

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 3) 2005
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 4) 2005

Second Reading - Cognate Debate

Resumed from 17 November.

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth) [7.10 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in this debate on behalf of the opposition. We certainly will support this bill.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Are you the lead speaker?

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I am not the lead speaker. We certainly would not want our state to go into the red, so we will support this appropriation bill. Speaking on this bill as the member for South Perth, I would like to raise a couple of points. They are points that I have raised in previous speeches at appropriation time or during the budget debate. The first one is the concern that the people of South Perth have about the Swan and Canning Rivers. South Perth is an electorate that is almost bordered by two rivers. Seventy-five per cent of the electorate of South Perth is bordered by either the Swan or Canning River. Therefore, the people of South Perth have a historical link with the rivers, as have many other people in Western Australia, and not just those from the metropolitan area. Other people have come to the area and enjoyed the rivers. In particular, I will talk about the Mends Street jetty. The Mends Street jetty is synonymous with South Perth. It is an icon of the area, similar to the Old Mill. The Mends Street jetty is heritage-listed, so it has already been recognised as being of significant value to not only the people of South Perth but also the people of Perth and, indeed, of Western Australia.

I notice that the Swan River Trust, which has been given the authority to manage and look after our rivers, has a budget in 2005-06 of \$8.912 million, which is a fairly handy budget but one that we believe is probably not enough. We have raised that issue several times, and it was pleasing that the Minister for the Environment introduced the Swan and Canning Rivers management bills into the house yesterday, which we will be very keen to debate when the second readings are called on.

Basically, the role of the Swan River Trust is to fix the Swan and Canning Rivers and keep them healthy. The problem that we have found with the Swan River Trust - this is a problem that is being relayed to me by various councils in not only my electorate but also other electorates that are situated along the Swan River - is that the trust appears to be a very autocratic body that is very protective of its power. It does not seem keen to listen to outside experts. As we have seen in the past week, when various experts made suggestions about what might be done to better manage the river for the future, the Swan River Trust did not seem to want to listen to those people. So, what is the Swan River Trust doing when, as we believe, it should be managing the river and making sure that our rivers remain healthy so that the toxic and algal blooms are well managed and there are not the big fish kills that we have seen in recent years? It seems that the Swan River Trust is now interested in becoming involved in the City of South Perth. It is telling the City of South Perth how it should run its city and what sort of development is good for that local authority. I refer to the latest copy of *RiverView*, which is a government publication that is published by the Swan River Trust. On the front page is a picture of a bearded gentleman and another gentleman holding a big document and the caption reads -

Swan River Trust chairman Charlie Welker, left, and Statutory Assessments manager Paul Stephens checking out the Mends St jetty.

Why are they checking out the Mends Street jetty? The article, which is headed "Swan River Trust supports Mends Street developments", reads -

The Swan River Trust recommended conditional approval of a new jetty at Mends Street and the extension of the Bellhouse Café on the existing jetty in South Perth in September.

The Trust considered extensive public feedback and the City of South Perth's concerns before recommending approval with amendments.

Trust chairman Charlie Welker said the Trust recognised that the river, surrounding parkland and South Perth foreshore had regional significance for the wider community.

"The proposed development would enhance enjoyment of the river for visitors, better meet the needs of ferry passengers and be good for tourism," Mr Welker said.

The problem with the Swan River Trust's announcement is that the City of South Perth, which opposes the development, thinks it has jumped the gun a bit, because the process is still waiting to be ticked off by the minister. Therefore, the people in the City of South Perth, Mayor John Collins in particular, consider that by making this statement about a process that has still not been completed, the Swan River Trust has shown no respect for the process that has been put in place by the government, the City of South Perth or the people of

South Perth. We are not sure that it should be the Swan River Trust's role. The Swan River Trust's functions and powers, which are listed in the trust's annual report, are -

- provides advice and assistance to the Western Australian Planning Commission and local governments on town planning issues, and ensures proper provision is made in planning schemes for:
- reservation of river foreshores;
- protection and public use of land and waters; and
- protection of wildlife habitat;

So, it can advise the WA Planning Commission and local government. We see this as being more than an advisory role. The Swan River Trust's role is to look after the rivers, but all of a sudden it has become a developer. It has angered John Collins, the Mayor of the City of South Perth, and I managed to get a copy of a letter in which he said -

I was extremely disappointed to read in the Swan River Trust Publication *Riverview* Spring 2005 issue that the Trust was promoting its decision to recommend conditional approval of a new jetty at Mends Street.

I accept that the Trust has the authority to make such a decision, but I feel that it was inappropriate to publicise the decision in this way. This is particularly relevant as the application is, as I understand it, still under appeal and is with the Minister for final decision.

...

It is my firm view that the local government is the principal planning authority for matters that affect its municipality - not the Trust.

...

I would like to emphasise that the City will be left with the problems associated with this development - not the trust.

I do not have a view one way or another on the development of this new restaurant on the Mends Street jetty, but the people of South Perth and the City of South Perth certainly have a view. I must support my constituents on this matter. I am sure that the people of South Perth are confident that the minister will give this matter proper consideration before she makes a decision. The City of South Perth points out that it has a very good relationship with the minister in that regard. The opposition will look very carefully at how much money the government puts into the maintenance of the Swan and Canning Rivers under the ongoing procedure that will be outlined in the new management bills for both those very important rivers. We want to be very careful that the Swan River Trust does not overstep its mark. It must continue to maintain the health of the rivers and guarantee the future of the waterways, rather than become too involved in development and try to tell local councils when they can develop and what type of development it can be. That should remain the role of the council and maybe the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. It is certainly not a matter for the Swan River Trust.

I will refer now to the contentious issue of underground power. In the last budget that was handed down, the Treasurer allocated from the massive budget some \$20 million for underground power. The total capital expenditure for Western Power's capital works program was \$599.4 million. How much of that money did it allocate for underground power? Just \$20.6 million. That is a very small amount of money to allocate for underground power. I am still not sure how much of that funding the government will actually provide. I understand that underground power is a three-way deal. The government puts in 25 per cent, Western Power puts in 25 per cent and the other 50 per cent is provided by local government, which generally collects the funds from consumers, who are the ratepayers.

I understand that not all people want overhead powerlines to be replaced with underground power. I doorknocked in some parts of my electorate earlier this year and spoke to a couple of senior citizens who still live in their own homes. I told them that we could get rid of the overhead powerlines by placing them underground so that the street would not be as unsightly, and they told me that it would cost them about \$1 600 each to do it. They probably could not afford it and decided that they could put up with the unsightly powerlines provided they did not have to find the money to pay for them to be put underground. The cost of putting underground power into one house is likely to be \$5 000 now. Therefore, a couple would have to pay \$2 500 each. Some people cannot afford that type of cost, particularly some senior citizens.

The people of South Perth are very keen to get underground power. The City of South Perth has said that it has been successful in previously getting funding for underground power, and that the undergrounding of power has been done in parts of South Perth and Como. The city values the program highly and would dearly love to see all overhead powerlines placed underground at the earliest possible opportunity. We understand there are

complications regarding substations and other matters. Western Power has a program to deal with that, but we think that the government should speed up the program, especially in electorates that are close to the city. It is much more expensive to provide underground power in country areas because it must cover many more miles. However, in some areas close to the city the local councils are keen for it to be done and the residents are happy to contribute towards the cost.

