal government had not done that, we would be in more difficulty than we are. The second economic stimulus package is now being rolled out to put money into the pockets of families this week. I think that cash will be very welcome. There will be discussion about how much will go into savings and how much will be spent to help make sure turnover occurs through our retailers. It is important that money go into the retail sector because so many people are employed in the retail sector. Even if people put the money into savings, given the level of debt in many households, that is not necessarily a bad thing. If the crunch comes and they lose income, they will be a little more insulated to deal with those hard times.

A lot of the projects that the second economic stimulus package is going into are to set us up for the longer term. As we are well aware, the federal government has brought down its carbon emissions trading scheme to try to limit the amount of carbon we are producing. That debate will go forward, and most people now realise a scheme will be in place. It will increase the cost of power, so if we put money now into savings, it will help protect us into the future while being able to deliver those services and that insulation in a fairly short time while creating stimulus in the economy. It will provide the double bang of meeting the immediate need of creating turnover in the economy and looking to the longer term.

Increased public housing is another area in which we know the demand exists. It is a long-term issue, but what can be done more quickly can help stimulate the economy. I am particularly congratulatory of the Rudd government due to the money it is investing in the Building the Education Revolution program. I have visited schools throughout my electorate and they are enthused about the extra money that will go to their schools and help them to improve the quality of their educational infrastructure. With the offer of a covered assembly area or a library, primary schools are looking now at plans for where they will put it, given the developments must fit in largely with a template so that it can be rolled out quickly. The schools will be able to deliver increased educational outcomes through the provision of those extra facilities. In addition to that, the Pride in Our School program will provide funding to help with maintenance and a lot of those things that schools have been trying to achieve and have not been able to. A specific allocation has not been made for each high school of course, as there has been for primary schools. I understand money is available for high schools to put into projects and the government expects that about 1 000 schools will get money for either science or language laboratories. I understand the type of building will be fairly broad in meeting those requirements. As I indicated, the schools in my electorate are very thankful to the Rudd government. They are enthusiastic about the opportunities it is offering them and the Building the Education Revolution program will mean something to the schools in the Balcatta electorate.

I find it very puzzling that, I understand on two occasions, the federal Liberal Party in the House of Representatives voted against the stimulus package. I do not know how federal members of the opposition will hold their heads up when they visit the schools in their electorate and tell them that they voted to try to stop that money going through to our schools. The schools think it is a fantastic idea and it gives very welcome recognition to the importance of education.

I turn now to what our state government can do to try to best manage the impacts of the global financial crisis in Western Australia. As I indicated, the federal government cannot stop the problem; it can only pull the various levers available to it and stimulate the economy in an effort to delay the worst consequences and to protect people from the worst consequences. Again, we recognise that at state level, there are only certain things state governments can do. But there are things that can be done, and one hopes that the current government will be more proactive in trying to assist and protect the people of Western Australia as these challenges confront us. I will touch on some of the things it can do. As has been indicated by the Leader of the Opposition, training policy and the commitment of additional funding to training is crucial. When we come out of these harder economic

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times, whether it be in one year or two years' time, I, and I think most members in the chamber, will be very optimistic about the future of Western Australia. We do not want to be back in the situation of Western Australians being not sufficiently skilled to take up jobs when there is a labour shortage. It may seem a long time ago but, in 2001 when the Gallop government was elected, I was the Minister for Training. People probably do not remember that our state was in recession when the Gallop Labor government was elected. It inherited from the Court government a gross state product that had fallen by more than one per cent in the last financial year of that government. Things were more dire than they are now, but we were confident that things would pick up and we needed to make sure that we put in place the training to help our young people have an opportunity in life and to provide the skilled labour that would be needed in the future. We set about that task and, from fairly low results, there was a huge increase in training to the point where we led Australia in putting people into apprenticeships. What is this government doing? As yet, nothing.

