

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 20 August 1981

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 10.45 a.m., and read prayers.

TRAFFIC

Reduction of Road Carnage: Petition

MR TRETHOWAN (East Melville) [10.47 a.m.]: I have a petition bearing 47 signatures. The petition is couched in terms similar to those of others presented during the session, requesting that the legal blood alcohol limit be reduced to .05 per cent. I certify that it conforms with the Standing Orders of the House, and I have signed it accordingly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 84.)

EDUCATION

Funding: Petition

MR I. F. TAYLOR (Kalgoorlie) [10.48 a.m.]: I have a petition from 997 residents of Western Australia and it reads as follows—

We the undersigned residents in the State of Western Australia respectfully petition the Government of Western Australia.

To reverse its educational funding cuts and maintain all specialist and advisory teachers in their present positions. Further, to replace all teachers currently on long service leave or accouchement leave by unemployed or graduate teachers as is the normal practice, thereby ensuring that the school children of Western Australia are not disadvantaged.

The petition conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, and I have signed it accordingly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 85.)

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Minister for Labour and Industry) [10.49 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill proposes two amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act. The first deals with the method of determining the level of hospital charges payable by the employer of an injured worker, and the other deals with clarification of the total entitlement limitation under the Act.

The Workers' Compensation Act currently provides for the payment of reasonable hospital charges incurred by an injured worker. The daily hospital rate for which an employee is liable is set by the Workers' Compensation Board. As hospital charges in this State will be varied from 1 September 1981, due to changes in the Commonwealth Government's new health insurance arrangements, this Government is acting to ensure the worker is not disadvantaged.

Hospital charges for the purposes of compensable patients will be assessed as the actual cost under the Hospitals Act. To ensure that workers are not placed in a position of being individually liable for the excess of proposed increased charges over the current entitlement, the level of entitlement has been tied to charges determined under the Hospitals Act.

Need for clarification of the limitation as to total entitlement has resulted from the mistaken belief of some compensation recipients that because the prescribed amount is indexed annually, their entitlement, even when the maximum has been received, is subsequently renewed. The Act has never intended that this situation apply and the proposed amendment clearly delineates the intention in this regard.

I am sure members would be aware that a complete rewrite of the workers' compensation legislation will be presented to this House in the current parliamentary session. This will represent a general consensus of all parties involved and will incorporate the above amendments.

The Workers' Compensation Amendment Bill 1981 has been prepared as a temporary measure to ensure workers are not disadvantaged by amendments to the Hospitals Act which are scheduled to take effect on 1 September 1981.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Parker.

EXPLOSIVES AND DANGEROUS GOODS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR P. V. JONES (Narrogin—Minister for Mines) [10.52 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The principal Act which this Bill proposes to amend relates to the control of explosives and also the regulation of the storage of dangerous goods.

The department has been advised that doubt exists as to the power for fees to be charged for the—

- examination for a shotfirer's permit;
- examination of vehicles for the licensed conveyance of explosives in bulk or packages;
- approval of prototype explosives firing equipment;
- testing of electrical shotfiring equipment;
- examination of vehicles for the licensed conveyance of dangerous goods in bulk or in packages; and
- approval of containers and equipment for the storage, conveyance and dispensing of dangerous goods.

All these functions are necessary to the administration of the Act and the effective control over explosives and dangerous goods, in the interest of public safety.

These functions are increasingly costly and time consuming, and the proposed amendments will ensure that those persons directly concerned legally accept a proportion of the costs involved.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Harman.

HOUSING AGREEMENT (COMMONWEALTH AND STATE) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 13 August.

MR B. T. BURKE (Balcatta) [10.54 a.m.]: The Opposition wants to make it perfectly plain at the outset that it opposes this Bill in its entirety. The Opposition wants nothing at all to do with a measure that the Minister in his own words, when describing its major thrust, said was unrealistic and totally inadequate.

If the Government in this State wants to acquiesce to its Federal counterpart in the way this Bill illustrates, the Opposition says it does so alone. The time is long gone when this Government should have taken a stand not only on the question of housing, but in all those other areas where we have seen in recent months the Government kowtow and run errands for the Federal Government.

I know that, as in 1978 when the same argument was used, the Opposition will be challenged with the fact that Labor Premiers have accepted this agreement. On this occasion the

Opposition uses the same argument it used in 1978 when it said that as an Opposition it is not in the same position as a Government, and as an Opposition it does not see its responsibilities to be to cave in to Federal Government instructions or directions as this Government has seen its obligations and responsibilities time and time again.

In this very area we heard the Premier say not 48 hours ago that, confronted with action by the Federal Government, he had no alternative but to take action which would result in higher interest rates on semi-Government borrowings. That is not good enough in the eyes of the Opposition. We believe that, in the area of housing, in particular—perhaps the most sensitive and most important with which any Government will deal—it is time the Government of this State set a lead—took a stand—and attempted to assist those people who are suffering so seriously from the incidence of the policies of the Federal Government.

It is true to say that in the last three years this Government in Western Australia has not taken one positive initiative to encourage home ownership or to assist existing home owners. It has done nothing whatsoever except "to be concerned at", "to complain about", and "to sympathise with" in all the actions it has taken in respect of Federal Government policy and the plight of home owners in the State.

Firstly, I shall deal with one or two of the underlying economic thrusts that I see as being responsible for the piece of legislation with which we are dealing today. Who can forget that, several months ago when the Opposition predicted what would happen with interest rates in this State, the Premier said that the Opposition was busily talking up interest rates.

Sir Charles Court: That is right.

Mr B. T. BURKE: What does the Premier say now to the Chief Executive of the Perth Building Society (Mr Harry Sorenson)? Is he talking up interest rates, because he is now joining with the Opposition in this State to warn this Government that interest rates are on the way up and that the burden on ordinary people is becoming almost intolerable? The Premier is mute in the face of Mr Sorenson's claims as he has always been.

Sir Charles Court: I publicly expressed my disquiet at the fact that he and others in the industry were doing this, because it conditions people's minds and the market for these increases. I wish you would join with us in a reverse way.

Mr Davies: He has his head in the sand.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The proposition put squarely and precisely by the Premier is that, by analogy, at the start of World War II no-one should have told the world that Germany had invaded Poland because we would be talking up a war!

Sir Charles Court: Don't talk rot!

Mr B. T. BURKE: The situation is that, because of the policies of the Federal Government ineffectively opposed by this State—

Mr Evans: Condoned.

Mr B. T. BURKE:—Australia is in the first stages of an interest rate explosion. It ill-behoves the Premier to say that people of widely differing political views who warn of the dangers and hardship of that interest rate explosion are in fact contributing to the escalation of rates. It is simply not true.

Sir Charles Court: Well, you are, you know. What have you suggested of a practical nature that would stop them going up? At least we have tried to do something.

Mr Evans: Control your foreign investments.

Sir Charles Court: Do you want to cut out development?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I shall be pleased to re-emphasise the package of measures the Opposition has put forward previously as a means to relieve the burden of many families in our community. I shall be pleased also to point out several other measures which will not prove expensive, but which will be of great assistance in combatting the problem. I hope the Premier is here to pass judgment on the sorts of proposals we are putting forward.

Sir Charles Court: What you have said before is quite unrealistic. It sounds nice, but it is not practical. Let us get something practical.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I want to continue with what I see to be the underlying economic madness which is driving up interest rates and which is imposing such hardship on so many families in our community. Several months ago in this place when we predicted interest rates would rise, the Premier pooh-poohed the idea and accused us of talking up interest rates.

The member for East Melville laughed when we spoke about the threat posed by the inflow of foreign funds to the economic strategy being pursued so assiduously by this Government. It is no wonder the member for East Melville is missing from the nightmare that confronts him today because all the things the Opposition said several months ago are coming true at a frightening pace.

Sir Charles Court: You tell us which project you want cancelled.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I shall move on to explain to the Premier exactly what our views are on the sorts of policies he is following and the sorts of policies of which he is the chief apologist in this State.

As far as the Opposition is concerned, it stands by its previous statement that the unbridled inflow of funds threatens to leave the economic strategy of the Fraser Government in tatters. We say too, that, to maintain its economic integrity, which is so seriously challenged, it will become increasingly necessary for the Federal Government to restrict the domestic capital market. We say today that, if interest rates are intolerably high now, then wait about for Christmas, because the Christmas present for people in this State, unless something is done to assist them, will be interest rates of the magnitude of 16.5 per cent.

Sir Charles Court: That is what you are hoping for so that you can make the sort of speech you are making now. We want action and performance. We do not want this sort of talking-up business and fear-mongering you are indulging in. That is what you are doing.

Mr B. T. BURKE: How then does the Premier dismiss or explain away the accuracy of the warnings issued several months ago when he deigned to say he could see no provocation for higher interest rates?

Sir Charles Court: I still confirm what I said then that all this talking up of interest rates is part of our problem. I want to repeat that this talking up causes the difficulty. I return to what I said that, if we can get the base rate for Commonwealth bonds pegged, it will stop a lot of the nonsense that is going on now.

Mr Evans: Your overseas speculation is running at \$15 million.

Sir Charles Court: Well, the member for Warren should tell us the project he wants stopped.

Mr Evans: What about pegging back some of your capital?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am sure the Premier does not seriously put to me that I am responsible, even at least in part, for the rise in interest rates, because it is beyond belief that the Premier should be in such square conflict with his Federal Treasurer who I am sure has been unaware of the comments I have made and probably those of Mr Sorenson and other building society leaders.

Sir Charles Court: I am in conflict with the Federal Treasurer and the Prime Minister on this issue.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The most important aspect is that the Premier is cruelly in conflict with the real needs and aspirations of the people who would own a home in this community.

Let the Premier pay lip service to the conflict he sees between himself and his Federal counterparts, but the lip service does not pay the mortgage, nor does it pay the health insurance premiums, and the public posturing does not assist in feeding the children or paying for their education.

Sir Charles Court: Having said all that, how about telling us how you would keep down interest rates and do something practical about the matter?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I will not chase the Premier up every drainpipe he cares to pursue today, but I will give him my word that at an appropriate time I choose I will outline to him all those steps we see that would be realistic and of assistance to people suffering from high interest rates or the lack of housing.

I will repeat the point that if we are to pursue the economic strategy so assiduously pursued by the Federal Government in the face of unwilling and ineffective opposition from this State in particular, interest rates will exceed the prediction of 15 per cent we made some months ago; and I am sure early in the new year they will reach levels of 16 per cent and more because the interest levels now being charged by building societies and other home lending institutions are insufficient to attract to those institutions the amount of funds they need to maintain their operations. In fact, the interest rates we now have are insufficient to stop the outflow of funds that so alarmed the institutions and provoked the interest rate rise we have witnessed.

This Bill is the result of the economic strategies being followed by the Federal Government and the unwilling and ineffective opposition to those strategies by State Governments, notably the one that governs in this State.

Mr Wilson: Hear, hear!

Mr B. T. BURKE: This Government's unwilling and ineffective opposition to the Federal Government's policies has fostered the present situation in which interest rates are higher now than they ever have been. We remember the squirms and the squeals of certain people during the period of the Whitlam Government, but those same people are now remarkably silent because interest rates on home loans are now higher than

they ever were during the period of the Whitlam Government. The Minister for Housing in this State, with his Premier, both of whom were so eager to flay the Whitlam Government and its policies, have been remarkably silent in calling for the resignation of the Fraser Government or for that Government's dismissal from office.

Mr Wilson: He supports Fraser.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Of course the Premier supports Mr Fraser. The Premier is a lion in public and a mouse in private when confronted by the Prime Minister. The Premier is the man who holds himself out to be the chief opponent of any increase in interest rates.

Sir Charles Court: I wish you could be there.

Mr Evans: Squeak, squeak!

Mr B. T. BURKE: I wish the whole State could attend the Premiers' meetings with the Prime Minister to determine whether the Premier's statements are truthful. If he has told the truth, why is the Federal Government able to dismiss him so lightly? On how many occasions have we heard the Minister for Housing say he is concerned about rising interest rates and home ownership, say he is making representations to the Federal Government, and say that he appreciates the problem but is achieving nothing?

Sir Charles Court: What about your New South Wales and Tasmanian counterparts?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It is time the Premier realised we live in Western Australia and he is the Premier of Western Australia.

Sir Charles Court: I realise that.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The people of this State do not benefit or suffer from the policies of the Wran Government in New South Wales or the Tonkin Government in South Australia. Those Governments are not answerable to this House. It is the Premier who is answerable here. It is time he was put in his position by the people with whom he requires to identify, and whose interests he desires to protect.

Sir Charles Court: If you believe we have been so ineffective, and you obviously believe that—that is your view, and that is your right—I remind you that these other States with greater influence such as New South Wales have been unable to achieve as good a result.

Mr B. T. BURKE: A question of fact is not one of opinion, and despite the protestations of this Government there has been no amelioration of the effect of increasing interest rates, and no brake upon their upward spiralling. That is a question

of fact. It is not a question of opinion and it is not my view—it is what has happened.

Sir Charles Court: No-one is questioning that, but we are questioning your motives which seem to be purely political. The question of interest rates is a matter of fact, but your reasons for wanting always to indulge in a tirade like this is very questionable and it is about time you had a look at yourself.

Mr Davies: You have a look at the speeches you made when you were in opposition. We had no help from you; all the time you just hit and hit.

Sir Charles Court: You got more help from us than we have got from you.

Mr Davies: Read the speeches of the Minister for Health. You wanted to stop supply and throw out the Government.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am not unhappy to have my motivations impugned by the Premier because I accept that by his using that course of action he is in a difficult situation. Whether my motives are worthy or unworthy, the facts are as I have outlined, and the answers we want are the answers to the problems I have outlined, not to the question of motivation.

If the Premier wants to debase this debate to the level of questions about my motives then he is doing his fellow Western Australians a great disservice. They do not want to know about my motives; they want to know about the honesty of his policy, and they want to know who will help them in their time of hardship. While the Premier occupies space in talking about my motives he is discharging conveniently any chance he has to answer the serious problems put to him and afflicting people in this State.

Home loan interest rates are at the highest level we have experienced for any period I can remember, and higher than the interest rates attained at any time during the Whitlam Government. We have seen the confiscation from thousands of Western Australian families any right they might ever have had to own their own homes. Is it a source of satisfaction to the Premier that at this time during his period of government the policies over which he is presiding are confiscating the right from so many people to own a home?

I remember the thrust of Liberal Party attacks on Labor policies from time immemorial. It was always said the Liberal Party promoted home ownership; that the Liberal Party saw as one of the front ranks in its policies the right that everybody should have to be able to own a home. How does the Premier feel today, and how does the Minister for Housing feel today?

Mr Wilson: They don't care.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Confiscated from thousands of Western Australian families is the right to own their own homes, and that has been brought about by Federal policies with which this Liberal Party is prepared to agree, and by agreements it is prepared to ratify. Along with that confiscation, naturally in parallel, is an alarming decline in the rate of home ownership. Australia always has enjoyed and still enjoys a remarkably high rate of home ownership, but that rate is under threat as a result of the policies followed by this Government and its Federal counterpart. Is the Premier concerned by the alarming decrease in the rate of home ownership?

Sir Charles Court: We are very concerned about the trend and we are committed more so than you are to making sure we can get back to the maximum possible rate of home ownership in Australia.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I accept the Premier's assurance that he is concerned about that trend, and I accept his assurance that he is committed to reverse the trend. Will the Premier tell this House what he intends to do about it?

Sir Charles Court: The only way eventually to achieve a halt to the trend is to have strong economic growth, and that is our policy. I would like to think it was yours too, but I doubt it.

Mr B. T. BURKE: While we have strong economic growth what will the Premier say to those people whose homes are taken from them as a result of foreclosures caused by high interest rates?