We would like the government to step up this program, which was started under the previous coalition Government and was wound back for one reason or another when the Gallop government came to power in 2001. I do not know why it was wound back, but it was wound back significantly. That has been detrimental to some smaller companies that were involved as subcontractors in laying underground powerlines. They had gone ahead and built up their small business, employed more people and been fully operational, then all of a sudden the winding up of a big project like that had an effect on them. Consequently, much of the electorate of South Perth, as I said before, still does not have underground power. There is an area between the Hurlingham Hotel and the Swan River that still has overhead powerlines. The whole of Kensington has overhead powerlines. Parts of Como have overhead powerlines. Manning and Salter Point have overhead powerlines. I am referring to an electorate that is very close to the heart of the city; it is a five-minute drive from the city. I am saying that this is an area that the opposition believes should be given consideration in the implementation of underground power. We concede that in 2006 more underground power will be going through Como on the southern side of Canning Highway; we are very happy about that. We will get rid of unsightly powerlines, the trees will be replenished and grow again to their natural beauty, and the streetscape and value of housing will improve. It is a great process. This state has been a trendsetter in implementing underground power. It was one of the first cities in the world to attack it in the way that it did under the Court government. We therefore certainly want to see the underground power process continue in South Perth.

Underground power has been mandatory in new subdivisions since 1991. There was a series of blackouts in May 1994, which I think caused the coalition government to implement the underground power pilot program back then. It was a result of that pilot program that the whole underground power system started to grow. It has gone through a lot of suburbs and we have seen the difference it has made. It is also a lot safer without overhead powerlines, which can cause a lot of problems during storms and so on.

The opposition will be supporting this appropriation bill. We know that the state is in a very good financial situation, thanks to the mining boom, which is raising an unprecedented amount of revenue for the state. However, these are two issues in particular that I felt I must raise on behalf of my constituents.

DR S.C. THOMAS (Capel) [7.27 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson); it is a delight to see you in the Chair again. It is obviously with great joy that members get to speak to budget bills, which of course give us a bit of a free rein to talk about a number of issues that impact on our electorates and the people we represent. However, I will start by briefly discussing the budget in general. I would say this is an era of balloon budgets. This is a balloon budget because it just keeps expanding. I recall the current Premier, when he was Leader of the Opposition, and the current Treasurer, when he was Deputy Leader of the Opposition, speaking during a budget debate when they were in their final year in opposition. They gave the then Court government an absolute spray. Can you believe it, Mr Acting Speaker?

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I am not talking about deficit budgets. I could debate with the member for Mandurah the decision to change from a cash to an accrual accounting system.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It's not a good look, though.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Obviously, I could go through the differences in accounting systems in which there is a surplus budget or a deficit budget, but I would waste my entire time.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: If the member for Bassendean had remained on the Public Accounts Committee, instead of skiving off and doing other things, he would have been involved in a number of accounting debates, not the least being the debate about the generally accepted accounting principles and the government finance statistics accounting system and how they converge. He would have been part of that, but he was skiving off and doing other things. He left the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Mandurah!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I thank you for your protection, Mr Acting Speaker.

I would love to stand here and debate whether they were genuine budget deficits or whether they were cash versus accrual accounting budget deficits, but I will not go there.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I could do, but I would be wasting my time. I am here to bring down the government, and members opposite are wasting my time on an accounting debate. Everybody knows that it becomes a very dry argument, so I will not go into that. I will refer to where the government has gone wrong with its budget priorities. I could spend hours on this issue. I have no doubt that members on this side of the house will stand, electorate by electorate, shadow portfolio by shadow portfolio, and demonstrate the absolutely horrible budget priorities of the Gallop government. This is a balloon budget. The government must be careful with a balloon budget. It does not want to blow it up to its full extent because it might pop. The Treasurer will make sure that the budget is blown up to only three-quarters. Every time he brings down the budget, he must ensure that nobody knows how big the surplus will be, because if he puts all the air in the balloon, the danger is that it will pop.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It goes bang!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: The budget goes bang. Were you pointing at the member for Dawesville, Mr Acting Speaker? I am talking about balloons popping.

Mr D.A. Templeman: He is talking about balloons.

Mr M.P. Whitely: I would rather talk about accrual accounting.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: That is what the Treasurer does. That has a fringe benefit, because when he gets down the track a little, and the figures are a little better than he said they would be because he had blown up the balloon only to 75 per cent, he looks like a bit of a hero. He can do that in a number of ways. He can do that by estimating the price of fuel at a certain level when he knows it will be at a different level and by using wonderful accounting systems that can change the outlook.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It is a cunning ploy.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: It is a cunning ploy; it is a wonderful ploy. The government is doing it very well. However, it is a balloon budget. At some point, the balloon will pop.

Mr D.A. Templeman: When your balloon was let go, it went "bzzzz". You had one of those dud balloons.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: No. The current Premier made a wonderful speech in his last year as opposition leader. He said that the only reason the then Premier, Richard Court, had been salvaged was that he had record income. This was in 1999. There was record income going into the 1999-2000 budget. Five years later, the government has income of 40 per cent above that level. The total turnover for the then state government was nine and a bit billion dollars. It is now \$14 billion. Of course, when the current Premier and Treasurer were in opposition, they were happy to say that the then government was saved only by record income and - would the member for Hillarys believe it - record taxation.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Absolutely, I would believe that.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: That was the only reason the then government was saved. We all know that it is completely different at the moment. This is the highest-taxing state government we have ever seen. It is a completely different story now. The Treasurer is calling himself the best Treasurer in the world and is thanking the V8 economy, as I think it is described. That is absolutely appalling.

I will talk specifically about the budget priorities of this state government and where the budget is headed. Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson), your electorate of Albany has done very well and is well represented in the budget. However, other electorates - and portfolios - have not fared as well.

Mr R.F. Johnson: The government has spent nothing in my electorate. In the five years that the Labor Party has been in government, it has spent zilch in Hillarys. We are the forgotten people of Hillarys.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Member for Hillarys, the same can be said of a number of other electorates. The members for Dawesville and South Perth know what the government's priorities are.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I don't think the government knows where Hillarys is.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: At least Hillarys is in Perth. I am sure that the government has no idea where Capel is. I am sure that it thinks Dawesville is somewhere on the way to somewhere else.

Dr K.D. Hames: The word “Dawesville” did not appear anywhere in the budget papers.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It should be renamed South Mandurah!

Mr R.F. Johnson: I think Mandurah did very well.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I am sure Mandurah did very well.

I refer to an issue with which the member for Dawesville has a connection and on which the government has shown absolute hypocrisy - the funding of deep sewerage programs.

Dr K.D. Hames: The funding has been reduced from \$90 million to \$35 million.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: The priorities of this Labor government are an absolute disgrace.

Mr R.F. Johnson: And it leaves a bad smell!

Mr D.A. Templeman: There is a bad smell in Hillarys.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.F. Johnson: Given all the extra expenditure it has created, what will happen when the balloon bursts and the income stops coming in? The government will be in big trouble!

Mr R.C. Kucera interjected.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Member for Yokine, the government will be in deep trouble.

