

LOAN BILL 2003

Second Reading

Resumed from 11 September.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie) [4.35 pm]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the Loan Bill. I intend to report on a few issues that are relevant to my electorate. As many members would know, in recent times my electorate has undergone a major and quite significant change in many respects. The downturn in the mining industry has made people sit up and look at how they will adjust to the future. I am pleased that in recent times there has been a change of culture in the community and people are starting to get their confidence back.

It has been pleasing also that in the past few months real estate sales have gone through the roof. As a guesstimate, house prices have increased by around \$20 000 to \$30 000. Not so long ago, a two or three-bedroom ex-Homeswest house in Collie could be bought for around \$28 000. They are now around the \$50 000 mark. I recently noticed on the Internet a real estate web site indicating that Collie was a great place in which to invest. Since then people have bought more than one or two houses in Collie because the rental returns are quite good. People have been lining up. One real estate agent last month sold 30 houses, which is quite a number for a small town.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: They have such a great member down there.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Yes, it must have something to do with the good looking bloke down there.

The new people moving to the town and the different make-up of the community means that new services are needed. Older and retired people are moving to the town. They do not need many of the services that were previously provided, and that puts a strain on the shire council in many ways because it must change and adjust to accommodate those people. The bowling club is quite happy because it has increased its membership during recent times. It was just about defunct at one stage but now, because of the different people moving to the town, it is in a very strong position. I am pleased to say that it recently received a major grant from Lotterywest that enabled it to become more of a warm social club than a bowling club. That is very good.

Numbers in the schools have remained static. That is pleasing, considering the changes that have happened to middle income earners. When the redundancies occurred, many young families left the town. To see all the schools maintaining student numbers is great. It again shows confidence in the town. Among the problems in the education system is the fact that some higher education courses have been moved to Bunbury. It means that some students must travel by bus, which makes a long day for them. When they travel to higher education or TAFE courses, they might leave at 7.00 am and not return until 6.00 pm. The home economics area of the high school has undergone a major refit. People have been waiting for it for many years. I think my name was still scratched on a desk when it was pulled apart. The major refit has gone well and most people appreciate that happening under this Government. The refitting of the library has doubled its storage capacity. It was envisaged at one stage that it would be a joint proposal between the shire and the Department of Education and Training, but unfortunately that did not happen; people went their own way. However, the library has been refitted and now has the capacity to contain twice as many books.

The Department of Education and Training has also introduced new reticulation for the ovals. In this day and age, people should not have to move pipes backwards and forwards across an oval by using manual labour. I take my hat off to the minister and those who decided that it made a lot more economic sense to change the reticulation. I know very well from its being reported to me by the staff that it has been a major boon because it has allowed them to spend the money that has been saved in that area on other areas. Although it may seem trivial, it is not when people see the gains.

The market's perception of the Collie region has been underestimated in recent times. The Ferguson Valley to the east of Collie would in some ways be regarded as the Kalamunda of the south west. People living up in the hills can look over Bunbury and its port. People are starting to wake up to the fact that the five and 10-acre blocks there are the playgrounds of the rich. That area is really expanding. It will also be a major wine producing region in the future. The member for Vasse has some great friends in the area and tends from time to time to bring along to our committee some very nice wines from that area. They have won quite a few gold and bronze medals. That is a change in the structure of the region. It was previously just a beef and sheep area. It is now moving towards small farm lots that are producing a lot more wealth than the broadacre farming. Along with that comes a few problems. Some of the problems are those of lifestyle versus producers. It always causes heartache when the bloke next door gets up and starts blasting away at the birds that invade the vineyards in the very early hours. It is something that I thought I would not have to deal with as a member of Parliament. I have to deal with issues such as who is shooting at what with what calibre weapon. It is a bit daunting at times.

There have been problems in recent years with water issues and dams across creeks. The tendency has been to build a major dam at the top end of a gully and only release water if the farmer feels like it. Some environmental requirements have not been quite high enough in recent times. The issue of licensing dams is quite pertinent to me. It will become a necessity because the ill feeling it causes from one farm to the next is quite high. I have had to adjudicate at times and there are still major problems in this area. Of course, we will not have such a problem this year because of the extra rain. It is something that will have to be dealt with in the near future.