Sir Charles Court: Which people up to date? Why are you always trying to make those types of comments and trying to strike fear into the community? How many people do you know today who have had to lose their home because of high interest rates?

Mr B. T. BURKE: In my electorate the number of people forced to sell their homes because they cannot keep up the payments has been alarming. I venture to say that the Premier's attitude towards this aspect of the housing situation is prompted by his failure to identify with the problems of people who face losing their homes, because he is sure there are not too many families or individuals in his electorate of Nedlands who have had their mortgages foreclosed. I am sure that the Premier has not had very many representations from his constituents who are in fear of losing their homes.

It is a failure on the Premier's part to identify with a very real problem.

I say this: While forced sales are not as alarming as they will be in the near future—as predicted by leaders within the building and home finance industry—the number of people who are selling of their own volition when they see the writing on the wall as a result of high interest rates is rising steadily. The Premier's proposition that this problem does not exist convicts him.

Sir Charles Court: I did not say there was no problem. Do not distort the situation. I have my telephone number in the phone book so I get plenty of calls on this issue.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier's words, as he threw them to me across the Chamber, were: How many people do I know?

Sir Charles Court: That is what I am asking you now.

Mr Barnett: Legions in my electorate.

Sir Charles Court: You name one that has sold to date.

Mr Barnett: I will give you lists of them.

Mr Wilson: Did you say there are not any? That is what you are saying. You are trying to say there are not any.

Sir Charles Court: The member for Dianella is up to his old tricks. Tell me one, because the member for Balcatta knows that the building societies and the banks and other institutions have been very anxious to renegotiate the loans so that the borrowers can still pay within their budgetary competence. That cannot go on for ever.

Mr B. T. BURKE: That is the whole point. I have no arguments with the building societies and the banks on this occasion—perhaps at a later date I may have—but the Premier from his own mouth has outlined the peril that we face because these lending institutions, after all, as the Premier is so fond of saying, are businesses. They have to cover their operating costs. They have to pay the wages of the staff employed and cannot forever continue to compensate for the effects of Federal and State Government policies.

Sir Charles Court: The Government accepts that. This is just words and words from you. You have not put up a single proposition as to how you would redress the situation in a practical way.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I will not be bullied by the Premier into outlining to him now the steps we would implement. If he stays in this place long enough he will hear them in good time. I will be very pleased to explain them to him in great detail.

Sir Charles Court: I will not guarantee to be here in 1985.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I should hope that the Premier would give an undertaking that he would not be here in 1985. I can recall the Premier advising the Press and the public that the former Premier (Mr Tonkin) was too old at 70.

A Government member: He was.

Mr Barnett: How old is the Premier at the moment?

Mr B. T. BURKE: Moving on from the fall in the rate of home ownership, let us also look at the great hardship that is being imposed on existing home owners as a result of the interest rate policies and general financial strategy being followed by the Federal and State Governments. In addition to that, the sorts of policies as vividly illustrated in the Bill now before the House that we have been discussing, place an intolerable strain on an already depleted public housing authority in this State. The Minister has said it himself time and time again.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crane): Order! There are too many audible comments in the Chamber. I would ask members to lower their voices.

Mr B. T. BURKE: As recently as in answer to questions yesterday, the Honorary Minister for Housing indicated that the State Housing Commission's job, by implication, was becoming more difficult. In respect of the major provision in this Bill, the Minister has said that the base figure provided by the Commonwealth to the States of \$200 million a year for the next five years is inadequate and unrealistic. Yet today the Minister has the gall to bring that agreement to this place for the Parliament's approval.

In addition to the points I have touched upon briefly, it is true that the economic strategy being followed by this Government and its Federal counterpart has brought the home building industry in this State to the brink of a major recession. That industry, which is such a vivid employer of labour nationally and in this State, has been brought to the brink of a major recession by the activities and strategies of these Governments.

The most worrying thing is this: The strategies and their effects are no accident. The Centre for Economic Development in Australia—CEDA—has seriously proposed that in this country for many years too many of our resources have been turned to housing. That centre has considerable influence in Federal Government as indicated by the statements of the Treasurer and his Federal colleagues who said that as a conscious policy the financing of development projects by the redirection of

resources from the housing sector is something that is to be pursued. That worries the Opposition in this State. It is no accident that the Federal Government has turned down the recommendations of its State counterparts. It is no accident, apart from the inherent weakness of its policy, that this Government has been ineffective because emerging in this country is an economic thought that instead of being a nation of home owners it should be turned into a community occupying rental accommodation.

That sort of philosophy which has been emerging in the past 12 months more precisely than ever before is one to which the Federal Government appears to be acquiescing. The Opposition, in the lack of any positive lead by this Government, says very clearly that that sort of philosophy has to be opposed and that when this Government talks about home ownership it really does the opposite in its failure to combat the emergence of that sort of economic thought, hypothesis, or thesis. The Opposition repeats again that the unbridled inflow of capital funds to this economy poses the very gravest of dangers to the strategy being followed by the Federal Government and being supported in terms of statements on economic growth by this Premier.

If this Government cannot learn from the examples of countries like Canada, where \$500 million was repatriated overnight, and cannot learn from the dangers of balancing an economy on a knife edge in that sort of situation with dependency on overseas investment, then the Government does not deserve to be in office. The Premier wanted to interject a moment ago to ask what areas of capital investment the Opposition would look at. The Opposition will tell him.

Sir Charles Court: I did not say that. I asked you which projects you would cancel.

Mr B. T. BURKE: We will tell the Premier exactly how the Opposition sees the situation. It does not support the proposition that foreign money should come into this State completely unbridled, to buy up residential and retail properties and thus create a situation in which Western Australian families and traders are left to the mercy of these people, having seen their homes, their businesses, and retail properties bought at the behest of foreign investors in an unbridled and unmanaged way. That is one way in which we look at the restriction of the inflow of foreign funds. If the Premier is happy to see that occurring, he should say so because he wants to talk about development all the time and ignore the reality that under his very nose the State is being bought by people of whom he has no

knowledge and about whose activities he does not bother to inquire.

Mr Jamieson: To say nothing of the rural buyer.

Mr B. T. BURKE: That is the next point. If this Government wants us to talk about the areas we would examine in an effort to see whether or not foreign investment can be properly managed and efficiently restricted, look at the concern being expressed by traditional opponents of the Labor Party about the vast land grabs by overseas investors in the agricultural and pastoral areas. The Premier is very quiet now; he has nothing to say about the land grabs and the retail property purchases by foreign investors.

Sir Charles Court: How can I speak while you are speaking?

Mr B. T. BURKE: It has never stopped the Premier before.

Sir Charles Court: If you will pause for a moment, I will gladly accommodate you. This is a comparatively small part of the total money coming in. Can you identify how it would make money available to build another house? On the contrary, if money were not coming in from overseas there would be less money for use in Australia. There would be more demand on the local money market. Look at the total picture.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am not sure whether the Premier is attempting to equate speculative investment with development funds.

Sir Charles Court: I am not; I am simply saying you should get your facts in proper perspective, because it is understood that the amount of speculative capital which is coming in—which none of us encourages—is comparatively small in the total picture.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It has never worried the Premier to interject before, but I am very pleased to hear him concede he does not favour the investment of speculative capital.

Sir Charles Court: There is nothing new about that.

Mr B. T. BURKE: What is the Premier doing to discourage it?

Sir Charles Court: We are doing plenty to try to discourage it. We are not encouraging it; start at that point.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier is discouraging it by not encouraging it!

Sir Charles Court: Isn't that factual? How stupid can you be?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I simply ask the Premier to outline to the House steps he is taking or has

taken to limit, restrict, or discourage speculative investment.

Sir Charles Court: First of all, we have no capacity to stop money coming into Australia because that is not within the competence of a State Government. At the same time, we have made it very clear in places like Singapore, London, and the Continent that we do not encourage that type of speculative investment. However, we do encourage—and this is the point I wish to emphasise—bona fide developmental expenditure.

Mr B. T. BURKE: We will come to that in a moment. I wonder why the Premier does not talk about his inability to place restrictions on people who have gone from this State and placed advertisements in newspapers in South East Asia, notably Singapore and Hong Kong, extolling the marvellous speculative opportunities which exist in Western Australia. That is an area over which the Premier has some control.

Sir Charles Court: We have no control over that area. How can we control a man going to Singapore or Hong Kong and placing advertisements in the local newspapers? Be sensible.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am not sure whether the Premier is completely in control of the situation, but he certainly should understand that real estate agents and companies are licensed by his Government.

Sir Charles Court: Of course we do, but we cannot operate on a basis that restricts their operation in Singapore or any other place, as you well know. We have no control of things which take place outside this State.

Mr Evans: What are you going to do to discourage speculation?

Sir Charles Court: We have made it clear that we do not encourage such activities. Have you not heard of the concern expressed on this question in Singapore?

Mr B. T. BURKE: We have heard of such concern being expressed by the Malaysian Government, but not by the Singaporean Government. However, the fact remains that there are ways in which the Premier can make known vividly and forcibly his Government's attitude towards speculative investment, and he has not done so. I am sure that if the Premier wanted to examine the situation, there would be ways in which real estate agents or other licensed people could be restrained from carrying out these undesirable activities. The truth is that the Premier is prepared to say in this place that he does not favour speculative investment and at the

same time he allows it to proceed in an unbridled fashion outside this place.

If the Premier is dinkum, let us see some advertisements sponsored by the Government, not on the crisis in education, but on the economic dangers posed by this speculative investment. If the Government is dinkum, let us see some sort of publicity campaign organised and implemented by our representatives in other countries. Let us not have the Premier saying one thing in this place and doing another thing outside this place, because that is what has been occurring to date.

Sir Charles Court: I am very interested to hear you make that comment. I assume that if ever—heaven forbid—your party becomes the Government, that is the sort of punitive action you would take against reputable people in an endeavour to inhibit their operations and lawful activities. That is what you are saying, are you not? You are saying you would withdraw their licences if they brought in money from overseas.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Let us move on.

Mr Laurance: You lost that one.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am quite happy to give an answer to the identikit Minister for Housing. No-one has said anything about withdrawing licences, but if that is what the Premier has in mind, let us do it.

Sir Charles Court: How else would you do it?

Mr B. T. BURKE: There are such things as warnings.

Sir Charles Court: They have had warnings.

Mr B. T. BURKE: What warnings have they had?

Sir Charles Court: We have made it very clear we do not encourage that speculative type of investment. If you want to go beyond that, say so. I am very interested to hear what you are saying because, in effect, you are saying that if they continue to indulge in bringing in money from overseas, they are going to lose their licences.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It is the Premier's effect he is using. Let me talk about the ability of the State Government to impose stamp duty on transactions involving the investment of overseas speculative funds. What has the Premier done in that area?

Sir Charles Court: We have not yet imposed any punitive stamp duty.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Has the Premier considered it?

Sir Charles Court: As we have said publicly, the whole question of overseas speculation in Western Australian pastoral, rural, and urban land is the subject of monitoring by this State, in

conjunction with the Commonwealth which, as you would know, has the overall final control over money coming into Australia. Tell us which projects you would scrap.

Mr B. T. BURKE: There are areas in which the Government has the authority to affect this type of investment.

Sir Charles Court: You said we should withdraw their licences; that is the end result.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I do not know whether anybody else heard me say we should withdraw their licences.

Sir Charles Court: That is the only disciplinary action we could take.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Perhaps the Premier requires an ear trumpet. I will say it again, clearly and concisely, for the Premier's benefit: His attempts to evade any responsibility in this matter, or to take action to prevent such speculation continuing are unworthy, because there are areas in which the State Government can not merely talk, but take positive action to curb the investment of speculative funds. That is what I have said, and that is what the Premier has failed to answer.

Sir Charles Court: I have answered it for you.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier, by way of interjection, has spoken about development. He sits there and says from his beard, "What projects would you stop? Name the projects. How many people would you throw out of work?"

Mr Laurance: We are still waiting.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Unless this Government adopts a realistic programme for development—one which can be managed within the context of the economy—it will impose such hardship on the people in this State that this Government will not see office for another 50 years after the next election. The Government has no development plan whatsoever, and while it persists without any plan, the cost is being borne by people who are unable and ill-equipped to bear it.

It is clear the Premier's mentality, bolstered by the support of his "low royalty" Minister for Water Resources is development at any cost and it is particularly sad that the "at any cost" refers to what ordinary people are going to pay. We would be perfectly happy to sit down with the Premier and assist him, and attempt to agree with him about a development project which fits into the jigsaw puzzle of the economy of this State.

The Premier follows no such programme or development plan. He simply throws open the doors and allows development to proceed at any

cost. We in the Opposition will not have a bar of that. It is bad economics; it is bad planning; and it is extremely expensive in terms of the hardship imposed on people in this State.

In effect, the development boom about which the Premier speaks is being financed by the massive redirection of resources from other sectors of the economy, noticeably the housing and construction industries. In some areas, it is possible to speak directly about the limitation of the investment of overseas capital. In other areas, it is possible only to say that we want some sort of plan for development at an orderly and well-managed rate that is not too expensive for the people whom it is supposed to benefit. The truth is that the people in this State cannot stand any more development booms. They are too expensive. They cost too much in hardship.

Good God, the development policies followed by this Government are sending building firms and partnerships into bankruptcy. The development policies followed by this Government are making it almost impossible to support the repayments on an average mortgage.

Wherever he goes, the Premier trumpets about how he remembers back to 1911—well, he says, not exactly 1911 because that is the year he was born. That is the time when there was no development—when this country was called the land of sand, sun, and sandflies, or something else. At least, it was not the land of unemployment, high health premiums, impossible mortgages, and "development booms".

Sir Charles Court: I just remind you that in those days there was real poverty, and the values in real terms were markedly different from those which exist today.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I agree with the Premier; and that is the shame of the situation today. In a society in which we should be well off, why is it that we are having these problems?

We accept that years ago there was real poverty. Can the Premier explain to us why there is so much hardship today, in a country in which we should be able to learn from the mistakes of others? The Premier stands convicted of contributing to the hardship by his failure to protect properly the interests of the people he pretends to govern.

Sir Charles Court: I am still waiting for you to tell me what project you want stopped.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am glad the Premier is waiting, because we will keep him here.

I will now deal briefly, point by point, with some of the remarks I have made. I am sure they

will be of interest to members. Firstly I will deal with interest rates.

In March 1980, the minimum possible interest rate on a bank home loan was 8.5 per cent. In August 1981 the rate is 12.5 per cent—from a minimum of 8.5 per cent in March 1980 to a rate in August 1981 of 12.5 per cent! Let us consider the situation in respect of building societies. In December 1980, less than a year ago, the rate in respect of loans advanced by the Perth Building Society was 11.25 per cent. In August 1981 the rate is 13.5 per cent. What has this Government done? It has done nothing.

The member for Whitford is sorely embarrassed, and I sympathise with him in his embarrassment. I was present with him at a meeting of 80 or 90 home owners; and the member for Whitford, good-natured type that he is, scratched his head and said, "Something's got to be done." Now, something has to be done.

Mr Laurance: Are you suggesting interest rate control?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I will outline for the Honorary Minister exactly what we are suggesting; and I venture to predict that within the next week he will be doing half the things we have suggested.

Mr Laurance: I have told you what we are doing.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Let us consider what this Government is responsible for not doing in terms of interest rates.

Every 1 per cent increase in interest rates, charges borrowers with average-sized loans an additional \$24 per month. Since December 1980, the results of the policies being followed by the Federal Government, aided and abetted by the State Government in Western Australia, have added to the average loan repayments an amount in excess of \$50 a month. What do we have from this Government apart from a cluck-clucking of the tongue? A genuine concern? A real sympathy? An ability to identify as people are forced to pay more than \$50 extra each month, simply to retain their own homes?

