

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 29 October 1986

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PARLIAMENTARY SUPERANNUATION FUND

Appointment of Trustees

On motion by Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the House), resolved—

That Hon. J. M. Brown and Hon. V. J. Ferry be appointed as Trustees of the Parliamentary Superannuation Fund.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Report

Report of Committee adopted.

Third Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Hon. J. M. Berinson (Attorney General), and transmitted to the Assembly.

ACTS AMENDMENT (ELECTORAL REFORM) BILL

Second Reading

HON. J. M. BERINSON (North Central Metropolitan—Attorney General) [2.35 p.m.]: 1 move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Democracy requires that Governments be fairly elected. This Bill proposes an electoral system appropriate for that purpose.

The Bill will create an electoral system that is fair to voters, candidates, and parties, and which will produce a Parliament which accurately represents the will of the voters.

The Government's proposals for a fair electoral system have received a clear mandate from the people of Western Australia in the past two elections. In its first term the Government gave priority to electoral reform, and several minor changes and some significant reforms were, in fact, achieved.

However, seven Bills were blocked by Opposition members of this House. Two major Bills proposing reform of representation to Parliament were among those defeated, and these form part of the background to the present Bill.

The present Bill is a compromise which incorporates the considerable common ground which now exists between the parliamentary parties. Five major concepts pursued by the Government in its earlier legislation have been modified to take into account the views of the other political parties.

Firstly, the Bill proposes a greater vote weighting than has been proposed in previous legislation. In the Legislative Council, the departure from votes of equal value in favour of rural electors has been increased from a ratio of 1.2:1 in the 1984 fair representation Bill to 1.4:1.

Secondly, the Bill modifies the position put in 1983 and 1984 that the Legislative Council should always be dissolved at the same time as the Legislative Assembly in favour of retaining fixed terms for the Legislative Council.

Thirdly, the Bill fully implements the concept of regional multi-member electorates by proposing six regions instead of four as previously proposed.

Fourthly, the Bill proposes a redistribution after every second election rather than defined criteria to trigger electoral redistributions.

Finally, the Bill proposes greater flexibility to the Electoral Distribution Commissioners who are to have a ± 15 per cent margin of allowance on Assembly District enrolments rather than the standard ± 10 per cent as previously proposed.

The present Electoral Districts Act sets out the electoral boundaries of all four districts. The Bill proposes that boundaries in future will not be drawn by the Act. All boundaries of Assembly districts and Legislative Council regions will be drawn by impartial and independent Electoral Distribution Commissioners working within a framework of agreed democratic principles and guidelines.

The broadest of geographical descriptions will guide the commissioners in their decisions on the grouping of Assembly districts into proposed Legislative Council regions. To make clear that the Electoral Districts Act will no longer prescribe actual boundaries, the Act is to be renamed the Electoral Distribution Act. The three people involved in redistributions are to be known as Electoral Distribution Commissioners.

The Government Statistician is proposed to replace the Surveyor General as one of the three Electoral Distribution Commissioners. This office is familiar with most of the population data essential to the redistribution pro-

cess, such as density, growth or decline patterns, occupations, land usage, and the like. An Electoral Distribution Commissioner familiar with this data and its computerised processing will give significant assistance to the redistribution process. Although the WA Government Statistician is also the Deputy Commonwealth Statistician, the State is entitled to call upon the services of the office, and the Commonwealth Government has indicated its agreement.

The Electoral Districts Act was amended in 1985 to adopt a much improved redistribution process modelled on the Commonwealth Electoral Act. The Act now requires a self-regulatory process which involves inviting suggestions from the public, giving interested parties the opportunity to comment on each other's suggestions, and to lodge objections to the work of the commissioners. It is now proposed to require the publication of a rationale for the boundaries initially recommended by the commissioners. When the redistribution is completed, it is proposed that the final boundaries become law without reference to the Government or to Parliament. The reforms will ensure that the new electoral system will have its boundaries drawn free of political influence in a process with full opportunity for public involvement and scrutiny.

The present criteria for requiring automatic redistributions has proved to be inadequate. Seats like Joondalup and Murdoch are now more than 47 per cent out of balance. Under the present criteria a redistribution will not occur until after the 1989 election. That will be the third election on the same set of boundaries, yet there have been major demographic changes during this time.

In future, an electoral redistribution will commence automatically one year after every second election. Electoral distribution commissioners may take six months to complete a redistribution and, in the context of the proposed terms based on four years, the timing will give electors, parties, and members adequate time before the following election to make the readjustments necessitated by any changes in boundaries.

A three-year term does not give Governments sufficient time to implement and follow through the programmes that are essential for long-term economic planning. Accordingly, it is proposed to increase the term of the Legislative Assembly from three years to four years. New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania all have four-year terms already. No

change is proposed to the length of the term of the present Assembly, which will expire at the normal time on 31 January 1989.

As members of this House are aware, we are now elected for fixed terms which end on 21 May six years after the 22 May immediately following a Legislative Council general election. Half of the members were elected at the 1986 election and the other half at the 1983 election. It is not reasonable for some members of Parliament to be elected for a term that is twice as long as the term of other members. It is therefore proposed that at each future election voters should select members for the full Parliament. The terms of members of this House will expire on 21 May four years after the 22 May immediately following a Legislative Council general election.

To translate the proposed pattern into actual dates, the terms of all members immediately prior to 21 May 1989 will expire on that day, and the terms of the 34 members who are elected to the next Legislative Council will expire on 21 May 1993, and so on.

No change is proposed to the existing requirement that Legislative Council elections must be held before the expiration of the terms of sitting members. It is proposed that future general elections for the Legislative Council be held within the final year of the terms of sitting members. This will encourage a continuation of the pattern in this State where Parliaments run their full term and elections for both Houses are held on the same day.

The Government proposes to make voting simpler and easier. A broader definition of a valid vote will mean that many honest and trivial mistakes made by voters will not prevent them from recording valid votes. The most important thing is the intention of the voter, and if this is clear, the vote should be counted. The Bill proposes that a repeated preference or a gap in the sequence of preferences on a ballot paper will not render a vote informal. In these cases, the vote will be valid as far as the voter's intention is clear up to the point of error.

It is proposed to introduce optional preferential voting for both Houses. To cast a formal vote it is proposed the voter must show a preference for at least the number of members who are to be elected, but that the marking of any further preferences is to be optional.

When a distribution of preferences becomes necessary in an election and a casting of preferences is optional, some votes may have to be set aside as exhausted because no further

preference is shown and the vote cannot therefore be distributed. In effect, these voters have said that if their early choices are not elected, they leave the decision about who is to be elected to the other votes remaining in the count. In order to win, a candidate must gain an absolute majority of the votes remaining in the count.

It is proposed to change the criteria for the refund of nomination deposits. The present Act does not make clear that the deposits of successful candidates will be refunded. The existing requirement in section 84 is that at the end of the count of first preference votes the deposit will be forfeited by any candidate who has not received more than 20 per cent of the votes gained by the leading candidate. The present rule is unfair. A candidate can obtain a significant number of votes and lose his deposit in a contest against someone who wins with a large majority. Another candidate in a closely contested election involving a large number of candidates could retain his deposit with a small number of votes.

Deposits will be refunded to any candidate who at a Legislative Assembly election receives more than 10 per cent of the valid votes. Where the election is for more than one member in a region, it is proposed that deposits will be refunded to all candidates who either individually or whose group receives more than five per cent of the valid votes.

Electoral laws should, firstly, guarantee that citizens may vote and, secondly, that the votes cast will be translated into a Parliament which accurately represents community opinions. A democratic system requires that each citizen should have the right to cast a vote that is approximately equal in value to the vote cast by any other citizen. In the Assembly at present, district enrolments vary from 30 000 for the highest to 3 700 for the lowest, a ratio of over 7.5:1. A majority of the members need represent only 35 per cent of electors.

To remedy this situation the three existing electoral areas which are created by the Electoral Districts Act are to be repealed. The existing electoral areas are the north-west Murchison-Eyre area; the agricultural, mining and pastoral area; and the metropolitan area.

The Bill proposes that the Electoral Distribution Commissioners will have the authority to decide enrolments within the margin of allowance. The commissioners will work on the basis of a Legislative Assembly of 57 districts. It is proposed to state in the Constitution the

principle for the determination of the range within which the enrolment of each district must be set at a redistribution. The margin has been set at ± 15 per cent which, based on an average district enrolment of approximately 15 580, creates a range from 17 900 to 13 250. The only guideline within which commissioners will work will be the trend of demographic changes.

In the Legislative Council, instead of 17 provinces, each made up of between two and five districts, it is proposed that members of the Legislative Council be elected from six regional electorates made up of groups of complete and contiguous Legislative Assembly districts. Details are outlined in table 1.

In the proposed North and East Region, there will be four districts that are in the opinion of the commissioners remote from the capital. This region will elect three members of the Legislative Council.

Four complete and contiguous districts forming an area that is generally south, or south and west of, and adjacent to the North and East Region, will form another region to be known as the Agricultural Region. This will also elect three members.

Three proposed regions to be known as North, South, and East Metropolitan Regions will consist of 13 complete and contiguous districts that are situated in or near the metropolitan area of the capital. The Electoral Distribution Commissioners will exercise their discretion to decide the metropolitan boundaries. The remaining area to be known as the South West Region contains the remaining 10 contiguous districts.

The three metropolitan regions and the South West Region are each proposed to elect seven members of the Legislative Council. All six multi-member regions will each elect an odd number of either three or seven members. This arrangement guarantees an important democratic principle that a party or group that wins the majority of votes in a region will win a majority of the seats.

Another important feature of the proposed system is that the city and country each have three regions. The political influence of city and country will be balanced by the combined effects of proportional representation and by each having an equal number of regions. This feature enables the proposed system to pass the test that an electoral system should not allow control to be won from a clear minority position.

Substantial shifts in the distribution of population in the State could conceivably render the proposed regions inappropriate at some time in the future. If or when this situation arises, it would be hoped that Parliament would allow our electoral system to evolve to accommodate the emerging changes in the need for representation.

The Government is proposing broad geographical descriptions of the regions, and there are two reasons. Firstly, the proposed regions contain either three or seven members and, secondly, the number of electors per member varies from region to region.

Each proposed region will have identifiable members in the Assembly and in the Council, who will be elected by and accountable to the electors in that region. In this respect, the proposal is similar to the existing system. The proposal is superior, however, because each elector will be represented by, and have access to, a greater number of members than at present.

In each region, votes will be counted by the same system of proportional representation as is used for elections to the Australian Senate. Under this system a candidate must receive a quota of votes to be elected, and the quota is determined by dividing the number of valid votes by one more than the number of members to be elected and adding one vote to the quotient so obtained. The formula and counting method ensures that when the correct number of members have been elected, there will be insufficient votes left to elect another member.

In a region where three are to be elected, a quota is therefore 25 per cent of the vote. In the four regions where seven members are to be elected, the quota will be 12.5 per cent of the votes per member.

Unlike a single-member election where it is possible for 49 per cent of the votes to achieve no end because they were cast for the losing candidate, in a multi-member election most voters will see someone for whom they voted become elected. Liberal voters in safe Labor areas and vice versa do not at present have their point of view represented in the Legislative Council by the member of their choice. Under the new system it is likely that each region will have members from several of the political parties.

A regional focus is given to the conduct of elections. Just as districts and provinces have a returning officer at present, each regional election is to be organised in a similar way with

nominations, the declaration, and all the normal election process decentralised to the regions.

At present, a casual vacancy in the Legislative Council is filled at a by-election, but this method is unsatisfactory when members are elected by proportional representation.

A party that managed to elect only one member out of seven in a region would have little chance of replacing that member at a by-election. The vacating member could have received only 12.5 per cent of the votes, so it is unrealistic to expect the replacement candidate to win 50 per cent in the region. Even major parties would find replacing a member very difficult in some of the regions.

A democratic method is proposed to replace casual vacancies occurring in the Legislative Council, but the method does not involve a by-election in the normal sense. The ballot papers for the original Legislative Council general election will be kept and if possible will be recounted to find the replacement to fill the vacancy. When a vacancy occurs the Electoral Commissioner will call for nominations from all the unsuccessful original candidates and in almost all cases a recount will lead to the election of a replacement. The most likely outcome is that a candidate from the same party as the vacating member will win the recount.

A fall-back provision of a by-election is also proposed should it turn out to be impracticable to fill a vacancy by a recount. The parliamentary leader of the same party as the vacating member may inform the Electoral Commissioner that it is impracticable for the vacancy to be filled by a recount if that party no longer has one of its original candidates available. Also, the Electoral Commissioner may cause a by-election if it is impracticable to use the recount method. The by-election would involve the whole region but it is expected that this fall-back provision would be seldom, if ever, used.

An expressed preference by the Opposition for a system of filling casual vacancies by nomination from the same political party as the vacating member has been considered. The Government has indicated that it is prepared to hold the necessary referendum in conjunction with the next general election if cross party support exists.

In the existing system, Legislative Council enrolments range from 98 000 to 9 000, a ratio of 10.5:1. The majority of members in the

Council need represent only 27.9 per cent of electors.