The other approach is to bring forward capital works. There is now minimal debt because it has been reduced. We can use borrowings to bring on projects that are ready to go and create jobs through that. What is happening? An audit is underway and those things are not happening. I respect that an incoming government has every right to look at projects and say that it wants to change priorities. However, this government has put its foot on the hose and largely stopped projects. It has not pulled out a quarter of them and said, "Let's get them through so that something is happening, and then we will think more carefully about some of the others." It really has put its foot on the hose.

The third area in which I think the state can provide real leadership and therefore support for industry for the people of Western Australia is that of confidence by actually showing vision, being proactive and convincing people that we have a bright future. Although the road is a bit rocky at the moment, this state's potential is basically limitless. We need to make sure we are ready to take up those opportunities. However, we have a major problem with the current Premier. Unfortunately, it is a problem I am sure that members opposite will not agree with me on at the moment. It is probably why Richard Court was very keen that the current incumbent should not have leadership of the Liberal Party. The Premier needs to be a person who faces up to issues squarely as a leader, who gets across the facts and provides accurate information and answers questions fully and honestly to engender confidence in people. The party must know it has leadership it can follow. People can get away with half-truths and with conning people for a while but they cannot keep doing that and provide real leadership. It is almost a fantasy to say that we have leadership in Western Australia today. The signs are not there; it does not exist on the ground. We have weak ministers and a Premier who regularly gets it wrong. Time after time, he gets it wrong. Of course, as I said, this is a great state. Even a bad government in Western Australia can do lots of good things. However, in times when these challenges are facing us, we actually need a good government—not a government that is weak and cannot establish credibility—so that people know they can rely on the words of their leader. We all make mistakes. We all say things that are wrong, but if we are committed to being honest and open with people, we correct errors when we make them; we do not wait until we are driven into a corner and reluctantly acknowledge that we got it wrong. We must put it on the record. If we are telling the truth 95 per cent of the time, people soon pick up that we have told them things that were not true and then they do not know what to believe. For the 95 per cent of the time when the government tells the truth, people say, "Is that the truth or not, because I was told this and it was wrong?" What we are finding with the current government is that far too often we are seeing the Premier and others getting it wrong.

Mr M.W. Sutherland: What about the five ministers that you sacked?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: A very good point, member, because action was taken. When there was evidence that something was untoward, action was taken. We do not see that from the Barnett government: issues are swept under the carpet and it does not acknowledge it is wrong; it does not acknowledge the truth; it has amnesia and thinks it can get away with it. The point I am making is that the government can get away with that for a while, but in troubled times when people want leadership it cannot get away with pulling the wool over people's eyes; it cannot get away with using half-truths or misleading people.

We saw an example in question time today of the Premier's lack of standards. He was talking about free seniors travel on public transport. Of course, we all know that this government made a clear, written election promise that that would be done in a hundred days. The Premier did not deliver. Does he acknowledge that and give the reason? He does not. What he says is, "We brought it in in March, but we were going to do it in July so we brought it in ahead of time". That is not honest. It was promised to be done in a hundred days, which was around the end of 2008. Instead of doing that, the government deferred that to July but it was done in March. So we get this doublespeak. The government does not imbue confidence in people if it cannot tell the truth.

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We have a Premier who regularly makes these off-the-cuff statements that are totally false; just made up. Let me quote from *The Australian* of 4 March —

Three hours later, Premier Colin Barnett had the same audience laughing as he revealed he had uncovered an astonishing 1000 government boards and advisory committees, and was still counting.

Does anyone want to take a bet with me? I will bet anyone that is a false, untrue statement. There are not a thousand boards or committees run or funded by government. It was a number the Premier made up because he thought it sounded good. Every government needs to review the number of its boards and committee. The Labor government did that when it came to office in 2001. Governments set up these boards and committees, but a few years later when the task is completed the committees are still there, so the government needs to go through that review process. I have no problem with that. However, I am willing to take bets with anyone that that is a false number; the Premier just made it up, and the number is more likely to be 400, 500 or 600 and not over 1 000. The Premier cannot control himself. I will continue with the quote —

The Premier said he had even found a rock lobster fishermen's wives' committee.

