

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 11 November 1987

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

ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION BILL

Assent

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

On motion by Hon Fred McKenzie, resolved --

That leave of absence for three consecutive sittings of the House be granted to Hon C.J. Bell, Hon Robert Hetherington, Hon J.N. Caldwell and Hon S.M. Piantadosi on the ground of parliamentary business interstate.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES' HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 October.

HON G.E. MASTERS (West -- Leader of the Opposition) [2.36 pm]: The Opposition supports the Bill, which amends the Government Employees' Housing Act 1964. It is proposed to restructure the board of the Government Employees' Housing Authority, better known as GEHA. The Bill proposes to increase the membership of the board from five to eight. The positions will be permanent and the additional three members to the board will be a representative from the Civil Service Association, the Western Australian Police Union, and the Teachers Union. I understand that 80 per cent of GEHA homes are occupied by members of the Public Service, the Civil Service Association, or by school teachers. It is understandable that in deciding to increase the number of representatives on the board the Government would choose to appoint representatives from those three groups. I have no objection whatsoever to that proposition.

Amendments proposed to section 28 of the Act are quite important and we should reflect on the Government's proposed changes, which I certainly endorse. In cases where a person owns a home in close proximity to the GEHA home he occupies, he will be required to move out of the GEHA home and live in his own home. That is understandable because -- the Minister may correct me if I am wrong, but it is my understanding -- usually GEHA homes are subsidised to a certain extent by the taxpayers, and for very good reasons. Very often people are forced to live in GEHA homes to serve in the capacity of a police officer, teacher, or whatever in a country town, and the Government provides homes at a subsidised rental. If a person lives in a GEHA home he is fortunate because the rent is fairly cheap. It is reasonable, if he owns a home in close proximity to the GEHA home he occupies, that he should be required to move into his own home.

It must be obvious to members that the person who owns his own home and who lives in a GEHA home is likely to receive a higher rent for his own home than the rent he pays for the GEHA home. If such a situation arises, under this legislation GEHA will be able to say, "I am sorry, but you will have to move out of the GEHA home and live in your own home." I commend the Government for this proposition.

I found it interesting to read some of the speeches in another place pertaining to this Bill. Over recent times I have not studied the amount of money expended by the authority on its housing, and I was surprised to read that it spends at least \$40 million each year. It might be more than that, but certainly it is as much as \$40 million. It is a large sum of money. The authority is responsible for 38 000 homes, and if one puts a figure of \$100 000 on each home, which is not unreasonable taking into account the cost of country housing, the authority has about \$400 million in assets. It is a much bigger organisation with far greater responsibility than I had realised. It was only as a result of reading the debates in another

place that I became aware of it. We know that GEHA plays a very important role in providing housing to country areas, and I am sure that all country members, as well as many others, have had contact with people using this facility and are aware that if it were not for GEHA making these homes available, the situation would be very difficult in country towns.

I see that Hon Tom Helm, who represents the north of this State, is nodding his head in agreement and I am sure that he, as much as anyone, has good reason to recognise the services provided by GEHA to the community, particularly in some of the remote areas he represents.

The Opposition supports the Bill and will make no further comments in the Committee stage.

HON E.J. CHARLTON (Central) [2.41 pm]: The National Party supports the proposed changes. We are experiencing some problems at the moment with the Government housing situation in some country areas -- I am making a generalisation. Obviously the Government is well aware of the increases in rents in recent times; and Hon Mick Gayfer referred to some of those increased charges in his comments last night.

We are continually made aware of problems associated with Government employees being transferred to country areas and their search for suitable accommodation. Obviously we support the amendment which will allow these individuals representation and give them greater input into the decisions made. Increasingly Government employees are resisting transfers to country areas, mainly because of disruption to their families and housing difficulties. This amendment is a positive step but I ask the Minister to relate to the Minister in another place that although this housing problem is an ongoing one, it has increased in recent times. Some country towns have a surplus of Homeswest houses but a shortage of suitable accommodation for Government employees who are continually on transfer. They are a very necessary part of community life in country areas, and they are not only expected to live in those communities but are much welcomed by the communities.

The National Party supports the Bill.

HON KAY HALLAHAN (South East Metropolitan -- Minister for Community Services) [2.44 pm]: I welcome the support from the Opposition parties for this Bill. I agree with Hon Eric Charlton that it is disruptive to the family life of Government employees when they are transferred to country areas, and certainly adequate housing must be provided. I was pleased to hear that these Government employees are welcomed in country areas and that there is an appreciation of the expertise and the services they provide.

In response to the Leader of the Opposition, I indicate that certainly the rentals struck for GEHA housing are below market rental prices and to that extent he was quite right when he said that taxpayers subsidise this accommodation in country areas. This is a sensible amendment to allow those bodies to represent Government employees in the various country areas. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by Hon Kay Hallahan (Minister for Community Services), and passed.

TAXI-CAR CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 October.

HON G.E. MASTERS (West -- Leader of the Opposition) [2.48 pm]: The Bill before the House is a disappointment as far as I am concerned. Some members in this place will not realise, but certainly members of the Liberal Party will be aware, that Ian Laurance, the member for Gascoyne until his recent retirement, had introduced into the Legislative

Assembly a Bill which would have addressed this problem by amending the Police Act. It would have been far more effective than the legislation the Government has introduced in a half-hearted way to address a serious problem.

Very many members of the Legislative Council have been approached by taxi drivers in one way or another who said they were concerned at the danger some drivers faced, particularly on late-night shifts. It has become more and more frequent for people to evade their taxi fares; they get out of the taxi and refuse to pay, running off or into their own homes and there is very little the taxi drivers can do. Even if the fare evaders were caught, the fines imposed were not very high. As a result, constant complaints have been made to members of Parliament to do something about the problem. Ian Laurance sought to amend the Police Act so that the police could be called in to take some action. For some reason or another the Government did not proceed with that Bill; instead it introduced this Bill which seeks to simply increase the fines which can be imposed on the people who evade taxi fares. The fines are substantially higher; the maximum fine is \$500 but they could be fined much less. For some reason the Government considers this a better way to deal with the problem. I suggest many people will not be at all perturbed by the increased fine and will simply try to avoid paying the fare. The fear of a policeman being called in would provide a great deterrent.

I do not suggest that the Opposition will oppose the Bill, but the Government seems to have been bloody-minded on this matter in trying to gain some of the credit by bringing in its own Bill, which unfortunately is not as effective as the Bill proposed by the Liberal Party. Nevertheless, the taxi-car drivers and the taxi industry are grateful for any help, and although they would have preferred the Liberal Party proposal, they see some benefit in the increased fines and hope that will improve the situation.

I do not intend to talk for any length of time on this matter because Hon David Wordsworth has obviously done a great deal of work and will give the House a much better explanation. I say again that I am disappointed that the Government was not generous enough to accept the Liberal Party proposal. This matter is one that ought to be beyond the political scene. Everyone is concerned about the evasion of fares and about the increasing level of violence and the serious injuries which have occurred. I hope the Minister will respond by giving us a good reason why the Government decided not to proceed with the Liberal Party legislation but rather chose to introduce this much weaker legislation, which I suggest will not do the job.

HON D.J. WORDSWORTH (South) [2.53 pm]: This Bill is designed to prevent the passengers of taxi-car drivers absconding without paying the moneys they owe. I believe such people are called "runners" by taxi drivers. As soon as they get near their destination, they throw the car door open and flee for their lives. It is a sad reflection on life today that such activity has become more frequent. We have had taxi-cars for a long time and these problems have never been experienced to such an extent in the past.

When one looks at the Bill, one finds that section 66, which gives the Government the ability to make regulations, is to be amended. Paragraph (h) of section 66 of the Act now reads --

- (h) regulating the conduct and behaviour of passengers in taxi-cars and providing for the punishment of persons evading or attempting to evade the payment of fares and charges for taxi-car services;

I am amazed that we have a Bill before this House to break paragraph (h) of section 66 into two parts. I would be very surprised if we could not have imposed a greater fine for the two offences, with each having its own penalty. The Government has chosen to bring this Bill in just to divide paragraph (h) into two parts and provide a separate penalty for each offence. The Government could have changed the regulation, but instead it has decided to put the penalty into the Act by way of this Bill. This is completely contrary to what has been done in the past. We have always been happy to have regulations so that they could be updated without coming back to Parliament. In this case, the Government has done the reverse; it has pulled this provision out of the regulations and put it into the Act. I am sure the Attorney General is horrified about that, but that is what the Government has done in order not to show that it was embarrassed by the fact the Opposition had a Bill before the Legislative Assembly to overcome this problem. The Government had to find a way to save face, and it did that by introducing its own Bill.

The Opposition's intention in its private member's Bill was that the police should bring offenders to task. The Bill before the House gives that responsibility to authorised officers of the Taxi-car Control Board, whose job is to inspect taxis and to do the necessary paper work associated with the issuing of licences and following up taxi drivers who have committed traffic offences.