As the member for Dawesville quite rightly pointed out, this very important program not only provides for the development and expansion of country towns and looks after their future, but also looks after the environment. It protects the environment, particularly the water and river systems. All those systems have been crucified by this government. That is an absolute disgrace. The original program - the member for Dawesville will correct me, no doubt, if I make a mistake, because he was involved with the original 10-year program - involved funding of \$90 million a year over 10 years, not only to provide security to the towns, but also to look after the environment, particularly the waterways and river systems that are absolutely vital in the south west. The south west is a central environmental area of this state. To reduce the funding of the deep sewerage program from \$90 million to \$35 million a year is a disgrace. There is no other way to describe it. Would the people of Perth really want water from the southern Yarragadee if they realised that many homes in the south west are still on septic tanks and that sewage is still going through some of those waterways? If they realised that they were potentially picking up some of the sewage from the south west, would they want 45 gigalitres from the southern Yarragadee? I suspect that they might be a bit concerned.

Mr J.E. McGrath: We will take it anyway!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: The member for South Perth would take it anyway - thank you very much! This is a real concern. If the government is serious about taking 45 gigalitres from the southern Yarragadee - I am on record as saying that I do not necessarily oppose that move - certain conditions must apply. The first is that if the extraction of that water has a detrimental impact on the environment of the south west, the tap must be turned off. The second is that if that water is required for the growth of the south west, that must be given first consideration. I am on record as saying that in a number of places. I think that still applies.

Dr K.D. Hames: It is not unreasonable.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: It is not unreasonable at all. Having said that, I believe it is incumbent upon this government to put back into the south west some of the savings it will make from extracting water from the Yarragadee aquifer, because it will do so at a cheaper rate than the cost of water from anywhere else. I listen to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. I am probably one of the few on this side of the house who does so on a regular basis. She regularly talks about road funding. I have covered only one of my six points, but road funding is one of the others, and I will get to it shortly. However, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure bangs on continually about how Western Australia has 10 per cent of the population of Australia and nearly 20 per cent of the roads, and gets only seven per cent of the funding from the federal government. If the values that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure applies to infrastructure expenditure in Western Australia were applied to the south west of the state, it would show that the south west of the state is under-funded by about a sixth of the funding to which it is entitled based on its population and contribution to the gross national product. From now on, every time the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure stands up and bangs on about the federal government not providing the state with an adequate proportion of road funding, I think I will stand up on behalf of the south west and say that it is not getting an adequate proportion.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Have you stood up to the federal member for Forrest and told him that the state is not getting enough?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I tell him on a regular basis. I am sure that the member for Collie-Wellington will back me up when I say that the south west is not receiving an adequate proportion of funding, in the same way that the state of Western Australia does not get an adequate share of road funding.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Do you agree with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure that we are not receiving adequate funding commensurate with the population, the gross product etc?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: For road funding, absolutely, but the next time that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure bangs on about it and says that the state is not getting it, I will say that the south west is not getting its fair share either from this state government. Members might be intrigued to know that under the previous coalition government, the Liberal Party government -

Mr R.F. Johnson: The great government.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Settle down. The member for Hillarys can stand up and speak in a minute. The previous government was spending approximately \$64 million a year in the south west on road funding, and one could see in the expansion of the dual lane highways and the Busselton bypass the evidence of that road funding. When the Gallop government came to power, where did the road funding disappear to? Do members know what the government is spending now on road funding? Would anyone like to have a guess?

Dr K.D. Hames: Is it \$45 million?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: We would love \$45 million a year.

Mr J.E. McGrath: Is it \$15 million?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: We would love \$15 million a year.

Dr K.D. Hames: Is it less than that?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Is it \$10 million? No. It would be beautiful. We would love \$10 million a year on road funding. There is no doubt about that. I am talking about road funding across the south west of the state, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson), which does not, of course, include Albany, which from our point of view is part of the great southern area. It no doubt receives much more, I am sure.

Dr K.D. Hames: Will Hansard record that he is shaking his head?

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member does not comment on my body movements when I am in the chair. I was merely shaking my head at a comment made by the member.

Dr K.D. Hames: Exactly.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. We have not got to the figure. It is \$4.5 million a year.

Mr R.F. Johnson: No! How much?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: It is \$4.5 million a year, which is more than \$17 million over four years of Main Roads funding in the south west. Where has it gone to? There is a new roundabout in the southern part of Bunbury. The area has acquired a roundabout and a few overtaking lanes. We are very pleased with the announcement from the minister in her press release today that another \$1 million would be spent on providing overtaking lanes on the South Western Highway. I think that was to cost \$1.5 million. I do not want to be misquoted. We are down only about \$60 million at the moment. It would be nice to have some of that money come back into road funding in the south west.

Mr M.P. Murray: We had better lift the taxes just for your electorate.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: It would be nice to see a bit more investment in the South Western Highway. The member for Collie-Wellington cannot sit there and tell me that he would not appreciate some more funding for the South Western Highway to make it safer.

Mr M.P. Murray: Like every other member in this Parliament, I would certainly welcome extra money in my electorate.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: The member for Collie-Wellington is an honourable man and I would expect an honest answer. I will not stand here and bag him. I would expect the member to say that, because it is absolutely vital. When somebody dies we might finally get some of that money back into the south west.

Mr Acting Speaker, I will run out of time in a moment and I am only two points through my six-point program. I seek an extension of time.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr M.P. Whitely: Only if you talk about accrual accounting.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I would love to, but it is point 8 on my list. I will run out of time. I would love to get back to the accrual accounting system.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: It is a lean budget. Health funding in the south west was second on the list but I have only limited time.

Dr G.G. Jacobs interjected.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: As the member for Roe said, we could spend some time dealing with health funding in the south west and getting the Department of Health and the Minister for Health to take the south west seriously in the provision of health funding. We could spend an enormous amount of time on that because it is a remarkably serious issue. It has been one of my bugbears during my time in Parliament that I cannot seem to get people to take south west health seriously. The member for Mandurah's area in the old south west health district was metropolitan, and it is still part of the metropolitan health service. He will excuse me if I tell him that the health services I refer to in the south west run from approximately Yarloop in the Shire of Harvey down through Northcliffe and Pemberton and along the coast.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I will forgive you.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I am not referring to the south west health funding in Mandurah, which has probably done fairly well from the Gallop Labor government. The greater south west region has not done well with health funding from this government. It is difficult to get this government to take that funding seriously.

When we wrote the strategic plan for health in the south west in 1997, we indicated that a number of issues needed to be addressed urgently, but a number of them have fallen off the radar completely. At the moment a decision must be made about the Yarloop District Hospital. Will it be rebuilt? If it burnt down tomorrow, perhaps the Labor government would be completely happy to leave it burnt down and to send those people somewhere else. That area urgently needs some attention. The Labor government has finally done something about the Busselton District Hospital. It will be interesting, because the government is going to replace Busselton hospital, allowing for growth of about six per cent. That hospital was built 30 years ago with 44 beds and will be replaced with a 48-bed unit. This is the new hospital that will last us for the next 30 years! Over 60 years that hospital will have an increase of four beds! Not only that, but also the government will spend \$65 million to build that 48-bed hospital. The member for Dawesville is much more au fait with the costings of hospital development than I, but a tertiary hospital, a top hospital that does all these things, costs \$1 million a bed.

Dr K.D. Hames: On a greenfield site.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: That is 48 beds, at a cost of \$65 million. It does not add up.

Dr K.D. Hames: It certainly does not add up. It costs between \$600 000 and \$700 000 a bed for an existing site, and \$1 million a bed for a new site, maximum.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: It is interesting that the member for Dawesville would say that. There is, of course, a potential greenfield site that the government would like to push everything to. The government is going through a community consultation process - I should say a facade of a community consultation process - and is saying that it may be possible to rebuild the hospital on the same site. However, I do not think that will happen, because the government is pushing very hard to have the new hospital built on the new town site. That would not necessarily be a bad idea. If the minister says that has to be done for financial reasons, and because there is more room on the new site, fine. In fact, there happens to be a lot of room on the old site too. It is a wonderful piece of real estate. It would be worth millions. Perhaps that is part of the process. However, to go through a community consultation process, when the new hospital will almost certainly have to be built on the new site anyway, is a complete facade.