“I'm not sure what that does; I'm sure it's good work, but they might not be there at the end of this term,” he said.

We all know it was a false statement.

Mr P. Miles: And he apologised.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Why did he make it up? That is the point. The point I am coming to is when the Premier tells people things that are false and then tries to tell them things that are important, why should they believe him? If the Premier cannot get the little things right, if he has so little interest in getting the facts right, why should they believe him in the big things?

Let us take Gorgon, and I think it was the same occasion. While the Premier was talking to a business lunch, he alleged there was a \$20 billion to \$30 billion blow-out in the cost of the Gorgon gas project. That is a major project of huge significance to this state, and we have a Premier who is so free and loose with the truth that he can make that statement without justifying it. When the Premier was asked about his statement, he said something to the effect that it will cost around \$50 billion, and he said, “That is my figure,” but when he holds discussions with Chevron he makes up a figure!

We have some people here who perhaps have been involved in business. Would they like it if someone gratuitously made comments about the financial situation of their business, and that caused a lack of public confidence in them, and then that person said, “I just made it up”? Just made it up! How can we have confidence in a Premier who has so little interest in the truth that when we have the state's biggest-ever project ready to go—I hope it is soon—he stands in front of a business audience and makes up a number of \$50 billion because he thinks that plucking that figure out of the air might make him sound big? That is an ego with a real problem. If the Premier wants to be a leader who actually provides leadership, he needs to be a bit considered in what he says. He should not just shoot off at the mouth because he wants to big-note himself or because he has a particular emotion about an issue. When the Premier is dealing with companies with an interest in the state's future, he must be very considered in what he says. However, we have a Premier, unfortunately, who too often jumps in without actually considering the situation and the real facts and making sure that he gets it right.

I heard members interjecting saying he had apologised to the ladies of the fishing industry committee. Well, it was not a very fulsome apology to them. He did not go out and talk to them and acknowledge that he had made a joke of them to make him a big man of himself. He did not know that these ladies are committed to the industry and their families have committed money to the industry. If the Premier could get a laugh out of them, he was happy with that.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Premier was not big enough to go out and give them a personal apology.

I could go on for much longer than the time I have with examples of this Premier saying things that are factually incorrect and not correcting them until he is driven into a corner with nothing else to do but admit he got it wrong. The Premier would rather say that he has forgotten about it or he did not know that it happened, and he tries to move on. Is it any wonder with that lack of honesty that we have seen the Barnett government renege on so many of its election promises?

Another technique of the Premier, which I find devious, is to misconstrue the question asked or make a conjecture about what the question may be and answer that. A classic example of that today was Oakajee. The Premier was asked, basically, whether he was now seeking to build a larger port in Oakajee than the one which

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had been planned before the election and which was very well advanced. But we could not get an answer. The Premier went on to talk about a lot of other things. He abused the member asking the question because he did not want to answer the question. To me that is a lack of honesty. This is a project that is getting close to a financial commitment, and I will come back in a moment with conjecture for why the Premier does not want to deal with that question. To me, that shows a total lack of honesty in trying to misrepresent the question instead of saying he is not willing to answer it. We still do not know whether that project is on hold because the Premier has a different vision, because he has not put that vision forward. So much work has gone into that project that if the government tried to start it again, it would open up a huge number of problems.

The difficulty we have is that the Barnett government was elected without any clear plan for Western Australia. I am glad the Premier has come into the chamber so that he can hear a few of the things I have to say. As I have just said, the opposition is very keen to hear the Premier's vision, because he has simply tried to cover up, to obfuscate and to attack people who ask him questions. He will not answer a very simple question about the future of Oakajee.