These officers are only on duty for certain hours of the day and on certain days of the week, and one can imagine how difficult it would be for them to catch offenders who have become "runners" two or three days after the event. It would have been hard enough for a policeman to follow these people up, but it is ludicrous to imagine an officer doing this job. Apart from anything else, many of these officers would not be of the right age and would probably not be of the right physique. A policeman has the ability to be able to call on residents to ask if someone lives in that premise, but the officers do not have these powers. I do not know what an officer is going to do in this situation. Presumably he will go and sit on the corner where the person absconded, and hope that he sees a person of that description coming by, because that is about all he can do. The officer has no power to apprehend previous passengers. The only power he has is laid down in the Taxi-car Control Act regarding dealing with people who are applying for and have taxi car licences.

I believe this Bill is just a complete whitewashing on behalf of the Government. It is interesting that two or three years ago, taxi drivers used to think that Hon Julian Grill was pretty good. I do not believe they think the same today about the Government. However, in view of not having a better Bill to support, the Opposition supports this legislation.

HON GRAHAM EDWARDS (North Metropolitan -- Minister for Sport and Recreation) [2.59 pm]: It is unfortunate that members continually use debate on legislation in an attempt to denigrate Hon Julian Grill, which seems to be a measure of how well he is going in this State and a measure of the great job he is doing and the way that he has been well received in the country. It is indeed obvious that is happening and that is why, at every opportunity, the Opposition attempts to attack the Minister through this Chamber. Let me reassure the House that this is not a half-hearted attempt to tackle the problem, nor is it a whitewash. What this Bill does, in effect, is to change the maximum fine, which was set many years ago, from \$40 to \$500. If that is not a severe deterrent and if it is not a measure of the concern the Government has for the wellbeing of taxi drivers -- particularly those who are working late at night and those who are vulnerable to people in the community who attempt to cheat -- I do not know what it is.

Certainly taxi drivers are vulnerable. There is no doubt about that. The Government's philosophy is that if it can attempt to make the penalty one which is significant -- and I believe what is proposed is a significant penalty -- it may well have the effect of making people think twice before they attempt to run, because there is a massive difference between a \$40 fine and a \$500 fine. I am sure that people will think twice before attempting to cheat. Certainly the Government believes that this will be an effective way of minimising the problem. I guess that if in some future period the Minister responsible for this matter believes that the step we have taken is not a big enough one, that Minister will then indeed be prepared to act and to reconsider the matter.

In the meantime I thank members for their tacit support of this Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Hon Garry Kelly) in the Chair; Hon Graham Edwards (Minister for Sport and Recreation) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1: Short title --

Hon G.E. MASTERS: I asked the Minister to comment on why the Government decided to take this course of action -- that is, to increase the penalty rather than to amend the Police Act. There must be an explanation, although I cannot imagine what it might be. Perhaps the Minister would advise the Chamber in that respect?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: The member referred to a Bill which was introduced by a

member of his own party. I have not had an opportunity to look at that Bill because it has not been before this Chamber. I explained the Government's philosophy in relation to this amendment; that is, it is better to create a penalty which will hopefully act as a deterrent and save having to call in the police. I think the Opposition's thrust was working the other way around. It is much better not to have to call in the police at all; hopefully creating a significant deterrent will have the effect of preventing that situation in the first place. That is simply the Government's philosophy.

Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH: The Bill says that there shall be a penalty of \$500. Can the court vary that penalty in any way? Does it not mean that the penalty will be up to \$500 rather than that the penalty will be \$500?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: As I understand it, that is the penalty.

Hon D.J. Wordsworth: It must be one or the other.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2: Section 66 amended --

Hon G.E. MASTERS: I take up the comment made by Hon D.J. Wordsworth when he asked whether the \$500 fine for the penalty is the maximum penalty. Knowing our courts as we do -- and it is the court's decision -- quite often a penalty substantially lower than the maximum penalty is applied. I would suggest that where a person has avoided paying a taxi fare of \$10 or \$15, that person is not likely to be fined more than perhaps double or treble that amount, so we are still around the \$40 fine. It probably would not be much more than that. It could be that the courts would view the matter more seriously if a bigger taxi fare was involved or if a particular person had done the same thing two or three times, but it is a difficult area. I cannot imagine that the taxi drivers will gain a great deal of protection from this legislation. Taxi drivers are under considerable threat, certainly at night and in the early morning, and in some parts of the metropolitan area.

Anything we can do to help taxi drivers is a good thing and I am sure that they would appreciate that help. However, I think that the threat of a policeman being called in would provide a greater possibility -- and it is still only a faint possibility -- for a penalty to be applied. After all, what does the taxi driver do? Someone jumps out of his taxi without paying the fare and runs off down the road; it may be that the taxi driver can identify the house the person went into, but what does he do? Does he contact the Taxi Control Board? I suppose that would be his first move, but does he then try to identify the passengers? I suppose he has to do that. What is the appropriate action? Will the Taxi Control Board represent that driver? The taxi driver has a job to do and the question of identifying a person and taking him to court for avoidance of a taxi fare of \$15 or \$20 seems to be something that a taxi driver would find hard to achieve. In other words the taxi driver would probably cut his losses and go back to his job. However, if it was a case of saying, "Righto, I'll call the police" and although it would cost time and money as far as the police are concerned, I maintain that that would be a far greater deterrent. Having a policeman knock on one's door in the middle of the night and saying, "Look, I understand you have not paid your taxi fare" would be a greater deterrent than having to wait a week or two for something to happen in the courts.

I feel sorry for our taxi drivers because they are not receiving enough attention from the Government. I will not get into personalities as far as the Minister doing his job properly is concerned. This is a Government Bill but I would simply ask: How often will these prosecutions take place? How much time and effort will it cost the taxi drivers? Will they in fact have to cut their losses and not bother? As a result, will the difficult situation which now exists continue to persist at perhaps an increasing rate? Having made those comments, I expect the Minister will say that the penalty will have a strong effect. I guess we can only wait for the results.

I ask the Minister if in fact taxi drivers report that the avoidance of taxi fares is continuing unabated, and whether he will consider the Opposition's proposition to amend the Police Act thus allowing the police to take a hand in overcoming this serious problem.

Taxi drivers are operating in fear of their person -- not necessarily with their lives in danger, but they are being robbed and mugged. As times become more difficult this problem will increase; taxi fare avoidance is part of the difficulties facing society today.

Will the Minister comment on the possibility of the Government's reconsidering the situation and perhaps giving favourable consideration to amending the Police Act?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: Should the need arise in future for reconsideration, I am sure the response from the Minister will be an appropriate one. I reiterate my earlier argument that by increasing it from \$40 to a maximum of \$500 the penalty is now a significant one for this type of offence. In the past some people in the community believed that a \$40 penalty was one to be taken lightly and, no doubt, one that did not create much concern. I am sure some people thought the \$40 penalty a joke, although taxi drivers do not feel that way.

The increase in penalty is a significant one which demonstrates the Government's concern for the people involved in the taxi industry, working late hours and at a time which makes them vulnerable to the actions of that section of the community which seeks to avoid its proper responsibilities.

Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH: Perhaps the Minister could tell us how an officer from the Taxi Control Board will go about apprehending and fining any offender. How does the Minister see a taxi driver contacting that officer? Under section 7 of the Act, how will that officer work?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: The taxi driver will convey such information to the persons responsible for pursuing the matter. It is always difficult to say offenders can be assuredly apprehended. The possibility exists whether the member agrees or not. How were offenders pursued when the penalty was \$40? The same way as they will be pursued when the penalty is \$500.

Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH: That is the answer I wanted. In theory people were to be pursued when the penalty was \$40, and that is why the Opposition believes the police should in future have powers to apprehend offenders and fine them. Previously, the Taxi Control Board had no hope of doing this, and that is why the offence of "running" has become so prevalent. People realise there is no chance of being caught. The Government has created a paper dragon in increasing the fine, as this could have been done by regulation.

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: I do not accept that argument at all. The difference between an offence which carries a penalty of \$40 and that which carries a penalty of \$500 is a significant one. The increase in itself will create doubts in the minds of people who may consider committing this type of offence.

Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH: It is ridiculous for the Opposition to keep raising these matters because the Minister obviously cannot answer them satisfactorily. The public are not aware of the contents of regulations and Acts and the penalties applicable thereto. The mere fact that the penalty has increased from \$40 to \$500 will not frighten every taxi hirer or would-be "runner". The public have no idea of penalties. If the offenders cannot be apprehended, the penalties are not likely to be a deterrent.

Clause put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by Hon Graham Edwards (Minister for Sport and Recreation), and passed.

ACTS AMENDMENT (CHILD CARE SERVICES) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 October.

HON G.E. MASTERS (West -- Leader of the Opposition) [3.18 pm]: The Opposition has strong reservations about this legislation. The question in our minds is very simple: Why change? I thank the Minister for the assistance given by two of her advisers, Jill Cameron and Jane Frazier, to my colleagues this morning. That brief gave us a better understanding of the legislation. However, I still ask why it is necessary to make this change; the present Act

seems to be adequate. The Government intends to repeal sections 118A and 119 of the Act which have been in operation for many years and will operate until this legislation is passed. Those provisions seem to cover the situation adequately, bearing in mind that they occupy one and a quarter pages of the Act at the very most. Most of the other requirements in the Act are dealt with by way of regulation. I consider that the regulations should be changed rather than the Act itself. If, in fact, the Government intends to proceed with these changes, it is absolutely critical for the Opposition to sight the draft regulations before it agrees to the progress of this legislation.