Dr K.D. Hames: The \$1 million a bed is for a tertiary hospital. It includes the cost of research facilities and all the high-powered, you-beaut equipment. It is not just for a regional hospital.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Absolutely. The numbers do not add up. I believe this is something that we on this side of the house will find with this government time and again. If we look closely enough, the budget figures just do not add up. There is no doubt that this will be the blow-out era for budget expenditure. There is no doubt that every six months we will have to come into this place and say this is one more project that this government has managed to blow out. We are dealing with appropriation bills for things that were not expected and for which we did not put aside enough money.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Balloons are expensive this year!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Balloons are expensive. They will be more expensive next year, most likely, because there is a two-year waiting list to do anything. Of course, the government now has more money than it has ever had.

It could build nearly anything it wanted. If it wanted to build a space station, it could probably damn near build that.

Mr R.F. Johnson: They are like a load of kids let loose in a sweetshop with a load of pocket money!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Absolutely. They have this enormous amount of pocket money that they can spend on just about anything.

Mr R.F. Johnson: But not in Hillarys!

Mr D.A. Templeman: Willy Wonka lives in Hillarys!

Mr R.F. Johnson: I get nothing in Hillarys.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: I get nothing in Roe.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: They get nothing in Roe, nothing in Dawesville and nothing in South Perth! The government is probably going to take bits out of it!

Mr M.P. Murray: They will put uranium there!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: That is going to Merredin, member for Collie-Wellington!

Mr M.P. Murray: We will share it around!

Dr S.C. THOMAS: We are told it is all going to Merredin. However, that is a different argument, and the member for Collie-Wellington can take that up with the National Party - which at this rate the Labor Party may well be in coalition with at the next election!

I want to go back briefly to the health budget and the damage that has been done to the health service in the south west. One of the issues with a health service is that we need a critical mass to make it work. I have been a country veterinarian, which is about the same as being a country doctor, except that we do a lot more work! Unless we can build up a certain momentum or size, we struggle to develop a service. There is no point getting one public psychiatrist for mental health in the south west, because in six months, if that person is still there, he or she will be burnt out completely and will not be able to provide the service. We will continue to suffer in the south west until there is an optimum size of service in that area. The optimum size for any profession is a minimum of three, because there is a trend these days for professionals to not want to put at risk their wives, their families and their health by dedicating their whole lives to their profession and by being on call continually and having to put in 12-hour days. They are not prepared to do that any more.

Mr M.P. Murray: It sounds like the federal government's new IR laws.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I have been doing it for 20 years, member for Collie-Wellington; nothing will change.

Mr R.F. Johnson: When the member for Collie-Wellington starts doing it, you can start complaining.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Yes. Until that minimum size is achieved, mental health services will struggle. One psychiatrist in the south west is not the solution. It is a short-term, temporary fix that lasts a few months before the psychiatrist gives up.

At some point it will probably be said that the Liberal Party's continual attacks on the south west health services are putting at risk the desire of professional people to work there because they do not want to work in an environment that is in turmoil. However, the turmoil was not created by the Liberal Party; it was created by the lack of a critical mass of support to develop those services. The minimum number of specialists required is four, and that includes psychiatrists, orthopaedic surgeons and specialist obstetricians. Let us get serious about what is available. Health services in the south west cannot provide cancer therapy or transplants. That is fine, but the services that should be provided in the south west must be provided.

I spent almost two days at the South West Area Health Service conference a few weeks ago.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: Did you meet Dr Swan?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: I will talk about Dr Norman Swan in a minute. I was appalled at Dr Swan's behaviour. His attitude to health administrators appears to be somewhere between obsequious and that of an apologist. For somebody who ostensibly represents patients in the health system, I found that rather appalling. Members who represent rural electorates, such as you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson), will probably understand this perfectly well, as will the member for Collie-Wellington. A number of smaller hospitals throughout the state cannot provide every service. However, if we are to retain doctors and nurses in small country towns, they must enjoy a critical mass of support so that they can provide a certain number of services.

I attended the two-day South West Area Health Service conference, and I commend that health service because it put itself on the line so that people could take a free shot at it, and people did take a shot at it. I did not, but I

was ashamed that people would take a free shot at those involved. I do not think they should have done that. At the same time, some people, led by Norman Swan, appalled me by pushing the proposal that it was okay to close country hospitals that the health department had decided were no longer economical. That proposal was justified by the argument that it is not safe to run an emergency department in a little country hospital. That is true for heart attack patients. No doubt there are little country hospitals in your expanded electorate, Mr Acting Speaker. Based on his initial symptoms, a patient might not know he is having a heart attack. If the patient visits the emergency department, he will probably be sent somewhere else. That is no reason to close little emergency departments that can provide minor surgery such as stitches, treatment for lumps and bumps, pulling out splinters that the patient cannot reach and other basic services. Triage reflects the economic rationalism for the centralisation process of this state government. I am with this government in condemning the federal government for its centralisation agenda. However, it is hypocritical of this government to centralise services in its own backyard. I am embarrassed about that process and I was embarrassed by Norman Swan's behaviour.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Wellington) [7.59 pm]: It is appropriate that I follow the member for Capel, given all the doom and gloom I have just heard him say about the south west. How wrong the member for Capel is. He spoke about doom and gloom when the truth is that the south west is absolutely booming. There is no doubt about that whatsoever. The member for Capel should look at his electorate and at the progress being made in Dalzellup. He should go across to Australind or Harvey and look at the progress occurring there. Doom and gloom has been touted around the place. In Collie, blocks have gone from costing \$4 000 four years ago to the top block at an auction on the weekend being sold for \$73 000. The auction was of surplus blocks that previously were thrown away. I am glad that I bought a block four years ago for \$3 000. I knew that a good member of Parliament would be elected, so I took a punt. I got it at the right price; I backed my own judgment and got across the line.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Did you declare that?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I certainly will. I do not know whether I have declared the profit margin, but the block is certainly on the list.

The south west is a progressive place; it is going forward. I cannot believe that people knock, knock, knock it instead of supporting it. The federal government has not provided some of the infrastructure that is needed in the south west. That is something that we must look at. Members should measure how Western Australia is going against the rest of Australia, which considers itself to be on the other side of the world. There is no doubt that a fair share of funding is not coming back to our state. Members opposite should be saying to the federal government, "Come on, you blokes; how about putting it back in so that we can match it?" What is missing in south west towns is infrastructure.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Absolutely.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: We need a hand from the federal government to provide some of that infrastructure, particularly for roads. It is incumbent on the federal government to do that. Why does the south west need infrastructure? It is because it is booming; things are on a roll down there. The state government can only provide so much infrastructure across the state. We need to wait our turn. No-one can deny that. To say, "I want it all in Capel," as I heard for the past 35 minutes, is just being greedy and ignorant of the fact that the south west as a whole needs infrastructure. We should be working together to make sure that infrastructure is provided.

I return to my town of Collie. As I said, an auction was held on the weekend, and the average price of the 18 blocks sold was \$40 000-odd. That was a great improvement and did not reflect any of the doom and gloom that people have spoken about. That improvement happened because Collie has become relevant in political circles. Why? It is because the town now has a Labor member. That is why Collie was previously ignored. One member opposite who ignored Collie for a long time, to his peril, is sitting on the backbench. He has been punished severely by the people he must sit next to.