I spoke earlier about the confiscation of the ability for people to purchase their own homes. It is a real problem that we have deprived people of the ability to purchase a home, especially when they earn well in excess of average wages. Which members knew, for example, that a \$30 000 loan—an average loan—over 25 years at the previous rate of 12.9 per cent required an income of \$16 176 to qualify for the finance? That was before the Perth Building Society increased the interest rate by 1 per cent the other day. For an

average-sized loan from a building society, to be paid back in 25 years, an applicant had to have an income of more than \$16 000.

Mr Barnett: How many have got that?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I cannot see that that should be a source of satisfaction to the Honorary Minister for Housing.

Mr Laurance: There are other avenues available, if that is the case.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I presume that the other finance available is Government assistance for purchase homes, or State Housing Commission assistance. The Honorary Minister does not realise, or he chooses not to acknowledge, that many people are not eligible for Government assistance. On the one hand, to obtain building society finance before the 1 per cent rise, an applicant had to have an income of \$337 per week; and the Honorary Minister knows that an income of \$300 a week rules one out; \$280 a week rules one out; and \$250 can rule one out of eligibility for Government assistance.

Mr Laurance: There are some funds available from terminating building societies without that qualification. It is available there today.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Honorary Minister knows that an income of \$330 a week makes one ineligible for assistance from terminating societies. I have sent applications—

Mr Laurance: That is quite wrong.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I have submitted applications on behalf of other people, and they have been returned. They were people receiving an income of \$293 a week. Either the Honorary Minister is ignorant of the situation, or he chooses to ignore what has happened until now.

Mr Laurance: On purely Government funds, you are right; but there are other funds available from terminating building societies without that qualification. Terminating building societies do not get funds only from the Government. They also get funds from the banks—

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Minister's denseness defies description. The money that terminating building societies obtain from banks requires an income qualification in excess of the figure which I have quoted in respect of building societies.

Mr Laurance: Wrong—and I thought you would know better.

Mr B. T. BURKE: In addition to that, the banks require far greater security in respect of the funds that they advance. There is a broad class of people from whom the ability to buy a home has been confiscated. These people fall squarely between the lower limits of the eligibility criteria

for private finance and the upper limits applied by Government authorities in the provision of assistance.

The Minister previously has acknowledged this problem which results in the creation of a new poor. The middle class in this country is being squeezed out by the policies being followed by this Government and the Federal Government. The Minister previously has acknowledged that the problem exists and the Chairman of the Town and Country Permanent Building Society (Mr McCusker) was quoted as recently as Tuesday evening as saying that what I am saying is true.

Mr Laurance: It could happen, that is what I have said, as a result of the latest increases.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Minister says it could happen, the Chairman of the Town and Country Permanent Building Society says it has happened, and I say it has happened. The fact that the Minister fails to realise what is going on in his own area of responsibility is one of the reasons we are doing badly.

Let us look at the situation in respect of the same borrower when interest rates rise by 1 per cent. To qualify for an average-sized home loan, if the rates rise by 1 per cent, a borrower must have an income of \$337 a week—well in excess of the average income. However, consider the situation under the rising rates as foreshadowed by some societies and announced by others. If interest rates rise by 1 per cent, on the figures I gave previously, the minimum income to qualify for an average-sized home loan would be \$360 a week. How can we have a society that tunes its average-sized home loans and the commitments they involve to such an above average earner? What has the Government done about it?

Mr Laurance: You will see.

Mr Harman: The Minister spends all his time going to casinos.

Mr Wilson: And visiting Honolulu.

Mr Clarko: That is unfair.

Mr B. T. BURKE: As far as the Opposition is concerned there is something drastically wrong with the situation in which, to qualify for an average-sized home loan, an applicant has to earn so much in excess of the average wage. The situation where a person has a loan over 30 years is almost as bad. On the present scale of interest rates, ignoring the latest 1 per cent rise, the income required for an average-sized home loan is \$330. If rates rise another 1 per cent the qualifying income will be \$354. What is the Government going to do and what has it done? The situation is alarming and is sufficient

justification for the sorts of statements the Opposition has been making for the past year—the sorts of statements the Premier is so fond of saying are “talking up interest rates”.

The facts of the matter are that this Government fails to realise the hardship people are experiencing and in particular is failing to acknowledge or act upon the gap that has developed between the income at which people can qualify for Government assistance and the income it is necessary for people to have to qualify for building society finance.

One of the other major concerns has been the elimination from the market of first home buyers. If we consider that a \$25 000 loan identifies a first home buyer—and that is considered by many in the industry to be a bench-mark—then the situation as outlined by the statistics is quite alarming. According to that criterion in June 1979, 43.61 per cent of applicants for home loans were identified as first home buyers and in January 1981 the percentage dropped to 16.59 per cent. That is how well we are doing for first home buyers!

Mr Laurance: Are you talking about purchasers of new dwellings?

Mr B. T. BURKE: No, I am talking about building society loans granted to first home buyers.

Mr Laurance: Buying a new home?

Mr B. T. BURKE: Buying any sort of home. I am simply talking about first home purchasers. As far as the Opposition is concerned and as far as statements by this Government in times past are concerned, a first home buyer is a person to be cosseted and assisted, yet we have seen this Government preside over their extinction from the marketplace.

As I mentioned previously the rate of home ownership has declined alarmingly. I know that some members on the Government side of this place are aware of the problem because they represent areas that are hard hit. The member for Whitford is one and parts of the member for Murdoch's electorate are also affected.

Mr Laurance: How do you account for the fact that the percentage of home buyers in Perth is higher than in any other capital city of Australia?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am not denying that that is the case, but I am saying if that is a desirable situation the Minister should appreciate the threat.

Mr Laurance: Sure.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Because already industry leaders are telling the people to rent not buy. The

building society movement is squirming in agony at what it has been forced to endure.

Mr Laurance: Better than any other State.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It has done well and of course its presence is vivid. But the Minister is damned by faint praise if he draws strength from that situation at the present time. The Chief Executive of the Perth Building Society tells people to rent, not buy.

Mr Laurance: In the very short term.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Rather than existing on pleasurable memories, the Honorary Minister should appreciate the threat that is being outlined by these people. The Chief Executive of the Perth Building Society is aware, as the Minister is aware, and as the Opposition is aware, of the past record of home ownership.

What we are saying to the Minister is, "Do not live on past performances, but look at the problem confronting you now". That is what the building societies are saying to him too, and, because of his political bias, that is what he is incapable of grasping. Sooner or later somebody will have to put up his hand and take the blame. I have always been taught to put up my hand early because the blame is less. This Minister continues not to admit mistakes or faults of the Government, but says we have the highest rate of home ownership in Australia.

Mr Laurance: It is not the alarming position, you are trying to say.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Mr Speaker, hang around because fairly soon we will not have the highest rate of home ownership in Australia; we will have a situation which even the Minister will be forced to acknowledge is alarming.

I turn now to another aspect which I touched on briefly when I indicated to the House that the home building industry is being brought to the brink of a major recession. In the 1979-80 financial, 5 503 fewer new dwellings were completed than in 1976-77. Specifically in the 1979-80 financial year 3 507 fewer new houses were completed than in the year four years previously. The value of the work completed in 1979-80 was \$193 million less than in 1976-77. That decline has been amplified by the most recent statistics that are available. In the first six months of 1980-81 building approvals were down 6 per cent. Home commencements are down 13.7 per cent; and home completions are down 15.9 per cent.

When the Minister was confronted with these facts he said I was playing with figures. The truth

is that building company collapses are continuing at the rate of about one every two weeks. The truth is that in respect of the collapse of seven companies in the industry, the loss to suppliers and subtrades was in the order of \$2.5 million. The truth is that there are none so blind as they who will not see.

Mr Laurance: The truth is that the Housing Industry Association said that there is no difference now than at any other time in the history of the industry. The member is not taking into account the changes in the market place. The number of extensions and renovations has increased enormously.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am absolutely amazed at the lack of knowledge the Minister exhibits.

Mr Laurance: There is no point in the member saying people are not going into new homes and building new homes.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I cannot believe that the Minister thinks people are going broke because business is good. It is absolutely unfathomable to find that the Minister chooses not to acknowledge the serious state of the home-building industry.

Mr Laurance: It is not the alarming situation which you pose.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It is a situation for which the Minister, by his interjections, shows he has no concern at all. I can only repeat that the Opposition's view is that the present interest rate structure has brought the home-building industry to the brink of a major recession; that the activity in the industry is at a subdued level; that there has been a significant number of collapses within the home-building industry that have occasioned significant losses to suppliers and subtrades; and that the failure of the Minister to acknowledge the situation leads me to believe he is not as competent as I thought in handling his responsibilities or discharging his obligations.

No matter what this boy Minister says, the home-building industry is in a parlous state.

Mr Laurance: Listen bully-boy, the Housing Industry Association says there have not been more failures this year than in any other year.

Mr B. T. BURKE: When I addressed members of the Housing Industry Association at one of their luncheons, it was plain the association took the view that the dangers to which I was alluding were dangers that should be properly stressed. I do not know what the association has told the Minister, but its public comments have reinforced the view held by the Opposition. I know the association has warned the Federal Government that unless subsidies are provided—that is its

latest line, instead of taxation deductibility—there will be serious repercussions within the housing industry.

Mr Laurance: You have quoted only failures.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Perhaps the Housing Industry Association chooses to tell the Minister something different. Nevertheless, I am quite happy to accommodate the Minister and tell him the truth.

Mr Laurance: You say the association is wrong.

Mr B. T. BURKE: In respect of these major companies alone—MPM Constructions Pty. Ltd., Skey Constructions, New Era Constructions Pty. Ltd., Emanuele Nominees Pty. Ltd., Y L Constructions Pty. Ltd., Ready-Built Accommodations (Aust) Pty. Ltd.—the losses have totalled almost \$3 million. The Minister should know that Hooker Homes Pty. Ltd.—one of the biggest building companies in this State—has announced that because of the poor state of the industry it is withdrawing its operations to Queensland.

During the past five years, Commonwealth funds for housing have been slashed by \$37.5 million, which is enough to build 1 703 State Housing Commission three-bedroomed homes. Today we know the allocation for the current year is to be about \$2 million less than the previous year in terms of the advance money. Is the Minister happy with that situation?

Mr Laurance: Read my second reading speech. I said it was inadequate and unrealistic.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I hate to correct the Minister, but he was commenting on the base figure. I was not commenting on the base figure when I mentioned the \$2 million reduction. Why should I read the Minister's second reading speech to find out?

Mr Laurance: It is totally appropriate to the situation now, after the Budget, as it was before.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am glad the Minister has finally scuttled the excuse he used about top-up funds—

Mr Laurance: There were none in the Budget.

Mr B. T. BURKE: —top-up funds which are unreasonable and inadequate, as was the base figure. Yet we heard the Minister say time and time again, "Do not worry, that is only a base figure. We will get top-up funds." Those figures will drown the Minister. There is \$2 million less in advances to the State than last year. Funds for Aboriginal Housing have increased slightly in money terms, but in real terms the amount has fallen, as have funds for aged persons' homes. It is

not good enough for the Government to cop that sort of proposition from its Federal counterpart.

If we look at the money terms, we find that in 1977-78 \$400 million was made available for housing by the Commonwealth Government. The amount in 1978-79 was \$330 million, and in 1979-80 the amount was \$260 million. In 1981-82 the base figure is \$200 million. In the words of the Minister himself, the amount prescribed is unrealistic and totally inadequate.

Why should this Parliament agree to ratify this Bill when the Minister describes it as being unrealistic and inadequate. Do members realise that the base figure of \$200 million is not indexed for inflation? If it continues without adjustment for inflation, we will see a real reduction in excess of 30 per cent of funds made available to States in the next 5 years. Are members happy to ratify an agreement of that sort?

Do members realise there is no provision for changed circumstances. Do members realise the excuse to which the Minister fled for refuge previously when he spoke about top-up funds has proved to be an illusion, because already we can see from the Budget delivered on Tuesday that the top-up funds are a myth and that in real terms the reduction in housing funds provided to Western Australia in 1981-82 under the terms of this agreement represent a decrease of around 15 per cent?

I want to touch briefly on one or two other points specifically referred to by the Minister in his second reading speech. The Opposition is pleased that the Minister will have the ability to apportion funds between rental and purchase operations. We are naturally pleased the interest rate in respect of funds provided will fall from 5 per cent to 4.5 per cent. We welcome in the agreement the incorporation of a requirement for matching State funds.

We acknowledge the necessity to limit the maximum to which the variable interest rate can escalate to a figure 1 per cent below the Commonwealth Savings Bank's current home loan rate. We point out to the Minister that this was highlighted by the Opposition when the previous agreement was discussed, when we warned that the long-term bond rate in the situation that appeared to be developing would become a means of imposing hardship on people unable to bear that hardship.

The other thing we do is to warn the Government about the dangers of subsidising private rentals. We seek an assurance from the Minister that this matter will be very carefully and cautiously embarked upon if it is his intention

that it should be a course of action to be pursued by the Government.

As I draw to a close, I want to touch on the SHC context into which we can slot this Bill. The member for Dianella will be dealing in greater detail with some of the practical illustrations of the sorts of hardships this Bill, and the policies it reflects, impose on people.

Firstly, I shall refer to rents. Do members realise that SHC rents, in many cases, are an unmanageable burden on families who are supposed to be people deserving of assistance from a Government housing authority? Do members realise the rental rebate scheme of which the Honorary Minister is so proud to boast is nothing but a myth, because a married man who has two children, and who receives a gross income of \$176 a week does not receive any rebate whatsoever? That is an illustration of the extent of the generosity of this Government.

Therefore, that man pays \$44.50 a week for a three-bedroomed house and, after tax, 30 per cent of his net pay goes to the SHC to pay the rent. How can the SHC implement that sort of policy when lending institutions advise that no more than 25 per cent of one's income should be committed to the discharge of one's housing needs?

The waiting time for SHC accommodation is escalating alarmingly. The Honorary Minister was unable to say the exact period people who lodged applications for rental assistance would have to wait before receiving it. However, the Honorary Minister said that the SHC is dealing with applications lodged in April 1978. That is not very long ago, but next year the commission will still be dealing with applications lodged in 1978 and in April 1988 they will still be dealing with applications lodged that long ago.

People in this State are waiting for as long as 10 years for SHC assistance and the Honorary Minister says, "They are too choosy". If one is a client of the SHC one cannot have any preferences about where one wants to live. One must simply take what one gets, because there is no precision about the way in which the SHC can meet a person's needs. If someone does not take what he is given by the SHC, frequently he is scrubbed off the list and if a person has a specific preference, he may have to wait as long as 10 years for it to be satisfied.

Even yesterday we heard the Honorary Minister admit the SHC is now dealing with purchase applications lodged in 1973.

Mr Laurance: Not at all.

Mr B. T. BURKE: That is what the Honorary Minister said in reply to a question.

Mr Laurance: People who are assisted already with SHC accommodation are entitled to put their names on a transfer list.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am talking about purchase assistance. What is this Honorary Minister going on about?

Mr Laurance: You touched on waiting times.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I touched on interest rates an hour ago also.

The point I am putting to the Honorary Minister is that in answer to a question yesterday he conceded the SHC was now dealing with applications to purchase which were lodged as long ago as 1973.

Mr Laurance: No, it was a list started in 1973. In almost all cases those people have been offered assistance.

Mr B. T. BURKE: "In almost all cases" means there must be some cases which remain from 1973.

Mr Laurance: There may be.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Either there are people in the list from 1973 or there are not.