By now, the democratic principle of one-vote-one-value is the well-known goal of the Government for the whole electoral system. However, it is equally well-known that one of the key reasons the 1983 and 1984 Bills were rejected by the Opposition parties is that they favour vote weighting. To produce a compromise that should be acceptable to Parliament, the 1986 Bill proposes vote weighting of 1.4:1 in the Legislative Council in favour of country electors.

Interpretation of the proposed vote weighting involves bringing together two aspects of the proposal. More generous representation in the Legislative Council of country electors than their numbers may justify is one aspect. The other aspect is the allocation of the same number of regions in the country as there are in the metropolitan area. The proposed electoral system for the Legislative Council has the capacity to enhance its status and legitimacy.

To ensure that the electoral process is administered impartially, it is proposed that an office of Electoral Commissioner be created. A Deputy Electoral Commissioner is also provided for. The office of commissioner is comparable to the present office of Chief Electoral Officer and the proposed Electoral Commission will replace the existing State Electoral Department. Independence is guaranteed for the office of Electoral Commissioner. The Electoral Commissioner will be employed under similar terms to the Parliamentary Commissioner or Ombudsman.

The Electoral Commissioner will be appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Premier and after consultation by the Premier with the parliamentary leader of each party in the Parliament. The term of appointment shall be for a period not exceeding nine years, is renewable, will not be subject to the Public Service Act, and will have salary guaranteed by the Electoral Act. The commissioner may not be suspended or removed from office by the Governor without addresses from both Houses of Parliament. The nine-year appointment is designed to ensure that an Electoral Commissioner will supervise the cycle of two elections and a redistribution. The normal requirement for an annual report to Parliament will apply.

It is proposed that many responsibilities held by the Government under the present Act will be transferred to the new Electoral Commissioner. The Governor will cease appointing registrars and returning officers. The Minister will cease appointing assistant returning officers, postal vote issuing officers, polling places, remote areas and special institutions. Objections to enrolments will be heard by the Electoral Commissioner instead of by a magistrate.

A clear statement of the functions and powers of the Electoral Commissioner is proposed. These are modelled on the successful Australian Electoral Commission. The Government envisages the new Electoral Commission being more active by the inclusion of functions like the promotion of public awareness of electoral and parliamentary matters and the provision of electoral information and advice.

An explanatory memorandum will be distributed to members shortly.

Mr President, the central goal of this legislation is to bring justice to elections by ensuring they are fair to voters, candidates, members and parties. This Bill constitutes a significant compromise compared with the initial programme for reform embarked upon by the Government in 1983 and 1984. It accommodates different viewpoints without detracting from the primary goal of fairness. This Bill will achieve that goal and I commend it to the House.

The following material was incorporated by leave of the House—

TABLE 1: COMPOSITION OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REGIONS.

Name of Region	No. of MLCs to be elected from the Region	No. of Legislative Assembly Districts in Region	Projected Total Enrolment of Region
North East	3	4	62 300
Agricultural	3	4	62 300
South West	7	10	155 800
North Metro	7	13	202 500
East Metro	7	13	202 500
South Metro	7	13	202 500
Totals:	34	57	888 000

(All Enrolment Projections are based on the figures for 20 May 1986.)

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon. G. E. Masters (Leader of the Opposition).

LEGAL AID COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 October.

HON. JOHN WILLIAMS (Metropolitan) [2.57 p.m.]: The Opposition does not oppose this Bill, but it will deal with the dissatisfaction which has been expressed about certain parts of it. I dare say that when one moves around the private practice solicitors he realises it is they who have expressed these objections.

I do not know whether the Attorney General is in a magnanimous frame of mind, but I will merely point out the objections to him and subsequent upon his reply the Opposition will decide whether it will seek to move amendments during the Committee stage. Perhaps if the Opposition points out to the Attorney General the objections it has received he may consider amendments to the legislation without the Opposition moving amendments at the Committee stage.

Generally speaking, the Bill is welcomed. It is a Bill which has been framed and brought to the House in view of the experience of the Legal Aid Commission. I am not sure how long the commission has been in existence, but it would be about 10 years; the Attorney General was not specific about the time it has been in operation.

One thing that worries a lot of the private practitioners is that while the number of members of the commission will be increased with the addition of Commonwealth members, the actual composition of the commission in regard to the Law Society's nomination will be reduced from three to two.

The Attorney General must not take my further remark as personal. It has nothing to do with Hon. Joe Berinson; it has to do with Attorneys General who are appointed in this State from time to time.

The objection which has been raised in regard to reducing the Law Society's nominations from three to two is that the third nominee shall be appointed by the Attorney General. Naturally, that makes some people nervous because at some time in the future the Attorney General may be sufficiently motivated to appoint someone—to put it in the kindest way—in a political fashion. This would destroy the fact that the commission has done and is doing extremely good work without the tainting of political patronage.

I did preface my remark that I did not want, in any way, to cause discomfort to the current Attorney General by accrediting any of those indiscretions to him. I am sure he would appreciate that in time there may be other Attorneys General, who may, unlike the present Attorney General, be politically motivated. The other night the Attorney General described how someone had been appointed to a position over which he gave his signature.

He employed a very fair method. I am not suggesting that the Attorney General will do otherwise in this case, but concern has been expressed that in future it could become what is colloquially called "a job for the right boy" who has the nod from the Attorney General. The office of the Attorney General is also held in such high repute in all States that it would be sad if the day came when a loophole existed whereby political patronage could be applied.

Another objection is prior approval being required before reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses. A practitioner employed by the Legal Aid Commission may have one or up to a dozen ongoing cases. Under the old system he was immediately reimbursed for the amount asked for. The proposed system under which approval must be gained for out-of-pocket expenses, could create more administrative work and cost, and loss of interest while the expenses are paid from the solicitor's trading account before reimbursement. In other words the man could be out of pocket for that period. The Attorney General is aware that at present expenses are paid simultaneously, as they occur.

I know of no case, and I am sure the Attorney General is not aware of one otherwise he would have taken some action, of someone claiming and being reimbursed too much—in other words, someone who has tried to fiddle his claim. Some solicitors know what bureaucracy is like and they feel the reimbursement of expenses could take some time, during which they will be out of pocket.

All members of Parliament are aware of one or two anomalies in the way in which our expenses are reimbursed. For example, members must pay their telephone bills before being reimbursed. This is a rather odd arrangement; it does not affect members in the metropolitan area quite so much but certainly country members, particularly those in the north of the State who rely on telephone contact with their constituents, have very high telephone bills. Therefore, a member of this House is out of pocket for a time because even though he has a perfectly legitimate bill, he must pay the account

at the post office and then present the paid account before being reimbursed at the end of the month. Not all members can afford to do that.

As an analogy, legal aid practitioners may be in the same situation. If they take the Legal Aid Commission work, there will be a gap before they are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, which must be paid out of their trading account.

There is no complaint about the eligibility and assessment of whether or not an applicant should receive aid. However, the reference to lifestyle with regard to eligibility allows the commission too much discretion. Looking around this town there are more Rolls Royce cars per head of population than in any other State. However, although one might envy a person driving such a car and assume that he is an extremely solvent and well-heeled member of the community, upon investigation one could find that a number of these vehicles are leased and perhaps the companies are struggling to keep up with the lease payments. That is not true in every case, of course. It is not a real objection, but perhaps provision could be made for certain invoices, certificates, tax returns, etc., to be produced as evidence of a person's financial status. For example, we all assume that the Attorney General is a multi-millionaire.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: What, because of the Rolls Royce I drive?

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: Hardly! I have never seen the Attorney General driving a Rolls Royce. A person's lifestyle can give a wrong impression and he should be allowed to produce documentary evidence, such as tax returns or even a social services card, as was the case in the past, indicating that he is not well off even though he may dress and talk well.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: And might be in arrears in his lease payments on the Rolls Royce.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: It is felt that the clause allows the commission too much discretion.

The coordination of legal aid, rather than leaving it to the various agencies to make a decision, is most welcome. However, it could perhaps lead to more stringent curtailment: if the Legal Aid Commission runs out of funds, where can those people go? Will the Department of Social Security come in at that point? It certainly has ample funds. There appears to be an anomaly in that situation. The Opposition has no objection, provided we can be

assured that this will be the case. If the Attorney General says that it will, my colleagues and I will accept his word. The availability of funds is always a problem with legal aid.

The insertion of this clause is most commendable in that the Department of Social Security will not assess whether or not to support an application. However, if the Legal Aid Commission runs out of funds, will the departments be allowed, on the recommendation of the Legal Aid Commission, to make a grant? It is a side shift to reassure the people.

The Opposition has no criticism of the remaining amendments. I ask the Attorney General to take those few points on board and to return with answers which are acceptable, in which case the Opposition will support the Bill.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon. Tom Stephens.

VALUATION OF LAND AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 October.

HON. MAX EVANS (Metropolitan) [3.09 p.m.]: I am pleased to support some of the amendments to the Bill. I do not support one amendment to the Valuation of Land Act in particular. The amendments are very technical and refer to the problems the Valuer General has in respect of dates and how they affect the department's records. Section 14 of the Act will be amended by one minor definition. Section 19 is amended by changing the date to July of each year rather than when the valuation is actually done.

Clause 12, which relates to objections, is commendable. It means that someone else—for instance, managing agents of properties—can represent the landowner and submit an objection on his behalf if he is away, or overseas, because there is only a limited time in which to put an objection in.

However, I must speak against clause 13. Section 34 of the present Act states—

34. The Valuer-General shall promptly advise every rating or taxing authority obliged to adopt or use, or which has adopted, any valuation—

(a) of receipt by him of an objection to the valuation;

In other words, when an objection goes to the Valuer General, he lets the Water Authority or the local government authority know there has been an objection. Section 34 continues—

- (b) of any allowance by him of an extension of time for service of an objection to the valuation;

To my knowledge, he rarely allows an extension of time for an objection, no matter how serious it is. Section 34 continues—

- (c) of his decision on an objection to the valuation and the reasons therefor;
- (d) of any amendment of the valuation consequent upon his allowance, wholly or in part, of an objection to the valuation;

In other words, he goes back to the authority and says, "I have made a mistake", or "The valuation has been amended for various reasons", and the authority can make the respective changes. The final paragraph reads—

- (e) of receipt by him of a notice requiring him to treat an objection to the valuation as an appeal.

In other words, if someone does not like the valuation it may go to appeal. However, clause 13 of the Bill proposes that section 34A be inserted, as follows—

34A. Any amendment of a valuation consequent upon the allowance, wholly or in part, of an objection to or an appeal against a valuation shall not apply for the purposes of any rating or taxing year before the year in respect of which the objection was served.

Indirectly, I take a degree of responsibility for that, and I would like to explain why. I point out that the Valuer General makes mistakes. He is a human being, and employs human beings, and uses computers. If he makes an error, two or three years might elapse before a taxpayer realises he is paying too much. The taxpayer may find the error has been made for a number of years. Is it the fault of the taxpayer that he has not picked up the error? If the taxpayer is to be held responsible for the error in the work papers of the Valuer General, and if he is to be the loser as a result of an error going back a number of years, we should amend the legislation to require the Valuer General to supply the work papers to every ratepayer.

To back this up, I would like to read a letter from the Valuer General dated 16 August 1984 to the then Perth Chamber of Commerce (Inc).

The Minister may be aware of this matter because it was taken up with him at the time. The Executive Director felt that the water rates for the Perth Chamber of Commerce were too high and that the valuation should be checked. The Valuer General remeasured the area and said, "We have made a mistake." He recognised the mistake and dropped the valuation, which resulted in an overpayment of \$1 000 in water rates, and more than that for Perth City Council rates. The letter to which I refer reads in part—

The advice which has been received indicates that I am unable to take any remedial action back beyond 1 July, 1979 which is the date on which the Valuation of Land Act came into force.

The first revaluation of your property by my Office became effective on 1 July, 1980. Prior to this, valuations were the responsibility of individual rating authorities. In your case, valuations used by the Perth City Council were assessed by the Council's own valuation staff whilst the Metropolitan Water Authority made use of the services of the Chief Valuer, State Taxation Department.

Further on the letter says—

I am satisfied that incorrect measurements were used by my Office when assessing the values which came into force on 1 July, 1980 and I have accordingly taken action under the Valuation of Land Act to amend the relevant Valuation Roll.

The valuation in respect of your property has been reduced to \$20 800 for the period 1 July, 1980 to 30 June, 1983.

Notification of this amendment will be forwarded to both the Metropolitan Water Authority and the Perth City Council. It must be pointed out however, that the question of recoup of rates paid is at the sole discretion of the relevant rating authority. Rating matters do not fall within the sphere of my responsibilities under the Valuation of Land Act.

The Perth chamber received a refund back to July 1980. However, other correspondence says that the error went back to 1971, and it was compounded in 1978 when extensions were done to the building and the relevant authorities—the Perth City Council and the Water Authority—carried out their own valuations. The authorities would not go back beyond 1980. We objected to that decision but

did not receive a refund back to the earlier date.

Under the proposed amendment, the Minister is suggesting that a taxpayer be locked in and not be able to challenge a valuation; or rather, he can challenge it but cannot claim a refund back to the date that the error was made. That is most unfair and unjust. The Minister is saying, "I will check the valuation for you, but I can only make a refund for the current year."