Dr S.C. Thomas: He built you a power station.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Half a power station. That is the problem. It was the dearest power station in Australia, and that has impacted on why we cannot go forward. It cost \$700 million to provide half a power station. That is what members opposite want to happen in the rest of the south west; that is, they want things to be provided at any cost.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Member for Capel, everybody listened to your speech and very few interjections were made. You should show the same respect to other speakers who are replying to some of the comments you made.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Thank you for your protection, Mr Acting Speaker.

Several members interjected.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The runs were on the board for a cost structure that the whole system had to bear, and that impacted on why the other half was not built. The previous Liberal government never put in place any checks and balances. When downsizing of the coal industry occurred, companies were allowed to profiteer. Members opposite are still grizzling about it today. Profiteering occurred in the form of charging \$65 a tonne for coal when it should have cost between \$30 and \$40. Members opposite cannot grizzle after the event. They signed off on it and caused some, if not most, of the problems that we are experiencing today.

The support that has been provided to Collie in recent times has given the town some confidence. Pinetec Ltd is one example. The government has provided it with \$2 million. I recently looked at the new factory, which is located alongside the Muja power station. It feeds the residue from the sawlogs back into the older part of the power station to help gain greenhouse credits. At the same time, it takes steam from the power station and uses it to season the wood. There are 30 new jobs in the town, and it has certainly given it a boost. It is all modern technology. I looked at the technology in Tumut, which I thought was pretty flash. However, this technology is better than that in Tumut. It is the latest technology from Canada. I advise anybody who is interested to look at it. Certainly, in the Albany area, where the plantations are -

Mr R.C. Kucera: It shows great vision on your part to bring that in.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: It took a lot of hard work.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Given your support for the disaggregation of Western Power, what is your estimate of job losses in Muja?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Is the member talking about upcoming job losses?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: In my view, there will probably be 20 through natural attrition. However, in saying that, I point out that following the Liberal Party's privatisation of the maintenance schedules, there is a floating population of tradespeople of 120, and it goes down to as low as 30. These people work for six or eight weeks, have four or five weeks off and then come back again. That is because of the privatisation. The maintenance area was privatised to the detriment of those tradespeople and to the detriment of the town of Collie. No-one will forget that.

The Pinetec support has been an absolute bonus for the town. CollTech Australia Ltd is also located at Collie A, the new part of the power station. That uses distilled water to produce collagen for the world market. It is one of the first of its kind, because the collagen comes from sheepskins, whereas previously collagen was produced from cowhides. Because of mad cow disease, people were reluctant to put collagen from cowhides into pharmaceuticals and similar products, so now the collagen from sheepskins is being used. It is a first for WA, and possibly for Australia. In Collie, that is another feather in our caps. I will add to that. At the moment, about three-quarters of a 50-bed motel that is being constructed on the outskirts of Collie is completed. It has a function room that will cater for up to 150 people. It is great to see investors coming back into the town.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What was the size of the blocks that you mentioned were auctioned?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Between 700 and 1 000 square metres. They are sprinkled all over the town.

Mr R.F. Johnson: And they were \$45 000, on average, roughly.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Yes, on average, roughly. That has been a huge boost for the town. Unfortunately, some of the younger couples were a bit disappointed because they thought they would get those blocks a bit cheaper. They were a bit disappointed about that price. However, they should have gone down the coast and looked there first before they made up their minds about whether they could afford one. I return to the motel and the people who are investing in Collie. It pleases me to see the confidence back in the town.

Another thing which happened in Collie and which is worthy of note was the announcement of the small business awards. Agmaster topped the awards in the state for small business. Again, it is a Collie company that produces farm machinery and farm implements, and it is going really well. Across the road from that company, another investment of \$1 million has been made in an industrial shed in which south west fire units are built. It employs about 70 people in the winter season. The number drops to about 40 in the summer, because they also plant trees.

Mr P.B. Watson: He's an ex-Albany boy, isn't he?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: He did come from Albany, but we would not tell anyone that. He has certainly adjusted to the Collie way of life. When I came into the job, I said that we would change the economic base to make sure

Collie did not die. We are doing that, it is happening, but only because we received government assistance. A National Party person represented that area for 12 years, and we did not get any assistance in those 12 years. Tell me one new factory or one new building that came into the town.

That leads me on to the number of new houses in Collie. People are pleasantly surprised when they drive around the town. In the scheme of things, I thought it was pretty smart to mention how many houses were being built in Collie, but another part of my electorate knocked me over when they talked about Harvey and the 800 new building applications there. In Collie, the number had been going towards only the 100 mark in the past two years. However, in a small town, it certainly changes the structure and the appearance of the town. Again, it shows the confidence -

Dr S.C. Thomas: Does it have deep sewerage?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Yes, it has, as a matter of fact; it has had deep sewerage for a long time. We are doing all right; therefore members opposite should not worry about it. It is a Labor seat - what else can I say?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Collie is a beautiful part of the state and it has excellent infrastructure. I do not say this unkindly, but I hope that because of the positive message you are giving, the community will be more positive in its approach. It does put out a pessimism that lets the town down.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I strongly agree with the member for Cottesloe. When the changes occurred to the mining industry, the town was full of doom and gloom. Everyone was down. No-one would do voluntary work. I blame it on the fact that it is not part of the political structure of this state. Collie was left to fight it out all by itself. It did not get big packages like the timber industry did when the Labor government made changes to that industry. The total amount Collie received was \$300 000 from the federal government for retraining, and it was left to its own devices. I take a bit of that blame because I did not yell loudly enough. Generally, when a major restructure takes place these days, a package goes with it. The coalmining industry did not receive a package.

One of the good things that took place was that when real estate prices dropped and a house could be bought in the area for \$25 000, people of a different ilk moved in. They told the Collie people to get off their bum and have a look around the place because it is one of the best places in the state. Slowly, but surely, that rubbed off. They soon realised that they could use the area at the back of the Wellington Weir, and they are only 45 minutes from the beach and the movie theatres at Bunbury. Members should consider that Armadale is half that distance from Perth. A completely different attitude prevails in the town. I accept the member for Cottesloe's interjection. He was right on the money. However, it is great to see a new wave of people coming into the town. Many of the older mine workers took a redundancy and got out. Currently, in the mines there are workers over and above the permanent work force. Griffin Coal has 39 extra short-term workers, each with up to a 12 month contract, and Wesfarmers has 40. In other words, there are approximately 80 extra people over and above the forecast numbers. That has created the optimism. The companies cannot get the coal out quickly enough, and these extra people are required to achieve that. That money is generating other jobs and boosting the town.

I want to move on to Harvey, in the new part of my electorate. I was sad to lose the Donnybrook area, especially as it went to the Liberals. Harvey went through the E.G. Green and Sons Pty Ltd situation, in which 300 jobs were lost overnight when it shut down. Did those workers whinge or whine? No, they got on with the job and went through an orderly process. The unions moved in and the government came in with some underpinning support. It guaranteed long service leave payments and holiday pay. Therefore, the people who were put out of work and needed to make a payment on their house or car were supported. When a similar thing happened under the Liberal government, the support was not available. Support was forthcoming and, because of the labour shortage, people found jobs quickly.