Moving across the electorate we come to the flats. It is great to see some of the proposals that have been achieved in the Shire of Dardanup, which is part of my electorate. It is a very progressive and strong shire on the outskirts of Bunbury. It has been getting about its business and is planning for the next 50 years. People in the shire have done a magnificent job and I take off my hat to Mick Bennett, the shire president, and his councillors. They are not afraid to play off the front foot and put forward proposals that not everyone agrees with at the time. They work through a diverse range of proposals for the shire. The community centres have involved a lot of funding. The shire did the right thing when it moved from Dardanup to Eaton and left open both premises. That allows people the access they have always been afforded. I congratulate them.

I feel strongly that the electorate of Collie was a little left behind by the previous Government, to say the least. It was considered a safe seat. People are not fooled by that. They could see they were being left behind and that it was time for a change. I guess I was one of the lucky ones who was standing around when the time for change came along. I now have to do my job and make sure we do not get left behind. In saying that, I acknowledge that trying to attract small business and change the economic base in the region is difficult. It is always difficult to get people to move from the coast to the scarp. There are additional costs and concerns about the attitudes of some people in the area. However, I do not see that.

It was recently announced that Collie will have a call centre. It will immediately create 25 jobs, and up to 50 in time. That is a major boon. I do not understand why the jobs are not higher paid. This type of job is very much needed in the electorate. We tend to focus too many times on highly skilled and semi-skilled jobs and other people miss out. The make-up and nature of our town make the jobs very welcome. I am sure that some of the people who have been on unemployment benefits will benefit from this. There have been a few hiccups in getting it up and running but, as people say, better late than never. It will also provide a small economic boost for the small businesses in town that have been doing it a bit tough. The main boulevard centre has had its number of shops reduced from 26 to 13. The town is looking more confidently to a brighter future. In the past week, some of the people in the shops have reported their highest ever turnover. Perhaps in some way when there are fewer shops there is more turnover, but people are shopping in town and the results are on the board. I will take the credit for that! No, seriously, it is good for the people who are saying they have turned the corner, and the results through the till are showing that. It means there is confidence in the town.

I will not divulge details but a few small businesses are looking to relocate to Collie. I am trying to assist with that. It was pleasing to hear the Minister for Small Business; Peel and the South West, Mr Kucera, along with the Minister for State Development, announce the possibility of a grant of \$1 million if Pinetec Ltd relocates to Collie. In this case, the federal Government has not been very forthcoming in putting in money. It was supposed to come from the forest industry restructuring package. The federal Government believes we have not done the right thing in the sustainable amount of timber that will be cut. The federal Government has refused to fund that side of it. We are still putting pressure on the federal Government because the money that has gone into Manjimup and the Warren region has been extraordinary. The unemployment rate is around four per cent and Collie has lost between 50 and 60 jobs in the mills. Two mills have closed. The area has not received the same sort of support from the restructuring packages because a lot of timber is just sourced from the area, which excludes the area under the program. It is good to see that \$1 million has been offered for Pinetec to relocate to Collie. I am confident that it will get there and it may create 40 jobs for semi-skilled people in need of jobs. It will be most welcome.

The other problem Collie has is with tradesmen. Smaller towns cannot match the wages offered on the Burrup and places like that. People are either relocating or using fly in, fly out to work on the Burrup. As such, Collie does not have the level of disposable income that it used to have through the mining industry. Hopefully, some of the larger businesses will come to fruition and we will be able to get on and rebuild our town.

Something about the town that not many people are aware of is that, although there are 9 000 people in the region, in the past it has accommodated up to 12 000 people. That means expensive infrastructure does not have to be put in for a business or a company to move to the town. The infrastructure is already there. In my view, it should be utilised. My bias against some of the closer coastal towns has been evident for some time, whether it is on the footy field or the political field. It does not matter; I think those towns get too much. The towns over the scarp and inland - not quite wheatbelt towns - rely very strongly on small business.