The point I wanted to make, in my limited time, is that this government simply does not have a vision. What I suggest is that instead of looking at how this government can stimulate the economy with major infrastructure projects—that is secondary—the primary consideration is the ego of the Premier, and his wish, which I can understand, to re-brand any projects so that they will belong to his government. It does not matter that 80 per cent or 90 per cent of the planning of a project had been completed at the time of his election to government; the Premier wants to make sure that project is branded as his. I can provide a range of examples. The first is the Heath Ledger theatre. That was well under construction, and the current Premier, I am sure, will open it in due course, and that is his right. However, he could not actually stomach keeping the name that was given to it by the last government—the government that committed the money and got the project going. The name could not stand; he had to change it. Now that Heath Ledger has won a posthumous Academy Award, the Premier looks very, very silly. Although it will in effect be a state theatre, we know that the Perth audiences that are generally attracted to the theatre are not as large as we would like them to be. If that theatre was given iconic status by being named after Heath Ledger, and contained some of his memorabilia, it could be much more than just a state theatre. However, there is no vision from this Premier in government. He needs to re-brand the theatre so that he can claim the credit for it, rather than see the great value that there is in that name.

I turn now to the other major city developments. As I said earlier, it is quite appropriate for the government to want to reassess and change its priorities, but what has happened? The new stadium, the new museum and the foreshore project are multimillion-dollar projects. Instead of going ahead with those projects to provide a future for Perth, those projects, which were all underway and being advanced, have all been dropped. The Premier has instead taken up the Northbridge Link, which is an incredibly expensive project. It is a good project. The last government had dropped it as a priority and had put the other three projects ahead of it. The Premier, without thinking it through, has simply changed the priorities. The point I am making is that the global financial crisis is impacting on Western Australia. We want some of these projects to come through now; we do not want them to be delayed by 12 or 18 months and then restarted. I accept that some projects can be taken off the list of priorities, because the government can set the priorities, but it has not done that. It has taken all the projects off the list. The government is now devoted to the Northbridge Link, which will involve a lot more planning before it is ready to go. The government will not be able to complete that project without federal funding. On a wish and a dream, it can go ahead. The point I am making is that it is all about ego and re-branding; it is not about saying that the state government must bring forward capital works to try to stimulate the economy to look after the people of Western Australia. That is on the backburner.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We're doing that.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Give me an example.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What about the police complex? We're doing that.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes, but that was already in the pipeline. The minister is not going to stop it, is he?

Mr R.F. Johnson: You hadn't done anything. You hadn't even knocked down the old buildings.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The money was there.

Mr R.F. Johnson: No, it wasn't.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes, there was \$93 million.

Mr R.F. Johnson: That was not enough for it to even start.

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The land had been acquired and the architects were at work; the project was in train. The minister can stop it.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We're not going to stop it.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It is great that the minister will let our project run. He can rename it the "Rob Johnson Police Station" or whatever. He can badge it.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I'm going to call it the "John Kobelke Bad Loser Grumpy Old Person Police Complex".

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I would need to check the acronym before I could accept that. The example given by the Minister for Police supports what I am saying. All these projects are in the pipeline. I am saying that the government does not need to let them all go. Basically, the government has put its foot on the hose and has stopped most of these projects while it works out what it wants to do and how it can re-brand them.

I now turn to one last issue that many people have already spoken about—the Oakajee port development. This is a huge project for the mid-west. All the talk that I hear mainly from the media and some of the proponents is that the proponents are very positive about this project. Despite the global financial crisis, they are still very positive that they will be able to get commitments in a matter of months and that that project will be underway. However, what is the government doing? It is looking at a different project. We are not sure what it is, but it is looking at a project that will involve government money instead of private sector money. That is hard to understand. We could understand why a large amount of government money, not private money, should be invested if there were a different vision, but the Premier has not put a vision that one can understand. The whole project is being jeopardised by a Premier whose ego and wish to re-brand is getting in the way of state development. If he could give me an answer to that, I would be happy to hear it. Is there any reason that this government is saying no to these well-backed proponents who want to build a project with private sector money? The government has a different vision but it cannot tell us what that vision is. It does not make sense, other than that it is about ego and the need to re-brand.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You'll be blinded by our vision, my friend. There is so much vision that you'll be blinded.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: No, we know how you're going to be blinded!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I think I had better move away from that issue, Mr Speaker!