I was talking to the business people in Harvey recently and the impact has not really hit, but my experience is that it will come further down the line when the job structure changes. These people have a little money from accrued leave. In the main, people have moved on. They have not dwelt on the issue. They have asked what they should do to get it up and running. Some people have been retrained and moved to the earthmoving industry, for example, to Charles Hull Contracting Co Pty Ltd at Waroona which prior to the E.G. Green closure could not get workers. Harvey Water took 10 people. The gaps filled up immediately. Instead of dislocation, there was a continuation of people moving through.

A lot of these people are migrants. A brand new influx of New Zealanders came to the area to work in the abattoirs, and a number of Muslims and Africans also work within the industry. All in all, the town has moved on but only because it got support.

It does not matter which side of Parliament members are on, if something like that happens in their electorate, they should not be scared. They should get in there and support the community because it will fight back and move on. That has been really good. Harvey's problem is that it does not have enough residential blocks. A small release of land was delayed but all of the 55 blocks that were previously released have been bought. A

short-term release of 10 blocks was announced and another 50 will be released after Christmas, and already there is interest from people who want to buy the blocks. Believe me, they will not be priced between \$40 000 and \$70 000; they will be valued at much more than that. As people opt for a sea change, they are moving inland away from the coast because the price of a block of land along the coast is heading towards \$150 000 and \$200 000. Harvey has the infrastructure and it is located near another small town. Harvey has a hospital, a lower and upper school, two doctors and an operating theatre that has been given a \$500 000 upgrade.

Further up the road there are problems with Yarloop. I make no secret about that. One of the problems there is a lack of unity within the community. There are five groups in the small town of about 500 people and some people belong to two or three of the groups. Until they present a united front and put forward their case, they will be taken for a bit of a ride. There are some problems. Certain people have a reaction to the chemicals that are in the air at times. A lot of work must be done before we give the approval for the expansion of the Alcoa refinery in nearby Wagerup. A briefing from Alcoa that I attended recently helped me decide that it should go ahead if all caution is exercised. I did not like the recent article on the refinery in the *Sunday Times*. A lot of the information in it was based on old news. Some of the issues it referred to have been addressed since then.

Mr R.C. Kucera: It was John Flint who wrote it.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Yes. The Shire of Waroona is working hard and is ably led by Noel Dew. It is working with the companies to make sure that the fears of the communities in that area are allayed. There are a few profiteers down there. When people who moved into the area just 12 months ago claim to not have known about the Wagerup refinery and say that the block of land they bought is not worth half of what it was 12 months ago, it must be taken with a grain of salt. That does not help the interests of the state or get the area up and going. It certainly will not help create the 1 000 or so jobs that would come with the expansion of the refinery. They are the bits and pieces I wanted to talk about regarding the coast.

I will talk about roads during the couple of minutes I have left. A survey was conducted recently about the road from Lake Clifton to Bunbury. It is a road on which I travel a lot. There can be no argument that it needs some work. Most crashes that occur on the road occur in the Lake Clifton area. I do not know why that is. It is one of the better stretches of roads in the area and it has double lanes, yet people are killed on it on a weekly basis. In saying that, I take my hat off to the RAC WA helicopter. It has been to the area three or four times during the past couple of months and it helps to save lives on a daily basis. It lands on the road and the medical team work on the injured people and take them to Royal Perth Hospital if they are seriously injured. I take my hat off to the RAC for its sponsorship of the helicopter. It has certainly changed the way procedures are carried out these days. If a person lying on the ground after a road accident had the choice of being taken to either the Yarloop District Hospital, which was built in 1930 and certainly needs some major restructuring, or to Royal Perth Hospital, he would choose to go to RPH every time. That is where the specialists are and is only 20 minutes away by air. A road trip from Preston to Yarloop would take the same amount of time as it takes the helicopter to fly from Yarloop to RPH.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: No-one can argue with that.

Dr K.D. Hames: You are absolutely right, but I am saying that you are closing Royal Perth, so you would have to choose another hospital.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: When we get to the southern suburbs, we will go to that as well. Those things are behind us. I am proud to say that the electorate is going very well. I do not see any doom and gloom in the future. There is talk that within five or 10 years between 10 000 and 15 000 people will be living at Preston Beach. I am concerned that the Peel deviation is about two kilometres short. The roads should meet at the Preston Beach turn-off because if the Wagerup refinery expansion goes ahead, people will travel from the coast and across to Wagerup, and there will be a double dogleg on which more people could be injured. I have raised that concern with Main Roads and am trying to deal with it at the moment. There are other bits and pieces along that road back at Brunswick and again at the Raymond Road turn-off. That is the problem for the workers at Worsley Alumina Pty Ltd; work needs to be done with the expansion there.

DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville) [8.19 pm]: I will not speak for too long, as I know members want to get onto other business. There are two issues that I had not planned to talk about but I will quickly raise them. One is that I am glad to hear that the member for Collie-Wellington has not had adequate housing, not because I think that he does not deserve it. In 1980 I was about to go to Collie to work. My life would have been completely different if I had gone there. In 1980 I went to Collie from Geraldton to look at an opportunity to work as a general practitioner. The only reason I did not ultimately go there to work is that the only house available for my wife and me and our two kids to move into was an old, absolutely filthy timber house with all the flywire torn

and a dirt yard. I think it had been a Homeswest rental. My wife said that there was no way we were staying there in that house; so that was it.

Mr R.C. Kucera: You are lucky you weren't a cop; you wouldn't have had a choice.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is right. The houses for the poor old police down there were not a lot different either. I might otherwise have been one of the member for Collie-Wellington's constituents.

The other issue raised, about the Peel deviation, was quite interesting, as the environmental groups in my electorate want the deviation extended through the pine forest so that it does not go through Tyler's property, which is right on the Old Coast Road and cuts through some very high quality tuarts. They want it to go out through the pine forest and come out where the pine forest ends, which is four or five kilometres south. Main Roads is saying that there is no way it will do that, as it has already built the dual carriageway to Tyler's place, the cost is too much, it has done all the plans and it would have to redo Aboriginal heritage and environmental surveys. It will therefore not do it. We would much prefer that option. Therefore, if the member for Collie-Wellington can use his influence on the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, it would be greatly appreciated. Certainly the environmental groups in my electorate are very worried. There is one area of limestone that will be cut through to a depth of 30 metres. Our worry is that it will have a hydrological effect on Lake Clifton, as all the water comes from that hill down to Lake Clifton. Main Roads is saying that a cut to a depth of 30 metres will not have an effect. However, that is a long way down. The member for Mandurah has been down to Lake Clifton and has had meetings with those groups as well and I understand that he has expressed a similar concern. I want to get the deviation through and do not want it delayed for a long period. I would much rather the Peel deviation was constructed because of the huge traffic problems in my electorate. However, if the members for Collie-Wellington and Mandurah can work together on the minister and make something happen quickly, all the members of my electorate would be very grateful.