The regulations will have a very significant impact on the people involved in child care in the community. I accept that it is a very important and sensitive area, whether we are referring to child care services or "family care" which is part of the system, although a little different. I fail to understand why it is necessary to remove these provisions from the Child Welfare Act 1947 to the Community Services Act, unless it has something to do with some empire building in that field. The Opposition has been concerned about some of the activities of the Department for Community Services for a long time and I am sure that all members have had just cause to be concerned at some of its activities. One or two cases have arisen in recent days and I am sure other members have experienced similar problems.

In my view child care is not entirely a community responsibility, although I accept that the community has some responsibility in this area. Many people make their own arrangements for child care at their own cost; they do not ask for Government involvement, handouts, or support. Other people are not as fortunate and they make use of the various facilities funded either totally or partially by the Government. I am sure most people will agree with me that child care is not entirely the community's responsibility.

We must get our priorities right in this matter; the welfare of the child is most important and that priority should not be overlooked or overruled by people who want to set up a new profession -- a system whereby the Government takes full responsibility in this area and other people in the community who would like to be involved are unable to do so because of unreasonable demands placed on them by the regulations in force.

There could be a move by some people to over-regulate in this area and to achieve the demise of some of the "family care groups" who are involved on a part-time or casual basis to earn a few dollars a week to help with their rent or grocery bill. The Minister may say that that is far from the Government's intention and I should be pleased to hear her say so. It should be put on the record. We do not want to prevent the involvement of people such as a mother with one or two of her own children, who is very responsible and capable, and has a better understanding of managing and taking care of children than people with diplomas, university degrees, and the other things which seem to be popular these days. Such mothers are well able to look after other people's children; they may not have the best of facilities but they can do the job with love, care, and attention so that the end result is far better than the institutionalised care which may be an alternative. I hope that the Minister will advise that the Government will encourage the family care groups to take a bigger part in this area. She and I know that in country areas child care services would not be at all effective if it were not for people in the family care area.

I ask the Minister whether additional costs will be imposed as a result of the legislation. At the briefing today it was suggested that the Government had no intention of setting charges and that the various child care centres would probably set their own fees. Certainly those involved in family care would be free to make their own arrangements.

The Minister understands the need for, and has agreed to, some reference being made to the legislation at this stage. Clause 4 of the Bill defines "child care service". Section 118A of the Act defines it to a lesser extent and it is significant that the Bill includes a further definition in paragraph (c) which states --

family day care, that is to say care provided to a child in a private dwelling in a family or domestic environment;

Previously no reference was made to a private dwelling or a domestic environment. There may be good reason for the inclusion or it may simply be for convenience. I understand that it was previously defined in the regulations. If we are to take the major step of including the definition of "private dwelling" and "domestic environment", perhaps other matters should

also be included in the definitions -- for example, the definition of a family day care unit.

It has been suggested that under the regulations people providing family care in their own homes will be limited to caring for four young children. Presently they may care for up to five children. I do not know why that change has been made and I would have thought that in most cases five is a reasonable number. I would have been inclined to include in the legislation a provision whereby people providing family care in their own homes would be allowed to care for up to five children.

My understanding from the briefing today is that those people who have up to now looked after five children under what might be called a grandfather clause -- perhaps in this case it is a grandmother clause -- will be able to continue to look after five, but anyone obtaining a new licence will be limited to four. Five seems a reasonable number; it would make a difference to those who are seeking to earn a small income, and if licensed by the department they would be able to undertake that sort of job. I understand that the document given to us today -- I think it was just a summary of proposals of the new child care services regulations -- refers to the matters I have just raised. I was going to quote it but I cannot find the reference. The concern is that perhaps there should be five instead of four.

Hon Kay Hallahan: They are really safety provisions.

Hon G.E. MASTERS: The recommendations propose that the licensing is of the person and not the building or the residence. Is that right?

Hon E.J. Charlton: Yes.

Hon G.E. MASTERS: I suppose, in licensing a person to do a certain job, the person's suitability will be taken into account. It seems reasonable for five children to be the maximum number. I cannot see any reason for that to change. The legislation makes provision for relatives, guardians or custodians to be excluded from the requirement to obtain a licence. Also excluded are people who look after children free of charge. I imagine that some people will pocket the odd few dollars and say they are doing it free of charge, but we cannot do anything about that.

Clause 5 says --

A person shall not provide a child care service nor use or keep any premises for the provision of a child care service except under and in accordance with a licence or permit issued under this Act.

So, apart from those exemptions I have mentioned, anyone at all who looks after children on a child care basis and is paid will be required to obtain a licence.

The Bill also points out that where a person is refused a licence she can appeal to the Local Court. I do not think that provision existed before, so this will be an advantage. I cannot imagine that a housewife, or someone who has not had the ability or opportunity to get out into the wider community, would take the trouble to appeal to a Local Court if she is refused a licence.

Hon Kay Hallahan: That is how it goes.

Hon G.E. MASTERS: Perhaps the Minister can explain the regulations and how it can be done. The fairly simple and effective way seems to be by appealing to the Local Court with the least possible trauma and little or no cost. I do not know how that will be achieved, but perhaps we should be looking at that area.

I was concerned to see the massive increase in penalties for people who do not obtain a licence to look after children for reward. I am sure the Minister will argue that there needs to be a penalty, because the most important point of this legislation is to ensure that children are protected and that they gain the maximum possible protection from some of the dreadful things which happen to children these days. To discourage people who may not be the right sort of people from looking after children, a penalty of \$2 000 and a daily penalty of \$200 will apply, and for the second offence \$4 000. I know that these are maximum penalties. We talked about that in the legislation we have just dealt with. Nevertheless they are significant penalties, and I guess the Minister and the Government intend to dissuade unsuitable people from looking after children for reward. It is purely for the protection of the children themselves. I know one or two people who I am sure act illegally and look after a

child, receiving perhaps \$10 or \$20 a week as payment for food and whatever else is used. However, we cannot do much about that.

I cannot imagine what would happen if that sort of person were faced with a \$2 000 penalty and a daily penalty of \$200. I do not know how they would react. I suppose with severe shock. We have to hope the courts will deal with them in a reasonable way and perhaps rap them over the knuckles with a light penalty. I am sure \$2 000 is a maximum penalty.

Hon Kay Hallahan: We will clarify that, but it just says that is the penalty.

Hon G.E. MASTERS: Talking about licences and the issuing of licences, I should imagine that the cost of the licence is set by the Government. I would like to know what the cost is now, and if there is any intention to increase that cost, understanding that we are talking about the small family unit, or the housewife looking after one or two children. If the cost of the licence is significantly increased by way of regulation, that would deter people from carrying out the task which in this case is necessary, and it may drive them out of the field of child care. This would be unfortunate, and I would strongly oppose that proposition.

The whole of this legislation revolves around regulations, dealing with a number of other areas. The regulations will deal with the building and other environmental requirements for the provision of child care services. That is important because the regulations should not be so strong as to affect people looking after children in their own homes. We have all heard stories of the department coming in with a heavy hand and insisting that certain things are put into effect, such as special toilets for children. I think the Minister herself told me that in one case a toilet had to be at ground level in one of these care centres. That is utterly stupid. Regulations could apply to fencing, to certain arrangements in the house and the like. Alterations could be very costly, and may force a person to discontinue the service. I imagine the regulations will somehow or other set out these matters. As a Liberal Party, we want to have a look at the draft regulations to see what will happen. If they are to be too severe, we would be inclined to oppose the progress of this legislation until such matters were debated further and if necessary included in the legislation before the House.

Under proposed section 25(k), regulations may be made to regulate programmes of activities and equipment to be provided for child care services. Once again, certain equipment would be used in a child care centre of any size, but will this provision apply to the domestic scene or to the home? If this were the case, it would make it very difficult. I am sure it will not be the case but we want to see the regulations, having some distrust of the department from past experience. We have no hesitation in saying we deplore some of the things it has done. Again, we put a question mark against these regulations and ask whether they will affect people who take four or five children into their homes each day to look after them. If experiences such as the sort of thing that happened with the toilets are to apply in these areas as well, once again we would oppose the progress of this legislation until it was sorted out. I think that is understandable. Who on earth has ever heard of such a thing? I doubt whether any of those children live in a home where there is a special toilet sunk at ground level or a special little toilet in the corner. They just do not have them. They are used to their own homes and environment, and they gradually learn as they grow older.

In clause 9 proposed new paragraph (l) refers to regulating the administration of child care services, the records to be maintained, and the returns to be made. Once again, what will the regulations say to persons in the domestic situation? Will they have to keep a detailed record or a book and make returns each month? Will they have to keep other records that may be unreasonable in the circumstances? If that is the case, we ought to look at the regulations and make our own decision.

Members can see that our party's concern is that there is a big difference between the child care centres that are of significant size and are partly funded in many cases -- if not wholly funded -- by the Government, and the family care situation. If one intrudes on the other I suggest we look very carefully at the regulations to make sure there is a difference, that there are guidelines, and that the requirements for the big centres do not apply to the family unit. I think the regulations, with all the assurances, should be put forward to this House so we can see just what will happen.