In fact, when the Perth Chamber of Commerce brought this matter up, one of its members thought he would have the valuation on his own land checked. He had the Valuer General check it; he proved the value was far too high, but as he was outside the 42-day period he could not get a refund and had to wait until the following year. The time limit of 42 days is far too severe when an error has been made by the Valuer General. The taxpayer has done nothing wrong—he wants to right a wrong and should be at liberty to do so. Why should the taxpayer have to put up with it? He has paid his taxes as and when required. He finds out he has been paying too much, makes objection to the Valuer General who proves the ratepayer correct, an adjustment is made, but under this legislation the Minister is recommending that he receive a refund for that year only, if he has paid the rates already, or a credit if he has not paid.

In the case of the Perth Chamber of Commerce it was a straight-out error of measurement of floor space in a building, and the consequent error was worth over \$1 000 a year in water rates and council rates respectively.

I have another case which I will explain to the House. The Minister is probably aware that local government rates are based on the gross rental value of a property, or on an alternative valuation, because sometimes the Valuer General nominates a gross rental value far above what one would get for the property, and one pays whichever is the lesser. That resulted in quite a big refund to my client. I would like the Minister to look at this question. When I appealed a water rate notice on the same basis as I would a local government rate notice, I was told I could appeal on the gross rental value to the local government authority, but not to the water authority, and so I was paying far higher rates than would otherwise have been the case.

I am not certain whether the Perth Chamber of Commerce is the only body to have not received a refund for an error made a number

of years ago. However, I think the situation is most unfair. If the Valuer General's Office makes mistakes, it should own up and say it did so, and issue a refund.

I know that the Minister for Budget Management may come back with an explanation to the effect that it comes down to a vote of local government or whatever. My point is that they can collect money which has been owing for two or three years in the current year; they do not mind collecting that sort of revenue two or three years late. However, if they are paid on the date due, it seems reasonable to me that the refund which applies in that case should also be obtainable from years gone by. The money which is assessed in this financial year must be received this year as in past years.

I hope we will see justice done.

HON. P. G. PENDAL (South Central Metropolitan) [3.21 p.m.]: I want to raise two particular matters in this debate.

Firstly, I hope Hon. Max Evans will be able to get more satisfaction on behalf of the Perth Chamber of Commerce in Parliament Place than I was able to get for a constituent of mine by the name of Mr Pinder from Salter Point. Mr Pinder received precious little satisfaction from the Valuer General's Office arising from a not dissimilar occurrence several years ago. Through his case I became familiar with the case of the Perth Chamber of Commerce in Parliament Place.

The only reason I have seen fit not to pursue what Mr Pinder regarded as being a gross error on the part of the Valuer General, where the wrong area of land had been assessed for many years, was that the man died. Whether or not his death was in any way connected with the traumatic procedures that he had to go through to convince the Valuer General of the facts of his case, I am in no position to say. However, I wish Hon. Max Evans well. I rather suspect that he will get nowhere.

The second point I wish to raise is in relation to some questions that I directed to the Minister for Budget Management a week or so ago. The question to which I refer in particular relates to the latter part of the Minister for Budget Management's second reading speech wherein he told the House that, among other things, the Bill sought to clarify the authority of the Valuer General to determine values other than for rating and tax purposes.

I would like to go through the sequence of events very briefly because I believe it raises some significant questions for this community

for which the Government has failed to give any adequate answers. In *The Bulletin* of 2 September this year the Premier of this State was reported to have said, with some pride, that a particular piece of Government property which was valued by the Valuer General for \$16 million had been sold to a private company for \$32.2 million.

In other words, the Government received double the amount that the Valuer General had suggested the property was worth. On that occasion I asked whether an investigation had commenced to establish why the Valuer General's valuation was 100 per cent outside the market value. Members may recall that the Minister for Budget Management on that occasion attempted, I thought rather inexpertly, to turn the question against me by saying that the Opposition was complaining that the Government had achieved a success in that particular field and that instead of deriding the Government, the Opposition ought to be praising it for that capacity to get double what the market value of the land was suggested to be.

On that occasion I tried to point out to the Minister for Budget Management by way of interjection that he was very conveniently missing the point of my complaint. It is not dissimilar to a matter which was raised in debate in this House yesterday by the Leader of the House. It was not a complaint as in the case of the Midland saleyards; it was not a complaint that the Government was getting much more money than the Midland saleyards had been valued at. It was a complaint that that valuation was not done properly in the first place and that in fact it probably was receiving very substantially under that value.

I refer again to the question I asked the Minister for Budget Management and which he attempted to answer. I would seek his explanation by way of another Statute with which the Valuer General's valuations are involved. I find it hard to accept the credibility of the Valuer General's valuations when they can be 100 per cent out.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: What percentage would you find acceptable?

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: Very substantially less than 100 per cent. If someone comes along and says, "Well, I have a block of land here that is valued at \$50 000" and somebody walks up and says, "I will give you \$100 000", then the first person has a pretty good deal.

We are dealing with the public estate and therefore I suggest that if the Valuer General's valuations are so far out, his procedures may be at fault somewhere. After all the Premier in *The Bulletin* of 2 September was bragging—that is what it was—that the Government had a particular piece of land valued at \$16 million which it sold to a private developer for \$32.2 million. I have no quarrel with the Government making that sort of profit, or with the Minister for Budget Management when he tries to accept the credit for it. Indeed I am happy to give him the credit.

However, at the very least it must cast some doubt on the Valuer General's procedures when a property can be sold at a price which is double the valuation placed on it by the Valuer General. This could put the Government of the day in the position of being able to say, "Well, the Valuer General has valued this land at \$16 million; therefore, we will sell it for \$16 million." Fortunately in this case somebody used his initiative and sold the property, not for the \$16 million which it was said to have been worth, but for \$32.2 million.

That leads me to the second part of my question. In the debate yesterday I mentioned another Statute which was passed by this House two years ago. I mention it now by way of illustration. This legislation was to do with the land on Burswood Island and the casino. We are told on page 18 of that particular Act of Parliament that the figure of \$9.4 million for the site was the valuation thereof by the Valuer General of the State. The Valuer General of Western Australia put a price of \$9.4 million on that piece of land. Given the Premier's bragging in relation to this other matter, I would simply ask the Minister for Budget Management—who is in charge of this particular department—how do we know that that land on Burswood Island was not worth \$18.8 million, which is double what the Valuer General had valued it at and what the Government ultimately sold it for?

If the Government is able to get a higher figure than the valuation made by the Valuer General, that is to be commended. That is what the free market is all about. I guess a valuation, if nothing else, is really an indication of what should be the minimum price paid for a piece of land. I do not have any quarrel about that, but the Government cannot have it both ways. In the first instance I repeat: The Premier was bragging that the Government was able to get double what the Valuer General had said the land was worth. I ask: How do we know that

the Valuer General was correct in saying that the Burswood Island land was worth only \$9.4 million and, more importantly than that, how do we know the Government could not have received a higher price than that? That is the crux of this whole matter.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: You are not suggesting that the casino licence should have gone to whoever was prepared to pay the most for the land? That is an entirely different situation from a St George's Terrace block.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: That is not the parallel.

Hon J. M. Berinson: Of course it is. How can you separate the value of the land from the particular use which has been decided for it?

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: If the Minister wants to go back and examine that later, I would refer him to an extended point of the same matter. We were told that the Government did a very successful deal in all sorts of ways with the land transfers throughout the sale of the Burswood Island land. However, I find in that particular Act—and this was one matter about which I raised some doubts in the debate a few weeks ago—it is all to do with the land's development, and therefore it is relevant to this section of the debate.

Page 22 answers a question I raised in the Budget debate as to why the Government had provided the amount of \$3.9 million out of Consolidated Revenue for the relocation of SEC pylons on Burswood Island. If one takes into account the fact that the Government paid that amount, it reduces the price the Government received for the site by \$3.9 million, because if one is going to sell land and the buyer says that one has to relocate the pylons, the value to the State is reduced by that amount.

Significantly, when the Bill went through the House, the amount of money was not spelt out and the \$3.9 million being spent by the State, allegedly for the relocation of the pylons, was not for that at all, as was indicated by the Minister in his answer to the House yesterday. From memory, something like \$160 000—a mere pittance in the overall scheme of things—was set aside for the relocation of the pylons. The other \$3.7 million approximately was to buy a parcel of land from the Perth City Council onto which to relocate the pylons.

That is why I raise these doubts about the capacity of both the Valuer General and the Minister for Budget Management to know what is going on. I pose two straightforward questions: Firstly, how does the Minister explain

that the Valuer General's valuation procedures are still valid and up to date, and in accordance with modern practice, if he can value something for half the amount the Government is able to get for it? Secondly, in relation to the valuation of the Burswood Island site, how was the Government able to indicate to the House 18 months ago that no money would change hands in the sale and handover of the land for the casino and there was no financial obligation on the part of the taxpayers for developing the island?

That is what the then Minister for Racing and Gaming said in this House in order to get the Bill through. Parallel with that, the legislation did not spell out how much money was involved. That does not surprise me now. The Government did not want to admit that it was going to cost \$4 million to do that part of the deal. It was not until the Budget papers came down last year that anyone had any inkling that provision, which referred to the valuation of land and relocation of pylons, would cost the taxpayers slightly under \$4 million.

Those are the two aspects I am querying. I would perhaps not have taken any interest in that matter except for the reasons given by Hon. Max Evans. Two years ago my constituent, Mr Pinder, underwent a dreadful trauma with the Valuer General after discovering the Valuer General had made a blue and had been assessing him on a piece of land that did not exist—a prime piece of real estate I might add; valuations are hardly rock bottom around Salter's Point and St Lucia—and on which were based his local government and water rates, and whatever else is based on land valuation.

How long has it been since anyone had a look at the procedures of the Valuer General's Office? Can the Minister say he is satisfied that the way in which that office operates is up to date? The valuers there may be the most highly trained, professional people, for all I know, but certainly the two or three incidents I have mentioned at least make one wonder. Even the Premier was able to trumpet in *The Bulletin* about his great triumph and say that the Government had sold land for \$32 million although the Valuer General had said it was worth \$16 million.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Are you aware that another valuation was obtained?

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: A private valuation?

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Yes.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: What was that valuation?

Hon. J. M. Berinson: I can indicate it was many millions below the eventual sale price. I do not have the exact figure.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: But many millions above the Valuer General's valuation?

Hon. J. M. Berinson: It was above his valuation, but many millions separate.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: Does that not even raise some doubts in the Minister's mind about what is going on?

Hon. J. M. Berinson: It should indicate the Government's interest in having more than one source of advice where a major transaction is being contemplated.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: The Government is to be commended. This is not the first Government to have done that.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Our predecessors did not do it very often.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: On the contrary. This is not the first Government to do that. If we consistently find the Valuer General's valuations are valueless, why are we not having a look at the procedures by which he arrives at his figures?

Hon. J. M. Berinson: That is not a fair description of his work.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: If that is the case, why did the Government not get a full and normal valuation from the Valuer General for the saleyards? That was not done, and the correspondence held by a member on this side of the House shows that it was not done.

We are being asked to change the Statute under which the Valuer General operates in Western Australia. I am a bit inclined to say we should throw the Bill out if the best the Minister can do is to say that the Government does its best to get more money than the Valuer General's valuation.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Is that a serious proposition—that we do away with the Valuer General's Office because on one transaction the sale price was significantly greater?

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: Not one transaction. Maybe we do not need a Valuer General. Why should we have a Valuer General's Office? What would be the harm in saying that every time the Government proposed to sell a piece of Government property it must put it out to tender, which is what should have been done in the case of the saleyards?

Hon. J. M. Berinson: You know the work of the Valuer General extends far beyond questions of the sale of Government properties. This Bill is concerned with the other aspects of his work, not that aspect.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: I think the Minister has answered his own question. There are many private valuers in this town who are capable and who have specialised in various branches of land, property and asset valuation. I am sure the Minister has had contact with them in his own private dealings over the years. Maybe that is an answer to the Minister's question; maybe we should do away with the Valuer General's Office.

The Minister was kind enough to interject at sufficient length to enable me to get out the Valuer General's budget.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: You might ask the Local Government Association what it thinks of it.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: We can ask that association.

We spent \$6.4 million this year on maintaining the Valuer General's Office, of which \$5.5 million went on the salaries of people who work there.

Hon. Graham Edwards: Are you going to pass that cost to local government?

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: I do not want to pass it to anyone. The Valuer General's Office employs 206 people. There is one Valuer General sitting fairly decently on \$57 600 a year; 99 valuers, 26 draughtsmen and draughting assistants, 65 clerks, typists, and assistants, seven trainees, seven temporary assistants, and one vacant position. Maybe the \$6.4 million we spend on that department could be done away with. That answers directly the Minister's question.

We could turn around and say—the Minister could write it into the Act—that from now on the disposal of any Government property or asset must be accompanied by three sworn valuations by members of the Australian Institute of Valuers (Inc). What is wrong with that? Last night, Mr Butler proudly claimed that he was a socialist—perhaps he may defend it.

