

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, CONSTITUENTS' ACCESS AND REPRESENTATION

Motion

HON PAUL LLEWELLYN (South West) [2.06 pm]: On behalf of Hon Giz Watson, I move -

That following the widespread changes in political representation due to recent reforms in the Western Australian electoral system, this house -

- (1) Calls upon the government to initiate a review to be conducted by an independent body, such as the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, to investigate methods of improving access to and representation by elected members, and to recommend methods of providing equitable services to electors and elected members regardless of proximity to population centres.
- (2) This review should include evidence collected throughout the state and consider but not be limited to -
 - (a) provision of telecommunication facilities such as teleconferencing and free telephone services to contact members;
 - (b) extra electorate offices and extra staffing;
 - (c) travel allowances for staff to move throughout electorates; and
 - (d) the establishment in non-metropolitan regional centres of "electorate shared service centres" where constituents can contact all members representing that region and access information about parliamentary processes such as inquiries and proposed legislation. These would be in addition to a member's own electorate office.
- (3) Requests a further independent review three years after the first election conducted on the basis of the Electoral Amendment and Repeal Act 2005 to determine whether regional and metropolitan electors have reasonable access to democratic processes.

I need some help with the procedure.

The PRESIDENT: The member has moved the motion and he may speak to it.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Thank you very much, Mr President. I have moved that motion on behalf of the Greens (WA) and, indeed, on behalf of all representatives of the state government and all members of this house who are charged with representing large regions in the state of Western Australia. The motion says that following the widespread changes in political representation due to recent reforms in the Western Australian electoral system, this house calls upon the government to initiate a review to be conducted by an independent body, such as the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, to investigate methods of improving access to and representation by elected members, and to recommend methods of providing equitable services to electors and elected members, regardless of proximity to population centres. At this point I seek leave to table a number of items for the balance of the day, one of which is the fax machine that I have in front of me. The documents that I will seek leave to table are inside the fax machine. In fact, the fax machine is out of order, and I do not know what the procedure is for tabling a document that is actually caught in a fax machine that does not work.

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps the honourable member would resume his seat. He is proposing to seek leave to table a fax machine. It would be a historic event if leave were granted, and it is historic to seek leave to table a fax machine. However, before the member can do anything further, the house must give him leave. Perhaps if the member puts the fax machine down, he can seek leave, and I will ask the house whether leave is granted. It is a matter for the house. The honourable member seeks leave to table the fax machine that is in front of him.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: In fact, I seek leave to table the documents that are trapped inside the fax machine because it is out of order.

The PRESIDENT: Very well. The honourable member is seeking the leave of the house to table the documents inside the fax machine, with the fax machine, because he cannot take the documents out of it.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Exactly.

The PRESIDENT: To do that, the member needs the leave of the house. The member may have other items he wishes to table, but I will put that proposition to the house.

Point of Order

Hon GEORGE CASH: Is it intended that the fax machine be tabled in the normal manner - that is, filed by the Parliament to be the property of the Parliament - or for the balance of the day?

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The PRESIDENT: I think the member said that it would be for the balance of this sitting day. Is that the case, honourable member?

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: That is right, because I would like to see whether I can have it repaired so that I can get the documents out of it.

The PRESIDENT: I will put the question as well as I can at this historic moment. The honourable member seeks the leave of the house to table the fax machine and the documents inside the fax machine until the end of this day's sitting.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: As a point of procedure, Mr President, I think it is the documents that are the key matter. If we do not have access to the documents, I wonder whether there is much point in doing this. I do not think we have the capacity to take apart the fax machine, particularly if the honourable member wants to get it repaired. We do not want to do further damage to it. Perhaps the member could be given leave to table the documents when they are recovered from the fax machine or at some later stage. I am raising this issue to try to help. However, I am perfectly happy to participate in the tabling of a fax machine, if that will help.

The PRESIDENT: The matter before the house is the proposition that a fax machine containing documents be tabled until the end of this sitting day. If leave is not granted and at some later stage the honourable member is able to get the documents out of his fax machine, he can at that later stage seek the leave of the house to table those documents. However, this is a matter for the house. I am just pointing out that it is a historic and somewhat unusual occasion.

Debate Resumed

The PRESIDENT: I will put the proposition. I ask the house whether leave is granted.

Leave denied.

The PRESIDENT: The member may continue his remarks.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Is there another way of doing this?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Paul Llewellyn has the call and he is speaking to the motion that he has moved.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Without wishing to distract the house from its important business, this fax machine of the Greens (WA), representatives of the Parliament of Western Australia, is out of order. This machine was bequeathed to the Greens, I believe, by the Premier of the state. Ever since we have had this fax machine, it has given us a lot of trouble.

Several members interjected.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Other matters relate to the symbolism of having been given a fax machine that is out of order or -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You're supposed to get it fixed when it breaks down. That's the whole idea.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I must tell the Minister for Education and Training that we have tried to fix this fax machine on a number of occasions. In fact, it has been dysfunctional. However, that is not the point I wish to make. This is an analogy for the way in which members of this house are resourced by the Parliament of Western Australia. I am conscious of the fact that the Minister for Education and Training would be highly resourced as a minister of the state and would have many staff members -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I actually don't have my own fax machine. I'd kill for that fax machine!

The PRESIDENT: That would be highly disorderly!

Hon Simon O'Brien: Sell her the fax machine!

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I was just about to get to the point that this fax machine is the minister's -

Several members interjected.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: The minister can have this fax machine if she guarantees me that any important documents that have been lost in its memory will remain the property of the Greens. In fact, faxes from our electorate offices are sent to this machine at Parliament House. I have spent many hours standing by the machine, at its mercy, waiting for it to transmit documents so that I can fulfil my obligations as a member of this house. However, it is out of order. For a hundred bucks, you can have it.

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The PRESIDENT: The member should address his remarks through the Chair. I assure him that the President is not interested in purchasing a fax machine for a hundred bucks or anything else!

Hon George Cash: The danger in that is that it is converting public property and it is a criminal offence, so I would not do that.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: We may well laugh about this metaphor for the way in which members in the regions of Western Australia have been resourced, but that is precisely the matter that I have raised in the house today. I will not seek leave to table some empty boxes, but, if you do not mind, Mr President, I have the boxes with me. These boxes are empty. They represent, in effect, the promises that have been made to the Greens about resourcing our offices and the important role that we play in the Parliament. The boxes remain empty. I keep them in my office in the hope that at some stage I can put some documents in them and move them into more appropriate accommodation for a member of Parliament. I have told members of this house previously that my temporary office in Denmark is full of empty boxes. The other day some important visitors came to meet a member of the Western Australian Parliament to discuss important matters, and I was able to offer them one of these boxes to sit on while we had the meeting. That is not a matter that I take very lightly as a representative of the Parliament of Western Australia. It is not a laughing matter.

I will return to the motion and to the metaphor. The motion states that we call upon the government to initiate a review to be conducted by an independent body, such as the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, to investigate methods of improving access to and representation by elected members. The problem is that Western Australia's unfortunate demography and geography mean that members of this house represent very large geographic areas. We also represent very large and diverse populations in those electorates, yet we are given fewer resources to service those very large and populous electorates with diverse issues than are members of the other place, who may service only a small area but more people - actually, members of the other place do not; they service fewer people. This presents a serious dilemma for representatives of the Western Australian Parliament. We are under-resourced to do the job that we have been paid to do, have been elected to do, are obliged to do at law and are obliged to do as a condition of our employment as servants of the people of Western Australia. It is scandalous in the extreme that members of this house get fewer resources to represent more people over larger areas than do members of the other house. It is scandalous in the extreme that a small party such as the Greens (WA), which holds the balance of power in this house, is obliged to deal with all of the government's parliamentary business with just two members while allocated exactly the same resources as any other member in this house. While that is a fair thing in some ways, any political party, particularly a minor party that holds the balance of power, should be given extra resources in order to discharge its responsibilities; that is, to not only represent its constituents, but also deal with the extraordinary large volume of legislation that comes its way.