I did raise a point with the Minister's advisers about a provision which is included in proposed paragraph 9(n), which states "providing for fees to be paid". I understand that has c

nothing at all to do with the regulations which will set down the charge to be made by people who look after children. In other words, I understand the fee to be charged will be a decision made by the child care centre, or by the mother looking after someone else's children. All these things are important.

In addition to the comments I have made, I refer to the summary of the proposals for the new child care services regulations which the Minister kindly provided for me today. I refer to page four of those recommendations, which set down the table for multi-age grouping and the requirement for people with certain qualifications to be available to look after children in different circumstances and situations. My great fear -- it is a philosophical argument, and I hope the Minister will give me some assurances -- is that there is in the long term a desire more and more to create the larger child care centres, and more and more to create a situation where trained people are required to look after these children.

I will quote from page five of the recommendations, which makes reference to the sort of qualifications needed in some child care centres under certain situations. This relates to the staffing requirements needed in figures provided by the Minister. It reads in part --

- A refers to a trained teacher holding a Degree or Diploma in Early Childhood Education from a recognised Australian University or College of Advanced Education, or equivalent as determined by the Child Care Services Board; . . .

Hon Neil Oliver: Where are you reading from?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon John Williams): Order!

Hon G.E. MASTERS: I am quoting from a document which contains the recommendations put forward by the special committee that advised the Minister and resulted in the preparation of this legislation. The Minister kindly gave me this document, and I will make sure my own members receive a copy of it in good time for the final debate on this legislation.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.00 pm

Hon G.E. MASTERS: Prior to the suspension I made the point that there will be certain requirements for people who are in charge of child care services. I pointed out that under certain conditions there will be a need for trained teachers, holding either a degree or a diploma in early education. I refer to page 5 of the recommendations, which reads in part as follows --

- B refers to a holder of a two year Certificate in Child Care Studies or Associate Diploma in Child Care from a recognized CAE or TAFE College, or equivalent as determined by the Child Care Services Board;

We go on to the requirement for the staffing of child care services. These relate to another reference I made earlier to page 4 of the recommendations where it outlines conditions for the ratio of staff to children -- the number of children to staff. If one relates that to the domestic situation, it would be quite ridiculous to suggest that a mother who has had perhaps four or five children, brought them up safely, lovingly and carefully, is not qualified to look after other people's children. To my mind such a mother would have the best qualifications; her qualifications would be far better than any obtained at a college or university. I am sure that the Minister's intention is not to apply these requirements to the home unit. In fact I am pretty sure it must not be the case. Nevertheless, it could be that the regulations do not take this into account or it might be that it is overlooked. It might be that the department itself is keen to erode gradually the situation and bring training requirements into those areas.

Again that gives us a good reason to say that before we proceed any further with this legislation, there should be brought before the House some draft regulations so that we can see what is intended and, if necessary, we may wish to bring some amendments forward so that rather than having regulations, the requirements are contained in the Statutes. This would mean that any change must be effected by being brought before Parliament rather than by way of regulation. I accept that regulations must come before Parliament but we all know that regulations can slip through without proper consideration by members on all sides of the Parliament.

I do not want to go into any further detail. The Chair has been very kind and allowed me to range over the clauses of the Bill, but I think in this case that was essential. I have advised

the Minister that my party at least would seek an opportunity to look at the draft regulations, which I understand are available but are not in a final form which could be presented to Parliament. I accept that position but at least there are draft regulations in being which could be made available to the Opposition. We are not being difficult or obstructive; we just think that this is a serious and important matter, which will affect a whole range of people in the community. It is a very sensitive matter at this time.

The Opposition understands that children and their protection are paramount. There is no argument about that, but at the same time many people in the community could be greatly affected by this legislation if it goes the wrong way. I urge the Government to accept the Opposition's position. The Minister has kindly said that we can have discussions with her advisers. Her advisers were very good this morning, and we will take advantage of the Minister's offer. I ask the Minister to give favourable consideration to this matter and if there are any other issues that need to be discussed, perhaps we can do so with her advisers and with the Minister personally.

I thank the Chair for its tolerance and urge members to look very closely at this legislation before it passes through the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon E.J. Charlton.

MINES REGULATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 October.

HON JOHN WILLIAMS (Metropolitan) [4.06 pm]: On the face of it this is a complicated Bill, but in fact it is quite an easy Bill insofar as it is in four parts. The first part deals with the establishment of a mines radiation safety board. Members would remember that not so many years ago -- maybe two years ago -- there was a great furore about a place called Capel. I am sorry Hon Colin Bell is working on parliamentary business overseas because I am sure he would have loved to take part in this debate. The mines regulation safety board, as outlined in this Bill, will be the authority that will control the disposal of mineral sands and their wastes which create radiation hazards. It was significant that the Mines Department at that time was dealing with radiation safety but there was no formally structured board. This Bill is structuring this board, not just for mineral sands and their radiation hazards but indeed for any mineral radiation that could appear in the future. It could be brought about by the mining of other minerals, which could lead to radiation hazards.

One of the most pleasing aspects of the set-up of this new board is that while it has been working on an ad hoc basis, it has never really had the underlying authority it needed to carry out its job efficiently. Even more important, I think, is the fact that in the long term, the board will be responsible to the Minister for Minerals and Energy. That is important because whenever a complaint is made, the board will be answerable to the Minister. This House knows perfectly well that I am against the establishment of quangos that are not responsible to any Minister. It is obvious that the Minister for Minerals and Energy has said, "No, they will be responsible to me and through me to the Parliament." That is a pleasing aspect of the legislation as far as I am concerned.

The second part of this Bill deals with the regulation of winding engines, winding engine drivers, and underground machinery. Up to now that has been the prerogative of the Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare. The Mines Department has experts who know what this is all about and consequently the authority for looking after that aspect of mining has been transferred to the Department of Mines. It has been made clear that apart from the Mines Ventilation Board secretarial services, there will be no increase in staff. In other words, this Bill will not create a monster. It will not create another semi-autonomous body that grows until it suddenly becomes its own department.

Naturally, there are people in the mining industry, as there are in every other branch of commerce, who are always attempting to outsmart the legislation. When the Mining Act was first formulated, fines for offences were quite steep. However, the legislation was formulated many years ago and this Bill now increases the amounts of those fines, making them more meaningful. The fines needed to be increased substantially because the people

involved in the industry are digging up thousands of dollars worth of produce and completely ignoring all of the safety provisions.

Finally, the Bill alters the constitution of the existing Ventilation Board which previously comprised members of the Department of Mines, with one or two other people included when required. Its membership has now been set down in the legislation. It is interesting to note that, in doing that, its members will be transferred and the positions filled by different organisations nominated under the formula. Apparently the present members will remain and it will be up to the trade unions involved to nominate new members.

It is also pleasing to note that the person who has accepted the position of chairman of the Mines Radiation Safety Board is Associate Professor Phillip Jennings from Murdoch University, who has no parallel in this State for the work he has done on radiation. Radiation will be of great importance as mining activity increases, not only in the mining of mineral sands and possibly uranium, but in rare earth mining and so on.

The Opposition supports the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by Hon J.M. Berinson (Leader of the House), and passed.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 10 November.

HON JOHN WILLIAMS (Metropolitan) [4.16 pm]: This is an interesting Bill. It proposes to restructure the Western Australian Water Resources Council as it has never been restructured before. I was amazed, after touring the Water Board, as it was known three years ago, to find that everyone there knew everything there was to know about water. This legislation increases membership of the council from 15 to 22, and obviously there will be more people who know more about water in this State. I hope the board will not become just another quango.

HON W.N. STRETCH (Lower Central) [4.17 pm]: The Opposition has always supported the operations of the Western Australian Water Resources Council. However, we are a little surprised at some of the amendments to the legislation. They have come about as a result of the sunset clause which was inserted in the legislation when it was first enacted. Our first surprise was when we saw that that section had been deleted from the legislation. It is strange that the Government should depart from that policy, but we will not slash our wrists over it. I believe there is value in these sorts of Bills being reintroduced every five years to give both Houses of Parliament the chance to assess the need for these bodies generally and to review their operations.

The council has done an excellent job in being a buffer between the Government and the consumers in water supply matters. As my friend and colleague, Hon H.W. Gayfer, said last night, the Western Australian Water Authority has undertaken great amounts of research and development to present its water strategy. I agree that it is a very good blueprint for the future. I will not go through it again now because Mr Gayfer did that with great effect last night. However, he underlined many of the important points about water in this State, one of which was the matter of ongoing supplies. It is a huge problem, and one to be solved by people with great imaginations. I believe the Water Resources Council can play a very important role, not just in bringing forward departmental ideas, but in obtaining an input from people from all fields of endeavours and disciplines associated with the supply of water.

Hon H.W. Gayfer spoke last night about bringing water to Perth from the Fitzroy River.

Various other schemes have been put forward from time to time. My father is a very strong advocate of water being brought from the Ord River scheme. However, present thinking is that it would be far too expensive. Who is to say, though, that if we get the right sort of input from lateral thinkers, it will not be possible in the future. Other countries are involved in mixing water, oil, and gas, bringing them through pipelines, and separating them at the end of the pipeline.

There are many organisations which can bring their expertise to bear on supplying water to the metropolitan area and to the agricultural areas. The metropolitan area is the major consumer of water, but it is completely overshadowed by the importance of water to our country areas. That is why it is so important that the country bodies are represented on this Water Resources Council in order to give their expertise to it, and through the council to the Minister; and also to bring forward their points of view, their needs and the effect of all their experiences when we are planning future water strategies.