Mr Laurance: I cannot tell you at the moment whether—

Mr B. T. BURKE: I should like to refer also to the situation involving the recent increases in rents. This matter will be outlined in greater detail by the member for Dianella, but recently rent increases of 10 per cent were announced. The translation of that announcement to reality was that, in many cases, pensioners were charged 20 per cent more than they were paying previously. That is not good enough and it is a situation the Opposition deplores. It is a situation provoked by the policies being followed by this Government.

Before gratifying the Premier's wish and moving onto the package of measures we think will assist home ownership in this State, let me talk briefly about an area of housing assistance which has been the most neglected and which is the biggest blot on the record of the Government. Aboriginal housing policies in this country amount to criminal neglect and this matter is perhaps the country's most pressing social problem. This State has been spared serious racial problems only because of the relatively small number of Aborigines who live here and their weak and defenceless position. There is no excuse for what this Government, through the SHC, is doing to black Australians in the metropolitan area.

We have a situation in which children are being separated from their parents and families are being forced to live in the open on the fringes of the metropolitan area. We have a situation in which urban racial tension is being exacerbated by the failure of this Government to provide housing—a failure that provokes relatives to move in with their families who have SHC homes. This inevitably leads to increased racial tension in the suburbs. It is an absolutely disgusting situation. It amounts to criminal neglect and it makes me wonder about the genuine concern this Government says it has for the Aboriginal population.

Mr Young: To which fringe dwellers do you refer, because that is important?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am talking specifically about three families who have been to see me in the past two weeks and another case which has been referred to me by the TLC social welfare section concerning people who are living in motor vehicles. In one case, I believe the people involved are living in a park at Midland.

Mr Young: I just wanted to make sure it was not the Lord Street group led by Mr Bropho.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am sure the Minister for Health will agree a great deal of work needs to be done in this area.

Mr Young: I have always said so and we have made representations to the Commonwealth in respect of funding for Aborigines. We were the only State which pointed this out to the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs and tracked down every single Aboriginal family in this State which requires housing and we submitted that information to the department four years ago.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am very heartened to hear that. I should like to make one further comment before referring to the Aboriginal Housing Board. I emphasise the very real problems being caused by the policies followed by the commission and the deleterious effect they are having on the emotional well-being of families in SHC suburbs. It is true that, while we fail to provide many Aboriginal applicants with assistance, they are moving in with their families who are housed and this causes massive problems, because they are unable to cope, in the same way as, I am sure, members in this place would be unable to cope if their families all shifted in to live with them.

Mr Young: That is true. It is one of the characteristics of the Aboriginal race that they are gregarious and prepared to share. One of the problems is the fact that many Aboriginal families have been assisted on a number of

occasions and cannot cope with the actual situation into which they are put.

Mr B. T. BURKE: One of the reasons is that the Minister's department has cut back on the number of home makers who are available. They were doing a good job in overcoming these problems.

Mr Young interjected.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I should have known it would be the Minister for Community Welfare.

Several members interjected.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The problem is two-pronged; not only are we not providing a sufficient number of houses, but also we are causing good people to say that their neighbours who happen to be Aborigines are shiftless, will not work, and are troublemakers. We are doing ourselves a disservice in two ways: Firstly, we are not caring for people in a particular situation as we should care for them; and, secondly, when those people are able to obtain a house we ensure that in many cases they suffer the animosity of their neighbours—we are not giving them a chance.

Mr Hassell: Where do you base the proposition that there has been a cutback in the number of homemakers?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I base the proposition—this is an answer to the Minister for Community Welfare who I am not sure knows he has that portfolio—on the fact that homemakers who have operated in my area have approached me and referred to the restrictions placed on their abilities to carry out their functions properly, and to the diminution of their numbers.

Mr Hassell: In other words, you are as usual being quite inaccurate. There has been no cutback in the number of homemakers, there has been an increase.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It is not my wont to dally with the Minister for too long. I am sure anyone who heard the Minister last night answer a question from the member for Kimberley would have been absolutely shocked.

Mr Hassell: Stick to the point made.

Mr B. T. BURKE: For the Minister to have said some people choose to separate from others because that is their wont and for the Minister to have been so blatant in his latent racism was an absolutely stunning experience for most of us.

Mr Hassell: You state untruths in the House.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Today I will not be tempted by the Chief Secretary. His harshness and vindictiveness—if one likes to use those

words—towards his department are well known. I can say again to the House only that homemakers employed to deal with Aboriginal families in my electorate complained to me as long ago as 2½ years that their services were being restricted and their numbers lessened.

Mr Hassell: You never conveyed that representation to me.

Mr B. T. BURKE: What is the point of conveying anything to this Minister? What is the point of conveying anything to such an unreceptive Minister as this one who yesterday illustrated and confirmed what we have all known for some time about his attitude towards Aboriginal people.

In 1974 the Australian Labor Party outlined its thoughts in regard to an Aboriginal Housing Board for this State. Shortly afterwards we were pleased to see the Liberal Government—the Liberal Party was returned at that year's election—establish an Aboriginal Housing Board of its own. Unfortunately it is now our view that the Aboriginal Housing Board needs to be either overhauled completely—changed and given purpose—or abolished because it simply is serving as a peg on which the Government hangs the window dressing of its feeble attempts to help Aboriginals in their housing needs.

Mr Laurance: You are sorry because your Government didn't have the idea.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The constitution first proposed by the board was rejected because the Minister thought it gave the board too much autonomy, and recently we had the resignation of the chairman of the board and that vacancy existed for more than eight or nine weeks. Today I do not intend to criticise the new chairman—

Mr Blaikie: That will be tomorrow.

Mr B. T. BURKE: —but it is certain he will have a lot on his plate when the monstrous task he has in front of him is considered. We will watch developments in that area carefully.

Mr Laurance: He is a person of high calibre.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Damning evidence has come from the board's north-west representative who wrote to the Minister. She is not a part of the Opposition; she is a member of the Aboriginal Housing Board. Previously the Minister described her thoughts as thought-provoking and informative, and in her letter that board member said—

my letter was an attempt to bring your attention to the obvious faults with Aboriginal housing and the board . . . after 2½ years of voluntary service, I am aware of

the official policy and lip service paid to Aboriginal housing . . . it is well known within the commission that the A.H.B. is a body with limited powers and has very little chance of any real success . . . I am forced to regard the Board as mere window dressing that the commission and Government can conveniently point to as the fine attempt being made to assist and involve Aboriginal people in housing . . . your belief that every endeavour is made within the commission to assist Aboriginal clients . . . is sadly untrue in most instances . . . this is most discouraging because I seriously believe that progress could be made with some constructive changes and realistic objectives . . .

Could more damning evidence be put to the Minister? It was put to him by a member of the board. Is the Minister happy to receive that type of criticism from a member of the board? Will the Minister say that member of the board, whose name I do not think I have given, is motivated politically?

Mr Laurance: Not at all; I regard her highly. I think it is unfortunate she wrote in the manner she did. I believe her service to the board has been unquestionable, as I believe it will be in the future.

Mr B. T. BURKE: If she believes these things why should not she convey her feelings to the Minister?

Mr Laurance: The board is an advisory one. She has made representations to me which have been referred to the commission, that she be placed on a full-time salary. Most members are paid merely attendance fees for when the board meets, but she has to make up her mind whether she wants to be employed or to be an adviser.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Minister's statement is a veiled attack upon a person to whom he shortly before paid tribute. He said she raises these matters only because she wants to be paid a salary. I will not say that, but will say to the Minister that this board member he regards so highly accuses the Aboriginal Housing Board of being window dressing for the Government and having no real chance of success.

Mr Laurance: I do not agree with her on that.

Mr B. T. BURKE: She believes the board is merely an avenue by which the Government pays lip service to the problems of Aboriginal housing.

Mr Wilson: It is worse than that; it acts as a hindrance to people requesting assistance.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am sure it is, and I am sure the member for Dianella will deal with that matter.

I am glad the Premier has returned to listen to the propositions which we say will relieve the housing situation and give relief to the hardship being suffered by so many people.

The first thing the Labor Party would do in the present situation is establish a mortgage relief authority. Yesterday we asked the Minister whether he would consider establishing such an authority, and to his credit he said the suggestion was being entertained. Perhaps the Premier could turn his mind to the need for such an authority because he was so keen to see what could be done to relieve high interest rates and their effects. Does the Premier suggest that such an authority should be established?

Sir Charles Court: You state your propositions and we will respond to them.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The first proposition is that we should have a mortgage relief authority representing borrowers, lenders, and the Government. Such an authority should be charged with the responsibility of determining cases of hardship, and should be possessed of the funds and ability to relieve hardship in certain cases.

That is one concrete suggestion that the Opposition puts forward—it is one thing that the Government has not done. It is one suggestion we will be very pleased to hear the Government's reaction to.

The next thing the Opposition says should be seriously considered by this Government is the extension of eligibility criteria for access to low interest Commonwealth-State finance. We say that the present restrictions are unrealistic and have provoked the gap between people who earn too much to qualify for low interest Government assistance and not enough to qualify for private finance. Does the Premier see that explanation of eligibility criteria as a worthwhile suggestion to assist those people who presently are denied access? Is it not strange that the Premier was so vocal—

Sir Charles Court: We do not have to respond to these announcements of yours where you pause for these dramatic, pregnant moments, asking for a response.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier asked me to outline to him earlier the sort of things the Opposition is going to do.

Sir Charles Court: I am waiting. I have listened to two. The Minister will respond to your comments.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am very pleased that we will get a response to that subject proposition.

Sir Charles Court: The Minister will respond to all the remarks, I imagine.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The third proposition is this: It should be possible, perhaps through the mortgage relief authority, to arrange for the replacement, in serious cases of hardship, of part of a high interest privately funded loan with low interest Government funds. If, for example, a mortgage comprising \$30 000 was advanced by Town and Country Permanent Building Society to somebody who experiences hardship, according to the authority's criteria, in making repayments, it should be possible for the mortgage relief authority to substitute low interest funds for part of that loan. It should be possible for the Mortgage Relief Authority to subsidise for a certain period, part of the interest burden attached to that particular loan which is occasioning such hardship. Does the Premier agree that that is a sensible suggestion?

Sir Charles Court: I have told you the Government is not going to respond just because you make these pauses of yours. The Minister will reply to your speech in due course.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am simply reminding the Premier that he is the person who prevailed upon me *ad nauseam* to put forward suggestions. Let the Premier be not less than gracious now that he is being confronted with the suggestions. That is all I am suggesting.

Sir Charles Court: We are listening to them. I gather you have a long list of them, so let us have them.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The third suggestion I put forward was that it should be possible for the replacement of part of the loan should the mortgage repayments be occasioning such hardship as to warrant that action in the view of the mortgage relief authority. Alternatively, it should be possible to subsidise for a certain period the interest burden attached to a loan that is occasioning hardship.

The Opposition believes there are specific programmes that can be advanced to assist people who are having difficulty in meeting their mortgage repayments or who are being denied access to home ownership. In the case of first home buyers why is it not possible for this State Government to abolish stamp duty? In the case of first home buyers why is it not possible for this Government to review the legal charges attached

to the documentation it is necessary to complete? What is wrong with the scheme previously outlined by the Opposition in this place which would allow people to capitalise on part of the family allowance that they expect to receive during the dependant life of their children? We have not yet heard, despite the frequency with which the proposition has been advanced, why it is not possible to institute a scheme on a State basis similar to that which operates in New Zealand which allows people to capitalise on their family allowance payments provided they wish to use the money as the deposit on a home or as a means of reducing the outstanding mortgage on the home they are paying off? Why cannot that be done? The member for Whitford knows that at the public meeting we attended, somebody from New Zealand stood up in the audience and said this was a good scheme. The member for Whitford does not deny the fact that the person in the audience said it worked well.

Mr Laurance: It has certainly been looked at in this country. It would need to be a Federal initiative.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Why would it need to be a Federal initiative?

Mr Laurance: Because family allowances are paid by the Federal Government.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Does this Government not have any initiative or imagination about the assignation of benefit entitlements? Could it not, through the Rural and Industries Bank, allow people to assign to the Government, the capitalised value of the family allowances they would receive on a monthly basis?

Mr Laurance: Only on the approval of the person who is actually paying it, and who has to guarantee it for a certain period ahead. The Federal Treasurer must—

Mr B. T. BURKE: The proposition from the Minister is that it is too hard.

Mr Laurance: No, it is not.

Sir Charles Court: It is a question of practicality.

Mr Laurance: What you are saying is you want to take that benefit which is paid to the family away from the children.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am not saying we take it away. I am simply saying we give people the choice. This Government, which parades itself as a paragon, giving people choices, now wants to make arbitrary judgments about what people should, use one or other benefit for. Let us see the Minister's dextrous footwork because we have caught him out. A minute ago he said it could not

be done because it was a Federal scheme; now he is saying it cannot be done because it is undesirable.

Mr Laurance: Members on this side of the House have raised it many times before and it has been rejected.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Opposition simply says that people should not be forced to take part in any scheme that is implemented along these lines but that they should be given a chance to say yes or no.

Mr Wilson: They could be given the choice.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier so often trumpets about choice. What does he think of this scheme? This is the fifth proposal that the Opposition has put forward today and the Premier remains remarkably silent.

Sir Charles Court: Let us hear it. This is an old stunt of ours. These pauses you make are absolutely ridiculous.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I think it is very clear that the State Government has not addressed itself in any worthwhile fashion to the prospect of allowing people to capitalise on their family allowance payments should they choose to do so in order to provide the deposit for a home they intend to buy or to discharge part of the mortgage on a home they are buying. We have outlined the scheme previously. I mentioned how it could operate through the Rural and Industries Bank. I have explained how it would be possible to insure families against the unfortunate happening of a child dying. I have explained how applicants, to convert part of their family allowance to a lump sum, could be given 90 per cent of the total to which they are entitled; how it could be arranged by periodical payments that simply assign to the State Government the entitlement that people have to family allowances should they choose to capitalise on those allowances.

The Minister's argument that the payment is for the family does not stand up because we are simply saying: Give people the choice. The Minister said it is for children. What better facility can you provide for children than a stable home, if one wants to argue along the Minister's lines?

Mr Laurance: If they got into difficulty and had already capitalised on the family allowance, what then would members opposite suggest?

Mr B. T. BURKE: Presumably, families would have an equity in their homes if they borrowed against their family allowances. No doubt the Minister is aware that families are already in trouble—

Mr Laurance: Not necessarily.

Mr B. T. BURKE: —in trying to pay off their mortgages.

Mr Laurance: Not necessarily.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Presumably, the Minister knows that there are families excluded from home purchases at the moment. All we are saying is: Give people the choice.

This Government, which parades itself as a champion of private enterprise, now wants to act as "Big Brother," and say to families, "Do not touch your family allowance because in a few years' time you might be in financial trouble." Why cannot people have the choice to participate in a scheme which works well in New Zealand and in respect of which the Government has not advanced one reason that it would not operate successfully in this State? Do members realise that people who are paying off their mortgages, by virtue of capitalising their family allowance could reduce their mortgages, in some cases by \$10 000 or \$12 000 and bring back to realistic levels the demands made on them for repayment? Does the member for Clontarf join with the Honorary Minister in saying that the family allowance is only for the children, and should not be used to secure a home for the family? As on most things, the member for Clontarf is remarkably silent. The Government shows its ineptitude by failing to explain when this scheme is suggested why it cannot work.

The Government has said time and time again that if we are to add any flexibility to the capital market in so far as home loans are concerned, there needs to be a mortgage market to which lending institutions in this State have access; yet the Government has done nothing about it except agree with what we have said, after initially disagreeing. Apart from being concerned, and apart from thinking it is a good idea, the Government has taken no action on the basis that such action must be taken at a Federal level and cannot be properly managed by a State Government alone. That excuse, used so often by this Government, will not stand up when it has been demonstrated within the industry that a mortgage market in this State is absolutely essential.