We still cannot underestimate the importance of coal to the town of Collie and the region. There are still 400 people employed in the coal industry. That would underpin any small town. We need to preserve that. I will bring up the issue of coal. People immediately think of old power stations belching out smoke and people with shovels in their hands digging underground. Even though I was an underground worker, I was not sad to see the end of the underground mines because of the conditions in which we worked. I was glad to see open-cut mines, which are far more efficient and produce a product that is much cheaper and cleaner because the coal can be mined without including the shale. Underground mining meant that shale bands had to be taken with the coal. That produced a dirty coal. Many people do not understand that Collie coal does not produce methane. The coal station at Collie does not reticulate its coal or run a power station on top of the mine head, unlike some places on the east coast. Methane is very detrimental to the environment and to the ozone layer. It is a positive that no methane is produced because of the way coal is mined in Western Australia. Coal producers and users have not explained that very well over time. I congratulate both coal companies for finally putting clean coal technology up-front and for letting people know that the effect gas or coal has on the environment is not much different over a 50-year period. The State cannot afford to be reliant on one form of energy production; that is, either gas or coal. A balance must be maintained in case of a major breakdown. A recent mechanical overhaul of a gas compressor nearly caused brownouts in this State. I am pleased to say that the Collie coal-fired power stations saved the day, even though - as Murphy's Law would have it - one of the power stations blew up in the week that maintenance work began on the gas pipeline.

Coal is important to the region. The old rule of thumb is that downstreaming creates 400 times five jobs. It is a major employer in the region in not only Collie but also along the coast. It has been said many times that the economic benefit to Bunbury from the coal industry is about 20 per cent of its overall takings, which is quite high. Bunbury is not far away, so people can travel to Bunbury and enjoy what it has to offer.

Over the past few months there has been much debate in this House about the disaggregation of the power industry and also of the power procurement process. We must be very careful and cautious of what disaggregation is about. Some countries and some States, including California, Queensland and New Zealand, have failed in their attempts to privatise or disaggregate their power systems. We must learn from those experiences. We must be careful about how we do it and take it step by step; we should not rush into it. There are many and varied views about how far we should go. I believe that Western Power should always remain a government utility. That issue is dear to my heart. If it were privatised, we would lose the things for which we pay taxes. It should be kept in public hands.

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

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I am disappointed by the power procurement process. It is a bit like an episode of *Yes Minister*. I do not believe that many people behind the scenes are following what was moved at the Labor Party's state conference. They have not kept an open and honest approach to it. The idea is to give every fuel producer a chance to compete on a level playing field. However, if we do not know the dates and processes behind the power procurement process, it is hard to have a level playing field for the coal industry. Even the gas producers are saying the process must be open and fair, otherwise they will cop the flak. I call on the minister to put a program forward that everyone understands so that everyone can read from the same sheet. It would therefore be fair and no-one could be critical if a company were beaten on price - and price alone - in the end. We want cheaper power, we want to look after businesses in the State and we want to attract larger businesses and higher energy users to our State. If the power procurement process is not open, people will be sceptical about what is going on and they will be reluctant to embrace the issue. With those few kind words to the minister - I hope he reads them or is listening to my speech from his room; I have spoken to him personally -

Mr R.N. Sweetman: If he does not read it in *Hansard*, I will remind him of what you said.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: That is very good to hear.

The issue of major projects in the south west is of concern to me. We cannot live on tourism alone. Mining has been conducted in the south west for many years. The impact of the benefits of mining has been underestimated in the whole of the south west, not just Collie. I was very disappointed that the Donnybrook chip mill did not get a start because of certain processes and probably because of the squeaky wheel syndrome. That project was canned. It would have created 30 or 40 jobs in the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup. It would have been located just outside the very small community of Donnybrook. The project would have had a huge impact on that shire's economy. People were misinformed that the trucks would stop at Donnybrook, which they would not have done. Donnybrook now has a bigger problem because the trucks are travelling to the port. If the chip mill were operating from the south east of Donnybrook, the trucks would not have gone through the built up areas of Donnybrook, Boyanup and then through Bunbury to the port. The woodchips could have been transported on rail. It was a major disappointment to me that that project did not go ahead. However, I have not given up on it.

Recently, I have been talking to people from WA Plantation Resources Pty Ltd and the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup about identifying another site for a chip mill that will be acceptable to the community.

Mr R.N. Sweetman: Is the preferred site closer to Kirup or Donnybrook?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: It will be close to either Kirup or the sand hills industrial estate, with an easement off the rail line. I have not given up on that. I am still looking into it. It is important that major infrastructure run through there and that the railway be utilised. I believe that about 1 000 trucks a day pass through the roundabout in Bunbury. If another one million or two million tonnes of woodchip were transported through Bunbury to the wharf, there would be a major problem. That is a word of warning. There will be problems afoot if a chip mill is not built in the Donnybrook area. In the end, when people's emotions had cooled down and they again spoke to me about the issue, they told me that perhaps they had been carried away by some of the literature they read and by some of the pressures that were placed on them. They did not realise that the trucks would travel through Donnybrook. Some people have had a change of heart. I hope that the woodchip mill can be built in the future.