I will close by making a plea to the Premier that perhaps he will find some consistency on the issue of daylight saving and that he will go back to his original position and be willing to support the yes vote at the referendum. The Premier is reported in *Hansard* of 31 October 2006 as saying —

I believe daylight saving is long overdue and will be strongly endorsed. As other members have said, despite the history of this issue, I do not believe we should commit this state to a referendum at this stage.

He went on to say —

We are elected to make decisions.

He concluded by saying —

I will be supporting daylight saving, on behalf of the majority view of my constituents in the electorate of Cottesloe.

I think daylight saving is a benefit. There is clearly evidence that increased physical activity is being undertaken by people, which is very important given the obesity problem in society. It is important for our health, it is important for families and it is important for business. I hope that the Premier will support the yes case.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.45 pm]: Like the member for Balcatta, I have listened to a number of speeches. I enjoyed the member's most volatile speech and I agree with one of his points. One of the most important things he said was that it is important to create confidence, and I support that point. I think that is what the Premier of Western Australia is doing. However, I do not agree with many of the member's comments when he got stuck into our illustrious Premier. In fact, he made a comment about someone taking up his offer of a bet that there are 1 000 government committees. I am willing to take up that bet and we can sort that out in due course.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: You're on.

Mr W.R. MARMION: We are on. I checked with the Speaker whether I was allowed to do that and he was a bit unsure.

Mr P. Miles: Are you going to table that?

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Mr W.R. MARMION: If someone could go banker —

The SPEAKER: I thought it was for me!

Mr J.C. Kobelke: How much do you want for the bet?

Mr W.R. MARMION: This is the biggest bet I have ever had in my life.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Only \$10! You're not very confident. What about \$100?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I do not make as much money as the member for Balcatta, obviously.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: I'm just very confident; you're not.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Before I get to my comments in support of the Premier's Statement, I support the member for Riverton's dissertation on prescribed burning. It was a very good dissertation and I totally support where he is coming from. I also enjoyed the member for Forrestfield's speech, in which he suggested that we need a railway line to Forrestfield, and I will get to that later. It was a very interesting comment.

Principally, I support the Premier's Statement. We are indeed very fortunate in Western Australia to have a Premier who is well equipped to lead Western Australia through these difficult times when the worldwide economy is not going so well. In the short term, perhaps the problem will even impact on our state. The situation requires leadership and an experienced head. The member for Cottesloe, the Premier, has all the qualifications and experience needed to do this. We are indeed fortunate to have a Premier with a Master of Economics and years of experience as a minister in government.

As was mentioned yesterday, the state is facing some serious economic challenges, with the global financial crisis already having an impact on business activity, with some sections of industry and some companies having to reduce staff. Some members on the other side of the house suggested that the government should stimulate the economy by investing in infrastructure and promoting job creation. Perhaps members were asleep, but I distinctly recall the Premier saying —

All these measures are focused on ensuring that the state's finances are not placed at risk in these difficult economic times and ... the government is acutely aware of the need to balance ... fiscal management with the need to stimulate the economy to ensure Western Australia's continued development through government and private sector investment and through job creation.

It is pretty clear to me that the government is committed to targeting infrastructure expenditure. It is good to hear commentary from the other side supporting the government's responsible approach, which is dual pronged—that is, to tighten our belts in areas that are nonessential and to direct expenditure to essential capital works projects that deliver immediate and long-term multiplier effects on the economy and consequential job creation opportunities.