If the Federal Government—and, it is preferable to have a federally organised market—will not go along with the suggestion, it can be done here. Let us see some action on that suggestion.

The Opposition has the right to know what the Premier—who demanded to be told what the Opposition would do to ameliorate the effects of

high interest rates—thinks about a mortgage market. The Premier, who was so vocal in demanding explanations of what we would do, when confronted with the explanation says nothing. This is the great financial wizard.

We have suggested other methods which would be of assistance in offsetting the hardship caused by high interest rates.

Despite all the political rhetoric which I suppose I indulge in, as do other members in this place, there is a very real and pressing problem confronting many families in the community. The Australian Labor Party in this State has put forward serious proposals about the establishment of a mortgage relief authority; about the use of funds that are provided at concessional interest rates to relieve in areas of the greatest incidence of burden the hardship that is resulting from the imposition of high interest rates; and, about changes which can be made to Government policies—not at great cost—in order to assist families having difficulty or which are being denied access to the purchase of homes. The central challenge to the State Government is the most efficient use of its limited resources.

I will now answer the Honorary Minister's interjection about whether the Opposition favours the control of interest rates. I have never said that I personally or the Opposition generally favours the control of interest rates. It is unworthy of the Minister to continue to make that sort of accusation.

What we do say is that if it is not possible to control interest rates it certainly is possible to insulate or isolate the housing industry and the home ownership sector of the economy from the worst effects of Government economic strategy. The central challenge is to use the low interest finance—the limited resources the Government has at its disposal—as efficiently as possible.

We see that being done, firstly, through the extension of the qualification or eligibility provisions to allow in a controlled way the elimination of the gap between the Government-assisted class and that group of people able to afford private finance. We see the use of part of the funds, at the behest perhaps of a mortgage relief authority, to subsidise interest rates for specific periods. We see the use of part of the funds as replacement money to overcome the difficulty in supporting high interest rates on first home loans. We see the abolition of stamp duty on the purchase of a couple's first home as a small but realistic possibility. We see the review and reconsideration of the legal costs associated with the purchase of the first home as desirable. We

see the establishment of a mortgage market as something which should be the subject of Government action. We see the family allowance conversion as a real option that is not being explored by this Government, but which, if explored and implemented, could promise in some cases to relieve burdens.

The Opposition is opposed to this legislation. It will not have any part in the complicity of this State Government in the Federal Government's housing policy. We realise the Honorary Minister can say that if we do not accept this legislation, we will get nothing at all. However, at the same time, we will not be held responsible in any way for the acceptance in this State of this agreement.

Sitting suspended from 12.42 to 2.15 p.m.

MR WILSON (Dianella) [2.15 p.m.]: This Bill to put the seal on the housing agreement is commended by the Honorary Minister in spite of a few ineffective bleatings at the beginning of his second reading speech about the unrealistic and inadequate minimum base level of Commonwealth funding imposed on the States. There is a very disappointing lack of feeling in his speech about the real harm this agreement will cause to the people renting private or welfare accommodation.

There is no doubt in my mind, or in the mind of anyone on this side of the House, or in the minds of many people in the electorate, that there is a great deal of collusion between the Federal Liberal Government—Mr Fraser's Government—and this lackey Liberal State Government in Western Australia to punish the people in the community at the bottom end of the economic scale. This is one of a number of punitive measures being taken against those people.

When one lumps together the increasing housing difficulties that are being faced and such measures as the increases in sales tax in the Federal Budget with increases in electricity, gas, and water charges in the State sphere, all of which impinge most heavily and most cruelly on people at that end of the economic scale, it is hard to deny that there is some kind of punitive element in the policies being taken by these Governments against people in that position.

Let us look at what is happening to people who have to depend on rental accommodation for housing. A survey by the Real Estate Institute of Australia shows that the rental market tightened considerably in the first quarter of this year. The demand for rental accommodation now appears to be exceeding supply, and forcing rents to rise. According to the real estate newsletter, *Property*

Investor, rents will soar. If credit remains tight, as expected, and interest rates remain high over the next 12 months, as expected, the increased demand for housing caused by population growth will be reflected in increased rentals.

We are already beginning to see that in Western Australia. As the Honorary Minister said, it is more marked in the Eastern States; but certainly it is a trend that is already beginning to become noticeable in Western Australia. Increased rents will make it exceedingly difficult for would-be home buyers to save for a larger deposit.

The member for Balcatta quoted building society principals, and everybody can recall their comments in the newspapers recently to the effect that, although they are recommending that new home buyers rent rather than proceed at this stage to enter into agreements to purchase homes, they caution that this should be a short-term proposal. The Honorary Minister misinterpreted that caution because another reading of the caution indicates that they might rent now and be at something of an advantage over new home buyers; but with the increases in rentals the advantage will be rather a dubious one in the future.

There are some who see the present situation in terms of a scenario in which the country seems set for the establishment of a landlord and tenant society. The National Director of the Housing Industry Association (Mr Bill Kirkby-Jones) has estimated that there are more than 280 000 pensioner and single-parent families in Australia who need housing aid. Not only are these people forced to rent, but he says they are also being forced to live in substandard housing because they cannot afford the rent for a decent home. If anyone doubts the reality of that in our own State and in our own city, he need be aware only of the sorts of rentals being charged for private accommodation. In some cases, that private accommodation is ex-Housing Commission purchase homes that have been bought by investors and which are being rented out to people at rents of up to \$60 a week in Housing Commission suburbs.

Mr Laurance: Where is that?

Mr WILSON: That is in Girrawheen. Obviously that information is not known to the Minister. I hope it will be of interest and concern to him. That sort of thing is going on in the suburbs of Perth—in suburbs of Perth which, in real estate terms, are not regarded as at the upper end of the real estate values scale.

Mr Laurance: Can you elaborate on that a little bit? You said that these are homes that were originally State Housing Commission homes.

Mr WILSON: That is right.

Mr Laurance: They have been purchased by the owners?

Mr WILSON: They have been purchased by the owners, who have sold them to investors. There are plenty of them. There are plenty of investors who have bought these ex-commission houses in Housing Commission suburbs, and they are now renting them out and making profits for themselves.

Mr Laurance: To prevent that, you would say we should not sell any houses to tenants?

Mr WILSON: I am not saying that at all. I am quoting the situation which faces people seeking private rental accommodation at the moment. I am quoting a situation in which investors are able to take advantage of the current situation. One of the reasons for that is the unavailability of sufficient welfare housing for the people requiring it.

Mr Young: That is not true, because the availability came about by the State Housing Commission selling the house to the original tenant on very reasonable conditions; and that tenant obviously wants to sell it to someone else. What do you do then?

Mr B. T. Burke: The truth of the matter is that you—

Government members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order! I suggest that the member for Balcatta not answer interjections made by members on the other side. I ask the member for Dianella to continue his speech.

Mr WILSON: At the current time, the housing resources available in the community are beyond the scope of an increasing number of people to afford.

Mr O'Connor interjected.

Mr B. T. Burke: You can buy from the Housing Commission one day, and the next day you can sell at a profit.

Mr Young: But the Housing Commission is making the houses available to people who were welfare tenants, if you like.

Mr B. T. Burke: That is right.

Mr Young: Suddenly they become capitalists.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. T. Burke: They need guarantee only that they will keep the house they buy for one day.

Mr WILSON: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: I tried.

Mr WILSON: Perhaps I can interject on the Minister for Health.

Irrespective of what he says about the situation, the fact is that we are facing a developing problem in the private rental sector. This means that an increasing number of people are not able to afford rents being charged and at the same time there is insufficient welfare rental housing available to those people as a second resort.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr WILSON: We know the situation has come about as a result of the declining contribution of the Federal Liberal Government—the same thing has happened with the State Government in Western Australia. Because of the declining contribution of the Federal Liberal Government towards public welfare housing in this State and other States—because of the deliberate policy they have chosen—less money has been spent on welfare housing each year since it came to office. The figures indicate a reduction in the Federal Liberal Government's housing assistance from 1974-75. Western Australia's share represented 3.9 per cent of the total Budget outlay in that year, and now in 1981-82 it represents 1 per cent only of the total Budget outlay. So there is a clear indication of a deliberate policy whereby the Federal Liberal Government has set about impoverishing the welfare housing situation in this State and other States of Australia.

It is clearly seen that a large section of the population permanently renting accommodation will have very considerable social consequences on life in this State and in other parts of Australia. People here, as the member for Balcatta has indicated already, have long been aware of the economic inequalities which come from a large section of the population paying large proportions of their wages to a smaller group of landlords for accommodation—something which has been foreign to our way of life in the past.

Widespread home ownership in Australia has generally contributed to the well-being of most Australians. It has allowed the bulk of the population to accumulate moderate wealth over the years. In a social sense it has prevented the transplanting of the feudal-landlord-tenant class structure which to some extent still prevails in parts of Europe. The growth of rental accommodation and the rental market and the decline in home ownership will in time lead to a steady and relentless drop in living standards of the people in Western Australia. The only winners will be the small section of the people with the

financial resources to purchase properties to rent. What about the way in which this impinges on particular situations—and there are plenty of them?

In answer to a question put by the member for Balcatta yesterday, the Minister, among other things, indicated that when we compare the applications for rental assistance in June last year to those in June this year, we find a 30 per cent increase. That may not seem a great increase, but I certainly think that is a warning sign that something is going to happen because the sorts of people who are now being forced to seek welfare rental assistance are those who have never seen themselves in that position in the past.

Mr Laurance: I am just pointing out, as I did to the member for Balcatta earlier, those lists include people already in SHC houses.

Mr WILSON: I am talking about applications for accommodation—not transfers.

Mr Laurance: But they are all on the waiting list.

Mr WILSON: People on the waiting list are not in SHC accommodation already.

Mr Laurance: They may well be.

Several members interjected.

Mr WILSON: Do not confuse the issue. How would the Minister for Agriculture know anything about this? What does he care about welfare housing?

Mr B. T. Burke: Join the Liberal Party. You are "fabulous", you are!

Mr Evans: Can't even run a grocery shop.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mr WILSON: The Honorary Minister for Housing does not know what he is talking about.

Mr B. T. Burke: Again?

Mr WILSON: The Minister for Agriculture should not enter the debate again because he knows nothing about it.

Mr Old: I know as much as you obviously.

Mr WILSON: The Minister for Housing is confusing applications for assistance with applications for transfer.

Mr Laurance: They are on the same waiting list. People are not incarcerated in an apartment and left there without any opportunity for transfer.

Mr WILSON: Do not believe that! If only the Honorary Minister knew the truth of the situation.

Mr B. T. Burke: Fancy a Housing Minister saying people are incarcerated in flats!

Mr WILSON: There are hundreds of them incarcerated in terrible flats.

Mr Tonkin: Come out to Lockridge.

Mr WILSON: The Minister should try to get some of these people transferred and see how much luck he has. I have even referred some of them to the Minister but they do not have a chance in heaven or hell of getting into something else in a number of years.

Mr Skidmore: He is quite correct. They haven't got a chance in hell.

Mr Laurance: They are eligible to go on the waiting list.

Mr B. T. Burke: Resign!

The SPEAKER: Order! Could I ask members to desist from interjecting?

Mr WILSON: Let us get down to cases and see whether the Honorary Minister can deny whether these situations exist.

Mr Tonkin: Instead of sitting at your desk, go and talk with the people at Lockridge.

Mr WILSON: We are talking about a 30 per cent increase in applications for accommodation between June 1980 and June 1981—that is the general situation. When the Minister looks at some of the worst aspects of the situation I think there is something to be concerned about. I hope he is because if he is not he should not be occupying that responsible position.

Let me refer to an application for accommodation made on behalf of a young mother with a baby at the beginning of last year. She was being forced to make this application because she had nowhere else to live; she was living in extremely crowded accommodation with relatives. A representation was made on her behalf in January last year to the State Housing Commission. The inspectors assessed her need as not urgent despite a hospital report and recommendations for assistance by welfare workers and by the Opposition spokesman for housing, Mr Burke. One of the welfare workers concerned said it was known that the baby was at risk, so a request was made for emergency housing. From the commission's criteria her case was not considered to be urgent. Subsequently the baby died. That was a few weeks after her case for housing was considered not to be urgent. The death was diagnosed as cot death—to be fair there is no certainty that the accommodation problem contributed to the death, but the possibility cannot be ruled out that the overcrowded conditions in which that young

mother and her baby were living were a contributing factor to the death of the baby.

Mr B. T. Burke: Shame!

Mr WILSON: That same young woman is at present living—with another child who was born about six weeks ago—with two other parents and seven other children in a State Housing Commission house. Her case was again taken up in June this year as one needing urgent attention. I made representation on her behalf, and the point was made very strongly by me and welfare workers that the commission should, in view of the loss of the child under the earlier circumstances, consider this woman for emergent accommodation. Certainly any human being would have sympathy for a mother who has been forced to live in crowded conditions as a result of which, possibly, she lost one child, and who again was being forced to live in crowded conditions, perhaps putting the life of a second child at risk. Would not any person with any compassion at all see some sense of urgency in that situation?

Mr B. T. Burke: Similar sorts of cases are the order of the day—perhaps not so bad.

Mr WILSON: I am citing this as a real bottom-of-the-barrel case, but the fact that this case does exist indicates there is something really rotten in the area of welfare housing.

The woman and her baby are still living in those overcrowded conditions. She was put on a wait-turn list and since then I have been told her turn has been reached and something might come up at some stage. However, to crown it all, I received a letter from the State Housing Commission in response to my representation, which in part read, "It is not the commission's policy to grant emergency assistance to an applicant who is causing overcrowding to the legal tenant of a commission property." Where is she going to live if she is not going to live with people she knows? Is she to live in a park or a cemetery? Is she to live on a river bank? No, but because her relatives are concerned for her welfare and for the welfare of her baby and have taken her in, she cannot be considered for emergent accommodation. The commission's policy seems to be the result of very punitive Government attitudes towards people requiring accommodation. Government members should not tell me that we can blame the State Housing Commission. The commission is the tool of the Government, and the Government's attitudes and policies are reflected in the commission's attitudes and policies. The commission's attitudes and policies reflect those of the Government towards people needing welfare housing assistance.

Mr B. T. Burke: And of the Chief Secretary in particular in respect of Aboriginal applicants.

Mr WILSON: That was a very pertinent interjection.

Let me cite the case of another person in particularly difficult circumstances whose case I raised by way of a question to the Minister on 5 August. This concerns a constituent who is a disabled person; she is a partial paraplegic. Her husband is a prison officer and they have five children. They are currently living in overcrowded, three-bedroomed accommodation. As anyone who knows and deals with the commission would understand, a couple with five children are entitled to emergent transfer to four-bedroomed accommodation. This family was listed for transfer to four-bedroomed accommodation in January of this year.

The State Housing Commission knew in advance that the woman would have to go to hospital on 10 August to have an operation as a result of which she would be confined to a wheelchair for several months. For months on end the commission was aware of this family's situation—not only was the family living in overcrowded conditions, but also the mother was a disabled person. The commission knew that not only did she require more suitable accommodation, but also the accommodation would need to be adjusted to suit the needs of a disabled person, in this case a person who would be confined to a wheelchair for several months.

This case has been before the commission for several months and the only word we can get from it is that there is no accommodation available. I put this question to the Minister and I was fobbed off with a statement about some policy of not revealing information about applicants' details.

Mr Laurance: Hang on.

Mr WILSON: I was told I would get a letter from the Minister subsequently, but as yet I have not received that letter.