The issue at stake here is the quality of democracy in Western Australia and the delivery of services by elected members of Parliament to their constituents across the state of Western Australia. I do not want to re-visit the tortuous debates in this house and the other place on the one vote, one value arrangements. I do not want to explicitly re-visit the merits of those debates. The line of argument that came out of those debates was that representatives of large regional electorates with large numbers of electors and complex issues should be resourced to reflect the size of their task. Their resources should reflect their capacity to not only service a lot of people and deal with a lot of issues, but also deal with a significant legislative load.

I can only speak cogently about the area I represent in the south west. Other members of this house represent even larger areas. However, the South West Region runs from Wellstead, some 30 kilometres east of Albany, all the way to the south of the Perth metropolitan region. That region of 170 000 electors produces much of the water for the Perth metropolitan region - it is a considerable amount of water resources. It also produces forestry, plantation, agricultural, fruit and vegetable, viticultural and dairy products. In addition, it has a burgeoning and vibrant mineral resource sector. It has 25 per cent of the world's alumina. Twenty per cent of the world's silica is exported from the south west region and a whole host of rare minerals are driving the high-tech sector of the global economy. This is all in an area between Albany and just south of Perth.

Just south of Perth are places such as Mandurah, which is clearly an urban area. There are places such as Wokalup on the Swan coastal plain that comprises a few households and a shop. Those constituents have varying and compelling needs. They have to deal with the tyranny of distance and complex environmental, social and economic matters. The small community of Yarloop featured on *Four Corners* recently because it was being poisoned by emissions from a very large alumina refinery. Those are complex matters that a member like me representing the South West Region has to deal with. We have to get a grip on complex chemical engineering and the consequences of such an industry. We have to get our heads around the medical impacts on the people of Wagerup and Yarloop so we can provide advice. There are complex planning issues to be dealt

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with as we try to resolve transportation problems, the movement of gas, the movement of water and all of the resource issues that go along with representing an electorate with these kinds of complex industries and settings.

We get to do that job with 1.4 staff members. The members in the other house who represent far less complex electorates have just been granted an extra 0.6 staff members because they apparently have more to do than members of this house. I do not know how anyone can construe that a member - I am not in any way picking on anyone - for an outer metropolitan suburb could possibly have more complex issues to deal with. I am sure that they have complex medical, health, community, transportation and social issues to deal with, but they simply would not have those social matters on top of very extensive and complex environmental and regional issues. They would certainly not have those social, economic and medical issues on top of a very large resource sector, all of which require a high level of expertise and a high level of analysis in order to get a reasonable grasp on the depth of those issues.

There is another thing that results from having a very large electorate that members of this house debated in the one vote, one value legislation; members spoke about ways to ensure that electors in very large areas get a fair go and get fair access to their democratically elected representatives. While my office happens to be at one end of my electorate, most of the people whom I represent in the Mandurah area live some two, four or five hours' drive away. It takes five hours to drive from one end of the electorate to the other. As we travel through that area, we go through a diverse range of communities that encompass a diverse range of regional activities, the likes of which no lower house member would ever see in his or her electorate. That is a fact. We are given out-of-order machinery. We are given a paltry number of electorate staff, including 0.4 researchers, which amounts to two days' work a week. That is two days a week for somebody to provide me, a member of Parliament, with advice on complex matters, let alone advice on very complex legislation.

I have another item that I had intended to table; it is these keys to the office that I am holding in my hand. I will not seek leave to table them for the balance of the day, as they do not contain documents. These keys are for an office over the road, which now contains a table and some chairs. We have never used the office; we do not have anybody to put in that office. I thought it was perhaps another symbol of the empty promises that this government has made, for example, about resourcing the Greens (WA). We had an agreement with the Premier that the Greens were in a unique situation. We previously had five members of Parliament, which was the same number of members as the National Party had, and its members had parliamentary status, but because our members were all in the upper house and we were holding the balance of power, we did not get parliamentary status. The rules ostensibly suggest that parliamentary status requires membership of both houses of Parliament. In fact, our role in the governance of the state of Western Australia is crucial and deserves to be resourced adequately; yet, for the best part of eight years, the Premier of Western Australia and various other people have said that they will make good on that promise. I had intended to take these keys and tie my hands behind my back, as that is how it feels to be a member representing the South West Region. I will tie my hands behind my back - this is almost like a Schapelle Corby-type of thing. I have my hands firmly tied behind my back and now I will try to turn over the page and deliver this speech. I will give members an example. Do they see? It is difficult.

The PRESIDENT: Order, honourable member! It is reasonable to make points, but the Hansard staff would have difficulty transcribing what you are trying to do, notwithstanding Hansard's great talents. It is not the custom of this house to turn your back on the Chair.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I apologise for that. The point I am trying to make, Mr President, is that the way this lands for representatives of this house, particularly representatives of the Greens, is like having my hands tied firmly behind my back. I am having a great deal of difficulty doing my job as a representative of the South West Region. If members look, they can see that. I will turn over my notes - it simply does not work. I will not table the keys. I will not even seek leave to table them, but the symbolism is clear. An empty office that has no capacity -

Hon Simon O'Brien: Where is this office?

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: The office is in Harvest Terrace, just over the road.

Hon Kim Chance: Where is your electorate?

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Hon Kim Chance does not know my electorate? Hon Kim Chance knows where my electorate is; it is in the South West Region. The bulk of my working life is dealing with parliamentary business, dealing with the bills of Parliament that Hon Kim Chance's government wishes to have passed through this Council. That is the bulk of my work.

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Hon Simon O'Brien: How many seats are coming out of the South West Region the next time the boundaries are redrawn; these same people that you reckon you can't support adequately? How many seats are coming out of there? That is a lot of resources that won't be available to parliamentary members and your electors.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: That is true, and there will be a rebalancing of that issue, of course, in the name of achieving some kind of fair and equitable representation in the Parliament of Western Australia. I will not go into that because I mentioned -

Hon Murray Criddle: You really should go into that, as that is the crux of the matter. The point, in fact, is that we are dropping from 11 to three. Admittedly, you go from seven to six as well.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Absolutely.

Hon Murray Criddle: So what will be taken out? Four members, with all that stuff? Perhaps that is a good argument to put to the government to get some more resources. You are just a year or two too late.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: What we do not want is to collapse the two arguments, the one vote, one value argument and the matter of resourcing individual members. I am conscious that I was not present in this house when the one vote, one value legislation came into the house, but I am very clear that there were some unhappy campers when it did. That being the case, each member of this Council continues to have a significant task representing the people in his or her electorate. The substantive argument stands that we will be representing large and complex regions, regardless of whether we will have one or two more members. In any case, the question is whether there should be reasonable equity in resourcing members of the other place, who represent smaller and less complex areas, and resourcing members of this place. That is an important principle that we should stand for in this house. It is not just about wanting a bigger slice of the cake; it is about giving members who represent complex regions the capacity to fulfil their obligations more effectively.

I may have put out my shoulder when my hands were tied behind my back. Nevertheless, that issue is over.

Part of this motion states -

This review should include evidence collected throughout the state and consider but not be limited to . . . provision of telecommunication facilities such as teleconferencing and free telephone services . . .