The method of choosing the members of the body changes under this Bill. In the past, the bodies each nominated one person as its representative on the Water Resources Council. One person was nominated by the Local Government Association, one by the Country Shire Councils Association, one by the Perth Chamber of Commerce, one by the Confederation of Western Australian Industry, one by the Chamber of Mines of Western Australia, and so on. One nomination went forward from each body. Now we have this rather strange provision which appears in a number of Bills brought forward by the Burke Government. The bodies submit not one name but three from which the Minister makes a choice. One wonders whether this is the result of some sort of inferiority complex on the part of the Government; that it does not trust the bodies from whom it asks for a nominee; or what is its thinking? Perhaps the Government wants a choice of three names from whom to pick a nominee who will suit its point of view. The point is that it shows a distrust of the nominee put forward.

Hon Tom Stephens: Not at all.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I hope not at all, but it seems rather peculiar to say to a body, "We want one nominee from you, but do not give us one, give us three."

Hon Tom Stephens: It is called governing.

Hon Neil Oliver: It has never happened before.

Several members interjected.

Hon Tom Stephens: We on this side of the House choose to govern.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: That may be the member's name for it. Some people call it patronage; others call it picking people to suit one's point of view.

Hon Tom Stephens: You are too fair-minded to think that!

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I hope I am too fair-minded to put it that way, but I believe the Government leaves itself open to such charges when it makes choices of this sort. It does not appeal to me at all. I would rather trust bodies such as the Country Shire Councils Association to choose a member to represent it on the Water Resources Council. If the Minister cannot work with that person, I have every confidence that he can go back to the association and say, "This person is not suitable, or he does not know the job", and ask it to choose another for whatever reason. It detracts from the integrity of those bodies when the Government says, "We do not trust you to give us one; give us three." There may be better reasons for this, and I am sure the Minister will enlighten us later.

If my memory serves me correctly, when the Water Resources Council was set up it comprised 13 members. That was certainly the position when I had dealings with it during an unsavoury period when the clearing ban legislation was in operation. Since then it has crept up to 15. At one stage I believe it had 20 members, but it was cut back to 13 because 20 proved unwieldy. I agree that a council of 20 on a body of this sort tends to be a little unwieldy. Some of these people give up a lot of time to come to Perth, and if everyone has his say, at the end of the day, not very much has been done. We have all had that experience.

The experience of the 20-member committee was that the council, in its wisdom, or the Minister in his wisdom, cut it down to 13, and it is now creeping up. It is now 15, and this Bill moves to increase the membership to 16. I intend to move an amendment which will

retain membership of the body at 15. I see no reason to increase the number, and no reason to have the Chairman of the State Planning Commission on the council. When we look at the bodies already represented on the Water Resources Council, I see no place for the chairman of the planning authority who, if we are to believe the Press reports, is very much overworked and in need of further members himself. The question of planning does not really come into the council's operations at this level of debate. It is inappropriate, unnecessary and a burden on the State Planning Commission.

I have said in this House before that I believe the State Planning Commission is becoming the rogue octopus of Western Australian operations. It is like salt and pepper; it seems to be in everything. It put forward a study paper recently recommending where land use planning should go in the country. In that, the State Planning Commission is cropping up in the planning of farms, the planning of clearing, and what farmers do on their farms with their own roads and everything else. The State Planning Commission has overreached its sphere of genuine constructive influence and needs to be pruned back. The Water Resources Council is one of the areas where the State Planning Commission can well be left out of the operations at this stage.

The proposed make-up of the council is very authoritative without that additional member. Its ex officio members are the Managing Director of the Water Authority, the Chief Executive Officer of the Environmental Protection Authority, and the permanent heads of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Resources Development, and the Department of Mines. All those people have genuine, hands-on experience of finding and providing water supplies, and their expertise vastly overshadows that of the Chairman of the State Planning Commission, however fine a person he may or may not be, and whatever his qualifications in other fields.

The rest of the council is made up of nominated representatives of various bodies. Some welcome additions include the Conservation Council of Western Australia, which is invited to nominate three names of which the Minister shall choose one. Members who have studied the Bill will be aware that the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which previously had one member, now has a 50 per cent chance of having a representative, as does the Confederation of Western Australian Industry, which also previously had one member. Between them the Minister makes a choice: they do not even toss a coin! This is taking consultation a little too far, and there should be a case for the Minister to take on board that the confederation and the chamber would have put forward a member whom they believed would suit the job. People take these jobs seriously, because they understand the importance of water supplies. People who it is thought will do their best for the council and for the preparation of meaningful strategies are chosen. Since the amalgamation the Water Authority has become large. It needs to promote strongly to the public its views and strategies. This is where I believe that the Water Resources Council will be of value.

However, I do not believe that the council should be politicised to any great extent, although it would be naive to think that it would not be politicised to some extent. The objection I raised earlier in relation to the method of choosing members highlights the fact that it leaves the way open for too much politicisation of that council, something I deplore as unnecessary -- it displays a lack of trust in these bodies and is an undesirable feature. When members from this side are back in Government they will not pursue that matter -- we trust our people to put forward good recommendations, and good nominees. Ministers have enough to do without playing eenie-meenie-minie-mo with a panel of three, six, or nine members!

I have foreshadowed an amendment which will seek to retain the number of members at 15, and to remove the planning authority head from the council. Such a move would lead to a leaner, more effective, and less diverse, or unnecessary, spread. With those reservations, we fully support the Water Resources Council in its operations and for the contribution it has made to the strategy and planning for water supplies. We look forward to its future operations being along the same lines. If the amendment and my comments are taken on board in relation to selection of people, they will contribute to this being a better body.

I add that strategies relating to water supply should not be allowed to overshadow the importance of immediate action. There are always emergencies and immediate planning that cannot be met by strategy papers. There have been such cases in the past few months when

approaches to the Minister were met with the comment, "It is all in my strategy. We have a corporate plan and a strategy." That is great, and I applaud the authority for its approach, but mother nature is a fickle lady.

To demonstrate that, a farmer in the Shire of Woodanilling in my electorate has a drought at his homestead and flood damage at the back of his property caused by a violent storm the other night. I applaud long-term strategies, but let us not lose sight of short-term needs. We cannot build dams in a hurry, but can make use of existing resources. I have spoken to the Minister about providing fully equipped bores to take over from pipelines, which will be overloaded this summer -- certainly in the central great southern, where the drought is at its height and where people have been carting water all the winter. I urge the Minister to keep his eye firmly on immediate matters and at the same time commend him for his strategies.

HON E.J. CHARLTON (Central) [4.35 pm]: My comments about changes to the water council are such that they follow on from where previous speakers left off and will refer to the people who make the recommendations in relation to this proposed department. I must say at the outset that everything that has been said about this Bill and related Bills dealing with water has been said a thousand times before. I guess that the bottom line is that they will go on being said until some action is taken and some of the strategies referred to are put in place.

We should not let this opportunity pass without placing on the *Hansard* record once again that it is an unbelievable situation when one sees the people put forward for this council, some of whom I wonder about. I also wonder whether they are all required to advise the Minister and the department in relation to plans and future strategies for water supplies in this State. Obviously, everyone has something to offer.

I acknowledge that the present Minister for Water Resources has done more to put a strategy in place and a plan forward for action in some of the areas experiencing the most dramatic and acute water shortages than has any other Minister since I have been attending water council meetings. The rural water council covers a large part of the agricultural area of this State. Never before have we had a Minister who understood the situation on the one hand and who, on the other hand, demonstrated his willingness and dedication to doing something about it.

Action to this stage has been small, but significant; there have been changes to water supplies for Miling and Bindi Bindi, the Harris River Dam is being constructed, and other connections have been made -- we must acknowledge and recognise that. The important thing is the changes to the council -- we will see more action taken and because of the few changes proposed under this Bill we will see different people on the council, people who will have a desperation of thinking to have action take place.

I have no fear when stating that there are people in the Water Authority who do not have the same dedication and desperation to see action taken and who are always putting forward excuses why action should not be taken. Some of those people have been taken into country areas where there is absolutely no water supply other than a piped one. They have made unbelievable statements because it is easy for them to say things when that night they arrive back in Perth by aeroplane or by car where they can turn on a tap and get water. They then forget about those places until the next time they go there. That is a disgraceful position that is taken by some people. The Minister is dedicated; the people living in these areas want to do something positive at a minimum cost, but some people in the Water Authority keep on saying that we do not have any more water and do not have enough water to satisfy present demands.

We all know that is not a fact, however. There is plenty of water available, both from underground and from the river systems. Although some things are a long way away and will cost a great deal of money, we have seen the Government underwriting all sorts of financial operations and contributing finance to other areas that it believes are important. Yet large areas of this State are bone dry and have been so since the State was first developed. We are getting close to this so-called celebration of our bicentenary -- about which I have severe doubts in relation to its value -- while at the same time not addressing this acute problem of providing reticulated water in the north western wheat-belt areas. There is an exodus of people from that area and I was told of yet another 12 families forced to leave properties in areas without reticulated water supplies.