I will move on to another area with which I have some problems, as does everyone in the bush. When driving out of Collie, the phone reception drops out at about the 10-kilometre mark one way, at the five-kilometre mark another way and at the three-kilometre mark the other way. It is all right to have two phones and to switch to code digital multiple access - CDMA; however, it cuts out when I drive behind a tree. I have marked the trees where it does not work. When I am driving, a message comes on the phone and I pull up and find out where the location is where I can receive a signal. Generally, it is 50 metres wide. On some days I can receive messages but I cannot transmit a signal and on other days it works both ways.

Members talk about telecommunications in the bush. I hope that some members in this House, including members of the National Party, are turning the corner a little and do not support the full privatisation of Telstra. Although that is a federal issue, it must be raised in this House. If Telstra were fully privatised and the corporate bodies take it over, it would be interested in profits rather than service. I am sure we all know that will happen. If someone is way down the priority list, it is guaranteed that his asymmetric digital subscriber loop - ADSL - computer speed will not get upgraded. Technicians have told me that some of the so-called new technology is already 10 or 15 years old and uses the twin-pair system on the cabling instead of optic fibres. The technicians put in loops to increase the speed. However, that is only a short-term remedy for a long-term problem. We must work at that and make sure we get fair and equitable representation in our telecommunications system.

People in Boddington cannot do their banking online because the Internet speeds are not fast enough. Members who have been there will know that an error message or an illegal transmission message is displayed on the computer screen when people try to do so. It is disappointing because farmers, surprisingly, were one of the first groups to embrace the Internet. The issue for them was to have access to markets, so it was very important for their businesses. Then they got into Internet banking, but if the line speeds are not quick enough, they cannot transact through the Internet. They still have to go to town, and when they get into town they find out that the bank has moved into the city, so there is another trip. Those are some of the problems, and I call on everyone in this place to make sure that the telecommunications issue is well and truly settled before Telstra is privatised. My personal opinion is that it should never be privatised. The communications system should remain in the hands of the people.

I did not realise the scope of the job of a country member of Parliament. There is no job description. I have told many people the story about the lady who telephoned me when I was on my way to Perth and said she had a snake in her yard. I told her to call the ranger, and she said she had done that. She said she did not want the snake killed, just moved. That was one job I did not intend to do, so I told her I was very busy.

Ms J.A. Radisich: And you are scared of snakes!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Exactly! The variety of the job never ceases to amaze me. Probably some of the background comes from being a shire councillor before entering Parliament. One issue before the council this week is a classic. There is a dog problem. It has been through the courts; the shire has taken the owner to court, and I have had to pick up a fair bit of the flak about what is going on. There are too many dogs. As usual in a country town, someone fixed it up by throwing some bait over the fence. Now the issue is that the dead dog has been there for five days. One minute they are complaining about it barking and the next minute it is dead, and not barking, but they are still grizzling. I do not know what the story is there. We tend to do things ourselves in the country, so I wish someone would remove the dog.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Last time I went out for a drink with you, you looked like you had taken a bait!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I felt like it, too. I did not call in the vet!

A couple of other issues impact on people in country communities. The first is bottled gas. I have heard the debate in this place about reticulating gas to country towns, and I am glad to see some of the legislation that may

allow that to happen in the future. People on pensions in a town as cold as Collie spend around \$90 for a 100-kilogram bottle of gas. When some older people are using that amount about every four or five weeks to keep their houses warm, it is a major impost on their budgets. Many of them are not well off. They have been battlers, have come through the system and now they are trying to keep their houses warm. There is nothing worse than hearing a constituent say that he does not turn the heater on until 8.00 pm and then only has it on for an hour, and the rest of the time he is wrapped up in blankets to keep warm. That is a sad thing in our society. We should be looking at giving some help in that area. We are not scared about gas being reticulated to Collie; as a matter of fact, we would welcome it, to give us the same comforts that many have on the coastal strip.