To some extent those facilities are provided, but there is the capacity for us to use technology in remote and regional areas of Western Australia to more adequately service and represent our electorates. As a matter of fact, I spend approximately 60 per cent of my time in the Perth metropolitan region at Parliament House attending to the volume of legislation that comes my way. I do not have time to go out and service my electorate. I could choose not to deal with legislation. I could allow the government to come into this house and bring in whatever legislation it likes and I could not pay any attention to it.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Wouldn't that just make you a Labor backbencher though, if you were to do that?

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Exactly. It would be a very unfortunate turn of events for democracy in the state of Western Australia to have the Greens asleep at the wheel. I think it is fair to say -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Of course, you would have to be dead to be a representative of the conservative party across there!

Hon Simon O'Brien: Wow! That's telling us.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Oh well!

Hon Norman Moore: You are so fast with your comments.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Let us not deal with personality matters here; let us deal with the substantive issues. This is the kind of behaviour that brings the Parliament into disrepute among the children whom we are trying to educate.

The PRESIDENT: Order, honourable member! Perhaps you could address your comments to the Chair, as I am sure you were a moment ago.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Mr President, it is the jeering and the juvenile behaviour that brings this Parliament into disrepute for the people whom we are trying to educate. We should not go "uurrh" like that -

The PRESIDENT: The member will address his comments to the motion he has moved.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: The point is that we need high-quality representation in this house. We need people and officers who can do the job responsibly and effectively to deal on their merits with the volume of legislation and the substantive issues that are coming before this house. In fact, we should give them proper regard so that this house can do its job. In order to do that responsibly and effectively, we need effective

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resourcing. Simple access to teleconferencing technology for people living in very remote areas - or even for people such as me who live 400 to 500 kilometres from the Perth metropolitan area - is necessary. Effective teleconferencing technology would be an extraordinarily important contribution to the quality of democracy in this state. We could bring together community leaders and their political representatives from different areas and communicate effectively across large distances. If we did that, we would not have to get into our cars, which cost the state an enormous amount of money in members driving from one end of the state to the other. That is not to mention the time involved. Dr Christine Sharp, whom I replaced in this house, spent between 20 and 25 per cent of her time driving between her home and Parliament. I am sure that members of the government would like other representatives to be ineffective by being in cars and not able to do their work. It is not a very productive use of our time. The use of innovative technology such as teleconferencing facilities, in conjunction with the education of members and the community in its effective use, could significantly improve the quality of democratic representation in the state of Western Australia. There are probably only a few other places in the world - I can think of North America, and Canada in particular - that would have anything like the type of issues that we have concerning representation of large, complex areas with sparse populations.

I have stated in this house previously that, as a member of Parliament, I am allocated 100 days of travel each year in my electorate. I would die to be able to spend 100 days a year travelling in my electorate. That would be absolutely fantastic. I would be able to connect with all the people in the far-flung regions and spend time attending their concerns and issues. In fact, that is fanciful. We should check the historical records to see whether there are any members of the Legislative Council who use anything like 100 days of travelling in their electorates each year. Most members are busy getting on with their legislative loads. In the case of the Greens (WA) and the balance of power, there is absolutely no way that we can spend 100 days travelling and staying in hotels to service our electorates. We cannot do that. Our 1.4 staff have absolutely no travel entitlements. I have hired highly competent and professional people to stand alongside me, one of which is in the gallery at the moment. They are quite capable of representing me at public meetings and meetings of interest, industry or community groups. In many cases, they are more qualified than I am technically or academically. Despite that, they have absolutely no travel entitlements. They have no ability to extend the capacity of my office to service and represent the electorate. Why be stingy? Maybe we should keep the 100 days of travel allowance.

The Minister for Education and Training is leaving the chamber; thank you, honourable minister.

The PRESIDENT: Order, Hon Paul Llewellyn. There are certain things that are not acceptable. Please address your comments to the Chair.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Thank you, Mr President. There will be many occasions on which my competent staff members could represent me quite effectively to expand the capacity of our office to service the electorate. Yet, there are no allocated resources for them to do that. That does not make any sense. It certainly does not make any sense in the context of a very large regional area. It certainly does not make any sense even in the context of a large metropolitan area. They might be able to catch a bus but they are not allowed to use taxis. In fact, they are not even paid their bus fares. Maybe that would be a small concession. It would be a sort of empty box concession; electorate staff might be able to use free public transport to service the electorate. That would be a good move. I am clearly speaking tongue in cheek because that is the kind of resource members get delivered. It is a paltry concession handed to us, yet it is quite clearly not the kind of resourcing that is required to breathe life and capacity into our electorate teams. The proposition might be: why not allocate 50 days of travel a year to be rationed between electorate staff members so they can effectively extend the capacity and services delivered by the electorate office? Instead, they find themselves at the end of a telephone. They are pinned down by hours and hours spent on the end of the telephone. We know that face-to-face high-quality contact with the electorate would service industries and the community so much better - if we could go out and represent them. It is not a very complex proposition to suggest that, although a regional member of the Legislative Council receives 80 days of accommodation in Perth each year and 100 days of travel in his or her electorate, if we want to expand the capacity of representation we should give some physical legs - tangible, material legs - to staff members in the form of some type of allowance for travel and attendant expenses. The accountability would be the same as it would be for any government expenditure. I suggest that that would be a most cost-effective investment in democracy in the state of Western Australia. If we were given the capacity to expand the quality of representation of members of this house, we would choose our staff members very carefully. However, what we get are empty and hollow promises.

An innovative concept might be a clearing house in a large regional centre, such as Bunbury, Albany or Mandurah, that would serve as an office that represented all members of a region regardless of their political persuasion. A clearing house could be visited by members of the public who seek some direction. We receive hundreds of calls a week from people making inquiries. Some calls are made by people 500 kilometres away. Actually, I exaggerate; someone who called me was 400 kilometres away. An electorate centre could be staffed

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by one or two people and it could serve as a clearing house for constituents' inquiries. A clearing house for constituents' inquiries would mean that we could extend the capacity of every member of this house to deliver services to the electorate. That is an innovative concept that should be implemented. It would mean that when honourable members from one area undertake business in another area, they would have somewhere to go. For example, even though my home town is Denmark, I may want to hold meetings and conduct business in Bunbury. I could invite people from Bunbury to attend a well-serviced facility; indeed, they would not sit on boxes. I could tell people that I would meet them next month in the meeting room of the electorate service facility in Bunbury. Other members of Parliament might be interested in coming along and, in that way, we could seek to improve the quality of the decision making in this house.

I am not making an ambit claim for more travel allowances. As I have said in this house before, my travel allowance is far more than I could possibly use. This is not an ambit claim; this is about rethinking the way in which this house provides service delivery. Times have changed. However, the way we do business remains archaic. I am not for one minute suggesting that there are not good reasons for the standing orders and procedures of this house. I am not questioning those things. What I am saying is that we have not changed the way in which we organise parliamentary representation other than to reorganise the deckchairs on the *Titanic*. As I said, we have moved a few boundaries, but we have not changed the substantive service delivery. Service delivery is about knowing who our clients are, paying attention to the issues they raise and ensuring that we meet their needs. I do not see that happening in this institution. We are so busy doing work that rarely do we adequately represent the people who elected us. If there is any way that we can improve the capacity of our elected representatives to do their work responsibly, we must investigate it. Alternatively, we must invent a way. We owe it not to ourselves but to the people of Western Australia to invent a way of improving the capacity of elected members to deliver parliamentary or representative services to the electorate. This is not a complex issue.