The Minister for Budget Management sits in charge of a very substantial group of civil servants. It is not me who is questioning their capacity to serve the people well.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: You could have fooled me.

Hon. P. G. PENDAL: Sometimes, despite being an exceptionally intelligent man, the Minister for Budget Management is easily fooled because he does not listen to other people.

Why should we maintain a very substantial Government office when there are serious questions raised about its capacity to do the job set out for it to do?

Only a few minutes ago Hon. Joe Berinson tried to pretend that I was talking about an isolated case. These are not isolated cases at all. I will enumerate them.

Hon. Max Evans has mentioned one—the famous case involving the Perth Chamber of Commerce (Inc) and about the building just up the road from this place. Secondly, there is the case, which I have brought to the attention of the Minister time and time again, about the Valuer General and which concerned Mr Pinder of Salter's Point or St Lucia. Thirdly, there is the remarkably big discrepancy, bragged about by the Premier on 2 September, in relation to the price of the Perth Technical College—\$16 million as against \$32 million. This makes me question in my own mind whether or not we got the right sort of deal on the casino if we were relying, as we were entirely, on what the Valuer General had to say. These are legitimate questions which people are entitled to ask.

How long is it since the Valuer General's office has been subjected to any sort of procedural overview to see whether or not the correct methods are used? It may well be that it is a fair and reasonable thing for the Valuer General's office to come in 100 per cent off target. I do not think it is, and clearly, those who took up that matter on 2 September in relation to the Premier's comments thought it warranted some publicity because there was a question mark that hung over the matter.

I support the Bill.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon. Margaret McAleer.

ECONOMY: WESTERN AUSTRALIAN

Concern: Discharge of Order

Debate resumed from 21 October.

HON. W. N. STRETCH (Lower Central) [3.44 p.m.]: Members will find in front of them two pages which contain reasons that the motion should not be discharged from the Notice Paper. Members are aware that this motion has sat under full notice of the House since the beginning of this session of Parliament for a

very good reason: The rural areas of Western Australia are suffering the most traumatic times in the State's history since the 1930s.

If members read the very carefully worded sections of this motion I think most of them would agree that it should not be discharged from the Notice Paper until the Government has made some acknowledgment of the fact that it is aware of the points which have been raised and is taking steps to address them.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.00 p.m.

Hon. W. N. STRETCH: Before we broke for afternoon tea I was about to refer to the effect of water dripping on a stone, and the fact that some of the resolutions in this motion appear to have had some little effect on the Labor Party, for which I am grateful. I will not pursue those metaphors any further because the Attorney General reminds me they may become mixed up.

Some serious matters were raised in this motion. On behalf not only of my constituents but of farming people throughout Western Australia I believe the Government should at least comment before the motion is discharged. Questions which still need to be addressed include paragraph (c), the failure of the Government to protect export-producing industries by adjusting its spending priorities. There is some indication that the Government is taking heed of warnings made over the period that the House has been sitting.

In the motion we request the State Government to make representation to its Federal colleagues to address some anomalies in the taxing and charging systems which are impacting very heavily on our primary producing constituents. Today's paper claims graphically that the fringe benefits tax has been gutted. That is a little exaggerated, but some notable improvements have been made to this horrific tax. We welcome them. I for one was becoming sick and tired of entering every little mile in my log book. I welcome the Federal Treasurer's concession that 12 weeks of record-keeping will suffice. Everybody in the bush will welcome that. However, there are still some horrific aspects of the tax to be addressed. We hope there has been an improvement in the Government's recognition of the problem.

One of my great concerns when I drafted this motion was the proposal to add another two Ministers to the Cabinet. I said then, and I believe now, that was a cynical exercise. That was in no way an attack on the new Ministers, as Hon. Tom Stephens construed it. In a time

of financial stringency it is something the State does not need. I opposed it then and I oppose it now. I do not believe it has added one jot to the improvement of the provision of services in this State.

Hon. Tom Stephens interjected.

The PRESIDENT: The President will determine that. The honourable member knows that he is supposed to comply with the rules in making accusations.

Hon. W. N. STRETCH: Paragraph (f) deals with the wasteful misuse of public funds in promoting concerts and social engineering programmes when the State's economy is in trouble. I am sorry the Minister for Community Services is not here because the move to take over such bodies as the Rural Youth Movement and replace it with some Government sponsored and funded organisation is a direct blow to rural communities. A great deal of finance was not spent on organisations such as the Rural Youth Movement, which was well worth encouraging so that those young people could make their own entertainment, organise their own education, their own field days and so on. No Government body can create the same family spirit.

The Government can certainly give assistance; it was giving assistance before, but this is a takeover, and it is not in the interests of the young people. We have plenty of trouble keeping them here now. Any attempt to replace bodies such as that rural youth organisation at this stage is unfortunate and very difficult to support.

I find it impossible to totally condemn it until we see how it works, but there is no way to replace that spirit unless people are chosen extremely carefully to work within the framework of organisations already set up. There will be a diminution of the services, not an improvement.

I suppose social engineering is a polite term for politicisation of previously voluntary organisations. We have come to the stage where people are asked to stand on bodies provided they do not stand as candidates for the Liberal Party in future elections. That is not on. Any organisation set up by the Government should recruit the best people available. Political bias is a fact of life. Asking a person to give an undertaking not to stand as a candidate for any political party should not be tolerated. It is going beyond the bounds of social engineering.

Hon. D. K. Dans: What experience have you had of that?

Hon. W. N. STRETCH: I will not mention the person or the organisation in this place, but I will give it to the Minister privately. I think he will agree it is a fair comment.

Hon. D. K. Dans: This Government has appointed people from right across the political spectrum.

Hon. W. N. STRETCH: It surprised me, it surprised him and it surprised a lot of people.

It is a forlorn hope to expect the Government to take much further action on the second part of my motion before discharging it from the Notice Paper. It calls on the State Government to speak to its Federal colleagues and ask them to reduce extravagant Federal spending on non-exporting sectors. Since this motion appeared on the Notice Paper the deficit has expanded with consequent higher borrowing and higher interest rates. The highest interest rates in living history are making survival for rural people difficult, or wellnigh impossible. Until the State and Federal Governments make further inroads on this horrific burden, I can see nothing but tremendous problems ahead for the major sectors in the rural community.

As I said last night Hon. David Wordsworth and I attended a public meeting at Ravensthorpe. It was said at that meeting that many farmers expected they had only four weeks left in their industry. We were out in the very well-established and highly regarded area of Merredin some months ago. The shire president expects that even with a good season, close to 10 per cent of farmers there will still go to the wall.

The major factor in their demise will be interest rates. While we have the Federal Government borrowing and State Governments not making sufficient representation to keep their borrowing and interest rates down, this burden will continue to grow and more and more primary producers will go under. The situation is extremely serious. I think the Government recognises that fact, but it has given no indication that it recognises it. Before it discharges this motion from the Notice Paper, it should acknowledge and outline any further steps it has taken.

The water on stone matter was given some credence at Ravensthorpe when the Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Julian Grill, finally recognised that the wealth of Western Australia is created by its agricultural and mining sectors. He went on to say he considered that people in the rest of the non-mining and non-agricultural areas were parasites. I think that is

a little graphic. Technically, as a well-educated scientific man he is right; a parasite is not necessarily an unpleasant thing. For example, I refer to the tic birds on the rhinoceros.

Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: It is not so good when it is worms on cows.

Hon. W. N. STRETCH: A parasite is not a label the majority of people would like applied to themselves.

The survival of rural people will be encouraged and helped by a combined approach. It should be supported by other than farming people by recognition of the electorate at large that the wealth producing people in this State and in this country are in the midst of a time of great peril. If they fail we will all fail. The Government should make a public acknowledgement. I am not asking it to call all other people parasites. We are an integrated community and country towns must survive if the rural industry is to survive and vice versa.

I urge the Government to keep up the pressure on its Federal colleagues. It is doing that in regard to the fringe benefits tax and the gold tax. It needs to do more in the industrial relations field. It must break the stranglehold of Crean, Kelty, and Gallagher on industrial relations in this country. We have seen the Builders Labourers Federation exerting its muscle in a very unpleasant way in Western Australia. None of us can survive under that sort of regime. We all need to work together to get rid of it. I ask the Government to give some indication that it will pay close attention to these issues before discharging this motion from our Notice Paper.

HON. J. M. BERINSON (North Central Metropolitan—Attorney General) [4.14 p.m.]: There is no question that the move to discharge Mr Stretch's motion can be taken to indicate any lack of concern by the Government for the position of rural and other export industries to which his motion is directed.

The position simply is that the motion which has now been on the Notice Paper for a considerable period has been overtaken by events. Those events include Government decisions which appear in the Budget, additional rail freight concessions and other matters including those approaches to the Federal Government to which Mr Stretch has referred.

At the end of the day it is not a question of whether the Government is interested or concerned or active on these questions, but whether Mr Stretch's motion is the appropriate way for the House to approach a discussion of

them. The Budget debate is now available to the House. All the questions listed in the motion can reasonably be discussed in the course of that debate, given that the Budget itself addressed some of the problems which were itemised in the original motion.

It is only on that technical basis that it is the view of the Government that there is no useful purpose to be served in proceeding with lengthy debate on this issue. That is the only basis on which we have moved to discharge the motion.

Question put and passed.

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED REVENUE FUND) BILL

Consideration of Tabled Paper

Debate resumed from 22 October.

HON. MAX EVANS (Metropolitan) [4.17 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Estimates and financial statements to June 1987. However, I am amazed that the Council is expected to discuss the Budget papers, including financial statements, prior to the first report of the Auditor General being provided to members. The Opposition in both Houses are expected to debate unaudited figures. No audit report has been supplied.

I remind members of the dates involved. The Budget papers and financial statements were tabled on 16 October. The first report from the Auditor General was tabled in this House on 22 October. Last Monday I phoned the Auditor General to see what had happened to copies of his report. No member had a copy of the first report of the Auditor General. My copy arrived on my desk at 4.16 p.m. on Monday 27 October, 11 days after the papers were tabled.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Honourable members, there are half a dozen audible conversations in progress. Each one of them is out of order. I recommend that members listen to what the honourable member who is addressing the Chair has to say.

Hon. MAX EVANS: I do not believe that is good enough. I came to Parliament from the business sector where shareholders are treated with respect. The Opposition and the Government represent the shareholders of Western Australia—the public—and the figures provided to them should be accompanied by the Auditor General's report, because that is what tells us some of the facts of life with respect to Government accounting.

Private companies must abide by the Companies Code. There should be similar controls on the Government. The Estimates' debate is equivalent to the annual general meeting of a company whereby the directors—the Minister for Budget Management and the Treasurer in another place—are to be questioned about the financial statements of the Budget for the next year. For example, under section 269(1) of the Companies Code, company directors must produce a profit and loss account not less than 14 days before the matter is to be discussed. Under section 269(2) of the Companies Code, the balance sheet must be given to shareholders 14 days before the annual general meeting. Why do we not follow a more reasonable timetable here? We are expected to go through a pile of documents within 24 hours of their being tabled and do justice to them. I think justice should be done to the financial papers tabled in this House.

The auditor's report must take account of public and private companies. The auditor's report was not tabled until after the Budget papers were tabled. Hon. Mark Nevill borrowed the tabled copy and then I borrowed it to get some information. I did not have my own copy until 11 days later when I could go through it and read it in some detail.

Section 269(8) (A) of the Companies Code provides that directors are to ensure that accounting standards are met. Section 269(8) (B) provides an overriding obligation for the accounts to give a true and fair view. I do not believe the accounts of this Government give a true and correct view. Section 275 provides for the accounts and the auditor's report to be submitted before an annual general meeting held in accordance with section 269 in respect of the last financial year. Shareholders must have comparisons over two years.

I have said before that I am glad that accrual accounting is to be brought in for the financial transactions of statutory authorities. When are we to have accrual accounting for the financial transactions of the Government of WA? Only then will we have some idea of how the Government's trading is going. We must stop this transfer of money in and out of accounts, which misleads the Parliament, the media and the public.

Last year the Budget surplus for 1985-86 was estimated to be \$1 million. It came out at \$300 000. This would appear to be an example of excellent financial management for which

we should be applauding the Government for having come in so close to Budget. However, when we read the comments of the Auditor General we find that such is not the case.

The Budget estimate last year included \$56.3 million from interest on short-term investments yet to come in. In December 1985 the Government was being tackled about its accounts because the indication at the end of November was that it might be short of money, that it was not going to make Budget. The Government brought in \$23.5 million from interest earned on short-term investments not in 1985 but in 1984, two years before.