The second contentious issue in many eyes, especially the local government, is the fire and emergency services levy. Members tend to go out to be photographed with every fire unit in their electorates, and there seems now to be some consensus about the colour of them. There was a major blue about the colour of fire engines, whether they would be red or white, and a red one would be more expensive than a white one. It is a bit like the lollipop issue - a red one can be bought for \$1 and a green one for \$1.10. That seems to have eased out a little. Some shires are concerned that they are not getting their fair share, but, in the main, Boddington, Collie and Donnybrook are very happy, after their initial concern.

MS S.E. WALKER (Nedlands) [5.04 pm]: In relation to the Loan Bill I will raise several areas of interest in my community, and of relevance to some of my shadow portfolios. The other night at a small business dinner I spoke on the new small business registration cost. I received an analysis from one of the business people at that dinner about the effect of the Bill before the House, and the \$75 impost of a new tax for registering a business name. According to this business person, quoting figures from the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, the number of new registrations for 2002-03 is 24 488. The number of renewals for 2002-03 is 38 825. The cost of renewal, as we know, is \$75, according to the Small Business Development Corporation. Thus, the income derived from the renewal for 2002-03 is \$2 911 875. If a hypothetical small business average net profit is 10 per cent of its turnover, it would take \$29 118 750 of additional turnover for those 38 825 small businesses just to recover the impost, bearing in mind that for every dollar of net profit the small business must make another \$10. That was an interesting analysis.

I will talk next about the launch of "The Kids' Science State" at West Leederville Primary School, one of eight primary schools in my electorate, on 10 September 2003. The Kids' Science State is the result of a collaboration between Scitech, the Rio Tinto WA Future Fund and the State Government. It is a significant partnership, because it aims to improve literacy in science and technology through programs for teachers, students and parents. It is specifically designed to reach out to our remote communities and provide them with educational opportunities that would otherwise not be available. Research, development and innovative design are integral to the way we go forward in our society. Mr Chris Renwick, from Rio Tinto Ltd, gave examples of artificial skin for burns victims, new wheat and barley varieties, hydrogen fuel cell buses and cars, and creative ways of attacking salinity. He said that all these things are providing us with solutions that were not evident in the past. As a large mining company, Rio Tinto Ltd recognises the importance of keeping abreast of developments in science and technology. One of the subsidiaries of that company is Argyle Diamonds, which has its headquarters in West Perth, in the electorate of Nedlands. Rio Tinto Ltd operates in remote areas such as the Gascoyne - where I spent a part of my life on a sheep station - the Pilbara and the Kimberley. The company is extremely conscious of community groups and related businesses and how they must be positioned to capitalise on new development. Mr Renwick also talked about what modern science and technology had to offer. He said that, in order to do that, we had to understand basic scientific concepts and their application. This new program will inform teachers and parents about science in our communities, so that we come to be more aware and care more about science. The Kids' Science State will target these fundamentals through a holistic approach to primary school science education in Western Australia. There will be professional development for teachers and expanded capacity for the Scitech road show. I was really surprised when I turned up at West Leederville Primary School. The Premier launched the initiative but I was surprised at the amount of media attention it received and the number of politicians who were there. Obviously, it will be an important partnership for the future. New exhibition and online resource for students, parents and teachers are all part of this five-year program that aims to create and inspire young people across the State.

I spoke to Chris Renwick after the launch and said I would raise this matter in Parliament because the mining company was doing a marvellous thing. The Rio Tinto WA Future Fund was established in late 2001 to make a difference to the future of Western Australia. The future fund, as he says, forms partnerships with the public and community sectors to implement projects that support the creation of a more secure and successful future for Western Australians. I was interested to note that the funds provide support to 29 different programs in areas relating to youth, education, welfare, community development, the arts, industry innovation, indigenous relations and health. Kids' Science State, which was launched at West Leederville Primary School, is considered to be a core program for the growth of science education in this State. I said that I would raise this matter in my

electorate. The kids loved the launch and a country school also came along - there were two schools there. I thought it was a marvellous initiative.