There is also another matter. Physical and geographical issues take up the intellectual headspace of representatives of the Legislative Council and of the government. The capacity to move about and represent are complex issues. There is also the landscape of the legislative load - members must think in two or three dimensions - that we are expected to deal with to be responsible and effective members of this house. The notice paper reveals the complex legislation that is the brainchild of years of administrative and departmental staff beavering away and changing statutes with a bevy of lawyers and administrative policy advisers. The government and its ministers get access to all of that. The legislation lands in this house and the other place. With 1.4 staff - 1.0 of whom is responsible for answering the phone and dealing with constituents' inquiries - we are supposed to come to grips with complex legislation, which is a completely different landscape. It is a landscape of complex ideas and law. We are supposed to do it in a responsible and considered way. The house and parliamentary democracy fail to deliver a responsible outcome and certainly fail to deliver a responsible and well-informed review process, save for the commitment of some members of this house who work endlessly and tirelessly.

Not so long ago - in fact, on 29 June - there was a large rally in town. The government convened with the trade unions to talk about the conditions of workers and the attack on the conditions of workers. I wrote a press release on that day which reads, "Greens MPs to work to rule". Can members imagine what it would be like if the Greens MPs decided to work to rule in this house? Can members imagine how slowly legislation would pass through this place if we decided to walk out of the house because we had only a certain capacity? I particularly draw this scenario to the attention of the representatives of the government and the ministers who are present in the chamber. They should imagine what it would be like if we walked out and worked to rule. What would the government's legislative program look like then?

Hon Murray Criddle: It would barely make any difference.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Does the member think that if the Greens walked out, it would not make any difference? No, it would not make any difference to Hon Murray Criddle, but it would make a big difference to Western Australia because the Greens have played an extraordinary and important role in the democracy of this country.

Hon Murray Criddle: You only have a role while you are in here; you have no role out there.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I will not go into that debate.

Hon Murray Criddle: It is a fact.

Hon Norman Moore: If they walked out, it would be a good thing because the government would not get its legislation through.

Hon Murray Criddle: That is right.

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Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: We would leave the opposition and those members.

Hon Norman Moore: It would be a good thing. You should try it some time.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Walking out?

Hon Norman Moore: You should have done it on the one vote, one value legislation, and then we would not be having this argument now.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Absolutely. We would be having other arguments; that is the only problem.

Hon Murray Criddle: We would not be because you would not be here.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I am sure that Hon Murray Criddle adores the Greens and all that we have done for him.

Hon Murray Criddle: I'm trying to work that out.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I will go forward following the line of argument here. If the Greens threatened to work to rule, imagine what would happen to parliamentary democracy. Let us look at our wages and conditions.

Hon Barry House: I am sure that the Labor Party members will understand that rhetoric.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I will not quibble about wages and conditions; however, I refer to the working hours of members of Parliament. Some members in the house are organising their Christmas parties, their book reviews or whatever they do, but we have much to do in this house if we are to be responsible representatives paying attention to each and every piece of legislation that comes our way. That is the role that the Greens play. We are talking about the quality of democracy and representation. Therefore, we are not strictly talking about the role of the Greens, but the role that we play is worth reflecting on. Imagine if we chose to work to rule. What would it look like?

I do not know what other business would expect its workers to work from 9.00 am to 11.00 pm and be on call 24 hours a day to deal with all these complex matters and these extraordinary responsibilities of representing many people. We are expected to do that with 1.4 full-time equivalents, a 100-day travel allowance and an allowance for 80 days in the city. I do not think it is reasonable to expect us, or any member of Parliament, to effectively do our job in those circumstances. To give members an example, the North Metropolitan Region has 14 Legislative Assembly seats in it and it has seven upper house members. Those 14 people represent small fragments of the population and the regional area. Those 14 members now have two staff members; they used to have 1.4 FTEs but now have two. They have an additional 0.6 of a staff member because, we are told, they have more to do than members of this house. Those 14 members represent an area in which there are seven members of the Legislative Council with fewer staff. The numbers simply do not add up.

The government is out there calling industrial relations rallies and arguing about the rights of workers. It is looking at the injustices in the system, counting off the hours and the penalties and arguing tooth and nail for every single penalty and allowance. However, in the very place, entity and institution from which all these noble ideas are being generated, there is this inequity between the two representative houses of Parliament. How has that come about? Who in the other place is constructing the logic about fairness and equity? Who is constructing the logic about what is right and proper to achieve representation and effective representative democracy in this state? I do not know. It does not make any sense to the Greens, except that there must be some compelling political reasons for nobbling the upper house and making it less effective. There must be compelling political reasons for wanting those pesky Greens, Nationals and Liberals, as a matter of fact, off the back of government - the peskies.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think there are some limits to how we address our colleagues.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I want to relate to the house the kind of conversation that has taken place over the time that the Greens have been involved in representing the balance of power. I understand that it is at the discretion of the Premier to decide who has and who does not have parliamentary status. Of course, he is guided by an act, but the discretion is with the Premier. We have been negotiating with the government. We have said that we are in a unique role and that it would not matter whether it was the Greens, One Nation, the Nationals or even the Liberals who were in a minority balance of power position; whoever is in that role should have more resources allocated to them to do that job effectively. We have had promises - mostly like these boxes beside me. The promises that the government would look into the matter have been made, but it has said it would need to change the law and it would need a separate bill to facilitate the changes. We have said that the government makes the laws and it should write them. I understand a bill has now been drafted that is intended to give life to the concept that there should be an independent review of the needs of members of Parliament and that there should be an allocation of resources to any minority group in Parliament that finds itself with the balance of power and that has an undue and onerous load upon it.

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I am not telling tales out of school, but the government has said, okay, it would like to give the Greens one more staff member. There have been no deals behind the chair. This has been a negotiation about attempting to get some equity. It was not just for the Greens but any group or minority party that found itself with the balance of power. That is fair. Why should it not have more resources? What we needed was a legal officer. Various models have been discussed. In fact, we have found that the model does not match the law. The argument was that the problem was too complex for us to solve here. It has been difficult to help us resolve the issue of resources; that is, a legislative officer who could read through the legislation ahead of time, flag any issues, and read the legislation from the point of view of saying, "This is how we want to organise our response to this piece of legislation." We needed a legislative officer - someone who was dedicated to helping us do that. The argument that was put to me was that it was too complex; the law was not quite lined up and right. We are expected to deal with complex stuff every single day. If the law is not right, it is incumbent upon the government to change that law. If that law is not serving the purposes of representative democracy, and if it is not improving the capacity of our representatives to work effectively in the Parliament, that law needs to be changed, just like every other law that is not working for the state of Western Australia needs to be changed. We can go to sleep on this matter, or we can choose to be proactive about it. However, I believe that another agenda is running, and it is quite possibly an agenda that relates to the inconvenience of having an upper house of review - an effective house of review. It is inconvenient for a government of any persuasion to be accountable to two sets of thinking, or to another way of analysing and interpreting the laws that are proposed.

While there was an industrial relations rally on 29 June, an industrial relations storm was brewing on the hill when the Greens threatened to work to rule in the upper house. The press release dated 29 June 2005 states -

The move has the potential to thwart the Governments legislative program, because the Greens hold the balance of Power in the Upper House of State Parliament.

Greens member for the South West Region, Paul Llewellyn says that just two Green MP have to scrutinise every piece of legislation that comes before the Upper House without any additional staff or resources. That is on top of have to servicing large and complex electorates.

The Greens welcomed, to some extent, the announcement that the Premier made about providing additional resources to members representing large electorates, but we fail to see how he can justify doling out additional capacity to small Legislative Assembly electorates while leaving the upper house under-resourced. We fail to see how the Premier of this state can make the decision to provide more resources to members of the other house while leaving members of the Legislative Council under-resourced to do their job, let alone those people who hold the balance of power.