Trading goes on in December and in January the accounts look better. Remember, the Treasurer is the accountable officer; he must take responsibility for this. He must have been privy to the fact that there was a surplus of \$23.8 million. This is a few hours before midnight on 30 June 1986. He would have said, "My God, has the bank closed yet?" the answer was, "No, Mr Treasurer, it has not." so he drew a cheque out of the revenue account and put it back in the short-term money market to bring the surplus back to \$300 000. How do we know this? The Treasurer did not tell us. If it had gone out as an expenditure item it would have shown up as expenditure with no vote estimate against it. He took it out of the revenue account. This obligated the Auditor General to make a comment and say, "Hang on, this shouldn't be done." Thank goodness we do have an Auditor General, and I have complimented him before on a lot he has done. He made this comment—

Treasury Revenue

The Estimates provided for the transfer of \$56 530 000 (rounded) from short term investment earnings to the Consolidated Revenue Fund, comprising 1983-84 earnings of \$23 586 869 and 1984-85 earnings of \$32 943 127. The amount of \$23 586 869 was transferred to the Consolidated Revenue Fund—Treasury Revenue on December 30, 1985 but was withdrawn from the Fund by a debit to Revenue on June 30, 1986. Section 31 of the Audit Act 1904 provides that no money shall be drawn from the Public Account except under appropriation by law or by authority from the Governor.

The Auditor General does not go on to say that subsequently the consent of the Governor was received or that an appropriation Bill was put

through the Parliament. He clarifies his comments in this way—

In my opinion, as the moneys were properly transferred to the Consolidated Revenue Fund on December 30, 1985 they could thereafter only be withdrawn in the prescribed manner. The annual financial statements reflect the net result of not transferring past earnings from short term investments to the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

They negated the original entry. I would be interested to hear what the National Companies and Securities Commission had to say. The Attorney General is the police officer of this State with respect to company matters and I wonder what he would say about a company director who did something like this. I must admit that I was a little confused about which Act was relevant and it seems that the new Act took effect as from 1 July. I quote from the Audit Act 1904 as follows—

31. No money shall be drawn from the Public Account except under appropriation made by law or by the authority of the Governor.

It is therefore quite interesting to read section 31 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act—

31. No withdrawals shall be made from the Public Bank Account or other payments made in respect of moneys standing to the credit of the Consolidated Revenue Fund or the General Loan and Capital Works Fund except in accordance with a warrant under the hand of the Governor.

So there can be no excuses for the Government, whether we assume it acted under the old Act or the new Act. The Government's action was wrong under both Acts, which are there to protect the public of WA from the unacceptable actions of the Treasurer and Premier.

We have auditors to protect the shareholders of public companies. They have great responsibilities to advise people. Auditors must maintain their independence against directors so that they can advise company shareholders. I remember my friend, Tom Sheridan, the South Australian Auditor General, who got into trouble by making similar disclosures. He thought that with all the flack in the Press he might lose his job, but he was glad to see—and I gather the same applies here—that it takes two Houses of Parliament to sack a State Auditor General. I know that in private life auditors need some protection from company directors.

My point is that the Treasurer and Premier, as the managing director of the WA board, has much to answer for. Ignorance of the law is no excuse as Hon. Joe Berinson would agree. The Treasurer has a responsibility to know the law. I understand the Treasurer said he did not know the law, but he is not asked to know it. Company directors get held to account if they do this sort of thing.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: But he didn't know.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Why did he not know? He signed the accounts.

Hon. P. G. Pendal: And it was illegal.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Fortunately Hon. Joe Berinson did not sign them. Mr Bob Boylan of the Treasury also signed them as required by law. The buck-passing must stop. The Treasurer is the one responsible. The moneys went in and were taken out without the proper action being taken.

But it is not just that the money was taken out; it is why it was taken out. Here we have a Government which was saying on about 24 June, "Things are tough. We have to put up our charges because it is a tough year and things will be tougher next year." It would have been hard to explain had the Government come in with a large surplus of \$23.8 million on 1 July. But the Government did not even tell the people that the money had gone out again. The Treasurer made a statement in Kununurra, from memory, saying that the Government had done a great job and had carried over \$56 million in interest earned on the short-term money market last year which it would use next year. I accept that.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Are you suggesting there was a \$23 million surplus on last year's transactions?

Hon. MAX EVANS: There was a \$23.8 million surplus at about midday on 30 June 1986 because the Government brought the money into revenue.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Are you suggesting the surplus is derived from ordinary transactions during 1985-86?

Hon. MAX EVANS: Yes. Revenue came in.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: I am talking about the ordinary transactions of Government.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Yes, including the sale of land.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Are you suggesting that capital income should be treated as current income?

Hon. MAX EVANS: I will get onto that in a moment because I have some strong points to make. The \$44 million is from the sale of land, but I will identify that later.

The figures at the end of the year and the accountability of the Treasurer are important. If a company director suppressed his company's profits by \$23.5 million, why would he be doing it? To avoid tax to start with. If he was caught by the tax office the company would face 200 per cent penalties. The tax on \$23.5 million is \$10.8 million plus penalties of \$21.6 million. He would be avoiding penalties. It might be also that he wants to cheat his fellow shareholders because he wants to take over their shares when the company is not going well.

We have rules and regulations governing how we account for funds. Treasurers and directors must have credibility and the Attorney General has the responsibility to ensure that they are honest or he will prosecute them and make them honest to protect shareholders. The money has not been misappropriated. However, we want to see honest accounting methods adopted.

I have been asked about what happened before. The Government, when in Opposition, referred to Sir Charles Court's slush fund. From what I understand, Sir Charles used to transfer surplus moneys earned on short-term investments from one financial year to the next to be used for capital works rather than for operating costs.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: It was brought into CRF.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Normally it followed one year.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Yes, but not always.

Hon. MAX EVANS: I thank the Attorney General for that because I have been trying to find that out for some time. I had to study the Auditor General's report last year to find out how much this Government was carrying over. The amount was not included in the Treasurer's figures, but the Auditor General highlighted the same \$23.5 million plus a further amount of \$22 million. Once one starts playing around with stock and debtors to a company it is very hard to find out what one carries over to the next financial year.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Could I suggest that there has to be a limit to the extent to which you can draw analogies between Government departments and private companies.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Right. We now have a figure of \$92.6 million which is interest from three financial years and which, by the grace of God, will be applied to this financial year.

Territorial land sales were over-budgeted by \$30.7 million. That amount included \$20.5 million for the sale of the Perth Technical College site. I rang the Auditor General and told him I thought that figure was a mistake. I read the annual report of the WADC and John Horgan, that great supporter of the Government—

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Do you disagree with the work Mr Horgan is doing?

Hon. MAX EVANS: I do not think it is hard to make money.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: But you were talking about Mr Horgan's contribution to the State's income. Are you criticising that?

Hon. MAX EVANS: No, I am saying that this great sale of Government land could have earned the Government \$52.7 million. The June 1985 report of the WADC states that it entered into a contract to purchase the Perth Technical College site for a figure of \$20.5 million. In the Budget brought down in October 1985, the Government did not include the sale of the Perth Technical College site and yet a contract had been signed for \$20.5 million in June. It was the first time since 1944-45 that the Government had budgeted for a surplus. Why was \$20.5 million left out? I understand the Government signed the approval to accept the offer. The sale of that site is quite interesting. It did not go through until 10 December, a few days before the on-going sale to the Superannuation Board and others went through.

I compliment the Government on its attitude to payroll tax. I believe it was ridiculous, the Government's paying payroll tax to itself. It will save Government departments much unnecessary work. It was very difficult for me to understand the answer to my question which I received just before making this speech today. The answer states that the amount paid was \$48 million; I thought it should be higher. However, in the last year there was a massive payroll tax increase of about 21 per cent. Large employers of, say, 70 employees will find that increase intolerable. They are not interested in the fact that small businesses will not pay payroll tax. They are concerned only at what the cost will be to them.

The Australian accounting standards state that, for extraordinary items, there should be reconciliation between a major change in accounting procedures and the effects of those changes. I know that does not apply to the Budget, but I would have thought that the Treasurer would have reconciled his figures out of courtesy. I think he should have quantified the figures to show exactly what the increase of payroll tax would be. It will reap an extra \$48 million plus \$1 million for the Government, a very heavy increase.

The Opposition has said time and time again that payroll tax is a major disincentive to employment. Employers in blue collar industries are experiencing increases all the time in holiday pay loadings, workers' compensation payments, and the like.

I am surprised that the amount of payroll tax paid by Government departments was only \$47.9 million because the Education Department alone paid \$26.4 million last year and I would be surprised if it employed half the total work force of the Government.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Your question related to Government departments. You asked separate questions for departments and statutory authorities and you were given the figures applying to each.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Is the Attorney General suggesting that the figures supplied do not take into account the Departments of Health and Consumer Affairs, for example?

Hon. J. M. Berinson: The SEC. You would need to go through the list. You have been given the figures in the form you asked for them and you need to add them up if you are looking at all of the Government's costs.

Hon. MAX EVANS: But it cannot be added up. For years, the only department to show the payroll tax paid has been the Education Department. All the other departments have not shown it.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: You need to add up the figures provided in answer to question 509.

Hon. MAX EVANS: But the answer referred only to statutory authorities and departments.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: That is what you asked for.

Hon. MAX EVANS: The Minister has said that the total for all departments is \$47.9 million. If the amount paid by the Education Department is \$26 million, I would have thought that the total would be greater.

The increase is a huge one and I would have thought that the Minister could have identified the amount of money collected last year under that category to show what the real effect was this year so as to quantify the amount of extra payroll tax taken, which on a quick calculation is \$49 million or a 19 per cent increase. That is a very big increase. Payroll tax collections in 1982-83 amounted to \$254 million; in 1983-84, \$268 million, an increase of 13.5 per cent; in 1984-85, \$287 million, an increase of 19.6 per cent; in 1985-86, \$305 million, an increase of 18.4 per cent; and for 1986-87 it is estimated to be \$306 million, an increase of 0.7 per cent.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: That is inclusive, of course, of the increased payroll tax by State statutory authorities.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Yes, they are all in there. It is the same for all the other years, but the adjustment this year is in respect only of departments. I would like the Minister to look at the figure he gave me and tell me whether it includes all the other departments. Perhaps my question was not properly worded. I am a newcomer in this House and I do not know the jargon to use to get the right answers. I had the same trouble as an auditor. I cannot always get the right answers, but I keep going.

I would have thought the Minister, owning some property himself, would take a great interest in land tax. For several years, we have talked about improving the assessment of land tax. Land tax collection figures over recent years are as follows: In 1982-83, \$35 million; in 1983-84, \$42.5 million; in 1984-85, \$49.7 million; in 1985-86, \$52 million; and for 1986-87, \$58 million. The figures for the last two years are less the 10 per cent discount which has applied to every person who pays land tax, irrespective of increases.

Land tax is not really a wealth tax. It is a tax paid by the occupiers of a building. The owner of leased premises takes a bit longer to collect it from his tenant, but he does so eventually. I own a house which I rent out for \$100 a week. Last year the land tax was \$9.20 a week, or \$480 a year. Next year, the third year of increase, land tax for that property will be \$12 a week. It is only a small house on a small block of land and worth, I think, about \$48 000. That money must be collected from my tenants. The same applies to owners of blocks of flats and the like.

The Government's statement that land tax on properties valued at \$5 000 or less would not be payable sounded very good, but it really

means an exemption from paying only \$15 in land tax. The Government would be a mile in front. The paperwork would cost \$15.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Are you saying that those properties should not have been exempted from paying the tax?

Hon. MAX EVANS: It sounds good.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: Either it is good or it is not good. If it is not good we should abolish it.

Hon. MAX EVANS: It is good.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: That is the first time I have heard that from you, Mr Evans, and I appreciate it.

Hon. MAX EVANS: I have given the Minister some recognition before.

This measure will mean that 7 000 taxpayers will pay less, amounting to a reduction in receipts to the Government of about \$105 000. The blocks involved are small outer suburban blocks or those in small country towns. I did a bit of research, as I wondered whether the Homeswest houses came into this category. However, they do not attract land tax. I commend the Minister for what he is doing with Homeswest to equate properly the cost of residential accommodation there and where Homeswest is charging for rents. It is a competitive market and land tax should be paid by Homeswest. Homeswest pays land tax as an adjustment when it buys land, but not in subsequent years.

On behalf of the Treasurer, the Minister said that the Government was going to drop the top rate of tax from 2.4 per cent to two per cent, a drop of 16 per cent. This is negligible in view of the increases in land tax. I hope that the Minister will have to bear the brunt of some of these very high increases because if it starts to hurt him, he might realise how much it hurts others. The 2.4 per cent land tax scale at present applies to land valued at \$120 000. That scale came in in 1968. With respect to commercial properties, land tax is roughly equated to the rental value for the area. I have a Colliers index for prime new office space for the years 1960-1984. Between 1968 and 1984, the increase in rents was 480 per cent. The \$120 000 value should have been scaled up.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: But if that had happened, just being practical about it, the rate of tax would have had to be increased because at the end of the day you need a certain amount of revenue, don't you?

Hon. MAX EVANS: I agree completely, but I think land tax is a very unfair tax.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: So is payroll tax.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Yes, they all are. The owner of two or three properties pays a wealth tax because he charges a tenant land tax at the lower rate, but pays the top rate himself. That is unfair. I am looking for some equality in this. It is like the old days of probate duty when the base was never lifted. Each property should be taxed individually and not grossed up. If the Minister came to me afterwards, I could tell him how to avoid that but I will not because free advice is worth only what is paid for it.