I want to talk about a totally different issue from the issues that have been talked about by other speakers. The Deputy Speaker has probably heard a bit about this issue already. It is about remote Aboriginal communities and renal disease. I want to briefly put on the record something that I am trying to get done in Aboriginal communities to do with renal disease. I cannot talk about what the Education and Health Standing Committee is doing about swimming pool projects in remote Aboriginal communities. It has fascinated all of us to see the success of that program. The program developed out of a theory that I developed - from my medical background and having been through remote Aboriginal communities - on the incidence of nose, throat and particularly middle ear infections in Aboriginal children. I do not know whether members know this, but about 30 per cent of Aboriginal children have some sort of hearing impairment, mostly because of middle ear infections, and a lot have ear perforations because of those infections. The theory with swimming pools was for them to have regular immersion in salt water to clear their noses and stop those infections. There are all sorts of other issues that go with that issue. I will not talk about them now but I will talk about them with the committee. When studying that, a comment was made by the TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research about the incidence of renal disease. When I went to someone else at the Telethon Institute because of that comment that the incidence of renal disease had reduced, I was told that that was not true. I was a bit surprised at that. Nevertheless, that developed my idea about the incidence of renal disease in Aboriginal communities. I have a theory about that. There is a condition called post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis, which occurs in someone who has a streptococcal infection. Streptococcus is a bacterium. Conditions such as school sores are caused by a mixture of two bacteria, one of which is streptococcus. It commonly causes middle-ear infections, and is the major cause of severe tonsillitis. If a person has severe tonsillitis and takes penicillin, the odds are that a group B streptococcus has caused it. A person's body has a reaction to that streptococcal infection and forms antibodies. Those antibodies can then cause acute renal damage. Streptococcal infections are rife in Aboriginal communities. My theory is that these infections are not being adequately treated in Aboriginal communities. We need look only at the problems experienced by general practitioners in the metropolitan area. Princess Margaret Hospital for Children says that everything is viral. If a child comes into the hospital with pus pouring out of his nose, the doctors at PMH say, "It must be viral, go home, take two aspirin and wait for it to get better." It is said that doctors totally overtreat with antibiotics, which, is true to a degree. When I see people prescribed antibiotics for what is obviously a viral infection, it makes me wonder where some doctors have been trained.

Mr E.S. Ripper: They have been trained in marketing perhaps.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Perhaps so. The fact is that the doctors at PMH tend to undertreat bacterial infections, and GPs tend to overtreat bacterial infections. Quite often, kids who have gone to PMH as emergency cases have been told to go home because they have a viral infection. However, when I have seen them, I have found that in no way was it a viral infection. They have had a problem for a week and a half, and have pus pouring out of their nose. I have given them an antibiotic and two days later they have been better. Obviously, it was a bacterial infection. The problem is that Aboriginal children in remote communities, in particular, do not have

access to antibiotic treatment, because they do not access GPs in the same way as non-Aboriginal kids. The swimming pool study shows that between 50 and 60 per cent of kids - I forget the figure now - in that first assessment had skin sores caused by a streptococcal infection. There is a huge incidence of infection.

I went to the Australian Kidney Foundation because it had heard that I was interested in the issue. A representative of the foundation told me that it was really interested in the issue, so I told him my theory. He said that he did not think that was likely because all the studies he had seen on post-streptococcal renal disease indicated that there was close to 100 per cent recovery and very little ongoing consequences of that renal disease. About two weeks later he told me that he had found a Queensland study on Aboriginal kids that showed that there were a lot of ongoing consequences. I think that these post-streptococcal infections in Aboriginal communities are causing renal damage. There are other causes of renal damage in Aboriginal communities, such as diabetes, which is the main cause of renal damage. There are other causes of kidney problems. There is a very common incidence of foetal abnormalities in children who are born to parents who, to put it politely, partake of excess alcohol, and one of those foetal abnormalities is small kidneys. That results in Aboriginal children who are born with small kidneys and who live on very poor diets. Among them is a high incidence of streptococcal infections and, subsequently, diabetes. That may go a great way towards explaining the end-stage renal failure that is prevalent in all Aboriginal communities, particularly remote Aboriginal communities. I want a study conducted into this issue. In the same way that Fiona Stanley's Telethon Institute for Child Health Research conducted before and after research in a community for the swimming pool study, I want to contract it to do a similar study on renal disease, particularly with aggressive antibiotic treatments for kids who have a streptococcal infection. Perhaps it can also research the way in which swimming pools can cause a significant reduction in streptococcal infections. The communities of Bidyadanga and Turkey Creek are soon to receive swimming pools. Perhaps a study could involve one of those communities and a community that does not have a swimming pool, such as Balgo. I have had such a study costed by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. The study would have to be conducted over five years because of the before and after research, which would consider what happens with renal disease and how it develops further. I have been told that the cost is about \$2 million, or \$400 000 a year, which is reasonably high. I have presented my proposal to the federal minister. I hope that he will come back with a contribution for at least part of that money. Once he does that - now that the Minister for Health is in the chamber - I will ask the state for additional funding. Alternatively, I will turn to the private sector or Healthway. Hopefully I will get half the money needed from the commonwealth; if so, I will need only \$200 000 a year to get the study completed. The Australian Kidney Foundation is very interested in the study and is keen to be a part of any committee that looks into this issue. I wanted to get that on the record during this debate.

I will branch out and briefly refer to some minor issues. One is commonwealth-state funding. In the early part of this year, the government's agenda was to make sure that government members asked ministers four or five questions during question time to give them an opportunity to abuse the commonwealth for a lack of funding. It is not my intention to chastise the government for seeking more funds from the commonwealth - far from it. When we were in government, we had a go at the commonwealth all the time, especially about a lack of road funding. Every time we did, the former member for Pilbara would leap to his feet. When we were in government we would say how much money we should receive because Western Australia contributed a major portion of the commonwealth's income. The former member for Pilbara, Larry Graham, would jump up and say that because the Pilbara produced the majority of the state's income, a greater proportion of money should be spent in the Pilbara. He said that the state government should spend heaps more money in the Pilbara. That argument continues. Although I will not have a go at the government, it also is not spending in the Pilbara the proportion of money that the Pilbara earns for this state any more than the commonwealth government is spending in Western Australia the proportion of money that Western Australia contributes to the commonwealth. I wanted to highlight the other side of the argument.

The second issue I wish to quickly deal with is the rail line to Mandurah. The government has always painted the picture that we supported it, and we obviously did, but what worries me is that I plan to use the railway line in the near future. In fact, I have a daughter in year 6 who has a year to go in primary school before she goes to live in Mandurah. We have booked her into Mercedes College. Obviously, I could have booked her into a local college at Mandurah, but as a result of my discussions with people who have had anything to do with Mercedes College on the one hand, and my dissatisfaction with Chisholm College, which we used in Perth on the other hand, for which I have very little time at all -

Mr M.J. Cowper: There is Mandurah Catholic College.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Although Mandurah Catholic College has a very good reputation, and I am sure it is excellent, we have decided to send our daughter to Mercedes College. The plan was that she would catch the train. We are told that the railway line will be finished in 2006 and the service will be up and running in 2007. That would be beautiful, because that is the year my daughter will start college in Perth. However, I am

developing extreme doubts about the ability of my wife and daughter to move to Mandurah and catch the train to Perth, because everybody I talk to who has any association with building the train - I am not talking about members of Parliament or anywhere else but people who are on the job - is saying that they would not count their chickens if they were me. I plan on living in Perth a little longer or catching the bus, because there is no way that the service will be ready to operate in April 2007. We might be looking at the end of 2007 if we are lucky. The people to whom I have spoken say that it will go miles over budget. They reckon it will be over budget by at least 30 or 40 per cent. These are the people who are doing the work. Someone who is involved in the job said today that it will be 30 or 40 per cent over budget.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It will cost \$2 billion.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The member is not allowed to tell me things like that when not in his seat.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you think there may be a bit of self-interest in that sort of approach?