The Premier highlighted that the government has a \$7.7 billion capital works program continuing this financial year, and that this massive program has been reordered so that expenditure will be prioritised towards schools, housing and hospitals. I think the majority of Western Australians support the Premier's priorities for Infrastructure Australia funding. The Oakajee port, around which there has been much discussion, with its associated transport infrastructure in road and rail works, as well as the building of an adjacent world-class industrial estate, will not only stimulate the economy and increase jobs in the short term, but also add to the state's port facilities, so essential to a state as large as Western Australia. The Ord River project stage 2 will more than double the irrigated area of the east Kimberley and will again stimulate the economy and increase jobs in the short term. It will also provide the opportunity to greatly expand our agricultural production and deliver long-term jobs and increase export income from the increasing demand for the quality agricultural produce that we can deliver in Western Australia. The sinking of the railway line through Northbridge, a project that could have been done far more economically if the previous government had built it as part of the southern suburbs rail project, is a third priority for Infrastructure Australia funding. This project will again deliver a stimulus to the economy and create jobs in the short term. Importantly, this project will also deliver a social dividend to the city of Perth by removing the barrier that splits Northbridge and the central business district. I commend the Premier's Statement for setting out a vision and a program of works to ensure that, of all places on this planet, Western Australia will be best placed to ride out any recession.

I was fortunate this morning to attend a breakfast function organised by the Western Australian division of Engineers Australia. The purpose of the breakfast was to launch the Western Australian division engineering excellence awards. At the breakfast the current state president highlighted some important facts. He mentioned the importance of building up confidence in the community about Western Australia's economy. In support of that he said that Western Australia had had a stunning year in 2008. A record \$21.7 billion worth of engineering

Mr Troy Buswell; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony Krsticevic; Mr Paul Miles; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Alan Carpenter; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Bill Marmion

construction was carried out in 2008 in this state, representing 27.6 per cent of the \$78 billion worth of engineering construction in Australia. The total worth of building and engineering construction in Western Australia was also a record \$33 billion, representing 22.2 per cent of Australia's total construction spend of \$148 billion. As at December 2008, \$8.7 billion worth of building works were in the pipeline in Western Australia, representing 18.27 per cent of the \$50.5 billion total works in the pipeline in Australia. These are quite incredible figures, and I am sure that, under the leadership of the Premier of Western Australia, projects of similar magnitude will be carried out in 2009 and 2010.

I cannot sit down without commenting on the suggestion by the member for Forrestfield—he has disappeared from the chamber—that the government should build a rail line to Forrestfield. The member did not disclose the route of such a line, or whether it is yet another radial link, linking Perth to his electorate. This, I believe, would be a short-sighted and probably wasteful exercise, although I would concede that it would provide jobs in the short term. However, I expect that the ongoing recurrent costs of running a train service between Perth and Forrestfield would be a burden on the credit rating of the state. The Premier stated that the government was committed to extending the northern rail line to Butler and Brighton, which it has done after carefully examining the economic, social and environmental benefits and costs. This no doubt will please the member for Mindarie, who is not present in the chamber, and also greatly benefit people living in the northern suburbs. However, I suggest that the next addition to our metropolitan rail network should consider all options, including the linking of key locations such as Perth Airport, Curtin University and Bentley Technology Park and major populated districts caught between the radial lines. Therefore, although the member for Forrestfield might suggest that a rail line to Forrestfield should be a priority, I believe that the only way to adequately compare future options is to undertake a considered net present value analysis of a range of options. I expect that the option of linking our present radial network—as Roe Highway does for the road network, passing through heavily populated areas and heavy destination areas—would have a much higher net present value and hence benefit to Western Australia than would a railway line to Forrestfield.

In closing, I commend the Premier on re-establishing the graffiti task force. Under the Richard Court government, I was privileged to be chairman of the then graffiti task force, after the resignation of Mike Daube. The member for Mount Lawley has already spoken on the subject, but I add that in my electorate of Nedlands it is disturbing to see tagging along walls, fences and letterboxes, and the cost this is adding for businesses, householders and local authorities. I commend the councils in my electorate for the speedy removal of graffiti, which, as we all know, is an essential strategy in reducing the satisfaction to the offender. I commend the Premier's Statement.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr R.F. Johnson (Leader of the House)**.

House adjourned at 6.56 pm