I compliment the Government for what it is doing with Homeswest. However, it worries me when I see how it is looking for a return on money. Some Homeswest houses are being constructed at Fremantle and North Fremantle. Some are being finished and some are not, so I realise the problems. However, we are putting up some very high-class places, but the return must be very low. I wonder how we can afford to do this. Perhaps the architects and planners are getting carried away. If we scaled down the quality of the properties, we might be able to construct twice as many.

Hon. J. M. Brown: Would you prefer hovels?

Hon. MAX EVANS: I am not suggesting that we build hovels there.

Hon. D. K. Dans: We are using the profits from those very high-class town houses to build smaller units. That is the philosophy.

Hon. MAX EVANS: What profits? The profits on rent or the profits on resale?

Hon. D. K. Dans: The profits we will make on the sale of those units.

Hon. MAX EVANS: Is the Government going to sell the units in North Fremantle?

Hon. D. K. Dans: That's right. The Minister has made no secret of that.

Hon. MAX EVANS: That is good, because the North Fremantle buildings are very expensive places if they receive only low rentals. The rent would not even cover the land tax—which Homeswest does not pay—or other rates and taxes, let alone interest.

I return to my points about the sale of Government land. Last year land was sold at Burswood Island, Bridgewater and Woodlands; the Perth Technical site was also sold. Revenue from the sale of that land amounted to about \$44 million. Some of it was budgeted for, and some of it was not, but proceeds from the sale of land went to the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

I know, I have heard that the Minister has been quoted on this before. We must look at some way of avoiding it. I accept that this Government must take notice of some of the terrible things going on in other States. From the sale of vacant land, \$44 million is going into Consolidated Revenue. The Perth Technical College site was not vacant, but the Woodlands and Bridgewater land was. We took it from the natives.

A member: The natives?

Hon. MAX EVANS: It cost us nothing, and we are paying the money straight into Consolidated Revenue. I will agree on that.

Hon. J. M. Berinson: But it is because that has gone into Consolidated Revenue that the funds from the short-term investment income were not required. That is another way of saying that those funds were not brought into Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. MAX EVANS: The WA Development Corporation is assessing all our assets to liquidate them, and so on. I do not disagree with that in part, but I do disagree with where the money is going. We have a State fund which was set up many years ago to take dividends from the R & I Bank, the Argyle diamond mine, and the WADC. That fund goes up and down, and we could take funds out of there and put them into Consolidated Revenue when the money is needed. I accept that; if it is cash accounting, I approve of that.

We could use the State Development Fund so that when we sell these assets the money is earmarked for something specific. I approved when I heard that the State Energy Commission was to sell buildings in Wellington Street to pay off overseas loans. Those debts can be offset at very high interest rates, and that is good. If we could sell land—and such sales have increased a lot in the last few years for various reasons—the proceeds could go to the State Development Fund, the money could be left there and taken out when necessary.

Everyone refers to the Westminster system, and I am still slowly trying to research that system. People perceive the Westminster system as achieving a lot more than it does in regard to the Budget and many other matters. However, that is a story for another day. So I put that forward as a recommendation.

Where do we stand? We do not know where we are from year to year. Three years ago \$50 million in royalties was paid by the joint venturers of the Argyle diamond mine. Those royalties were paid so that the joint venturers

did not have to build a town site at the mine. A tax deduction was received on that money. It was brought into State revenue. Later the Argyle shares were bought and sold. We had this abnormal amount for prepaid royalties which came into one year's revenue. That is why I keep saying it is very hard to know what is happening in regard to Government financing because of this cash accounting.

I wish to refer to some other taxes, and in particular, to tobacco licence fees. In 1983 there was a massive increase in the tobacco licensing fees to fund the Quit campaign which was to save our souls. The Government was going to save all those smokers. The tax which was paid on tobacco products was to be used to help people to stop smoking. The rationale was that if people were charged a lot for their cigarettes, they would not continue to smoke. It has cost \$2 million a year to fund that campaign, but the scheme has not worked out in the way it was planned.

Hon. D. K. Dans: I have not started smoking!

Hon. MAX EVANS: One of the few pleasures many pensioners have in their lives is the enjoyment they get from smoking. What has happened is that they keep smoking and they eat less. This revenue from tobacco tax has escalated rapidly, and I will give members some idea of the increase involved. In 1982-83 this tax brought in \$16.9 million. In 1983-1984—the first eight months of the new tax—it was \$46.7 million. In 1984-1985 it was \$50.4 million, and in 1985-1986 it was \$57 million, and by 1986-1987 it will be \$60 million. That is a massive increase for one item, and only \$2 million each year goes to the Quit campaign. I commend the Government for getting away with such a massive increase in one tax without a huge groundswell of complaint from the public. The poor pensioners will eat less so they can smoke more.

Hon. Tom Helm interjected.

Hon. MAX EVANS: I have been told that they eat less because they want to keep smoking the same amount. I do not smoke.

Another area where there has been a massive increase this year is in liquor licensing fees. We keep looking for more and more ways of taking money from the people. The Government consumes money; it does not generate wealth. It takes money away from the people so that it can spend it. It goes on and on. This must be stopped. We must look more closely at expenditure. If the Government takes out \$23.5

million at the end of one financial year, it must make adjustments at the other end. We really do not know what the Government is doing with our money.

Another tax which the Government brought in was the financial institutions duty. Western Australia started with one of the highest rates in Australia. We were blessed when the Government dropped that back to three per cent! The imposition of that tax will bring in \$20.5 million next year. It brought in \$27 million last year and \$35 million the year before. Four years ago that massive impost did not even exist.

My final observation is about my efforts to try to work out the problem of financing Federal and State Governments through increases in taxes. I cannot find out the exact figure, but wages and salaries represent about 70 per cent of the State Budget. With the increase in the work force in the last couple of years, it may be even more than that. The figure I had was for a few years ago. With the Federal Government, wages and salaries make up about 10 per cent of the total Budget.

With inflation, the Consumer Price Index, and a 10 per cent increase in wages to the State Government, there is a seven per cent overall increase in costs. With the Federal Government, salaries and wages do not represent such a major component of its Budget. Problems arise with what the Federal Government spends rather than what it pays out to its employees.

Now we are in a period of lower inflation, the Government is much better off, because with the slowing down of the rate of increase of the CPI and wages, more money can be expended on other matters. The Budget papers reveal that recurrent expenditure averages nine per cent. Under the Court and O'Connor Administrations, expenditure went up by 17 per cent, an increase which I think mainly reflected the high inflation rate and the fact that wages represented 70 per cent of the total Budget. That added to the expenditure of those Governments, but they were not responsible for the CPI.

I support the Budget.

HON. J. M. BROWN (South-East) [4.59 p.m.]: I believe the Burke Labor Government deserves the highest commendation for its efforts, particularly in the eastern goldfields and in relation to services to the community. While we are enjoying quite a progressive outlook in the eastern goldfields, the Government has

been mindful of the services rendered to it by the goldfields, and the Government's acknowledgment of this service is demonstrated by the facilities now available for the goldfields people.

I refer particularly to the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital, the progress that has been made with the WA School of Mines and the Kalgoorlie College, and in addition the enterprise shown by the resourceful mining companies in the area. The goldfields are assured of a very long and fruitful future.

The goldfields is the gateway to Western Australia. Perhaps the real gateway is the town of Norseman, which has a Holiday WA Centre, which, in the opinion of Hon. Phillip Pental, is not being utilised in the manner intended.

[Questions taken.]

Hon. J. M. BROWN: This has been of concern to Hon. Phillip Pental, and it has been the subject of some comments. My information and knowledge of the checkpoint is that it has done a remarkable job for tourism. Greg Latimer, the officer in charge of the Agriculture Protection Board checkpoint, and his staff have done an outstanding job for Western Australia, particularly in the prevailing circumstances.

Hon. P. G. Pental: I agree.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: For instance, in the month of August there was an increase of 600 vehicles at a time when some doubts were being expressed about whether the America's Cup would be successful. The numbers are continuing to mount, and the latest figures I have show a 25 per cent overall increase in vehicles coming across the Nullarbor during September.

The centre has been in operation for only one week with a staff officer who was recently appointed. He is working under difficult circumstances. There are no facilities for communication, and no on-line computer for bookings, but the checkpoint has been set up so that people can be introduced to Western Australia, firstly from the point of view of tourism potential. They are given directions which will take them to the south through Esperance and the Leeuwin, or to the north through the goldfields; and at the same time the checkpoint has been able to protect the agricultural industries of the State. The staff perform their task admirably, and anyone who has the opportunity should go there and see how they maintain their facilities and welcome people to Western Australia as well as doing an onerous job as APB officers. Members who do that would have the same outlook as I have.

The fact is that the Norseman Holiday WA centre is not yet officially open although it has been in operation for one week. An officer has been posted there and there are many problems associated with this particular posting. The first is concerned with accommodation.

The introduction to Western Australia for visitors has certainly been one of the assets of the agricultural checkpoint and I am sure that in conjunction with the Holiday WA Centre it will continue to welcome people to this State.

If one visits the other gateway to Western Australia, Fremantle, one will see that the people concerned with the development associated with the America's Cup are to be congratulated. I took the opportunity last week of having a look at Fremantle. Hon. Max Evans has made some comments about the type of buildings being constructed there by Homeswest.

If members care to have a look at Fremantle and at the buildings along South Terrace, they will see some outstanding buildings, some of which will be auctioned on 22 November. These buildings have water frontages and have some outstanding characteristics. The work on these buildings is excellent and I feel certain that the Government will receive a great return on these saleable items, as well as on the buildings which are to be used as rentals. I am certain the people of Fremantle will be grateful to the Government for the overall benefits provided to the port city this year. They will be grateful that the Government's attitude has been so good to their city. There has been Commonwealth funding, and the State Government's attitude towards the Fremantle City Council and the development of Fremantle itself has been excellent. I believe that through this Government's actions the true character of Fremantle will be maintained for the next century as well as for the present time.

I would refer now to the rural industry of this country. I would have enjoyed the opportunity to respond to comments made in the opening session when a motion concerning agricultural industries was moved. I am the first to admit that things are not well in the bush but not for the reasons that members of the Opposition have outlined.

There are two very important reasons for the concern and worry of people in the country. The first deals largely with poor production caused by the past season, while the second deals with the cost of finance to carry on.

Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: The trouble is they are going broke.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: Hon. D. J. Wordsworth says that the trouble is that farmers are going broke; Hon. E. J. Charlton said that 60 per cent of farmers were going to walk off their farms, while Hon. Bill Stretch, when commenting on the discharge of his motion from the Notice Paper, said that things were grim. I believe that some people have brought these problems on themselves.

However, I see the areas of concern as being firstly, production, which has been poor because of the drought—and members only have to look at the figures from the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation to see that there were some 750 applicants this year for carry-on finance while in 1984-85 the figure was only 158. That demonstrates the parlous situation that exists this year. Despite the downturn in production, the outlook is probably as good as it has been for many years. The gravest concern is in respect of prices for our goods. Is it as bad as members opposite would like everyone to believe? I, for one, would say that it is not.

Hon. W. N. Stretch: It is 10 per cent in Merredin.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: Hon. Bill Stretch can cite any percentage he likes in this Chamber. However, I would say that 10 per cent of farmers in any one year would be in a difficult situation, irrespective of seasonal conditions. Members of the Liberal Party and the National Party are going around the countryside saying that things are bad in the bush and that 60 per cent of farmers will have to walk off their farms. I believe that things are not as bad as members opposite would make out. This Government has been acting to protect the farming community and has been doing so very well indeed. However, nobody acknowledges that.

This Government has gone to great lengths to ensure that the State's production is in conformity with the progress of the State. There are commercial aspects which apply to the sale and disposal of land which the Primary Industry Association wants to keep on a free enterprise basis without any Government intervention. The PIA thinks that market forces should dictate the price of land. The Government has established a Government utility to ensure that people are not forced off their land unfairly and so the number of mortgagee sales is declining. However, there have been sales

and disposals of land at much reduced rates for the simple reason that the land was overpriced in the first place. The people who are in trouble now are in such a situation because they paid those high prices and they invariably used overseas currencies. By doing so they put themselves into difficulties, because there was an eventual fall in the value of the Australian dollar. However, the sale of our products, and in particular our grains, has never been better.

In the past year, Western Australia has had the highest delivery and sale of grain in the history of this State's production of primary goods.

Hon. W. N. Stretch: Then you agree that it is all to do with our internal costs?

Hon. J. M. BROWN: However, we have not been paid for all of those sales to the present time. In 1984-85 we had a record harvest and there will be one million tonnes of carry-over grain. Some learned people in the industry are suggesting that farmers should not be cropping grain, wheat in particular, next year. However, we are producing less than five per cent of the total world production. We cannot even make 20 million tonnes but we have been able to sell our wheat.

Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: That is what the farmers were trying to tell Mr Grill at Ravensthorpe yesterday.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: Hon. D. J. Wordsworth can say his piece later. I have a theme to develop and in doing so I will tell this House and the people of WA that things are not as bad in the bush as members opposite would paint them.

Hon. W. N. Stretch: We did not say 60 per cent either.