I will talk about the Sunset site, the issue of aged care in the electorate, and the sunset community village concept, which is basically being bagged by the local residents in my area. I have done a survey of 5 500 people in the Dalkeith and Nedlands area south of the highway saying that I will be opposing the sale of the Sunset site. I have had one reply from a developer who said he agreed with the subdivision and three or four replies from people who said that they agreed with the sale but under very limited circumstances. Shortly after that survey, another survey was done by the Government. I read that questionnaire and the methodology it used in posing the questions and I must say that those questions - I have had a lot of feedback from the community - were very leading and the results did not properly reflect the views of the community. A recent article in the *Western Suburbs Weekly* referred to the 12-month Sunset steering committee, from which I resigned. It said that following what the committee alleged was community consultation - when there was no proper community consultation - and following the surveys and submissions, it would appear that the Government accepts that the community does not agree that \$15 million should be taken from that site. If the proposal had gone ahead, the subdivision of 34 blocks in an A-class reserve would have gone ahead and \$15 million would have been taken out of the A-class reserve. With regard to the heritage buildings on that site, some work would have been done to them with the remainder of the profits from the sale of the land. However, the upgrade to the rest of the buildings would have been paid for by the community, which is no resolution.

I will speak about the concept of aged care. The concept report says that the Sunset site should be a place vibrant with modern community life, which also celebrates and preserves the site's rich heritage. I could not see the concept plan doing that. However, the steering committee, having considered the issue of aged care, gave it the thumbs down. That surprised me because no-one on the steering committee visited a nursing home. Somebody from Silver Chain spoke to the committee but the committee itself did not visit a nursing home. The local community should have aged care facilities at the Sunset site and the committee is very short sighted if it does not include that on the site and fails to understand and recognise the site's history - it has been a home for the frail, elderly and homeless for nearly 19 years.

With the current and future demand for aged care facilities in the community, this committee fails to recognise that 30 per cent of the population is already aged 65 years or over and that there is a huge waiting list at existing facilities in the community. There should be a push to incorporate aged care into all facets of the community and there should be an urgent response by government and local government agencies to provide additional aged care services to the community. It is important that the aged in the community have a service in the area in which they live. I have said many times before that the future demands of baby boomers should not be forgotten. They are going to demand and are demanding a different level of service for aged care than is currently available in the community. The community, through its leaders, needs to fulfil its social responsibility to its aged community. When the Melvista Nursing Home was going to close down, I had a lot of distressed relatives see me because their parents were going to have to move away. It is important that people who have control over the Sunset site consider this issue.

The Australian population's life expectancy is amongst the highest in the world, and there will be further ageing of our population over the next 40 years. I do not have to tell that to members in this place because there are a lot of baby boomers here. Overall, the proportion of population that is very old - 85 years and over - is expected to triple. By 2051, the number of people over the age of 65 years will more than double, peaking in 2012 with the large cohort born in 1947 turning 65 years of age. Therefore, this should be a major focus of social and economic planners and policy makers in Australia. The median age of the Nedlands electorate is already higher than the Australian average, as I understand it. The committee's view that aged care is not an appropriate objective for the Sunset site is incorrect. It is true that the site needs a new building. It has been an aged care site for years. Often homeless men would be seen walking around Dalkeith and people would either walk them or drive them back to the site. A new facility needs to be established at the site for which there is plenty of support in the community.

I am getting a lot of inquiries at my office about the live exports to Saudi Arabia and the sheep losses in the Red Sea. I can speak with some experience in this area having lived up north and had sheep stations. I have been around at shearing and mulesing times and all that sort of the thing and I have picked dead wool; I have done the lot really. I have been asked to raise this matter in the Legislative Assembly. I am an animal lover and a patron of the local Shenton Park dogs home. The issue of what happens to animals is very important in our community.

When I was visiting Canada last year on behalf of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee about the disaster legislation, we went to a conference about disaster that was attended by about 900 people. Experts from all over the United States were there. Among them was a vet who had been in attendance at the World Trade Centre when the disaster happened on September 11. He looked after the dogs that went into the trade centre to find any form of human life. He held a lecture that I decided to attend. There were not many

people at the lecture but it was very interesting. I think he came from North Carolina and has established programs on how to deal with livestock when there is a disaster. There was an enormous flood in Carolina, I think, a few years ago and the front page of a magazine there showed pictures of dead livestock. Many people were very distressed by those pictures. They brought home to the community how important the welfare of animals is to people. It is a very important issue in our community, and I raise this on behalf of the people who have contacted my office. A joint media release by Mark Vaile and Warren Truss of 28 August 2003 states that the Australian Government has suspended further shipments of livestock to Saudi Arabia, pending the negotiation of an effective mechanism to ensure the safe entry of livestock into the country. I cannot go into that, but I raise it as an issue. The way we treat animals is important. We should watch how the animals we sell are dealt with when sent overseas.