At present the Premier is effectively in charge of allocating staff and resources to members of Parliament. This is not a matter that should be left in the hands of the Premier, who has shown himself to be biased and unprofessional in this area. The matter of resourcing members of Parliament must be determined by an independent entity, such as the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. The resourcing of members of Parliament should be undertaken by an independent entity, independent of political influence; yet the way in which the rules are written now, the government pulls the strings. That might serve the purposes of whoever is in government, but it does not serve the purposes of democracy and responsible representation. If laws are standing in the way of making parliamentary representation in this chamber equitable, we should change them. We should put it on the table: change those laws. We should put some distance between the people who make the decisions about resourcing members of Parliament and the government of the day. It makes sense. I do not know how governments have got away with it for so long. I do not know why the issue has not been raised - perhaps it has.

There are two quite clear issues. All upper house MPs must be treated equally with all other members of Parliament. There is also the special matter of the outrageous workload of members who find themselves holding the balance of power. There should be equity in resourcing. We should not run the risk of making the Legislative Council the poor cousin of the other house. It is a grave risk to the quality of democracy in the state of Western Australia. It is a grave risk to the quality of democracy in the state of Western Australia to have this house and its representatives under-resourced, which affects our capacity to adequately service our electorates and deal with the volume of legislation that comes our way.

In this context, I cannot avoid dealing with the historic debate about one vote, one value. I appeal to people to keep the matter clear and separate. There was a difficult debate relating to one vote, one value and representative democracy in this state. We have had that debate and we came to a conclusion. As I understand it, that conclusion was reached in this house after long debates and impassioned discussions about equity and fairness. We can leave that aside for one moment and move to what came alongside that legislation; what agreements there were, in other words, to build the consensus, outside the numbers and the boundaries, about what was needed to improve the quality of democracy and representation.

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Hon Barry House: Do you agree with the line that your predecessor Hon Christine Sharp took?

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I do not really want to go into that. No, I will get trapped if I do that.

Hon Murray Criddle: You're already trapped.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I am trapped. It comes with the job. We are a new party with a new vision and with the capacity to make decisions and think them through, and we are often left in a very difficult situation.

I will go back to unpack the question of what came with the logical arguments about the quality of democratic representation in Western Australia. Outside the metropolitan region, 531 255 people live in the remaining space of 1.99 million square kilometres. What I understand came out of the one vote, one value conversations and discussions in this house was a clear agreement that there needed to be additional resourcing. Notwithstanding any of the vitriol and the difficulty in making that decision, there was a clear agreement, and the Greens sought a commitment from the government that there would be other clear mechanisms to ensure fair representation for remote and rural areas. This is not rocket science. We have already spoken about some of the mechanisms. One of them was initially to improve communication, administrative and staffing facilities for remote, regional and large electorates. I believe that was one of the understandings that came out of discussions on the one vote, one value legislation. Another mechanism was the concept of a regional electorate servicing facility; that is, an office in another area that all parliamentarians could use. The decision making for the resourcing should be taken from the government and given to an independent body, in this case the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. I am not sure that that is necessarily the right body - I do not have enough administrative experience to know whether it is - but some kind of independent assessment is required. We want to ensure that Western Australians have reasonable access to their representatives in remote and regional areas. We know what that means. We in this house know more than anyone else does what it means to have fair and equitable access. We need some kind of facilitative process. I am thinking about a regional electorate centre that might facilitate contact with representatives and also the resourcing of their staff so that they can go into the electorate. It is not rocket science.

As members know, I did not construct this motion. It was on the notice paper before I arrived in this place. Rethinking the motion today, I would like to amend it, but it would take some time and negotiation to work out how to do that. That would be an exercise in parliamentary democracy to see whether there was a way to negotiate an appropriate amendment to this motion, so that the needs of the community of parliamentarians who represent their regions in this house can be met. As the mover of the motion, do I get another chance to speak to it? If I sit down now, is it all over, red rover? I do not know.

The PRESIDENT: I take it that the member is seeking some guidance. It all turns on what happens. If the member were to sit down now and other members were to speak, he would have a right of reply. However, I do not know whether another member will speak, and neither does Hon Paul Llewellyn, so we will just have to wait and see what happens.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I acknowledge that I took on responsibility for this motion at short notice, primarily because Hon Giz Watson has had a great deal on her plate. I am sure that every member of this house will have noticed that, over the past few months, Hon Giz Watson has been working tirelessly on a range of complex legislation. I have paid attention to those debates, and she has done a very honourable job of maintaining the quality of the debate in this house. Notwithstanding the antic with the out-of-order fax machine with the documents inside it, if this fax machine is a metaphor for the way in which our office and our parliamentary representation have been resourced, it is a sad statement about the commitment of the government to good governance. I will never call into question parliamentary services. I put on the record that the Hansard services, the parliamentary services and the library services have been absolutely extraordinary. They are not in question. However, I speak for myself in expressing the frustration that I have experienced at working in an office with wires gaffer-taped to the ground, cardboard boxes and technology that should have been repaired or replaced. I will hand this fax machine to the Minister for Education and Training - she probably needs it. Technology that needs to be serviced or replaced is hardly a good way to introduce a new member of Parliament to parliamentary democracy. In my first few weeks in this place, I thought that everybody had to do this -

The PRESIDENT: The member should address his comments to the Chair, rather than to the machine in front of him.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: When I first arrived in this place, I thought that everyone's fax machine did not work and that it was par for the course. Having said that, parliamentary services staff were saintly in their delivery of help, but they could not help with this particular machine, which I believe came from the Premier out of order. I would like to donate this machine. Perhaps I should not sell it to Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. I should donate it back to the Premier and cabinet for use in that office. Perhaps Hon Kim Chance could take this

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machine back to the Premier on my behalf. Perhaps he could use this machine. There might even be some documents from the Premier and cabinet trapped in the machine. Whatever the case may be, this machine is of absolutely no use to me. It would be of no use to the Minister for Agriculture and Forestry or the Minister for Education and Training. However, they can have it. I will deliver it free to their office after this debate. As we go past the offices of the journalists from ABC TV, *The West Australian*, ABC radio and maybe a few other media outlets, I will say that I am delivering this dysfunctional fax machine to the minister's office because it is an example of the quality of democracy in Western Australia. I do not know how one gets an assurance that the government is listening. It is not fair, right, just or proper that new members of Parliament should walk into their offices with a hodgepodge of broken down machines, a computer sitting in the corner taking up space, a series of empty boxes and a series of empty promises. Those promises embody what is right and decent about democracy; that is, that members of Parliament should be adequately resourced to do their job. They should not have to waste their time opening and closing the drawer of their fax machine. We ought to calculate how much time I spend opening and closing the drawer trying to get this fax machine to work. It does work from time to time. Every time the drawer is closed, another document comes out and it has to be opened and closed again. We could calculate how much it costs the government and the state of Western Australia by using whatever rate of pay I am on.

My hope is that we continue this debate and amend this motion appropriately to the point at which we have a consensus, not a disagreement. I draw the attention of members to the previous debates about one vote, one value. Let us look past those debates to the point at which we have a consensus about where to go forward from here in terms of the resourcing of this place and the members.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [3.33 pm]: This is clearly a case of closing the door after the horse has bolted. I find it quite extraordinary that the Greens (WA) party has moved this motion and that the problem it relates to even exists. I can understand Hon Paul Llewellyn not wanting to talk about one vote, one value because, as I interjected, that legislation passed with the support of the Greens and that is why this motion is on the notice paper. That is not to say that I do not have a lot of enthusiasm and support for what the member seeks to achieve through the motion.