That woman has since gone into hospital and she still does not know what sort of accommodation she will have when she leaves. That is a pretty terrible situation for a disabled person, in this, the International Year of Disabled Persons. The State Housing Commission, in this International Year of Disabled Persons, was not prepared to go out of its way to look for a house that would suit this woman or a house that could be adapted to her needs. The commission was not prepared to do that in the eight months in which it had time to do so.

Mr Laurance: You are not arguing about the policy that individual details should not be made public in this way?

Mr WILSON: I am not arguing against that policy, and the Minister knows that is a very small part of my argument. He would know there are many more important aspects of this situation than that superficial argument he raises. I am bringing forward this case and it is the second case that may be said to be an extreme one. Nevertheless, if these extreme cases exist and are known to me I can assume only that there are other extreme cases which exist and are known to other members of the House, and that there are other extreme cases which people do not bring to the notice of members of Parliament because they think that if they do they might be punished by the commission for contacting a member of Parliament.

I do not say that in jest. Plenty of people are told by the commission that they should not contact members of Parliament. A number of people have told me about this. That threat is held over the heads of some people as a result of things said by officers of the State Housing Commission.

Let me refer to a few other instances. I know of a family living in rental accommodation where the rent being charged is \$48 a week. There are four children in the family. The father has been declared bankrupt and is on unemployment benefits. The family applied for State Housing Commission assistance and it is eligible for four-bedroomed accommodation. I point out there are three sons and one daughter. However, we all know the situation with four-bedroomed accommodation—there is none of it. At the moment the commission is not building four-bedroomed houses for rental accommodation. The turnover is very low. People who qualify for it do not have a hope of getting it for years, even if they are on emergent listing.

In this case the family qualifies, but it has been wait-turn listed. The family has been told it will be offered three-bedroomed accommodation. The mother and father are worried about living in a three-bedroomed duplex or townhouse. Any parent concerned for young children would not want four young children to be brought up in a pokey townhouse or duplex. They want a three-bedroomed, single-detached house.

The commission's attitude is that the family is being overselective. Yet the family does qualify for a four-bedroomed house. They have asked for a three-bedroomed house, but the commission believes they are being overselective. All they are

offered are townhouses or duplexes. The Minister should not tell me that there is no crisis in the welfare housing area when this sort of situation arises.

Let me refer to another situation. A week or so ago, I mentioned in the House an Aboriginal family which had suffered the misfortune of having their State Housing Commission flat burnt out as a result of an electrical fault—it was no fault of its own and it occurred when no-one was home. The family was shunted out of that place into a townhouse—a townhouse which was flooded out a number of times. It took the commission several weeks to put down new flooring after the previous flooring had been saturated and damaged beyond use.

The tenant was told—I think by the Aboriginal Housing Board—that he was being moved out of his previous flat temporarily because it had been burnt out. When he had been in the flat he had been given an option to move into a house. However, now that he has been put into a two-storied townhouse, which has been flooded out several times, he does not have that option. Now he is stuck in the townhouse forever and that townhouse is likely to be flooded again some time in the future.

Interestingly and sadly enough, over the period of time that family has been forced to live under those conditions—I am glad the Honorary Minister feels free to smile and grimace about this—it had had an uncle living with them. That man had a very serious chest infection, he was an asthmatic, and he died in hospital last week. The family feels the conditions in which it was living contributed to the death of that person. He was a relatively young man in his 40s.

I hope that family will not have to remain in that situation much longer, because it is yet another act of gross negligence and indicates complete lack of sympathy and compassion towards the family concerned.

Of course, it is not only in the areas of rental accommodation that this situation is affecting people in a very serious way. Let us look at the maintenance service being offered by the commission at the present time and let us examine some cases of neglect which have occurred. For instance, let us look at this case: Here we have a woman who suffers from a chronic arthritic back condition. Two weeks ago she reported to the commission's Mirrabooka office that the gas heater in her lounge room had ceased to work.

Mr Laurance: Can I save the member's time by telling him the person telephoned me about that

one or two nights ago and it has been taken care of.

Mr WILSON: That may be the case, but the House should hear about the matter. The member for Murray can laugh, but that woman would not thank him for laughing, and neither would I because the seriousness of the situation has not been diminished simply because the matter has been attended to. The House should be aware of the attitude expressed initially when the woman requested maintenance assistance.

As I mentioned previously, the heater in her lounge room had stopped working and she suffers from a serious, chronic arthritic back condition. She telephoned the commission's office at Mirrabooka and was told it would probably take two weeks for repairs to be effected. When she then asked the commission's office if she could phone again in a week if the problem had not been attended to, the response was, "You phone as often as you want, but you will not get the job done any quicker". The Minister may be satisfied with that attitude and the fact that people have to go to Lifeline to get to him so that they can obtain the help they deserve; but I would not be satisfied with it and I should hope he would not be.

Mr Watt: He has already told you.

Mr WILSON: I am not talking about the Minister's attitude now. I am talking about the officers of his department who should have a more sympathetic and understanding attitude towards the people who approach them with problems. I am glad the Minister has heard about the matter and rectified it immediately. I would certainly expect him to do that.

Mr Watt: I am glad you can see there are lengths to which the Minister goes in controlling these matters.

Mr WILSON: Another example of these sorts of situations concerns a half-blind pensioner in Girrawheen who on Tuesday night reported that his toilet was blocked. He telephoned the commission's emergency number and was told it was commission policy not to attend to such a matter during the night. I imagine he accepted that to some extent and expected it would be dealt with the following day which was Wednesday. When no-one had attended his home by 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning, he telephoned the commission's head office and was told to report it to the regional office. He did this and he also telephoned the health department of the Shire of Wanneroo which indicated that it did not come under its jurisdiction.

This man advised the commission that if for any reason he had to leave home, he would leave the side door open so that the maintenance man could gain access. The problem has still not been attended to. Just a few minutes ago I phoned him to check the position and he indicated the toilet is still blocked. As I said, he is a half-blind pensioner; he cannot use the toilet in his home, and nor can his children. One would imagine that would be an emergency situation which should have been attended to as soon as possible after it was reported.

Mr Barnett: Why wasn't that done?

Mr WILSON: This man is now digging in his backyard to overcome the problem.

There are plenty of these sorts of situations. In another case a month ago a widow with four children received an excess water bill for \$182. She knew she could not possibly have used such a large amount of excess water and she reported it to the MWB. An officer from the board inspected the situation and indicated there was a leak in the pipe. The woman immediately notified the housing commission about the leak in the pipe which served her property. The SHC was informed of the position one month ago and nothing was done.

On Sunday night the pipe burst. The woman rang the emergency number of the SHC and was told it could not be attended to as an emergency matter, but that someone would come out on Monday or Tuesday to attend to the problem. This morning this woman telephoned my office to say that nobody had yet been out to attend to the burst pipe.

What does this widow with four children have to do in the meantime? Every time she wants to shower or bath the children or use the toilet she has to go out and turn the water on at the main so that she has a water supply. In the meantime, all this water is being wasted.

The water is making a huge puddle in the yard and the woman does not know whether or not she will be charged for excess water. What a situation to be in! One would imagine that would be an emergency matter and that it would have been rectified some time between Sunday night and today. One would imagine that when the housing commission was told a month ago there was a leak in the pipe which had caused this woman to incur very high excess water charges the matter would have been attended to immediately; but that has not happened.

These are situations which have actually occurred and they are symptomatic of a sadly and seriously deteriorating position in rental welfare

housing in Western Australia. These sorts of situations result directly from a deliberate policy of the Federal Liberal Government year by year to consistently impoverish the funds allocated for welfare housing assistance for the people of Western Australia.

The member for Murray can smile and nod his head and feel he has nothing to do with it if he likes, but he has everything to do with it. He is a member of the State Liberal Government, as are the Honorary Minister and the Premier, and that Government is a like-for-like Government with the Federal Liberal Government in Canberra which has been instrumental in bringing this policy into effect. This Government is punishing the poor people of Australia and, into the bargain, making more and more people poor.

Mr Shalders: Every one of those people could have taken some action. It might have cost them a few dollars out of their own pockets—

Mr Davies: A widow with four children!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WILSON: I could not have asked for a better interjection had I prayed for it than the one just made by the member for Murray.

Mr Shalders: I am quite happy to repeat it if you want me to.

Mr WILSON: That is an indication of the attitude of this Government towards people in those sorts of situations. The member for Murray has branded himself and members on that side of the House by indicating where they stand and what they stand for. Members opposite stand side by side, hand in glove with the Federal Liberal Government in impoverishing the welfare housing system in Western Australia and they stand side by side with the Federal Liberal Government in impoverishing the SHC in Western Australia.

The Government is taking away from the State Housing Commission its ability—responsible commission officers want to have this ability—to deal with our community's housing needs of which the commission is much more aware than are members of the Government. If those officers of the commission had the resources they require they would assist the people they know need assistance, but their hands are tied. They cannot do all they want to do because of the restrictions placed upon them by this Government.

I will leave this matter with the interjection of the member for Murray fresh in the minds of the members of this House. I hope it is reported in the newspapers of this State. It was the greatest slur that anyone could have cast upon this

Government, and it was cast by one of its members.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Fremantle.

Mr Barnett: The member for Murray sends his wife out to work because he doesn't earn enough money as a member of Parliament.

Mr Shalders: I don't send her out to work.

A Government member: She sends him out to work.

The SPEAKER: I am distinctly of the impression that I gave the call to the member for Fremantle. He is the only member I have not heard.

MR PARKER (Fremantle) [2.56 p.m.]: That is not a complaint I hear normally. One hates to speak in such circumstances. The member for Dianella pointed out that the member for Murray showed eloquently and succinctly just where the philosophy of this Government lies. He showed the philosophy of the conservative Government in relation to people who virtually have no income to meet basic necessities, let alone as the member said, to enable them to take a few dollars out of their pockets to meet the problems to which the member for Dianella referred.

Apart from anything else, what is the point in having somebody take a few dollars out of his pocket, even if he did have the money, if he is living in accommodation he wants to move out of as quickly as he possibly can?

Before I go on to the main thrust of my speech I must acknowledge, at least to some extent, the alacrity of this Government. At least it in part takes up some of the suggestions of the Opposition. Only yesterday the member for Balcatta issued a Press statement saying the State Government should act immediately to establish a mortgage relief authority to intervene in cases of hardship resulting from rising interest rates. Whilst that Press statement was released yesterday, the member for Balcatta, and the Labor Party generally, called for the establishment of such an authority in December 1980—some nine or 10 months ago.

One must say that the call in December 1980 fell on deaf ears, but in August 1981 it fell on somewhat more receptive ears. In today's *Daily News* we see a statement on the front page to the effect that today a special body was established to help Western Australian families who are unable to meet their mortgage repayments.

Mr Laurance: Have you ever heard of a thing called *Hansard*? I spoke about this matter a week ago.

Mr PARKER: The proposed title of this new body is the mortgage assessment and relief committee, which sounds rather similar to the term used by the member for Balcatta—mortgage relief authority. The member for Balcatta suggested that name as long ago as 10 months.

Mr Laurance: Can I tell you something else? It is surprisingly similar to the one set up by this Government in 1974.

Mr PARKER: We are in a position now of having a body established to give relief to people suffering hardship from increased interest rates. Whilst one can be pleased with the fact that such a body will exist, there do not seem to have been any guidelines laid down for its operation, or any research carried out to show how much money the Government will be required to pay out.

Only this morning I heard the Honorary Minister for Housing interject on the member for Balcatta when the member spoke about the facts that many people are having to move out of their homes, and have other problems because of increasing interest rates. The Honorary Minister interjected to the effect that there were no such people, and the Premier interjected at the same time and said, "Name one who is in such position". All of a sudden we have the *Daily News* reporting that the Government will set up a committee in direct response to the call by the member for Balcatta for assistance to the people to whom I have referred.

One can be pleased about that situation, but how many people will be involved? I would be the first to concede that we in the Opposition do not have the statistics as to exactly how many people may come within the purview of this committee. Probably if we get together and pool the names we have of people in these difficulties, we would have a large number of names to submit to this committee so that it will have an idea of the tip of the iceberg that will be involved.

One of the functions of the committee will be to lend Government money to private lending institutions—banks, building societies, and finance companies—at low interest rates so that those institutions can assist clients in difficulty.

The introduction of this body is commendable, but one must ask: How much money will be made available and from where will the money be made available? This morning the Premier told us he did not believe even one person existed in such a situation of need. If that is what he believes, and he is correct, then I am sure it will be easy for the Government to provide funds for this commitment to those people suffering hardship from increased interest rates.

If one accepts the Premier's notion, the committee will be hardly operative at all. However, he will be in for a rude shock, as will the Honorary Minister for Housing. They will find the committee deluged with complaints and problems of people in just the situation to which the member for Balcatta referred this morning and the member for Dianella referred this afternoon. I would be quite surprised if this Government had any idea at all of the amount of money that will be involved. We had the Premier tell us by way of interjection that the hardship of the people to whom I have referred is a Federal problem and it is upon the shoulders of the Federal Government to come to the party to assist in solving these problems. I would be the first to concede the amount of money the Federal Government makes available for welfare housing is pitiful, and I will return to that point in a moment.

The response of Premier Wran was that he called for deductibility of mortgage interest on private housing from personal income, to which there was a pitiful response. This State Government supported the call of the Wran Government. As I said, I would be the first to agree that the response of the Federal Government has been virtually negligible, and to the extent it has been a response at all it has been regressive. However, that does not take from this Government the responsibility to ensure people in need in this State are assisted under the Government's statutory and constitutional responsibilities. It must ensure those people obtain the housing they deserve.

I ask the House to remember the situation that occurred with Aboriginal housing only a few years ago. I am sure every member on this side of the House would agree that the area of Aboriginal housing is one of the worst in which to obtain welfare housing for those in need, but only a few years ago this Government did the shameful act of sending millions of dollars back to the Commonwealth Government because the money had not been spent.

Mr B. T. Burke: Shame, shame!

Mr PARKER: We now have the position of Aboriginal people and others living under bridges and on river banks. They are discriminated against; they are forced to move in with members of their extended families, as outlined by the member for Dianella. The Government in that situation did not spend the money allocated to it for Aboriginal housing. In the area of ordinary welfare housing virtually no money has been allocated and, obviously, virtually no money is being spent.

I will deal with a few other points before returning to the specific provisions of this legislation relating to the State Housing Commission. It is obvious to me that on the Government side much misunderstanding exists of the financial position in which this country finds itself. The situation is that the amount of interest rate we pay is directly related to the availability of money. Demand for that money supply and those sorts of things are subject to a very large number of factors, and related directly to the use to which money is to be put and where it is to be used.

The cost of money—that is, the interest—in this community has increased dramatically in only the last few months. That has occurred as a result of a deliberate policy decision taken by the Federal Government to force up interest rates. It should not be said that this situation somehow is the result of talking up interest rates on the part of the Opposition, as the Premier constantly claims. It should not be said also that this upward pressure is a result of a lack of economic growth.

Last year, as I recall, this country had a real economic growth rate in the vicinity of 4 per cent to 5 per cent, which was a considerably higher growth rate in real terms than the growth rate of Japan.

On the basis of what the Premier told us this morning one would expect, therefore, that the Japanese would have a much higher interest rate than the Australians. In fact, when one looks at the position in Japan one discovers that the prime rate which is charged to significant customers by the Japanese banking system for overdrafts and loans, etc., is currently 6.75 per cent and has been for a good number of years. Those people who are not such good customers and are not what we might call within the privileged section of borrowing and who have to go outside to get their money are paying no more than 8.5 per cent interest in Japan.

Sir Charles Court: I have got news for you. If they went to Switzerland they would get it cheaper, but the end cost of the money would be more.