I refer to other work I have done. I promised the Nannup community when I opened its 2003 flower and garden festival that I would mention it in Parliament. The festival was reported by *The Nannup Times*. In Nannup I met with Bob Longmore, the chairman of the garden village committee. I do not know whether anyone from the Parliament went to the festival, but it was fabulous. The streets of Nannup were full of tulips, daffodils and bulbs. It was beautiful.

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

Ms S.E. WALKER: I promised that I would promote the Nannup festival in Parliament. The front page of *The Nannup Times* reports Mr Longmore as having said that -

the Festival was getting bigger and better each year, and that this year's festival, with its new exhibits from local businesses had "re-shaped the mould" and pushed the festival "down a better path".

"It's basically saying we're not dead, there's a lot going on in this town," Bob said, adding that the festival focussed attention on Nannup from the rest of WA.

...

He thinks the festival also showcased Nannup's timber artisans.

I took the time to drive to Nannup and back on a Saturday to open the festival because, as shadow Minister for Tourism, I had promised to do so. It was very disappointing that no Labor Party member was at that opening. It was pretty poor.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I am sorry; did the member for Girrawheen say something? Does the member for Girrawheen wish to say something to me? Good.

I raise the issue of corporate credit cards, which is relevant to my shadow portfolio of justice. I asked the Attorney General early this year about *The West Australian* report on prison executive Jeff Enoch, whom the Attorney General sent to Hakea Prison as a troubleshooter following a report by the Inspector of Custodial Services that the maximum-security prison was in danger of becoming a failure. There had been an investigation into the credit cards Mr Enoch had used to purchase sex romps with prostitutes, strippers and alcohol at taxpayers' expense. The credit cards were withdrawn on 19 March, but Mr Enoch resigned only after journalists leaked the information. Interestingly, the Department of Justice conducted an internal review on its credit cards. According to the report, the Department of Justice uses two types of credit cards: ANZ Visa and American Express. At the time of the internal audit, the department had provided approximately 400 credit cards to personnel located across a range of business areas. The methodology of the audit was that a random sample of 80 credit cardholders was selected, with over 1 000 transactions reviewed against departmental policies and procedures. Examples of corporate credit card usage within the Department of Justice included travel and accommodation expenditure, prison canteen expenses, miscellaneous purchases and seminar and conference bookings. Departmental credit card expenditure equated to approximately \$2.2 million, compared with a total departmental appropriation for the financial year of \$506 million.

I put on record that the report says that the procedures in the Department of Justice were loose and uncontrolled and that there was no accountability. Basically, it was a shambles. The report refers to what was not done. The controls were not strong enough. For instance, there was no periodical review of expected usage by cardholders, and vendors or industries were not restricted to the cardholder. There was no formal mechanism to record or review whether a cardholder continued to need his card when he transferred between business areas of the Department of Justice. There was no check on how many cards an individual held. Officers accumulated cards without checks. Part 3.2 of the report states that policy was not followed. Fuel and videos were purchased although that was not allowed. In one instance, a departmental card was used for a Video Ezy promotion that provided a free DVD player for every life membership. The card was used to buy two life memberships. I understand the DVD players are used in the prisons. Cardholders purchased electrical equipment such as digital

cameras and video cameras. Cardholders gave authority for others to use their cards. For instance, travel officers gave their cards to someone else when they went on leave.

When asked for proof of purchase, many gave only the electronic funds transfer docket, so the department had no way of knowing what goods were purchased. Purchases were made over the Internet and the department was not told what they were for. Credit cards were used to purchase stationary and goods outside existing contracts, even when there was no emergency. Cardholders purchased goods without first obtaining verbal quotes and minor computer equipment was purchased even though officers were not allowed to do so.

That is how bad it has got in the Department of Justice. The report states that there was no clear documentation of so-called entertainment expenditure. There does not appear to be any control on information that allows us to know what is being spent. The report talks of the provision of insufficient explanations, and says that some cardholders did not appear to have obtained approval from executive directors before spending. Poor or no supporting documentation was provided, which meant the department was unable to claim goods and services tax credits. Part 3.5 of the report states that there was no proper accounting. Often the Department of Justice paid off the card before getting supporting documentation, and cardholders did not lodge their internal journal transfers on time. One officer withheld his for 14 months. I do not know what the transfers are, but obviously it is a procedure officers are meant to follow but do not. The report says that this had an effect on account coding and the end-of-year outstanding balance. The report says that no procedure required the lodgment of returns for each trip, and that there was confusion about whether people should use their credit cards or travel allowances and whether they even had approval for the trips.