The actions of the WA Greens will contribute dramatically to the reduction in parliamentary representation in regional Western Australia after the next election. The Greens and the Labor Party will take seven seats out of the country and put them in the city. The natural consequence of that is that every electorate in the country will be much bigger. Because they will be so much bigger, the quality of representation will diminish for all the reasons Hon Paul Llewellyn has outlined. He talked about taking five hours to drive from one end of his electorate to the other, but if he drove from one end of my electorate to the other, it would take five weeks.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: What kind of car do you have?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I have a very small car that goes very slowly. If I drove from Eucla to Wyndham, it would take me at least five days, if not five weeks.

Hon Kim Chance: Five hard days!

Hon NORMAN MOORE: That is exactly right. As we all know, fortunately we have an electoral system in Western Australia that pays attention to the particular needs of country Western Australia. We have a weighted voting system that has evolved over decades to look after the necessary interests of country Western Australia. As a result of the Greens and the Labor Party getting together, we will have a new electoral system that will significantly disadvantage country Western Australia. The Greens (WA) party caused the problem. However, I support some of the solutions that it is promoting today, albeit I believe that it is extraordinary that the people who caused the problem are now trying to solve it. The simple solution was not to cause it in the first place.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: We didn't cause the problem; it existed beforehand.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: There were problems before the WA Greens and the Labor Party gave us one vote, one value. A lot of issues raised in the motion moved today have been around for as long as there have been members of Parliament in Western Australia. For some strange reason - I do not know why this is the case - members of Parliament are their own worst enemies when it comes to looking after their own needs and getting the support and help they need to carry out their work.

One of the problems is very simple and I know it because I did it. When a member becomes a minister and is part of a government that makes decisions about how money is spent, he very quickly gets used to the notion of having 10 or 11 staff, having the best equipment and having people who can provide for his every need. Fundamentally, money in ministerial offices is no object. Whatever they need, they can have. Ministers very quickly forget what it is like to be in the backbench or a member of the opposition. They quickly forget that the fax machine does not work, the computer is about 10 years old and the photocopier has done four trillion copies

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and does not work any more. When members are ministers, they put up their hand and these things get fixed. I was as much at fault as anybody else with respect to this matter. At least this motion will remind the government that it has to look after the interests of all members of Parliament by providing them with the capacity to do their job properly and adequately.

Recently the government demonstrated significant generosity to itself by giving members of the Legislative Assembly an extra 0.6 staff members, giving them a total of two full-time staff members, and provided six Legislative Assembly members with two electorate offices. This is of significant benefit to the Labor Party because it has more members in the Legislative Assembly than any other party so, incrementally and proportionally, it gets more support staff than everybody else because it has more members. With respect to the two electorate offices, four of the six will go to the Labor Party's lower house members. The generosity of the government to Assembly members was of significant benefit to the Labor Party compared with everybody else. That is the first thing that the Labor Party did. The non-government members of the Legislative Assembly were very pleased to get that additional support, so not much was said about it. However, for reasons that we still do not know - and I remind the house that we asked the Premier to provide an explanation - the Legislative Council was treated differently. Why were we ignored? Why were we not provided with additional staff in line with the Legislative Assembly? I am waiting for the Premier to say to me and to all members of this house that we are lesser members of Parliament, we have less to do and we have less need of support than an Assembly member, simply because we are in the upper house. I am waiting for the Premier, or his representative in this house, to say publicly that our needs are much less, and then try to explain that to us and the community. There is no doubt in my mind, as I have said before, that members of the Legislative Council have different needs from the needs of members of the Legislative Assembly. Increasingly, as the legislation that comes into this house is more and more complex, more and more badly drafted and more and more in need of amendment, there is more and more need for us to have additional research staff and capacity in this chamber. It is a fact of political life.

Let us consider the additional electorate offices that have been made available to six members; that is, the members for Kimberley, Central Kimberley-Pilbara, North West Coastal, Eyre, Roe and Merredin. All those members have been told by the Premier that their electorates are so big that to represent their constituents properly, they have the capacity to have two electorate offices and two electorate officers. I say to the government that all of those seats combined do not make up the size of my electorate, the Mining and Pastoral Region, which covers 2.2 million square kilometres; yet the members in those six seats are entitled to two electorate offices and I am entitled to one. I wish that the government would explain the rationale behind the decision that it has made so that we can once and for all know what is going through the Premier's mind. If he thinks that we should be treated as second-class citizens, he should say it. He should not let us continue to argue the case in this place and completely ignore us, as that is not acceptable.

Let us consider the motion in some detail. It is interesting that the preamble refers to "recent reforms". The word "reform" in this motion is a terrible word, as reform usually means to fix something that is broken and to make it better. I must say that the one vote, one value legislation is the complete opposite to reform. It has, in fact, created the sorts of problems that Hon Paul Llewellyn talked about today.

The motion calls for a review to be conducted by an independent body, such as the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. I am quite happy with that proposition. The tribunal pretty well knows what members of Parliament do and do not do and it has conducted extensive studies into our working conditions and so on, albeit that it never gives us enough at the end of the day. As a matter of interest, to get some indication of how well the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal thinks about members of Parliament, the person running the Department of Health - a bureaucrat - gets a salary five times that of a member of Parliament. The lady who runs the Office of Energy gets three and a half times the salary of a member of Parliament. Let us go through the list of public servants and see how much they are paid compared with what we get. We underestimate and undersell ourselves. As I said a while ago, the people in charge of these decisions are ministers who are on quite a reasonable salary - not a good one but a reasonable one - and have all their needs looked after. They forget about the backbench and the opposition. As I said a while ago, I have been as guilty as everybody else has been on those decisions. The time has come to fix that and to give some reasonable recognition of what members of Parliament do. We actually do the most fundamental and basic thing in society; that is, we make the laws that affect everybody. If the laws in society are deficient, society is deficient. The sooner we are prepared to promote that recognition in the context of what we are in this place for, and the sooner the public understands that making laws is the most important job in Western Australia, the sooner we will start to deal with the issues contained in this motion.

The motion calls for an independent inquiry to investigate methods of improving access to and representation by elected members. If that inquiry is conducted after the next election, the first thing we will find is that people will not be properly represented as a result of the new legislation because the seats will be too big. That is the

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first thing that people will find. The motion suggests some initiatives to improve conditions for members of Parliament. It refers to better telecommunication facilities, which is obviously a good idea. However, they have improved dramatically over the years. Albeit we are still behind most private sector organisations, telecommunication facilities are better than they used to be, but there is always room for improvement in telecommunications as a result of the rapid improvements in technology.

The motion refers to extra electorate offices and extra staffing. It would be fair and reasonable if all members of Parliament were provided with the same level of support staff. It should not matter which house they are in; they should get the same support. The notion of travel allowances for staff in this motion indicates an extraordinarily ironic situation. The Greens (WA) are putting forward that we should get rid of seven or eight country members, put them in the city and then give staff to country members so that the staff can travel around the state and do the job.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: No, that's not what we are saying at all.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: That is exactly what the Greens are saying. They are saying that country members are having difficulty getting around their electorates and they want to employ staff who can travel. At the same time, the Greens are putting up their hands to get rid of seven members of Parliament from the country. Come on! Let us be real about this! I actually agree that members' staff should be able to travel, but I do not believe that staff should replace members of Parliament. If the Greens believe that their staff can do a better job than they can, they had better swap over. I reckon it would be a good idea if members' staff could travel with them, but not in lieu of them. As every member would know, when we visit particular communities and attend meetings, functions and so on, it is always very helpful to have somebody taking notes, providing assistance, making sure that the plane is not running late and all that administrative stuff that is important when members are very busy and attending to many different matters in a short period. Having a staff member who could travel with them would be a very good idea. However, I have some concerns about the notion of staff members being able to travel to represent their members. I could foresee a situation developing in which political parties would employ endorsed candidates as staff who would fly around electioneering at taxpayers' expense.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: I can't imagine that!