Probably more than 50 per cent of the reason why they are going is that they have no opportunity to diversify into anything else. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been contributed to this State by the produce which has come off those properties, yet we cannot find enough finance and support to allocate funds for the provision of reticulated water. It has been established that only 100 miles away we have double our water requirements -- underground water, which is flowing out into the ocean -- yet we cannot do anything about that. I am critical not only of this Government but of all previous Governments for not making this matter a priority. I know funds are tight at present, but there is never enough money to do all the things that should be done.

Hon J.M. Brown: Are you talking about Agaton?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I do not care whether the water comes out of the Agaton bore site or whether it comes from the north, but the water is there and we should be doing something about using it.

I hope the individuals on this council will recognise and understand the priorities that should be given. I wonder whether the Conservation Council of Western Australia, the State Planning Commission and the Mines Department have sufficient knowledge to understand the critical need to recommend which action should be taken, although I must say that I have not spoken to individual members of those organisations. I wonder how dedicated the Federal Government will be, particularly under the current economic circumstances, and whether it will make a sufficient financial contribution to this operation.

The council has a tremendous opportunity to recommend action to implement water supplies, without needing the total contract operation which has been part and parcel of all our public works activities in the past. At the moment we have unemployed people and they can be involved in this operation in order to obtain work experience. Many of the shire councils have plant and equipment which can be made available to do some of the earthworks that are required, and it would be to their advantage to keep their employees occupied in this way. While on the one hand there may be a shortage of capital, we do have the manpower and equipment which can be taken advantage of at some periods of the year.

I conclude my remarks by saying that the National Party supports the principle of having a council for water resources, and I would hope that the Government, and particularly the Minister for Budget Management, would ensure that the Minister for Water Resources has --

Hon Fred McKenzie: Hon J.M. Brown has been pushing for the Agaton scheme for years.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I know he has, and I saw him last week at the same meeting that I was at. The only thing is that we do not have the water; on this side of the Parliament, their record is not very good either.

Hon P.G. Pandal: It is not their record; it is yours because you are part of it.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I accept that totally, and that is why I have been critical of this group -- of which I was a part -- which did nothing.

Hon P.G. Pandal: You did not put it that way.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I referred to the people on this side of the Parliament. The member does not like to be truthful about some of the things we did not do. We do not win them all; we do not have a 100 per cent record.

I conclude my remarks by saying that I hope the Government will take advice from the council, which I hope will be made up of people who will advise the Government in the way that we would like them to.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Neil Oliver.

IRON ORE (CHANNAR JOINT VENTURE) AGREEMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 10 November.

HON NEIL OLIVER (West) [4.47 pm]: I understand that the Government is anxious to have this Bill -- which is to ratify an agreement -- passed as soon as possible in this Chamber, and I believe this agreement will have the support of all members of Parliament

because it signals a significant development in Western Australia, particularly at this point of time with the uncertainty that we see throughout the world.

It is quite normal to bring agreements to the House and have them ratified. I presume that a subsequent Bill may be required to vary the original agreement, the Iron Ore (Hamersley Range) Agreement. I am not sure whether there is a requirement for that to occur, but I notice there is a variation to the leases of the various previous agreements involving one of the joint venture partners. However, the ratifying of agreements in Parliament has been a regular event in this House, and the first agreement was the one to which I have just referred, which was responsible for the commencement of the development of Mt Tom Price, which adjoins this current development.

At that time the Government was headed by Mr Brand, the Premier, later Sir David Brand. Some people have stated that there is not a lot of legal enforcement in these agreements. That is not so; the joint venture partners are very keen to see these agreements ratified in Parliament because they must stand the test of time. In this instance, based on the present life of the mine, the agreement will last for over 23 years and may be significantly extended. Therefore one may almost regard these agreements as something of a comfort because the original 1962 agreement has stood the test of time and five successive Governments of differing political persuasions. It is important to the joint venture partners to have the agreement of Parliament rather than just the agreement of a department or a Minister, which happens regularly in agreements entered into by statutory authorities.

The Channar mining area is located 20 kilometres east of Hamersley's existing Paraburdoo mining operations and comprises surrendered portions of mineral leases 4SA and 252SA, which are currently the subject of the Iron Ore (Hamersley Range) Agreement and the Iron Ore (Mt Bruce) Agreement. It may be that those agreements will have to be brought before this Parliament for amendment. I understand the proposed life of this mine is 22 to 23 years, based on the arbitrary figure of 200 million tonnes at roughly nine million to 10 million tonnes a year. However, as I intimated earlier, the life of the mine could be extended considerably if a figure of 300 million, 400 million, or 500 million tonnes were taken. It is possible the life of the mine could be extended to 50 years on the basis that the 200 million tonnes delineated now by drilling and other methods is extended to the figures I mentioned. The figure of 10 million tonnes per annum could be extended to 15 million or 20 million tonnes per annum.

This is not only a significant development for Western Australia in economic terms at a difficult period in the world's economic cycle, but it is also a significant continuation and expansion of new markets in the People's Republic of China. It complements the ore exports which we are already sending to other parts of the world, particularly to Japan. This is not the first iron ore exported to China; I understand it is already a significant importer of iron ore.

Apart from the State of Western Australia, the parties to the agreement are the China Metallurgical Import and Export Corporation -- CMIEC -- which is a statutory body in the People's Republic of China, represented as CMIEC (Channar) Pty Ltd, Channar Mining Pty Ltd and Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd. It has become quite a common method of international trade to negotiate these agreements, particularly with Iron Curtain countries, where major amounts of money are involved. I know that the agreement is expressed in US dollars which is the currency in which most Australian exports are negotiated, but this leads to a lowering of the revenue which Western Australia and Australia generally will enjoy if there is a deterioration in the US dollar. The Australian dollar tends to follow the US dollar, although that has not been the case in recent weeks. One expects those two currencies generally to move in harmony, but in recent weeks one might have called it disharmony. The relationship of the US dollar to the Australian dollar is beneficial in some ways to Australia particularly to our exporters of manufactured goods. It enables them to be more competitive. It is not very beneficial to wool producers, for example, if there is a decline in the Australian dollar. At the same time, however, it is beneficial to wheat growers because we are a major world producer of wheat and it will enable us to be more competitive in other markets. However, a decline in the Australian dollar has a detrimental effect on our balance of payments.

This agreement involves the extraction of resources, their export from Western Australia, and their manufacture outside Australia. Many attempts have been made by successive

Governments to reach an agreement whereby some form of base manufacturing of our resource commodities takes place. Unfortunately we seem to be continually thwarted in those efforts, irrespective of which raw materials we have. This is attributable to our internal costs, the state of our currency, and a factor which at times has been very detrimental -- it seems to be more obvious overseas than in Australia -- our inconsistency in being able to deliver the goods due either to industrial unrest or the lack of regular and reliable scheduled shipping facilities.

I trust this joint venture will not have the difficulties which surrounded the beginning of the iron ore industry in Western Australia. At that time there was great industrial unrest at all levels. I hope on this occasion we will see harmony in the workplace, because I know the People's Republic of China will be looking to future opportunities for investment and obtaining more of our resources, provided we have the ability to perform. It is interesting that apart from this they have, in this current season, already made a significant contribution to the wool market. In mainland China they have taken on a lifestyle that is known as the Hong Kong suit brigade. Some members in this House may find it difficult to understand that that is the case considering the climate in China.

[Questions taken.]

Hon NEIL OLIVER: Before the interruption of this debate by questions without notice, I was mentioning the impact of the People's Republic of China on the wool market in Australia. A significant improvement in prices was brought about by the residents of the People's Republic of China adopting, with their improved standard of living, what they call Hong Kong suits. That has significantly helped wool production in Australia. I hope that when members visit mainland China they will, whenever possible, wear coats to ensure that people recognise that Hong Kong suits consist of trousers and coats. This will ensure that the price put on Australian wool will be maintained at its highest level.

Negotiations with China are a difficult and long process. There is the need to go through the period of negotiation of trust between one another. The need to achieve a degree of comfort with a joint venture partner before entering into a project is very much part of what might be called the Chinese philosophy. It is a very long and sensitive process to progress along the path to the final conclusion of entering into heads of agreement.

I commend Hamersley Iron Pty Limited, and the senior joint partner in that company, Conzinc Riotinto Australia, for bringing this project to fruition. It will make a substantial contribution to Western Australia, not only to the iron ore industry but the economy overall.

I draw attention to the significance that has been placed on the People's Republic of China throughout the world, particularly by the British Government in its very early recognition of mainland China -- what a lot of people call China. The recognition of the People's Republic of China by the United Kingdom Government was ultimately followed by the United States of America. I am pleased that this country is now entering into this field in a much more significant manner. It is not that we have not been exporters to mainland China. Even in the early part of this century we were exporting to mainland China. I travelled to the People's Republic of China in 1958 because we were exporting there.

The overall capital investment in this project, I note from the Minister's speech, is estimated at \$250 million, which indicates its significance. Approximately 500 people will be employed in the construction phase, and the permanent work force at Channar will be approximately 100. The agreement appears to me to be a standard agreement of a similar character to those which have been introduced into Parliament over many years. Basically it is an agreement between the joint venture partners which comes here for ratification, because the Government of Western Australia has entered into the agreement, and the joint venture partners are anxious that it be given the blessing of Parliament.