I should ask questions about what has been done about the problems within the Department of Justice, outlined in the June 2003 review of corporate credit cards by the Department of Justice's internal audit branch. I raise this issue because the shambles within the Department of Justice is also reflected in the prison system. It is interesting. We know that the prison system is in a shambles because the Inspector of Custodial Services has told us that three of the prisons in this State that house maximum security prisoners are on the verge of failure. The justice portfolio, which is in crisis, has now been handed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the biggest portfolio in crisis - health - has been handed to the former Minister for Justice.

I raise an issue important to my electorate; that is, mental health. Interestingly, before the Minister for Health announced the axing of funding to programs, I accepted an invitation to visit one of the community groups in the Nedlands electorate. The group I visited was not one of those mentioned in an article I will quote from *The Australian* of Tuesday, 23 September, which is headed "Health groups suffer stress of uncertainty". Basically, the Minister for Health is being cold-blooded and brutal in his approach to these people. I do not say that lightly. I turned up to a community meeting at which some mentally ill people were present. The community group that held the meeting cares for mentally ill people. Its members have spent a lot of time and money looking after people in the community who have mental health illnesses and they are concerned that their funding will be cut. Some funding to community groups has already been cut. Groups are telephoned in a cold-blooded and brutal way and told that their funds have been cut off. The article in *The Australian* talks about the funding of a non-government sector association called the Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill. The photograph to the article has the caption -

... Ms Shiels yesterday at Nedlands, Perth, is unsure about the future for her staff and clients

The article reports -

"One of the difficult things in this situation is the uncertainty," Ms Shiels said.

"Not only is it affecting our staff, who are getting very distressed, it's clearly affecting the clients."

The association relies on \$600,000 a year from the state Government to provide statewide counselling for families and carers of mental health patients.

Ms Shiels said that without that money, services in Perth would be reduced and they would cease in regional areas.

That article was published in the week that the Minister for Health announced \$11.7 million in funding cuts. That was not the community group that I visited, but I agree with what was said in that article. The group I am referring to was one that I was visiting for the first time. I listened to what its members had to say. They had invited the Minister for Health to speak to them, but he did not bother to turn up, in much the same way that the Minister for Education and Training, Alan Carpenter, did not have the gumption yesterday to go out and speak to the education people who were demonstrating.

I will provide a few statistics on mental health and funding cuts to non-government services. Every family in Western Australia is at risk of experiencing mental illness. About 14 per cent of children and adolescents and 18 per cent of adults will be affected by a mental illness each year, or approximately one in every five people. What about the average in Parliament? These statistics cannot convey the distress caused by an individual's lack

of function or quality of life, or the impact on family and friends. These groups tell me that if they are to be got rid of, the people who come to see them will go to hospital, and will place a greater burden on the hospital system. About 62 per cent of Western Australians with a mental illness do not receive treatment from existing health services. Among young people with mental health problems, one in four receives professional help. Western Australia spends about 7.5 per cent of its health budget on mental health, even though mental illness is thought to account for at least 20 per cent of the economic cost of premature deaths. Other First World countries invest 10 to 14 per cent of their total health expenditure on mental health services.

The Minister for Health is in the Chamber. The members of the group I visited told me that they do not accept the axing of funding, but if those funds are to be axed, they want to know in advance so that they can plan. They do not want to be rung up one day and told that the programs, which in some cases have tentacles in other electorates, will be axed. That is a fairly cold-blooded and brutal approach in my view. In fact, it is short-sighted. The group told me that when patients in mental health hospitals are due to be released for an hour's outing, they go to their facility. If that facility no longer exists, those people will have to stay in hospital or will be socially isolated. People with mental health problems are now accommodated in large blocks of flats. They live in isolation in Homeswest flats. When those people wake up in the morning they will have no hope, because there will be nowhere in the community for them to go. I hope that the minister will think about that. Maybe he will go home and think about it tonight, instead of laughing, as he is now doing, while health groups fret about what the minister will do.

I thank members for giving me the opportunity to speak on matters relating to my electorate. They are important matters. I dare say that I will raise many of those issues again.

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