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I know. It would not happen in our party but it might happen in Hon Paul Llewellyn's party. It certainly would happen in the Labor Party as it does it now, only through ministerial offices instead of members' electorate offices.

Hon Simon O'Brien: The "Hon Tom Stephens Airlines"!

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Yes, quite right.

Although I agree entirely with the notion of members' staff being able to travel with members, I do not necessarily go along with the notion that they should become de facto members of Parliament and use the office to profit and promote their own political careers. The member talked about the notion of electorate shared service centres. The notion of a service centre is something I find amusing because I do not know quite what would go on in a service centre. Imagine an office in Port Hedland with four different political parties representing the town who are trying to share the facilities. Imagine the staff members trying to share. It would be an absolute nightmare; the notion of any sort of confidentiality would go out the window. Members of Parliament should be given more electorate offices. The federal member for Kalgoorlie, whose electorate is about the same size as mine, has three electorate offices located in Kalgoorlie, Port Hedland and Canberra. I would not mind having three offices. I could probably just about get away with that. That would be almost adequate; as much as I could service. I think I know where the member is coming from concerning this part of the motion. However, vast problems would potentially arise if a member tried to have an office in a regional centre that was shared by every member of Parliament who might want to access that office. Despite that, the notion is worth looking at; it might be able to work. Maybe there is a potentiality for some sort of privacy for what members want to do in an office. If that could be arranged, it would be worth thinking about. It would certainly provide a place where people could go if they had a particular problem and hopefully get a member to look after their interests.

The motion also calls for a further independent review after three years. As I said, it is pretty much a foregone conclusion that after three years - which is after the next election - the review will come up with the view that representation in country Western Australia has severely diminished. That is because there are simply fewer members. If the Greens members cannot understand that, they cannot understand anything. Fewer members of Parliament means less representation; it is as simple as that. It does not matter how many staff members a member has, how many telephones he can get on to, how many aeroplanes he can access or how many miles he can drive in his car, because fewer members means less representation. That is what the whole argument about

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one vote, one value was all about. The review being suggested, if it ever comes to fruition, will simply tell everybody that what we said would happen has happened.

The member spent quite a lot of time telling us about the problems of the Greens in this chamber, and the fact that they have a broken fax machine as well as the balance of power. I am trying to work out which was the most important part of the speech - the broken fax machine or the balance of power! Most of the speech was about the fax machine but the most important part of his speech was about the fact that the Greens have the balance of power. I have significant sympathy for the problem. First of all, the main sympathy I have is for the people of Western Australia for whom the Greens have the balance of power! I would much rather that somebody who thought more like I did had the balance of power if anybody was going to have it. However, that is not to say that there have not been occasions when the Liberal Party and the Greens have been able to reach agreement on a number of issues in this chamber, which is good. Fundamentally, the Greens have had the balance of power over the past four to five years and have sided with the government. They have given us government legislation that we do not support. They have used their balance of power to allow the Labor Party to introduce its platforms and policies into law, one of which concerns the electoral system. I will not mention it again. That should be firmly and thoroughly entrenched between the ears of the Greens because that is the reason we are talking about this now. I recognise that it is very difficult for two members to have the balance of power. It was difficult enough when there were five Greens members. I could never work out why the government did not deal with this problem. It is in the government's interests to make sure that the party with the balance of power, upon whose support it relies to get its legislation through, is given some additional help. It seems to me that the government has a very narrow view of the way in which things should happen; in other words, it wants everything and is not prepared to provide anything to ensure that it gets what it wants. I know it sounds flippant but if I were the government and I needed the Greens to get legislation through, I would ask how I could help them to understand what it means and provide whatever assistance was necessary to get it through the chamber. Despite that, and from what I can gather, the government has done nothing to assist them. That is unlike the Brian Burke government, which was a very pragmatic government, as Mr Deputy President (Hon Graham Giffard) may be aware. However, he may not even have been born then.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): I am a young man!

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I do not want to be disrespectful to our sometime coalition colleagues on this matter but, after 1983, the Labor Party in government wanted some things to happen, one of which was electoral reform. I believe that the Salaries and Allowances Act specified that in order to be a recognised political party, there had to be seven members in the Assembly. The National Party had only five members. The legislation was changed to enable the National Party to become a recognised political party and, therefore, be provided with the additional support that comes from being a recognised party. It is interesting to read in the Salaries and Allowances Act that a party with seven or more members in the Legislative Council that is neither the government nor the opposition is given money to provide for a Whip. However, only five members are needed in the Assembly for there to be a recognised political party. In my view, this is where the Greens did not twist the government's arm hard enough. They should have said that what applied in the Assembly should apply in the Council. In other words, when they had five members in this house they should have asked for the Salaries and Allowances Act to be changed to allow them to become a recognised political party and be entitled to the benefits of office. As an aside to this matter, the way in which the government treats the opposition these days by saying that there is an opposition and a second party in opposition has, in my view, no relationship to any law in the state. There is one opposition and there are other political parties. The money that is provided to the opposition by the Treasury should go to the official opposition - all of it. However, the government in its wisdom has said no, there is a second party in opposition and it gets one-third of the money that goes to the opposition collectively. The Liberal Party therefore gets two-thirds of the money and the National Party gets one-third. I will suggest that, after the next election when the Labor Party is the opposition, it gets the same amount of money as the Liberal Party has received in opposition so that it knows exactly what the official opposition has to live with. Alternatively, the government should find some form of legislative basis for a second party in opposition because there is no such thing that I know of. The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal can provide support to a party in the Assembly that has five or more members. However, that is getting off track a bit.

The opposition is very happy to support this motion because it has provided a very good opportunity for us to - if I can use the word - whinge a bit about our conditions. It is a good opportunity and we should do it more often. As I said a while ago, we are our own worst enemies. We treat ourselves with contempt most of the time because we do not promote what we do hard enough. We are not prepared to look after our own interests because, for some reason or other, we think we will get done over in the press.

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We are happy to go along with this proposition and we hope that the government will support it. As a result of the motion being passed - as I hope it will be - the government should do something about it. The motion does not state that anything has to happen. It is just the house making some recommendations to the government. The government can ignore them just as the Premier has ignored a resolution of this house recently, which called on him to explain to this chamber why Legislative Council members have only 1.4 staff each instead of two. We unanimously passed a motion calling on the Premier to provide an explanation, but it still has not turned up. That means two things. First, the Premier does not have to provide an explanation. That is right, because the chamber cannot make him provide an explanation. Second, it demonstrates the total contempt the Premier has for us as members of Parliament. I would love to be in the government's party room when this issue is discussed. Mr Whitely would not be the only one walking out with his tail between his legs yelling his head off; indeed, a few Legislative Councillors would be doing the same thing. I do not know whether government members in this chamber have the nerve and guts to tell the Premier what they think. If they have, nobody has heard about it. At least they could try to get him to tell us why he has done what he has done. That would be a good idea.

The motion is not binding on the government. However, if it is passed, I hope the government takes notice of it, recognises that something has to be done and uses it as a vehicle for improving the conditions of members of Parliament, something that is long overdue.