Dr K.D. HAMES: I have no idea.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Dr K.D. HAMES: The person to whom I spoke today has a huge amount of work and is very busy working in Mandurah. He has no particular interest in getting extra work on that job; in fact, the part of the work that he is doing is not that great. He said to me today that he reckons that it will go over budget by miles. He might be wrong, and I hope he is because I want to get my daughter on the train in 2007. I will whinge about it if I cannot, because the government has been promising it for so long with such vehemence.

Mr G. Snook: The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has given a guarantee, so you will be safe.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is good. Perhaps I can approach the minister to subsidise my daughter's transport costs to Perth when she cannot catch the train and we have to drive to Perth. She could catch the bus. The bus service was started by our government and is a very good service. If it was not started by our government, it was started as a result of pressure from our then local member, Mr Arthur Marshall.

I want to briefly comment on country hospitals, and I will not take much longer with my speech. The member for Capel made a comment about shutting country hospitals. I have a lot of concern about that. I wish to relate a little story about Boddington Hospital. My father is a general practitioner working in Boddington, and until recently was the only general practitioner there. One of my family, during a visit to the farm, lacerated an arm or a leg, I forget which, and needed sutures. I think it was over Christmas, and because my dad had had an ale or two he was not prepared to do anything to it. We went into the hospital where I sutured the family member's laceration in the little emergency department. It was not anything special - just a little emergency department - but all the gear was ready with a nurse at the hospital to assist. It took me 10 minutes and we were done. If the government is talking about cutting out hospital services like that, which provide emergency departments, it will create a huge problem, not just for the everyday injuries that occur, such as the splinters that people get and farmers in particular are prone to, but also when there is a major accident in the area. At present, ambulances bring the patients to that hospital first for my father to stabilise, so that they can then take the patients to Perth. It takes two hours to drive them to a major hospital in Perth. He stabilises them in those emergency departments. When they have a serious injury, he does not have the equipment to properly manage them, even though he is a very experienced GP. However, he can stabilise them, and fix breaks and all sorts of minor problems, or even more extensive problems, that come to the emergency departments in those little hospitals. If those emergency departments are closed and GPs from the area are denied access to the departments in which they can do that sort of management, it will be a huge downward step for not only all the people who live in the area, but also the doctors who wish to provide a proper service for their patients. It will be a disgrace if that happens.

The final issue on which I will spend just five minutes relates to schools and the commonwealth funding program for schools. The commonwealth recently provided a fund that was available to schools for all the things that the state government did not fund, such as airconditioning, coolrooms, reticulation or greening. Lots of schools throughout the state put in applications for funding. In my electorate two schools received major funding of \$130 000-odd each. One was Falcon Primary School and the other was Halls Head Primary School. Suddenly those schools found that something being done by the state government was causing them extreme problems. For example, they received a quote from a business in the local community to construct an undercover shelter for \$18 000. As part of that application they received \$16 000 from the commonwealth to help pay for it, so members of the P&C had to raise only \$2 000. They were extremely happy with that. They would get a new undercover shelter for \$18 000 and would fund \$2 000 themselves. There was a tick in a little box and an indication that it should go through the state government to manage that funding. What did we find? The first item was an 11 per cent administration charge. Therefore, 11 per cent of the \$18 000 given by the commonwealth came out before they started. Secondly, quotes had to go through the tenderers to the state Department of Education and Training, which is not based in Mandurah, it is based in Perth. The Perth guy

came down and gave a quote, but instead of it costing \$18 000 to build the shelter, suddenly the cost was quoted at \$25 000 or \$30 000. The school will now pay \$25 000 for an \$18 000 shelter. The 11 per cent administration charge by the state government will reduce the \$18 000 by about \$2 000, so they are down to \$16 000. However, as the quote is now \$25 000, they must find an additional \$9 000 instead of \$2 000 to build the shelter. They cannot raise \$9 000 because they are just an ordinary little P&C. Suddenly they cannot build this shelter for the kids and they must say to the commonwealth government, "Sorry, we can't take your money because we can't afford it any more." Those schools did not receive funding of just \$18 000; they received \$130 000, which is multiplied across four or five different projects. It is an absolute disgrace what the state government has done.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is a disgrace what the commonwealth government has done. They should do it in a coordinated manner, instead of trying to butt their noses in. It is bad politics.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I am sure the member has had the same thing happen with schools in his local electorate. A great school for me was a little school in Osborne Park, which was very tired and run down. It was extremely difficult trying to get that school moved up in the priority list to get some work done. That school was also chasing an undercover shelter. It was very difficult to get that school on a priority list because it had to go through its own region and the state government. It was extremely difficult for that school to get funding.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is done on a priority basis, which is the way it should be done.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The state government does not fund the little things.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It should not be done at the whim of a commonwealth bureaucrat.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The state government does not fund the little things. The Falcon community wanted a new freezer, because they had a couple of fridges and only a tiny freezer, and they could not fit in the food to properly service the kids. The state government is never going to fund something like that.

Mr M.P. Whitely: If the federal government gave us more money, perhaps we could prioritise those sorts of things. Why can't it just give us more money?

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is always about federal government money, money, money. The fact is the state government would not do it. I am not talking just about this government. Our government when in power did not do it either. Our government put in a lot of money for schools, and so too has this government. However, the fact is that these things will never be funded. This money helped the P&Cs, which do a huge amount of work in chasing funding. I hope the member will encourage the people in his electorate to chase that money. Two of the schools in my electorate got \$130 000 each for the little things. For airconditioning there is statewide funding. However, for freezers, or for internal painting - all sorts of things - there is no state government funding.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is done on a priority basis.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The state government does not fund airconditioning in old schools.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It does.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It funds it in new schools. It does not fund it in old schools.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It does.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It certainly did not ever fund any in my schools, I can tell the member that. The fact is that this money has been extremely welcome. Did any schools in the member's electorate get any money?

Mr M.P. Whitely: Yes, they did.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Are they happy?

Mr M.P. Whitely: Of course they are. They are not going to turn it down.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Is the member complaining about it? Of course he is not! They think it is great! They think it is fantastic!

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is pure politics! It is about making the federal member - usually a marginal federal member - popular. That is what it is all about.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Is the member happy that the state government is going to take out 11 per cent of the money for administration purposes?

Mr M.P. Whitely: I would be happy if the federal government gave the state government something so that we could do our job fully and properly.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I understand that.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is pure politics.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I understand the member's politics, and I understand what he is saying. Is the member happy, now that the schools have the money, that 11 per cent will be taken out by the state for administration purpose? Is the member happy about that?

Mr M.P. Whitely: I think 100 per cent should be given to the states so that the states can get on with the job of running schools.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I have said that I understand the member's position on that. However, the fact is that schools in the member's electorate have been given the money, but now they will not be able to do the job, because 11 per cent of that money will be taken out. The member has the advantage of being in the city, so the original quotes that his schools have been given would probably be the same now. However, I am sure that the local quotes that the schools in my electorate, and I am sure in the electorate of the member for Mandurah, have been given would be far cheaper than the quotes that we will have to get now from people who will need to come from Perth. Those schools will now have to pay more money to cover the cost for a person to come from the city to do the work, and to cover the 11 per cent that will be taken out. I am fighting against this. I am chasing the federal government to try to find some better way of doing this. I hope the members for Bassendean and Mandurah will speak to their minister and try to find some way around this. Whether they agree with the principle is irrelevant. The fact is that this should not happen. Schools should have the option of getting this money directly so that they can do the work that they have planned in their classrooms.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.A. McGinty (Attorney General)**.