Hon. John Halden: Hon. Eric Charlton did.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: The export wheat record this year will mean that something like 900 000 tonnes of wheat will carry-over in WA and less than three million tonnes this year in Australia. In the previous year we had a carry-over of five million tonnes. For the enlightenment of members, I will tell them that there are farmers who will not take the cash payment which is being offered at the present time. The payout figure on offer this month is \$17.33. Many farmers are prepared to wait until next year and the year following for their total payout rather than be discounted on it. They are financial managers, they know how to operate their businesses and therefore they are competent enough to see that the cash payout may help some members of the farming com-

munity if it is made available to them. It is indeed very good that it is available to them, but I would say again that 1984-85 was a record year when over eight million tonnes of grain was produced. No-one, however, has said anything about that. No-one has said anything about how the Government has bent over backwards in its pursuit of an equitable price for fuel. There are people in the farming community who do not apply to the Australian Customs Service for their rebate of 20c a litre for fuel.

Of course, a State franchise levy is not applicable to the price of distillate and motor spirit purchased by farmers. If one looks at the price per litre of distillate delivered to a property in a rural community, one will find that depending on where it is bought it will cost between 22c and 24c a litre. The Federal Government has been able to offer a rebate to the farmers and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to John Kerin, MP for his efforts in this regard.

For the benefit of non-farmer members the cost of fuel for farmers last year was, in some cases, estimated between \$16 000 and \$40 000, but as a result of the Commonwealth rebate this cost has been halved. I have perused many farmers' budgets and have spoken with them and I understand the situation. That is what the Commonwealth Government has been able to do regarding the costs incurred by farmers.

Members seem to lose sight of what is happening. Wherever I go in the metropolitan area people say, "Things must be bad in the bush." A lot of it has to do with bad management, but I assure the House that many farmers are doing very well indeed. Some farmers in the marginal areas of the eastern wheatbelt manage their affairs extremely well and do not spend their money until they have received it. I know that that applies not only to farmers, but also to other people in the community.

The outlook in the rural area is not as good as it could be because of the European Economic Community and its subsidies and the United States of America and its subsidies. Despite those disadvantages Australia has been able to make its latest sales for \$US104 f.o.b. which is quite an achievement. By selling it at that price the payment for our first advance this year will be only \$20 less than the previous year. The first advance in 1985-86 was \$150 per tonne. The Commonwealth Government's preliminary guaranteed minimum price this year is \$130.60 per tonne. If we look at this matter objectively we will realise that as far as farmers are concerned the price of grain has

decreased this year by only \$20 per tonne despite the fact that the price of grain has dropped by \$100 per tonne. The wheat industry has been able to do this because of a guaranteed minimum price which has been supported by successive Governments.

The outburst by the member for Murchison-Eyre has been well canvassed in another place. He said on the ABC in the goldfields that all he did was to break the eleventh commandment; that is, not to get caught.

Hon. A. A. Lewis: This Government does not do too badly. What about DTX and Fremantle Gas and Coke Co Ltd?

Hon. J. M. BROWN: I advise the honourable member who has just interjected that I was kind to the member for Murchison-Eyre. I have not finished my comments about him. What he has said shows that he knows as much about the subject as does the Secretary of the Machinery Dealers Association.

The member for Murchison-Eyre said that his comments have now been vindicated because the Commonwealth Government has offered a guaranteed minimum price.

Hon. A. A. Lewis: Who said that?

Hon. J. M. BROWN: The honourable member can read what I said in *Hansard*.

The concept of a guaranteed minimum price goes back to 1946 and it was introduced by a Labor Government for the benefit not only of this State, but also of Australia. It is the Federal Government which has done everything for the farmers and the rural community.

In 1946 the scheme was known as the wheat stabilising scheme and the Minister responsible for introducing the relative legislation was Mr Reg Pollard.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon. D. J. Wordsworth): Order! Hon. A. A. Lewis will cease interjecting.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

The member for Murchison-Eyre said that we were subsidising wheat, and I would advise him that the guaranteed minimum price is part of the whole structure of the sale of this important commodity. It has been with us for 40 years.

What happened was that in the five years prior to 1973 something in the order of \$290 million of funds from the taxpayers' purse was spent on the stabilisation of the price of grain.

Since then that assistance has not been necessary and taxpayers' funds will not be required in 1986-87 to ensure a guaranteed minimum price.

It has been noted that in the Commonwealth Budget papers provision has been made for a guaranteed minimum price. However, the Federal Government considers that a contribution to the guaranteed minimum price will not be required until 1988 when it is anticipated that the pool will wind down. At this stage an impact on Commonwealth Treasury finances is not expected.

So much for the comment by the member for Murchison-Eyre that the taxpayer is subsidising the grain industry. It was a poor statement to make about an industry which requires support from all members of Parliament.

What really concerns me is what has been termed, "the persuasive influence of agricultural fundamentalism".

Many people in the rural community—not all of them—believe that a person who tills the earth is inherently better than those who do not and that he is born to be a primary producer. That sort of belief is completely untrue and it is preposterous to make that suggestion. The primary producer is being told by our opponents about this type of fundamentalism which pervades the industry and that does not do the industry any good at all.

I suppose a classic example that one could use is the sale of the Midland abattoir. I have not received any complaints about it, but no doubt other members have. I am sure that many members have raised the question themselves because they see an advantage in so doing. However, successive Governments have wanted to dispose of the Midland abattoir site.

Some members of the Opposition and, indeed, some members of the Government, probably believe the Government should not be involved in saleyards. It is probably my socialist philosophy, but I believe we should be involved in saleyards and abattoirs. I will continue to propound that theory because overall Government involvement provides the greatest benefit to the industry. Similarly, the Lamb Marketing Board, now the Meat Commission, was established for the benefit of the producers and consumers, as was the Wheat Board, which is also of great benefit to our State.

The attitude pervading country communities should be stopped by members of Parliament. We should tell our country constituents the real

facts, not try to hoodwink them by telling them the things they want to hear, such as that they are the backbone of the nation and are carrying the country on their backs.

Hon. W. N. Stretch: Your Minister said it yesterday.

Several members interjected.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: He might have said it but I am telling members what I think.

Several members interjected.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: This Minister has done more for agriculture and country people since he has been a Minister than anyone else, and that includes the sensitive Transport portfolio which the Liberal Government made a mess of with its deregulation and stupidity.

Hon. W. N. Stretch: He said he is carrying on Rushton's work; he admits it.

Several members interjected.

Hon. J. M. BROWN: Mr Grill has done an excellent job in transport and in agriculture. It is about time we told our primary producers the truth of the situation, rather than making them believe they are an overwhelming asset to the State and nobody else is doing anything. We should tell the farmers that they have a future; their wool has never been better and their stock is in the best condition it has ever been.

Through the Meat Commission and the private industry organisations available for slaughtering stock—E. G. Green and Sons comes readily to mind—the farming industry has received good service. I understand that that company wants to bypass some of the selling agents who operate. The men at the abattoir at Robb Jetty fulfil their obligations as employees with the highest commendation as far as I am concerned. Looking at Linley Valley and what Smorgens tried to do with the industry, it is easy to see why it is no longer operational. That operation has been an absolute disgrace.

It is high time we related to the farmer that he has a future. Specialist consultants, through the Department of Agriculture, are available to him free of charge. These skilled members of the department are competent to advise the farmer.

I believe the farm adviser has caused much of the trouble within the industry. Winston Crane was reported as saying—

"The time has ended when individual farmers can, without having taken professional advice from anybody other than

their banker, borrow sums of money ranging from \$500 000 to \$2 million, and then 18 months down the track, come to the PIA wanting us to bail them out," he said.

That is the sort of thing farmers have been able to do. The Primary Industry Association has had two bob each way in its attitude towards the Government and the industry, encouraging its members to support the association. I quote further from the article—

"Jacking up growth and our internal economy, principally by the use of borrowed capital, may look good to the uninformed on paper," he said. "But the reality of the situation is that on our current account for the twelve months, Australia will have gone backwards as a nation by about \$15 billion."

By contrast, he praised the financial sector for working "very diligently" to assist farmers.

He also gave the Government a serve.

I want to clear up some misconceptions; the rural community is not in as bad a state as people want us to believe. It has been through very difficult times and still has a difficult task ahead in the sale of its products, particularly wheat. But, I am sure we shall be able to meet that situation as we did in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. We had downturns then and came through them. I am sure we shall meet our commitments and that we shall not need to dump any grain into the ocean. We have never done that in the past and, if there is surplus grain which we have to sacrifice, what better way to dispose of it than to give it to people who need food? What would be a more humanitarian attitude to take? It is certainly better than telling farmers that they should not grow grain.

The agricultural industry has a brighter future than our opponents predict; it is not all doom and gloom. The people I know who are still in the industry will be there next year and the year after because of the attitude of the Government in this direction and the planning that has taken place at a national level. The marketing boards have been streamlined and keyed up to make approaches for the sale of our products unparalleled in the history of agricultural production.

I was concerned at some of the responses to the fringe benefits tax. Members of the Country High Schools Hostels Authority through the Press took the Federal Government to task,

making certain assertions about the fringe benefits tax. I refer to Mr J. Trevaskis, chairman of the Geraldton hostel board, and Mr Fairclough, chairman of the Narrogin High School Hostel. They stated that the Country High School Hostels Authority will be paying enormous amounts in fringe benefits tax which will be a burden on the parents of the students who have the good fortune to attend the hostels. Western Australia has 10 of these hostels and I have been associated with Merredin hostel, the oldest in existence, since its inception.

It was suggested that an amount of \$7 341.60 would be payable in fringe benefits tax this year and it was stated that the hostel would find it difficult to pay those taxes. I quickly pointed out to the authority and the warden of the hostel that they were completely wrong; that their rental accommodation was subject to a criteria evaluation in the first instance and, in the second instance, it was subject to a 40 per cent discount.

I believe that discount has now been amended to 50 per cent. If they want to give meals to their staff, all they have to do is pay them extra to cover the cost of the meals. At \$2 per meal, it is quite a small fee to pay, and by doing that they could reduce the \$7 341.60 to less than \$1 000.

That sort of comment misleads the people in the country as to the commitment high school hostels will have to make to increase their fees, and is most unfair to the country community. Everyone should be told that each student at the hostel receives \$3 per week subsidy from the State Government. In addition, they receive \$250 per year from the State Government, and they receive a further \$989 per year from the Commonwealth Government. The total contribution is \$1 239, plus the \$3 per week subsidy.

If there is a difficulty in financing a child at one of the 10 country high school hostels, parents are eligible for a grant of up to \$1 830, subject to a means test. So if they are paying \$3 400 a year for their child at a high school hostel, there is a considerable contribution from both State and Federal Governments towards that child's welfare. I draw this matter to the attention of the House because of the unfortunate circumstances concerning a youngster who was denied the opportunity to go to school at the Narrogin hostel because the parents did not meet their fees for some considerable time. The contribution by the Commonwealth to the country high school hostels

makes it a very attractive proposition for families.

Despite the question of the fees charged to each student, I have made representations to the Government, and will continue to do so, to ask that it consider taking the responsibility of the warden and supervisors into its hands at Government expense, rather than those families having to board youngsters at the hostel. That is done with agricultural colleges, so there is no reason for it not being done for country high school hostels, and I hope that does eventuate.

Another matter which concerns me and which has come to prominence recently is the question of people who have been convicted by the courts and for many years suffer the indignity and the stigma of having their character blemished by some minor incident. This matter was first brought to my attention not in this Chamber, but in Kambalda, where a miner from that town, in the days of the SP bookie, stood in for the illegal bookmaker, was taken to court, and was eventually fined the sum of 10 pounds. He has had that stain on his record for over 30 years. It was a common practice with SP bookies for someone to stand in for them, because if one was caught too many times as the person operating the illegal betting transactions, one was subject to a gaol sentence.

Hon. P. H. Lockyer: It was the second time, into the slammer, was it not?

Hon. J. M. BROWN: No, it was not the second time, but if it became too prevalent some magistrates would wield a very heavy hand with a gaol sentence. I look forward to the State Government implementing a procedure to rectify this matter. The Western Australia Law Reform Commission's proposal is a worthwhile one, and I trust legislation will be brought in so that a human approach is taken to give these people the opportunity to wipe their slates clean.

I wished to bring many other matters to the attention of the House, but my time is fast running out. However, I do say to the House that the Government's performance, particularly for country people, has been unparalleled in my experience in public life and I believe we have a responsibility to our rural communities to give them that support.

I wish to put a final matter to the Minister for Budget Management concerning a question without notice that he answered with reference to public servants. When one or two public

servants are taken from a country town, that can represent up to 50 per cent of the public servants working there, and the impact of that is very detrimental to country communities. We value the contributions public servants make, unlike those people who always criticise public servants. They are a very important, integral part of the community, and I would not like to see them lost because they are never replaced. I ask the Minister for Budget Management to be mindful of his responsibility in this matter when it arises.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon. Doug Wenn.

AMERICA'S CUP YACHT RACE (SHOPPING HOURS) BILL

Assent

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Bill.

AMERICA'S CUP YACHT RACE (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion without notice by Hon. D. K. Dans (Minister with special responsibility for the America's Cup), and read a first time.