The only point I would make is that it has the standard royalty provisions. It has 7.5 per cent f.o.b., which will be the initial threshold. Thereafter, we take lease rentals with a further adjustment to those rentals in 1992.

The Government's responsibilities, one sees from reading through the agreement, are in the areas of housing, water, and civic facilities of the various infrastructures; the manner in which they are installed -- not necessarily at the taxpayers' expense; and how they meet the

normal requirements of our public utilities. I note that much of that is in place. The only matter not in place at this time is the environmental report, but that will be part of the agreement that the Minister will ultimately be responsible for approving.

In 1980 the first mining industry group from Western Australia visited the People's Republic of China. It was headed by Hon Peter Vernon Jones, who I believe at that time was Minister for Industrial Development in this State. No doubt that was one of the initiatives that started this development of the trust, and it is essential that these agreements come to their conclusion. Hamersley Iron should be wished every success with this project and should be congratulated for bringing it to fruition. I know that it will follow the success stories of many other projects in that area.

Some years ago, when visiting Western Australia, I met a young person called Garrick Agnew, later Sir Garrick Agnew, who recently passed away. When I spoke to him I noted his great faith in the development of the iron ore deposits in this State and his comments about how significant they were. At the time he discussed those matters with me in 1962 I was loath to accept the figures that he quoted in relation to export income that could be earned from our iron ore deposits. However, during his lifetime he saw them come to fruition and he was one of those people who played a part in ensuring that that industry got off the ground.

I am certain that this agreement will have the full support of all members of this House.

HON A.A. LEWIS (Lower Central) [5.24 pm]: I also congratulate Hamersley Iron. I have a question in relation to the Minister's second reading speech, in which he said the following --

... the initial obligations of the State with regard to the ratification of the Bill and to allow entry upon Crown lands for the purpose of the agreement ...

Does "Crown lands" as mentioned in the second reading explanation include national parks, because they are part of Crown lands? I wonder whether that terminology might not need tightening up. On page 8 of his speech the Minister referred to clause 7, which requires the joint venturers "to ... on or before 30 June 1988, or by such extended date as the Minister may allow as hereafter provided", which seems very open-ended. I have been through the clause carefully and it seems to me that the Minister can extend, and extend, as long as he wishes. Subclause (6) states that if the joint venturers do not meet that date of 30 June, or any such extended date, the agreement shall cease and determine. However, it says nothing about a time limit -- the Minister can continue extending the agreement.

I am interested in the environmental aspects of this matter. In this case the company is to report to the Minister for Minerals and Energy in relation to environmental conditions outlined in the Bill, and about environmental conditions at the mine. I do not disagree with the Minister's having this provision, but it may in the long term lead to some environmental struggles, something with which the ALP is familiar, from its past history. The Liberals have environmental problems, but we are not swayed by rump groups. I see one of the leading environmental Labor members got one of the jobs for the boys in occupational health, which was great for him.

There are still 13 days to go before all the submissions relating to the environmental report are required to be in. I realise that the agreement will be signed next Monday, but this is another sign of not having environmental protection in place before the Government moves -- and it is not as though negotiations have continued over a short period. I am sure that if Sir Charles Court were still Premier the Labor Party would have been jumping up and down and screaming about this matter, but so be it.

Hon T.G. Butler: With some justification.

Hon A.A. LEWIS: That was an interesting comment from Hon Tom Butler, with all his knowledge of this Bill. Mr Butler is meant to be the leader of the Labor Party in this State, so do we, as a responsible Opposition, hold this Bill up? Is that what the Minister would like, to defer it for another fortnight until the environmental statements are complete? We know that the Minister does not want that at all. There were scenes about this matter last night. The Minister wished this Bill to pass, preferably last night, but certainly by tonight. However, the leader of the Labor Party has come into this place --

Hon Mark Nevill: Do you mean the leader of the Labor Party or the leader of the Liberal Party?

Hon A.A. LEWIS: He is the leader of the Labor Party, and Hon Mark Nevill should not forget that, because his preselection might be on the line -- and that might not be a bad thing, either. If the honourable member is here for the money, he certainly has not earned it. He should go out and double it somewhere else, because his contribution here has not been great.

Hon Tom Helm: Don't be so nasty.

Hon A.A. LEWIS: Do not worry, I will sort out the honourable member's problem.

As Hon Neil Oliver has said, this is a standard agreement in most parts. However, I bring to the fore the fact that we have seen much in the Press about the Minister's argument with his party's environmental committees about mining in national parks. I tend to favour Mr Parker in relation to most of the sensible proposals he has put forward. One wonders when the ALP will learn to govern without having to remember the rump that elected it. Because of the promises it made to certain people in environmental organisations it will have a great deal of trouble, not only with mining in national parks but also, I would imagine, with this Bill. To pass this Bill through all stages in this House and the other place without having the environmental review provisions in place would appear to me, if I were a Labor Party member, to be dicing with something that perhaps is bigger than the Government appreciates.

With those few words, I support the Bill.

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Central Metropolitan -- Leader of the House) [5.31 pm]: I thank Hon Neil Oliver and Hon Sandy Lewis for their support of this measure. Both of those members appreciate the importance of this development, not only as another development venture but also as one which significantly breaks new ground.

In response to Hon Sandy Lewis I suppose one can only read the reference to the Minister's ability to extend time as an unlimited ability to extend time. No further limitation on that is expressed in the legislation and in the agreement, but the very requirement of that flexibility is itself an indication of the difficulty of setting a specified limit on it.

The environmental aspects of this will be dealt with fully in terms of the agreement itself, and it is really a question of the proper management of it rather than, as is the case in some situations, a project where the whole nature of the submission is in question. Preliminary consideration of this agreement has led to the conclusion that there are not going to be the sort of fundamental environmental considerations that would throw the whole of the development into question. What are being looked at are questions of proper management, and these will be fully addressed as they emerge.

A question has been asked as to whether the term "Crown lands" includes national parks. There may be some technical limitation of which I am not aware in the national parks legislation, and Hon Sandy Lewis would know that legislation better than I. So far as I am aware, and subject to correction after further inquiry, I would not think that the expression "Crown lands" excludes national parks. Nonetheless, here again we have a situation where the areas in contemplation are specified and the Crown lands referred to are limited to those -- I am just looking for the phrase --

Hon A.A. Lewis: It was "outside the area".

Hon J.M. BERINSON: Yes, outside the area, but nonetheless related directly to the project. The question is an interesting one and I am quite happy to pursue it further, but I do not believe that it raises an issue which need concern us at this stage to the point of deferring consideration or indeed delaying the passage of the Bill.

I thank the Opposition for its understanding of the urgency of this measure, and it is a reflection of the importance which all of us attach to this development that there has been general agreement to expedite its passage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by Hon J.M. Berinson (Leader of the House), and passed.

CHILD WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL (No 2)

Report

Report of Committee adopted.

House adjourned at 5.38 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

ROTHWELLS LTD

Government Guarantee: Conditions

395. Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House representing the Treasurer:

- (1) Is it correct that the State Government has given Rothwells Ltd bank a Government guarantee, and if so for what amount, and on what terms and conditions?
- (2) Was the Government, at the time of negotiation or since, given a statement of --
 - (a) the assets of the bank;
 - (b) the manner in which they are held;
 - (c) the cash available to repay outstanding loans;
 - (d) the amount of outstanding loans and the period over which they would fall due;
 - (e) the amount of cash the bank expected to receive from loans the bank had made to its clients and the period of time over which these moneys could reasonably be expected to come in?
- (3) If so, what were these amounts and in what form were they presented?
- (4) On what basis did the Government decide that there was no risk in the granting of a Government guarantee; when was that conclusion reached; and was the Treasury involved?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) No, but the State has indemnified the National Australia Bank to secure a \$150 million cash advance and bill acceptance and endorsement facility as part of an integrated packaged of measures to assist Rothwells Ltd.
- (2)-(4) Members of the Cabinet Budget Committee met with Mr James Younge, Chief Executive Officer of Wardley Australia Ltd, and Mr Peter Beckwith, Managing Director of Bond Corporation, and were given an assessment of Rothwells Ltd's financial position prior to taking the decision to grant the indemnity to the National Australia Bank. This information is commercially sensitive, and it would be inappropriate to release it publicly.

ROTHWELLS LTD

Trading: Continuation

396. Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House representing the Treasurer:

- (1) Is it correct that Rothwells Ltd bank is to be able to continue to trade in the same manner this week, following the announcement of a Government guarantee, as it did until the weekend?
- (2) Will the bank still be able to take the "high risk" end of the market, as it is reputed to have done in the past?
- (3) If not, is the Government in a position to vet the risk of each loan and veto any loan if it is considered too risky to fall under the conditions under which the Government guarantee was granted?
- (4) Is Rothwells now trading under the umbrella of a Government guarantee in much the same manner as the R & I Bank, which also has some Government guarantee?
- (5) Has Rothwells bank an advantage over other merchant banks with which it competes?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

(1)-(3)

The commercial policy of Rothwells Ltd will be determined in the future, as in the past, by the board of the company.

(4)-(5)

No.