HON MURRAY CRIDDLE (Agricultural) [4.03 pm]: It is somewhat ironic to talk to this motion after the debate on the Electoral Amendment and Repeal Bill earlier this year, particularly given the role played in that debate by the Greens (WA), an Independent and the government. The basis of the arguments advanced by the National Party was the issue of representation and the fact that regional and rural Western Australia would be dealt a tough hand if the legislation went through. That fact is now reflected in the motion before the house. My mind goes back to the third reading stage of the Electoral Amendment and Repeal Bill. Hon Giz Watson made a number of points, which I viewed as a deal that was done to get the legislation through, and stated that we would receive a number of the resources that are outlined in this particular motion. I refer to the provision of telecommunications facilities, including teleconferencing. I am not sure that I would support teleconferencing given that there would be quite a deal of competition among the parties for that facility. Certainly it was one of the things that was mentioned, as was a free telephone service and extra electoral staff and officers. During debates not only in this house but also at other opportunities, Hon Norman Moore and a few other members have put forward claims to the government about fairness of parliamentary representation between the two houses. That is something that the Premier should take on board. The situation for members in the larger electorates is simply not reasonable. As Hon Norman Moore pointed out, the Mining and Pastoral Region is very large. The Agricultural Region - the area that I and the Leader of the House represent - has something like 65 shires. If people want to know how busy it is for a member representing that area, they should try to cover the distances. I live in the north of the electorate, and it is something like 1 400 kilometres to the south of my electorate. It takes quite some time to cover the whole electorate. Covering every shire in a year is an impossible task. There is an enormous requirement for representation in my area. One of the ways to do that would be to have a couple of electorate offices and staff to man those offices. That is something I support. I view travel allowances for staff in the same way as the Leader of the Opposition. When a member travels to various functions and meetings, it is very handy to have a staff member who can put the requirements of people in those areas on paper so that they can be taken back to the office and acted on. Not only that, when I was a minister I found it very useful having staff members look at the problems as they existed in the areas. They gained some understanding of what was required in the electorate. The education of electorate staff in that way - electorate staff do an excellent job; indeed, I very much recognise the work done by my electorate staff - would be of great value if they were on the spot when a certain issue is raised. From that point of view, it would be very beneficial to them to have some form of travel allowance.

Those of us who live in country areas - when I can get back there, my property in the north of Geraldton is my primary place of residence - believe that the opportunity to occasionally bring staff to Perth so that they can meet with the various people would give them an ideal understanding of the people with whom they talk. They would also have an opportunity to talk face-to-face with them during the year. Certainly, I am glad to have the opportunity to point out that there are needs. I am not all that sure that the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal would need to review the situation. It understands the situation pretty well and would be able to put the required measures in place very quickly. I can see us reviewing the legislation in three years and putting in place the changes that might be beneficial to not only members of Parliament but also our communities. I will leave it at that, bearing in mind that I strongly support the view expressed in the motion. This motion was brought about by a particular piece of legislation and because the government, the Greens and an Independent voted in a certain direction.

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HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [4.08 pm]: The points made by Hon Paul Llewellyn in moving the motion and by other speakers raise some interesting issues, some of which the government would be happy to consider supporting through the appropriate forum. The one that probably appealed to me the most was the capacity for electorate staff to be able to travel either with or without a member, because there are occasions, particularly in country electorates, on which it is necessary for a member to be represented while he or she is undertaking other duties or in Parliament. At the moment we do not have that option. I am consistently reminded of the quality of the people who work in our electorate offices. They are quite capable of representing us and meeting with our constituents on a face-to-face basis. We are limited in that regard - country members specifically - in having staff members move around the state and represent constituents' interests to government because there is no capacity for them to travel. I certainly think that is something we will need to consider in the future.

At the same time, I do not believe that the quality of democracy in Western Australia can be judged on the basis of a fax machine that, for some reason, Hon Paul Llewellyn has not been able to have repaired. Although I express some sympathy for what Hon Paul Llewellyn said, the services available to members are a vast improvement on those to which other members in this house are accustomed. Hon Norman Moore could tell Hon Paul Llewellyn some absolute horror stories about the quality of services that were available to him as a new member.

Hon Norman Moore: We didn't have typewriters in those days. Times have changed.

Hon KIM CHANCE: They have indeed. When I was a new member, the quality of the fax machines was absolutely superb. It was absolutely superb because the machines were brand new, and they were brand new because I bought them. I bought three new fax machines on becoming a member - one for my house, one for my office and one for my Parliament House office.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: The symbolism remains.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes, but they cost - I can recall this quite accurately - between \$1 420 and \$1 480 each. Fax machines were quite new and expensive in those days. That represented about half my annual electoral allowance.

Hon Norman Moore: And all the paper faded.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Exactly. We did not carry the messages around in our cars for very long unless we put them very carefully in a folder and then in the glove box, because by the time we got to where we were going we would not be able to read the message anyway. Things have changed and improved.

Even acknowledging most of the comments the Leader of the Opposition made about us being our own worst enemies, and I agree with him on that point, some not just incremental but quite fundamental changes and improvements have occurred over the years, even in the 12 or 14 years in which I have been a member, that have taken us to the point we are at. I could not quite ascertain from Hon Paul Llewellyn whether he has an office in Perth and also an office in his electorate.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: I use my office at room G1 -

Hon KIM CHANCE: The Parliament House office?

Hon Paul Llewellyn: I do not have another office.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I was assuming that the member was talking about an office across the road.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: You probably do not know but I live here for most of the time. The staff know. I am living on the premises because I do not get much of an allowance.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Members of the government are not unsympathetic about this. Although the Leader of the Opposition did make a point about the superior services that are provided to ministers, which is a fair comment, we do not forget. I spent eight years as an opposition member. I am well aware of the nature of the difficulties that we face. At one stage I was going through three cars in one year by travelling 120 000 kilometres a year. We bought our own faxes, drafted our own legislative amendments and did our own research on the bills we were dealing with. We certainly dealt with a narrower range of bills than the member and his colleague are required to do, but we thought that was our function as members of Parliament.

Hon Norman Moore: What has changed in respect of that and the fundamental research of a member of this chamber since you were sitting over here? Nothing.

Hon KIM CHANCE: That is a very good point. The government has considered that with the issues that have been raised, not just in the context of this motion but more generally this year. I am currently in discussion with

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the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Giz Watson and Hon Murray Criddle on how we might be able to provide additional services to members in their legislative role and also to a limited extent in their research role.

Hon Norman Moore: Limited? You cannot get any more limited than that. I told my colleagues and they all burst out laughing.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I am glad that we are able to cheer up their day.

Hon Norman Moore: They said that if you could find the meanest and most miserable thing that you could offer somebody, you would do it.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I cannot possibly comment on that. I have only a couple of minutes left, but I want to make this point. The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal makes an annual determination in relation to members of Parliament. This provides an opportunity for members to make submissions to the tribunal about the level of resourcing they receive to assist them in doing their job. Rather than a one-off, independent inquiry that is sought by the motion, the annual determination process of the tribunal does provide an opportunity for members to make a progressive and evolving case for additional resources.

Hon Norman Moore: Hang on! The tribunal is not responsible for electorate offices or officers. That has nothing to do with it at all. The tribunal deals with individual members' benefits, not extraneous support, which is what this motion is about.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Certainly, but there are issues about this that can be resolved at that level. That is why we have the tribunal to look at those issues and to make recommendations in respect of the way that a member does his or her job.

Hon Norman Moore: The tribunal is not able to talk about additional staff, equipment or officers for members, because that is part of the Premier's department.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Changes have already been made this year in respect of the Legislative Assembly. The government is also open to discussions about what we can do in respect of the Legislative Council. I have just touched on that.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I do not think so. We asked the Premier for his comment by unanimous resolution of this house. We have heard diddly-squat from him. He has not even had the courtesy to give us a reply.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): Order! The Leader of the House was just about to finish a sentence. I will allow him to conclude.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The tribunal does provide an opportunity for members to develop their cases as they evolve and as members encounter new challenges in servicing their electorates. What this motion seeks is for the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, or some similar body, to carry out an analysis of members' resourcing, which is the exact function that the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal carries out in any case. I think this was a good opportunity for members to make the points they wanted to make, and the government will certainly take very seriously those issues that have been raised, but we will not support this motion.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 4.30 pm