Second Reading

HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Minister with special responsibility for the America's Cup) [5.46 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Shortly after *Australia II* won the America's Cup, the Government of Western Australia initiated a strategy plan to ensure the State's ability to successfully host the America's Cup defence.

The first piece of special legislation, necessary in conducting such an event, was passed earlier this year. At that time, members appreciated that existing legislation in Western Australia was never intended to superimpose an event such as the America's Cup yacht race and its associated activities.

This Bill reflects the recommendations of two legislative working parties established to ascertain whether there was a need to introduce changes to existing legislation. The Transport Legislative Working Party, comprising representatives from the Police Department, the State Planning Commission, the Fremantle City Council and the America's Cup Office, has identified several areas where existing legis-

lation was inadequate to meet the needs of the event.

For example, the process of providing additional parking facilities or alterations to existing facilities could take several weeks. Where a local authority has by-laws covering parking, the local authority must endorse the proposal and recommend the proposal's implementation to the Minister for Local Government. Once approved by the Minister, the local authority may then implement the proposal. Where the local authority does not have its own by-laws covering parking, a proposal must be forwarded by the Commissioner for Main Roads for the local authority's endorsement. Once endorsed, the Commissioner for Main Roads may then implement the proposal.

The provision of traffic signs and signals requires the approval of the Commissioner for Main Roads, with implementation taking several days. In addition, not all local authorities have the power to tow away vehicles that may be obstructing traffic or vehicles that may in fact be abandoned.

In response to these matters, this Bill proposes uniform legislation to enable a rapid response to any unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the period of the America's Cup. The provisions of the Bill include the power to close roads if considered necessary.

I would like to point out that visitor number predictions are available. However, the actual number of people visiting the State and areas around the State during the period may vary considerably given a number of varying circumstances such as whether or not racing or other events are scheduled for particular days, the yachts to be competing on any given day, or even the weather.

Because of these variable circumstances, the impact of visitors on the road system will be known at short notice, and consequently legislation should be sufficiently flexible to respond to the circumstances. The legislation will be vested in one Minister who will have the power to issue orders. In issuing orders, the Minister may consult with the Transport Advisory Committee that is proposed to be established in this Bill.

The second legislative working party comprising representatives from the State Planning Commission, the Health Department, Department of Local Government, the Western Australian Tourism Commission and the Caravan Parks and Traders Association, has ident-

ified potential problems in accommodating the expected influx of caravaners and campers.

Three areas have been identified that will ease the potential for problems. These are—

Temporary overloading of caravan parks;
accommodation of caravans on private property; and
contingency parks for caravans and camps.

In regard to the temporary overloading of caravan parks, this Bill will enable a caravan park proprietor to exceed the registered number of caravans that may be parked in a caravan park, provided the site can accommodate additional vans, and subject to the approval of the local authority.

With regard to the parking of caravans on private property, the Bill will enable visitors to park a caravan on a residential lot, thereby reducing the impact upon existing caravan parks. At present, the by-laws enable only members of the family of the occupants of the residence to do this.

The Bill will enable temporary, emergency caravan parks to be set up on private and/or public land. Although it is expected that existing caravan parks will have adequate capacity to cater for the expected demands, it is prudent that the State Government designate contingency caravan park sites in case there are

not sufficient facilities available due to unforeseen visitor numbers.

In conclusion, the State Government has endeavoured to legislate for all anticipated circumstances and situations that may arise during the Cup defence. However, with such a significant event, such legislation must account for the unforeseen as well as the expected.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon. P. G. Pandal.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—
Leader of the House) [5.53 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until
3.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 11 November.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.54 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

TAXES AND CHARGES

Payroll Tax: Government Departments

509. Hon. MAX EVANS, to the Minister for Budget Management:

With respect to the effect of discontinuing the payment of payroll tax by Government departments, would the Minister please provide—

- (a) the payroll tax figures for 1985-86 "vote" and "expenditure" for all departments;
- (b) the payroll tax in respect of Government statutory bodies received for 1985-86;
- (c) the estimate of payroll tax to be received by statutory authorities for 1986-87?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (a) Payroll tax expenditure was \$47 689 000 compared with the Budget provision of \$47 793 000;
- (b) \$39 376 000;
- (c) \$46.8 million.

EDUCATION: STUDENTS

School Leavers: Assistance

546. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Employment and Training:

Further to his answer to my question 506 of Tuesday, 22 October 1986, will the Minister advise—

- (1) How many school leavers indicated a need for assistance?
- (2) How many school leavers have been placed in—
 - (a) employment;
 - (b) training; and
 - (c) education?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) The YES scheme has assisted 2 370 1985 school leavers.
- (2) (a) 11 400;
- (b) 2 855—short-term training assistance not included;
- (c) 7 549.

HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

Lower North Province

548. Hon. P. H. LOCKYER, to the Minister for Community Services representing the Minister for Housing:

How many State houses are proposed to be built during the 1986-87 financial year in—

- (a) Carnarvon;
- (b) Denham;
- (c) Exmouth;
- (d) Meekatharra;
- (e) Wiluna;
- (f) Mt Magnet;
- (g) Cue;
- (h) Laverton;
- (i) Leonora; and
- (j) Menzies?

Hon. KAY HALLAHAN replied:

Subject to availability of land and finance, Homeswest's 1986-87 programme, including Aboriginal housing, is to complete—

- (a) Carnarvon—14;
- (b) Denham—nil;
- (c) Exmouth—nil;
- (d) Meekatharra—1;
- (e) Wiluna—nil;
- (f) Mt Magnet—4;
- (g) Cue—nil;
- (h) Laverton—2;
- (i) Leonora—7;
- (j) Menzies—nil.

POLICE STATION

Mt Magnet: Budget Allocation

549. Hon. P. H. LOCKYER, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

Can the Minister inform me of the use of the estimated \$7 000 proposed in the 1986-87 State Budget for the Mt Magnet Police Station?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

The \$7 000 proposed in the 1986-87 State Budget is for the final payment for construction of replacement quarters for the officer-in-charge at Mt Magnet.

FISHING BOAT HARBOUR

Learmonth

550. Hon. P. H. LOCKYER, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) What is the present situation concerning a proposed fishing boat facility to be built at Kailis Fisheries at Learmonth?
- (2) When is commencement of this project expected?
- (3) When is completion of the proposed fishing boat facility expected?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) Site investigations for a fishing industry facility at Learmonth have been completed. However, in view of the high cost and minimal shelter which such a facility could provide, alternative types and locations for a facility are being examined.
- (2) and (3) This evaluation is scheduled for completion in early 1987, thereafter enabling project timing to be determined.

STATE FINANCE: BUDGET

Allocation: Harbour Facility

551. Hon. P. H. LOCKYER, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

With reference to the proposed expenditure of \$53 000 on investigations of a proposed harbour facility in the 1986-87 State Budget, what will this expenditure be used on?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

The 1986-87 budgeted expenditure of \$53 000 will be used to evaluate alternative types of commercial boat facilities in Exmouth Gulf.

DENHAM JETTY

Budget Allocation

552. Hon. P. H. LOCKYER, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

With reference to the proposed expenditure of \$340 000 on the Denham Jetty facility in the 1986-87 State Budget, what will this be used on?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

This project is stage 2 of improvements to fishing industry facilities at Denham which were commenced in 1979 following severe damage to the old jetty by cyclone "Hazel". Work currently nearing completion involves the extension of the excavated boat basin adjacent to Knight Terrace and the construction of a new steel-piled timber-decked jetty immediately to the north of the existing slipway-launching ramp. The damaged outer section of the old jetty has also been demolished.

MIDLAND ABATTOIR:
REDEVELOPMENT*Public Environmental Report*

556. Hon. NEIL OLIVER, to the Minister for Community Services representing the Minister for Environment:

With respect to the redevelopment of the Midland abattoir and saleyards—

- (1) Has the public environment report been advertised?
- (2) If "Yes"—
 - (a) in which newspapers and on what dates;
 - (b) has all the advice been received from Government departments, public, and local authorities;
 - (c) when were the recommendations and report received by the Government;
 - (d) does the environmental impact assessment support the proposed development; and
 - (e) how many submissions were received from the general public?

Hon. KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) No. The public environment report is still being prepared.
- (2) Not applicable.

BOAT HARBOUR

Carnarvon: Budget Allocation

557. Hon. P. H. LOCKYER, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

With reference to the proposed expenditure of \$250 000 on the Carnarvon Boat Harbour in the 1986-87 State Budget, what will this be used on?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

These funds will be expended on the construction of mooring pens for fishing industry and commercial craft whose owners enter into a pen rental agreement with this department.

SPORT AND RECREATION

Cycle Paths: Budget Allocation

558. Hon. TOM STEPHENS, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) What funds were provided in the State Budget as part of the Western Australian Government's strategy to assist local government with bicycle paths?
- (2) Are funds still to be made available to local government authorities under this scheme?
- (3) Will the Broome Shire Council receive any funding during 1986-87 to commence work on the first part of its bicycle path plan?
- (4) If so, how much will be made available and what will be the extent of the project that will be undertaken as a result of this funding?
- (5) How many other local government authorities in the Pilbara or Kimberley will receive funding under this scheme in the current financial year?
- (6) What details are available about any of these projects?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) \$525 000 is provided for all bicycle matters. These include staffing, educational, enforcement, engineering, and funding programmes.

- (2) Funding and other priorities associated with the implementation of a bicycle policy will be considered shortly, following the establishment of staff positions. In view of the large volume of requests from local governments for assistance, it is likely that many will not be met.

Alternative sources of funds, such as those available under the community employment programme, should be considered by local governments.

- (3) to (6) No decisions have been made on the matters raised in these questions.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Contract Printing

164. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Works and Services:

- (1) Is it correct that in 1985-86 \$5.9 million was spent by the Government on contract printing?
- (2) Is it correct that this item has been abolished for 1986-87?
- (3) Does this now mean the Government Printer is handling all Government printing and nothing goes out on contract to the private sector?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) to (3) I would prefer that the question be put on notice, but the answer to the last part is "No". The Government Printer will not be handling all Government printing. Printing will be going out to the private sector.

Incidentally it is now the State Printing Division.

BILL OF RIGHTS

Submission

165. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Attorney General:

Is he prepared to release the contents of the State Government's submission to the Commonwealth on the contents of the now defunct Bill of Rights?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

No.

STATE FINANCE

Consolidated Revenue Fund: Withdrawal

166. Hon. MAX EVANS, to the Minister for Budget Management:

What action will the Government take to rectify the over-sight of withdrawing the sum of \$23.5 million at 30 June, which was commented on by the Auditor General and which requires an appropriation by law or the authorisation of the Governor?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

I refer the honourable member to a statement issued by the Treasurer, which covers this matter.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES: PUBLIC SERVICE

Appointments: Freeze

167. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Budget Management:

- (1) Does a freeze still exist on public service staff appointments?
- (2) For what reason has provision been made for an increase of 20 per cent in the staffing of the Probation and Parole Service?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) I should firstly explain the nature of the staff freeze, which is not as complete as its description might indicate. The freeze applying to Government departments is subject to an ability by departments to seek exemption in particular cases. The system is therefore best described as a partial freeze. That is still in place, and the position is that it will be lifted on a department by department basis as agreement is reached between the respective departments and the Public Service Board on a target staff level to be achieved by 30 June next year. That in turn is part of the process which seeks to ensure that the Government's commitment to an overall reduction of 3 000 in the public sector work force will be met.
- (2) I ask the member to place this question on notice, as a number of factors would be involved in making up the total vote of the Probation and Parole Service.

BILL OF RIGHTS

Submission

168. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Attorney General:

Supplementary to the question about the Bill of Rights, does his refusal to release the contents of the State Government submission on the Bill of Rights in any way indicate that the Western Australian Government supported the contents of that Bill?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

It indicates neither support nor opposition.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Welfare Officers: Rural Areas

169. Hon. W. N. STRETCH, to the Minister for Community Services:

With regard to the special welfare officers working in depressed rural areas of Western Australia, are they employed by her department, or were they recruited from her department, and if so, how many are presently working in those areas?

Hon. KAY HALLAHAN replied:

In general terms they are employees of the Department for Community Services. However, if the member puts the question on notice I will get an accurate answer.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Perth Technical College Site: Valuation

170. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Budget Management:

- (1) Is he aware of the report in tonight's *Daily News* concerning the alleged new valuation of the Perth Technical College site?
- (2) If not, will he investigate its contents?
- (3) If he is aware of it, does he still believe the Government got a satisfactory return from the sale of this asset?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) to (3) I am aware of the report in tonight's *Daily News*, but on my reading of it there is no suggestion that the figure mentioned constitutes a valuation of the property.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Old Swan Brewery Site: Sewerage

171. Hon. MAX EVANS, to the Minister for Works and Services:

In relation to that last question, at least the State Superannuation Fund will be a big benefactor if there is an increase in the value of the property, because it owns half.

Is the Minister aware of the major sewerage expenditure at the Swan Brewery site redevelopment which was not anticipated? If so, how much will it be; if not, can he find out?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

That seems to be a smelly question. It would be far better directed to the Minister for Water Resources, Ernie Bridge.

The PRESIDENT: I remind the honourable member who asked the last question that there is no provision in this category of business to make statements.