Mr PARKER: I am not arguing with the fact that it is cheaper in Switzerland. The Premier this morning told us if we had real economic growth it would pull down interest rates. As I pointed out, we had higher economic growth in Australia last year than did Japan, yet Japan has interest rates which are now less than half those being charged in Australia.

Sir Charles Court: Have you not heard of the currency factor?

Mr PARKER: The Japanese Government, dedicated as it is to private enterprise, has decided that some of the important things it is going to foster are private enterprise housing, and an increase in the standard of living of Japanese people. Whatever else private enterprise is able to do, it is not going to be able to get its greedy hands into interest rates or into making decisions about the cost of money. The Government of Japan makes all of the decisions about the cost of money and regulates interest rates. As a result of that, the Japanese are paying, as I said, 6.75 per cent. Small wonder that the Japanese economy goes ahead in leaps and bounds and Japanese enterprises are buying out half this country when their entrepreneurs and financiers can get money at that sort of rate.

All the Japanese have to do to make a huge quid is come to Australia and invest their money at the interest rates they can get from our financial institutions. It is not surprising to me that the Japanese economy and businesses are in a much healthier situation than that which prevails here in Australia because the cost of Japanese money is half the cost of Australian money.

The cost of Japanese wages is about the same—probably slightly greater than the cost of Australian wages—but the cost of their money is half. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Japanese are able to do what they do with their economy. The Japanese Government knows that the cost of money has a serious effect on the growth factor. Indeed, some economic analysts are predicting for the forthcoming year that the Australian growth rate will slow very considerably as a direct result of the effect of these high interest rates on all sorts of things. This includes the effect of these interest rates on the amount of money therefore available for housing, business activity, etc.

Let me read to members some of the answers that the Minister gave to me last year to question 406 about the amounts of money involved. I will come back to the figures, because they are more relevant to a later comment I wish to make. Basically, the figures reveal that the amount of money that has been made available by the Commonwealth to the State Government for housing between 1975-76 and 1980-81 has declined in Australia-wide terms from \$384.693 million to \$275.5 million. In the case of Western Australia it went from \$34.825 million to \$27.239 million. I am not sure of the precise figures as a result of this year's Budget.

Mr Old: They are pretty accurate.

Mr PARKER: About \$255 million was allocated nationally. What that precisely means to Western Australia, I am not sure, but it obviously means a reduction from last year's figure in the vicinity of \$3 million or \$4 million. The Minister, in calculating what that meant, replied to me that in real terms it meant a decline from 1975-76 to 1980-81 of 45.9 per cent Australia-wide and 44.88 per cent for Western Australia.

As a result of the budgetary figures announced on Tuesday night we will be talking about at least a further 12 per cent reduction on top of that, taking us to the vicinity of a 60 per cent reduction in real terms since the 1975-76 period. That amount in itself would have been greater had it not been for the fact that the five-year agreement which the Whitlam Government entered into with the States did not expire until 1978. It was really only after 1978, when that five-year agreement expired, that we saw the reality of their funding for welfare housing as revealed by this particular Bill.

It is also the case that the capital market is distorted by the way in which capital flows into this country, and the purposes for which it is used, and the way in which capital is created in Australia and the purposes for which that capital is used. In *The Bulletin* which came out today, there is a considered article by Maximillian Walsh, who is no Labor supporter, pointing out that there has been a negative growth rate in building society and bank deposits in the last four or five months. This, at least in some measure, is attributable to the cash investment trusts that have been set up—such as the Hill Samuel Cash Trust—which have attracted, in less than a year of operation, some \$124 million, most of which otherwise would probably have gone into banks or building societies as deposits. That has meant that banks and building societies do not have the funds to lend out to home buyers which they otherwise would have had. That means there is a greater demand on the limited resources they do have. That has the effect of driving up interest rates.

It has a further effect when the banks and building societies are attempting to raise money to lend out. It also has an effect on what the Government can do in deciding what the prevailing money and interest rates in the community should be, because ordinary people, through trusts similar to the Hill Samuel Cash Trust, now are able to obtain higher rates than were previously available and which were available only to people with more than, say \$50 000 to invest. Now people need only \$1 000 to invest to get the same rate of interest.

Consequently, people are not putting their money into banks or building societies.

Maximillian Walsh said that in America these trusts have grown to astronomical proportions. Because they operate outside Government control, and in a way unlike building societies and banks which are directly regulated by the Government, money is no longer available for housing loans. That is a very serious situation and one which could be curbed by the Commonwealth Government if it so desired by enforcing certain sections of the Finance Corporations Act, which was passed by the Whitlam Government in 1974 and which has not yet been either promulgated or enforced. The use of those sections of that Act would enable the Commonwealth Government to take control over all forms of capital aggregation and expenditure. It is patently clear that the Commonwealth Government has no such desire to control these areas.

As I say, in regard to the Japanese Government—which could hardly be described as being socialist—obviously thinks that if nothing else is going to be controlled, that which is going to be controlled is the cost of money.

It would appear from some of the Premier's statements that whatever else one might think of the Premier of this State, he is not as wedded to a monetary philosophy as is the Prime Minister and Federal Treasurer.

I believe it was Neville Wran who pointed out that the Federal Treasurer seems to be of the view that everything from interest rates to haemorrhoids could be treated by the application of a monetarist supply policy. Many people have described this disease which seems to affect our Federal leadership. Also, one has to acknowledge the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain as "friedmaniacs". It is clear that the Government—or at least the Premier—of this State is not quite so wedded to that philosophy, as is the Federal Government.

Mr Barnett: Perhaps he knows a little more about haemorrhoids.

Mr PARKER: Perhaps he does. Because of the financing arrangements which are applicable in this State, the Government feels forced to go along with the policies which are being implemented by the Commonwealth Government.

However, even then there are areas where it could be expected this Government might take the initiative. For example, it could take the initiative to hold down building society interest rates as both the Queensland and New South Wales Governments did for a considerable period. I acknowledge that in a situation such as we have

at the moment, with interest rates going up nationally, it cannot be done forever. However, it was done for a period in New South Wales and Queensland, but there is no such suggestion on the part of this Government that it will attempt to get the building societies in Western Australia to do likewise. On the contrary, the building societies in Western Australia put up their interest rates with alacrity, faster than did any other building society in the country.

The other point about the way money is used and the effect it has on the community is that it is a result of the development boom. The Premier asked the member for Balcatta to name a development project he would like stopped in order that there would be more money available for housing. It has become quite clear to even the most development-minded Western Australian that there is no point in development proceeding unless it is planned development—development which takes into account, as it proceeds, the availability of all resources the community has to offer.

Those resources include labour resources. As the Minister for Labour and Industry pointed out some time ago, we are already experiencing pressure in certain areas of the labour resources market which have an inflationary effect in some areas.

Such development should take into account the resources of materials; again, it will have an inflationary effect on the home building industry because in many instances the same sort of materials are used.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it must take into account the monetary resources which are available. What is happening at the moment is that instead of the monetary resources being used for such things as welfare housing or manufacturing industry, they are being used almost exclusively to fund this resources development we are going through at the moment. This has two effects, the first of which is to withdraw even further amounts of money from that which might otherwise be available for housing; the second effect is to drive up interest rates because of the greater demand on the available money.

Further, we have the Federal Treasurer pointing to the Premiers of this State and one or two other States as the prime culprits in the driving up of interest rates. He believes that those Premiers are trying to borrow much greater amounts of money than are appropriate, and because they are causing too great a draw on the availability of money, it is having the effect of

driving up interest rates. That is not my view, or something the Labor Party is advancing; it is a view advanced by the Liberal Party, federally, the very same party to which members opposite belong.

That emphasises what I am saying, and what the member for Balcatta said this morning. It is very important that these developments proceed on a planned basis so that the available resources are not unduly strained and do not create the distortions we see as a result of the use of money for purposes which are not as socially useful as they could be.

We know these things are having a cumulative effect which is damaging to the housing industry; again, this was something which was pointed out by the member for Balcatta and later denied by the Honorary Minister on the basis of information supplied to him by the Housing Industry Association.

I refer members again to the question I asked on 20 August last year, exactly 12 months ago. Question 406(10) was as follows—

(10) In light of the fact that Australian Government revenue has increased considerably between 1974 and 1980 is the funding for Western Australia regressive and disadvantaging to the home building industry in this State?

The Minister's reply was a simple, "Yes". So, exactly a year ago the Honorary Minister said that what happened to the availability of Commonwealth finance for housing in this State was disadvantageous to the home building industry in Western Australia. Yet, when the member for Balcatta put that point to him this morning, he said it was not disadvantageous and said, in effect, that the housing industry in this State was in fine fettle. The Honorary Minister can hardly contend the situation has changed for the better because in fact, it has become much worse since then.

It has deteriorated to such an extent that the Hooker Corporation, which is one of Australia's largest home builders, is suspending its operations in this State and is moving back to the Eastern States. It was reported in the *Sunday Independent* that although last year the company had a sales turnover of \$7 million it still had an unspecified number of "spec" houses unsold.

I understand also that Leighton Contractors Pty. Ltd., another very large national construction company, is to cease its home building operations in this State and will concentrate instead on contracting in the resources development area, because money is available for resources

development; one can borrow money to develop resources, but not to build houses. This situation is causing tremendous problems for home owners, for potential home owners, and particularly for the home building industry.

Let us consider now what this sort of policy is doing to the State Housing Commission. We now have a position where the funds available to the SHC render it unable to accommodate a very large number of people it ought to accommodate. From the figures supplied by the Honorary Minister, we find that since 1975-76 in real terms there has been a decline of 45 per cent in Commonwealth funding to the State Housing Commission. I believe that if we took out of that figure the funds directed specifically to Aboriginal housing and pensioner housing, we would find the decline would be even greater.

I would suggest also that if we included the level of funding foreshadowed in Tuesday night's Federal Budget, which showed a further decline of some \$2 million in actual terms, representing a real decline when taking into account inflation of between \$3.5 million and \$4 million or a further reduction of 16 per cent in real terms, we would be talking about a reduction of about 60 per cent in Commonwealth funding to the State Housing Commission since 1975-76.

To put it another way, this means that today the State Housing Commission is able to do only 40 per cent of what it was able to do in 1975-76, when the Whitlam Government's Commonwealth-State housing agreement was in force. I regard that as an extraordinarily regressive and reactionary situation.

Yesterday, we had the Minister for Health telling us the new hospital agreement highlighted the philosophical differences which exist between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. It showed he was a capitalist and was prepared to get on with free enterprise, and that we were socialists and supported public funding of hospitals. I do not know whether the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing is similarly prepared to say the declining level of funding provided by the Commonwealth Government since 1975-76 also reveals the difference in philosophy between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party.

If the Honorary Minister is not prepared to be as forthcoming and forthright in that respect as was the Minister for Health, I am prepared to be; I believe it clearly reveals the fundamental difference in political philosophy between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party. The Labor Party believes in providing for people in need, and

the Liberal Party does not. That fact was revealed, underlined, and accentuated by the interjection made by the member for Murray when the member for Dianella was on his feet.

Mr Blaikie: That is absolute rubbish and arrant nonsense, and you know all about that.

Mr PARKER: The member for Vasse was not keen to say that yesterday when the Minister for Health indicated how his hospitals agreement showed the difference between Labor Party and Liberal Party philosophies. He was quite happy to go along with it. It is not that I believe that precisely the same situation prevailed with regard to the Commonwealth-State housing agreement. A reactionary Commonwealth Government is providing limited funds to a reactionary State Government. The member is not pleased about that, because it is not very popular, or he does not think it is very popular, to be seen protecting the policies of his party by reducing, in such a significant way, the amount of money available for public housing.

Mr Blaikie: It is not a reactionary State Government. It is an extremely sympathetic State Government.

Mr PARKER: Sympathetic, yes, but to whom is it sympathetic? It is not sympathetic to ordinary people—in particular, to State Housing Commission tenants—to people who would like to be or who need to be State Housing Commission tenants, or to people who want to buy homes. I can think of a number of people to whom the Government is sympathetic, but they are not included in that group.

That is revealed in some of the figures which the Honorary Minister has given in answers to questions. For example, on Wednesday the Honorary Minister was asked from what dates were people still waiting for housing assistance. This morning the Honorary Minister was trying to say that the statements made by the member for Balcatta about people waiting for five or six years were not true. In answer to question 1545, the Minister said—

Of these 1819 applicants remained unsatisfied for various reasons and their names were held on a deferred basis, with listing dates dating back to 1973.

Mr B. T. Burke: When?

Mr PARKER: 1973—not 1978, or 1980. The member for Balcatta, who was being generous to the Government, said that it was five or six years ago. We are talking about eight years ago. For eight years some people have been on the list waiting for assistance. That is something of which no Government would be proud. Is the member

for Vasse proud of the fact that 1 819 people have been on the list going back to 1973?

Mr Laurance: That is myth. That has been the maximum number on the list since it was first established in 1973. Now we are going back and asking some of these people, and we have found a great many of them have been assisted in some other way.

Mr B. T. Burke: They got sick of waiting eight years.

Mr PARKER: I am quoting the Honorary Minister's answer. All of the 1 819 have remained unsatisfied.

Mr Laurance: I am interpreting for you—

Mr PARKER: Is the Honorary Minister telling us that he misled the House?

Mr Laurance: Not at all.

Mr PARKER: Do not interpret. It is there for members to read.

Mr Laurance: If you can read, fair enough. You would see where terminating building societies helped a great number of these people.

Mr PARKER: It does not say that at all. The answer continued—

It is not possible to give any indication as to when the current list will be satisfied. It is considered that the acceptance rate of the 1 819 applications could be in the order of 50 per cent.

Is the Honorary Minister proud of the fact that 50 per cent of the people were still waiting, wanting help—that 908 people were still on a list dating back to 1973? Is the member for Vasse proud to be associated with the fact that 908 people, as a minimum, on the Honorary Minister's estimate, were waiting since 1973?

Mr Blaikie: You should use a degree of honesty when you quote figures and qualify them because I come back to the fact that numbers of people in the metropolitan area have applied for housing in Busselton when it becomes available; and they might stay on the list for five years.

Mr PARKER: That is better than eight years.

Mr Blaikie: Or 10 years.

Mr PARKER: Even the Honorary Minister is not prepared to reveal a waiting time of 10 years. Apparently the member for Vasse is pleased to be associated with a waiting list of 10 years. That is an extraordinary position. It would be interesting to know whether other members of the Government would want to go any longer. Does any member of the Government want to be associated with a 12-year waiting list?

Like the interjection by the member for Murray earlier, the interjection of the member for Vasse shows how callous this Government and its members are. It shows how unsympathetic they are to the needs and aspirations of the ordinary people of this community. In its treatment of welfare housing recipients, or the people who ought to be welfare housing recipients, the Government has revealed itself as a callous, reactionary Government. The member for Vasse has proved not only that the Government is reactionary and callous, but that he personally is reactionary and callous. I must say that is no surprise to me; but I would have thought that is something he would want kept hidden.

Mr Blaikie: Well, I tried!

Mr B. T. Burke: Come on! Your performance has been absolutely dismal.

Mr PARKER: Let us now deal with the financial management of the State Housing Commission. We all recall that some years ago the State Housing Commission introduced its management fee for those people who had borrowed money from the State Housing Commission and who were paying off loans. It was decided they would have to pay a \$60 a year management fee. We all remember the public kerfuffle associated with that. We all remember that we were told how essential to the operations of the State Housing Commission it was that the management fee be paid. In answer to a question yesterday the Honorary Minister for Housing revealed that the number of people who were obliged to pay the State Housing Commission's management fee is 9 197.

Since the Honorary Minister has been disputing his own answers to questions, could I ask him if that is the correct figure?

Mr Laurance: It depends on how you use the figure.