ROTHWELLS LTD

Government Guarantee: Security

397. Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House representing the Treasurer:

- (1) If the Government was satisfied that "the book" written by Rothwells bank was "safe" and at "no risk" when granted a Government guarantee last weekend, what guarantee has the Government that future trading and business carried out by the bank over the next two years will be just as "safe" and at "no risk"?
- (2) Is the Government aware that the Reserve Bank was in touch with all banks almost on an hourly basis monitoring their situation following the collapse of the share market?
- (3) Is not the Federal Government responsible for banking in Australia and for taking any necessary action needed to make corrections in the deregulated market policy developed under the current Federal Government?
- (4) If so, how does the State Government justify risking taxpayers' funds by entering a field over which it has little jurisdiction or responsibility?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) The Government's assessment referred to was in respect of the Government's indemnity. Future policy of Rothwells Ltd is properly in the hands of the board of the company, which will include a nominee of the Government.

(2)-(4)

The Government is aware of the responsibilities of the Reserve Bank under the Banking Act. However, we also acknowledge our own responsibilities in ensuring confidence in financial markets and the need for State Governments to take timely and decisive action in times of crises.

HEALTH: DISABLED PERSONS

Pyrton Training Centre Closure

403. Hon P.G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Community Services representing the Minister for Health:

- (1) Are there any plans under consideration to close the Pyrton Centre at Eden Hill, and subsequently sell the property?
- (2) If so, is it correct that the centre's present residents would be transferred to community homes with little or no supervision despite their special disabilities?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) The future of Pyrton Training Centre is currently under study by the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons, which is looking at the possibility of providing more appropriate accommodation, of a less institutional nature, for the residents. The authority will submit the results of its study to the Government in March 1988, until which time no decision will be made.
- (2) Any transfer of Pyrton residents to community houses would only occur under conditions of --

- (i) their suitability;
- (ii) appropriate supervision; and
- (iii) after consultation with parents or appropriate family members if there are no parents.

WILDLIFE: TAMMARS
Goonac Forest

414. Hon A.A. LEWIS, to the Minister for Community Services representing the Minister for Conservation and Land Management:

What are the estimated numbers of tammars in Goonac Forest?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

It is not possible to provide an estimate since no detailed survey has been made recently.

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT ACT
Amendment

417. Hon A.A. LEWIS, to the Minister for Community Services representing the Minister for Conservation and Land Management:

- (1) Is it intended to amend the Conservation and Land Management Act along the lines recommended by the Honorary Royal Commission?
- (2) If so, when?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

(1)-(2)

Some amendments are proposed to the Conservation and Land Management Act during the next parliamentary session.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CRIME: SEXUAL ASSAULT

Laws: Review

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

What is the current status of the Crown Law Department's review of the sexual assault laws and, in particular, that part of the review arising out of the case of the so-called 30-second rapist?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

The question of a review was last raised when this particular case came to attention. I then reminded the House and other inquirers that at the time that the legislation was introduced I had indicated that it would be reviewed after a reasonable period of operation. A couple of months ago I expressed the view that a reasonable period would be arrived at 12 months from then. It is not a review which is continuing, but one which will take place at that time.

FOOTBALL

West Coast Eagles Games: Telecasts

406. Hon TOM McNEIL, to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

- (1) In view of the fact that there are only 143 days to the start of the football season, I ask the Minister whether he is able to tell the House what action he has taken, or is about to take, to ensure that a direct telecast of the West Coast Eagles' games from the Eastern States will be viewed in Western Australia?
- (2) What action has he taken to ensure that the games the Eagles play within Western Australia will be telecast to the country areas of Western Australia?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

(1)-(2)

It is not 143 days to the start of the football season; it is 142 days and a wakey!

As I have explained to the member before, it is beyond the ability of my department to bring about that which the member seeks to bring about. As I have said in the past, I will continue to pursue the matter in the future and, indeed, I am happy to again approach the people who are in the position to make these decisions. I would be more than happy to include the member in those discussions.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Child Abuse Complaints

407. Hon P.G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Community Services:

- (1) I refer the Minister to a report in *The West Australian* on 9 November and ask her whether she believes that false complaints of child abuse are becoming an enormous problem in Western Australia?
- (2) Will she comment on the view of Dr Paul Wilson of the Australian Institute of Criminology that taking the lid off the top of child abuse has put the accusation of molestation on too many lips and in too many minds?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

(1)-(2)

The problem experienced in some other States, particularly New South Wales, is that there has been a move towards mandatory reporting by certain professional groups and a certain amount of hype in the community. It appears to have led to an extraordinary reporting rate to the extent, as I understand it, that it is very difficult for staff in the field to manage it well. That has not been the case in Western Australia.

In Western Australia there is a gradual awareness that it is a serious problem which is not adequately addressed, but that everyone involved in it is behaving in a responsible way. Members of Parliament can take some credit for that because it is an emotional issue and one on which members can readily obtain headlines if they choose to go that way. It appears that members of Parliament in Western Australia have not chosen to make the issue such a headline grabbing personal expediency. As Minister for Community Services, I am relieved about that.

We do not have the problems in Western Australia that Dr Paul Wilson alluded to. With regard to that particular gentleman's address to the crime summit last weekend, his comments were quite thought provoking, if not in depth. I think that was what he was asked to provide to stimulate thought at the conference.

CASINO

Burswood Island: Investigation

408. Hon E.J. CHARLTON, to the Attorney General:

My question refers to the investigation into the operators of the Western Australian casino which was carried out by the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs. In view of the fact that the Crown Law Department marked the file indicating that a prosecution could be expected to succeed, what were the specific reasons which led to the commissioner deciding against a prosecution taking place?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I do not know where the honourable member gets his information about how the Crown Law Department's files are marked. The basic issue

involved here is that a decision on prosecution is not for the Crown Law Department to make. That was a matter for the independent discretion of the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs. I am aware he took very thoroughgoing legal advice from the Crown Law Department and also from the Solicitor General. It is not for me to go further than the commissioner went in indicating his decision in this matter. While I have no authority in the area of those investigations, the commissioner did keep me informed of them and of the basis on which he arrived at his conclusion. I am satisfied he took all relevant considerations fully and properly into account.

CASINO

New South Wales: Investigation

409. Hon E.J. CHARLTON, to the Attorney General:

Further to my previous question, are the reasons the Attorney General has just given in line with those relating to the New South Wales Police Department's recommending that the same company not be a successful applicant in New South Wales?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I have clearly had no authority or even contact with the Police Department in New South Wales, and I am unable to comment in any way on the basis of any of their decisions in relation to the Burswood operators or anyone else.

CASINO

Burswood Island: Decision

410. Hon E.J. CHARLTON, to the Attorney General:

Were the reasons that they stated part of the reasons for the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs' final decision?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I know nothing more about the report on the operators by the New South Wales police than has appeared in the Press. That was so sketchy that I could not comment on it.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Adoptions: Age Ineligibility

411. Hon P.G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Community Services:

- (1) Has the Minister considered the call to revoke retrospective regulations which have led to couples awaiting to adopt a child being ruled ineligible because by then they are considered too old to adopt?
- (2) If so, with what result?
- (3) If she has not, would she be prepared to consider this matter?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

This issue has been brought to my attention by somebody else in the member's party. I have therefore given it serious consideration. The law which was introduced was not retrospective. I continue to be amazed at references to it as a retrospective law. It brought in regulations which took effect from promulgation. They were not back dated. They came into being at that point.

After serious consideration, I believe that the way the law stands is best. That is not to say it is not unsatisfactory for some couples. Members must realise that there is no satisfactory way of supplying babies for childless couples. There are just not enough children offered for adoption. Until we concentrate on issues dealing with the causes of infertility, which is where the emphasis should be, we are always going to have disappointed people who are not able to adopt children because there are not enough available.

NGAL-A MOTHERCRAFT HOME AND TRAINING CENTRE

Changes

412. Hon E.J. CHARLTON, to the Minister for Community Services:

Have the proposed changes at Ngal-A been documented and made public?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

There have been two reviews into Ngal-A. There was a working group on which two senior people from Ngal-A were represented. As a result of that process, a decision was made that Ngal-A should provide more community-based services as opposed to an institutional health model as at present.

Ngal-A would be the last of our residential child care services to go this way. Every other service has moved to being community-based, smaller, and providing more homely care. That position has been agreed to by Ngal-A and the Department for Community Services.

I will be happy to supply other information. I am not sure what is being sought.

NGAL-A MOTHERCRAFT HOME AND TRAINING CENTRE

Staff Cutbacks

413. Hon E.J. CHARLTON, to the Minister for Community Services:

Further to my previous question, will there be staffing cutbacks in any specific area at Ngal-A because of the proposed changes?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

There will be significant changes to the way those services are delivered. An implementation committee will oversee that. That committee will decide which services Ngal-A should operate and which staff it needs to operate those services.

NGAL-A MOTHERCRAFT HOME AND TRAINING CENTRE

Staff Cutbacks

414. Hon E.J. CHARLTON, to the Minister for Community Services:

When will this take place?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

It will start in the foreseeable future. Certainly by early in the new year a staff member will be available to assist in the restructuring of the services.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Adoptions: Age Ineligibility

415. Hon P.G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Community Services:

How many applicants for adoption were ruled ineligible because of the age factor under the new regulations?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

I went through this at the time the regulations were introduced. I do not have that information with me now. It can be made available to the member.