Mr PARKER: Apparently the accuracy changes depending on how I use the figures. In other words, if I criticise the Honorary Minister, the figure is not accurate. If I do not, the figure is accurate.

Mr Laurance: You are learning!

Mr B. T. Burke: He is learning too fast for you.

Mr PARKER: The answer to the question indicated that 5 564 people were up to date with their payments; 3 305 had paid part of the fee; and 328 had paid none of the fee. That means that of 5 564 people, just over half—some 3 305—had paid part of their fee, and 328 had paid none of the fee. In other words about 40 per cent of the people who were supposed to be paying

this fee to the Housing Commission had paid either nothing or only part of it. Perhaps the Honorary Minister would like to advise me whether those figures are accurate?

Mr Laurance: Yes, totally distorted.

Mr PARKER: I am just reading the Honorary Minister's answer.

Mr Laurance: What you mean is that about 90 per cent have paid all or part; and those who have not paid are having it estreated so they cannot get their title until they pay it.

Mr PARKER: I must say that the Honorary Minister's financial acumen leaves me astounded. If I were the principal of a lending institution, I would be very worried if the best my manager could give to me was a statement that 90 per cent of the people had either paid none of their fee, or part of it. I would be wanting to know what proportion of that 90 per cent had actually paid no part, what proportion had paid part, and what part had been paid of that.

Apparently the Honorary Minister is quite happy with the fact that some 40 per cent of the people have paid absolutely nothing, or only a part. It is possible that those who have paid a part might have paid only \$1 of the first \$60 levied before they decided that they would not pay. I would be very worried if I were the principal of a lending institution—which is the role of the State Housing Commission in this instance—and the person in charge of my affairs was quite satisfied that 90 per cent of the people had paid part only.

Mr Laurance: You do not read figures accurately. Are you dyslexic?

Mr PARKER: I am not dyslexic. I am reading the Honorary Minister's figures.

I refer the House to the answer to part (3)(c) indicating that 328 had paid nothing at all.

Mr Laurance: It is not a bad debt situation. I remind you further that those people cannot get a clear title to that property until they have paid all of it.

Mr B. T. Burke: They can pay it at the end of the mortgage, and the money they pay is only a small proportion of the money they started with in the first place.

Mr PARKER: Those people would have been all right if they obtained their financial advice from the Deputy Premier. He seems to have more ability in that field than the Honorary Minister for Housing.

The situation I referred to in relation to Aboriginal tenants of the State Housing Commission was that only a few years ago this

housing campaign set back the Commonwealth Government \$7 or \$8 million.

We have had the revelations made here today by the member for Dianella, and the Honorary Minister can visit my office at any time to see the list of people who are waiting for accommodation of one sort or another through the Aboriginal Housing Board. I am sure the same position applies in the electorates of most members on this side of the House at least, and it applies probably in the electorates of some Government members. We are aware that some Government country members do not bother to proceed with applications made by Aboriginal constituents, and consequently, these people approach metropolitan Labor members for some assistance. However, Government members must know, if they are sensible, that there is a considerable waiting list of potential tenants for Aboriginal Housing Board accommodation.

According to an answer which the Honorary Minister for Housing supplied to the member for Balcatta yesterday, we were told that the number of evictions for Aboriginal tenants is twice that of non-Aboriginal tenants.

Mr Laurance: Give the total for the year.

Mr PARKER: The numbers were 23 as against 11. If the Honorary Minister wants me to be more precisely accurate, obviously it is more than double. We know that 8 per cent only of the housing commission tenants are Aborigines, so if we factorise those two figures, the result is that more than 25 times the number of Aborigines are being evicted from housing accommodation than are white tenants.

Mr Laurance: If you take the total number of evictions for the year, 23 over the total number of Aboriginal families, the figures show a very low eviction rate.

Mr B. T. Burke: Why is it so much higher than for white Australians?

Mr Laurance: The figures for both are very low.

Mr PARKER: I would like to ask the Honorary Minister the explanation for the fact that the Aboriginal rate of eviction—at whatever level—is double the rate of eviction for white tenants.

Mr Laurance: Obviously the honourable member was not here earlier today when it was brought out in the debate that a number of Aboriginal families have difficulty in complying with the normal urban situation. The total number is very low, and it is an absolute credit to the Aboriginal people.

Mr PARKER: I agree that they deserve great credit for putting up with the circumstances under which they have to live.

Mr Laurance: I am glad you are now interpreting the answer correctly.

Mr PARKER: As the member for Dianella pointed out, the State Housing Commission denies transfers to these Aboriginal people simply because they are living in overcrowded conditions. Aboriginal tenants have approached me to seek a transfer, only to find that the commission tells them they will not be transferred because they have been engaged in activities or social behaviour which is not up to "the standards" of the community. The Minister for Health had the cheek to interject this morning and say that this arose because the Aborigines are gregarious. I am not disputing the fact that sometimes many families live together. The reason they share accommodation is not that they are gregarious—and I am not saying whether or not they are—but because they have nowhere else to go and they have to share houses.

Many of the Aboriginal families I have had dealings with would like nothing more than to live in accommodation that is not shared. They would prefer to be gregarious—

Mr B. T. Burke: By themselves!

Mr PARKER: —in some other circumstances, in some more congenial way.

Mr Wilson: It is warmer too.

Mr PARKER: I know of some houses at Narrogin which would need 100 people or so living in them to heat them. No doubt Aborigines would like to find other ways to be gregarious.

Mr B. T. Burke: Are Italians gregarious also? Do they like to bunk in together?

Mr PARKER: I think they tend to, but fortunately many Italians are able to build big houses in which they can live gregariously together in a constructive way. It is very difficult when 11 or 12 people live in a three-bedroomed house.

Mr Laurance: Obviously this is a source of great hilarity to the Opposition!

Mr PARKER: This Government must be ashamed of the current position where people are forced, through no fault of their own, to move in with other members of their family. It is a great tribute to the Aboriginal families that they are prepared to have them; many white people would not take this attitude.

Mr Laurance: You have dragged that lot on for 45 minutes.

Mr PARKER: I believe the philosophy behind this Bill, and behind the policy of both the Commonwealth and State Governments towards welfare housing in this State is a disastrous one, and it shows the difference in the attitude between the Government in this State and the Opposition. I believe the Bill ought to be opposed.

MR BRIDGE (Kimberley) [3.39 p.m.]: My understanding is that an acceptance of this measure will bring about a reduction in the allocation of money for housing in this State. There is no doubt that anybody who is interested in the housing situation in Western Australia recognises when an attempt is made to reduce housing funds. The ability of the Governments to provide additional housing in this State needs to be guarded most vigorously.

In the Kimberley there are two important issues that concern people directly. One is the lack of sufficient housing to meet the needs of the people, and the other is the lack of the availability of land to meet the needs of those people who want to invest or build a home and settle in the Kimberley.

Generally in Western Australia there is a great shortage of housing but in a place like the Kimberley a greater problem exists because many families from the metropolitan area travel to the north-west initially to evaluate it and to see whether they would like to settle there. In many cases they like the area, in particular its climate and isolation, and they make a decision to settle there. One problem they are confronted with is the lack of available State Housing Commission homes and the lack of purchase homes so it is just not on that we can agree to a reduction in Commonwealth funds for housing, or even that we could agree to an allocation similar to that of last year. I hope that collectively the Government and the Opposition will rally forces in vigorously opposing any demands by the Federal Government to reduce the State's ability to provide additional homes in Western Australia.

Two areas of great concern to the Kimberley are the non-availability of sufficient housing and the non-availability of land. They go hand in hand and the State has a responsibility to fight and to attempt to show the Federal Government that an additional amount of money should be made available for the general housing needs in Western Australia. The needs of the north-west and Kimberley are well known to members on this side of the House.

I would like to touch on a situation I saw here in the metropolitan area. Before I became a member of Parliament I heard about the plight of

the fringe dwellers. I never understood how devastating the situation was until I had the opportunity to evaluate it. Recently I attended a funeral in the Midland area where it became clear to me that a great problem exists. Many fringe dwellers were in attendance at the funeral and in my opinion they are the most deprived and depressed people in our community. I make that statement most sincerely. We hear frequently about housing needs in the north-west, and indeed, in the south-west, but at least in the outer areas, people have an escape. They have the gum trees, the Konkerbury bush, and the riverbeds. They are used to the environment in which they live, and, in times of real distress, they can find solitude. It appears to me that the fringe dwellers of the cities are living in distressed conditions, as are the people in Lockridge.

Mr Young: I cannot speak for other fringe dwellers, and this is why I asked the member for Balcatta whether he was referring to the Bropho group. Bob Bropho and his Lockridge group were given every opportunity to participate in any housing scheme that could be worked out. He was one of the people I worked with in getting other Aborigines together in what eventually became the Cullcarbardee Village. No matter what proposition was put to him, he did not want to touch it. He and the rest of his group wanted to remain at Lockridge and they wanted to remain as fringe dwellers. I think Mrs Kickett was his sister.

Mr BRIDGE: The Minister is probably right, but that does not alter the fact that the situation which exists is a very depressing one. People in most of these areas have no escape. I will tell the Minister what their escape is in reality.

Mr Young: If there is none, it is because there is simply none and not because the Government has not attempted to provide one. At one stage I said to Bob, "Tell me what you want" and he said, "I do not want to talk about it. We are happy to stay at Lockridge."

Mr BRIDGE: The Minister is really discussing the attitude of one individual.

Mr Young: That is why I said I was referring only to him and his group.

Mr BRIDGE: In the remaining minutes allowed to me before the member for Kalgoorlie commences, I would prefer to speak about the general situation. When I looked at the situation in the metropolitan area I saw it as one where the people had a very genuine concern for their plight. They really have no escape. I can understand why most of them finish up in the lockup. As a matter of fact, their escape from

their situation is the cell. They do not have the slight advantage held by Aboriginal people in other parts of the State, although even their situation is bad enough as it is. I am certainly not suggesting they are well off, but at least they do have some form of escape.

The Aboriginal people in the metropolitan area run into another problem. When they do go into the outer parts of the State they are faced with difficulties in that they are not part of the local scene and so on. The Aboriginal people in the metropolitan area are in a terribly difficult plight. The fringe dwellers would be the most depressed and disadvantaged people in our society.

The lack of accommodation causes a great deal of overcrowding with its consequent social problems. We see conflict develop. People become polarised and tension develops between families living side by side. These are the inevitable results of the conditions in which they live. The families need to rely upon one another.

Mr Laurance: Have you seen Cullcarbardee Village? Is that the answer?

Mr BRIDGE: It is part of the answer. One of the criticisms I have of the village is that it is too distant from the city. It is the isolation I do not like. As far as the availability of accommodation goes, it is commendable and a far cry from what the people had to contend with previously.

Mr Laurance: Should we look at further developments like that?

Mr BRIDGE: The housing is good and the people living there are satisfied. My only concern is its location and this is something I believe could cause problems in the future. The Government needs to assess this matter of location.

I would like to touch on the subject of the Aboriginal Housing Board, referred to earlier today by the member for Balcatta. We are concerned that it does not seem to operate in the way in which the people outside believe it should. There is a great deal of criticism levelled at the board by Aboriginal people throughout the State because they feel it is controlled too much by the State Housing Commission.

The Government should consider giving a greater degree of autonomy to the chairman of the board so that he is able to make decisions without being bound by the red tape which seems to be inhibiting the performance of the board at present. The Minister should have a hard look at the responsibility of the board's chairman and the desirability of giving him greater scope in making decisions. There is a good deal of criticism both fair and otherwise levelled at the chairman at present.

MR I. F. TAYLOR (Kalgoorlie) [3.50 p.m.]: In his second reading speech the Honorary Minister failed to indicate to this House the extent of the decline in Commonwealth Government assistance for housing since the present Federal Government came to office. The Minister did say the base figure in the agreement was unrealistic and totally inadequate. I shall point out to the House just how unrealistic and totally inadequate has been the Commonwealth Government's commitment to housing and I shall quote from three tables I have with me, which I am prepared to table if the Minister wishes.

These tables present a devastating picture of Commonwealth Government assistance to housing to this State and throughout the Commonwealth of Australia. In Western Australia since 1975-76 the total assistance in ordinary dollar terms was \$38 million. That figure is now down to \$27.9 million in the estimate for 1981-82. That represents just one side of the picture.

To find the important side of the picture we must look at this information in June 1981 dollar terms, because that is when we realise what a devastating picture we are faced with in respect of Commonwealth housing assistance to this State.

In 1976-77, in June 1981 dollar terms, the figure was \$53.8 million. The 1981-82 estimate is \$24.9 million. On top of that we can look at the rate of increase in those funds. In terms of actual dollars there was a decrease of 17.3 per cent in 1978-79; a decrease in 1979-80 of 19.7 per cent; a rise in 1980-81 of 10 per cent; and for 1981-82 we can expect a similar increase.

However, in real growth terms it is a very sad picture indeed. The figure for 1976-77 was down by 3.8 per cent; for 1977-78 it was down by 4.7 per cent; for 1978-79 it was down by 23.3 per cent; for 1979-80 it was down by 29.9 per cent; for 1980-81 there was a miraculous rise of 1.02 per cent; and for 1981-82 there was another fall of 10.45 per cent. I think the Minister will agree that is a very sad picture indeed.

Earlier today the member for Balcatta mentioned the Labor Party family allowance conversion scheme. It was treated with derision by members opposite. I do not know whether they were aware of it, but they certainly did not seem interested in it. I would like to point out some of the provisions in that scheme.

We all know that high rents and inflation eat into incomes and confiscate the capacity of many people to save the deposits necessary for their own home. At the same time, home owners worry about a future clouded by rising interest rates and increasing home repayments. Consequently, we

have proposed the following scheme, and I think the Government should consider seriously having its bureaucrats review our policy. I quote as follows—

Families receiving family allowance payments will be able to borrow from the Government, in a lump sum, up to 90 per cent of their remaining family allowances provided they use the money to—

pay the deposit on their first home; and

reduce the mortgage and monthly repayments on their home.

Young families will be able to convert their family allowances into a lump sum rather than have to wait for monthly instalments over a period of up to 15 years.

Under our scheme, families will be able to enter into an agreement with the Government in which they can—

borrow a lump sum equal to a maximum of 90 per cent of their total remaining family allowance payments;

arrange to have their monthly family allowance payments paid into an account with the R & I Bank or another approved financial institution; and

authorise the bank or other institutions to repay the Government, from the account, a monthly amount determined according to the percentage of total remaining family allowance payments borrowed.

I shall give some examples of what this could mean to a family with children and I believe this is the important part of our scheme. If there is one child in the family, 90 per cent of the family allowance paid over a period of 15 years would make available \$2 462; in the case of a family with two children the sum would increase to \$5 977; a family with three children would have an amount of \$12 296 available to it; and a family with four children would have available an amount of \$18 614.

The maximum value of a loan to an individual family for this purpose will range upwards from \$2 462. I must point out all these figures are current after the devastating Budget of last Tuesday night. Perhaps the only good thing to come out of the Budget was the increase in family allowances. Of course, the amounts will be greater for large families.

When we look at home owners with young families, we see they would be eligible for cash loans of up to 90 per cent of the family allowance to reduce the mortgages on their homes. For

example, if we take a PBS mortgage of \$28 000 we see the current monthly repayment amounts to \$321. For a family with two children, under this scheme the monthly repayment would reduce by \$68 to \$253. For a family with three children, the loan repayments would fall from \$321 to \$182; that is a reduction of \$139.

On a mortgage of \$35 000 the current monthly repayment amounts to \$403. Under this scheme, for a family with two children the repayments would reduce to \$334, a reduction of \$69 a month. For a family with three children, the repayments would amount to \$265, a reduction of \$138 a month.

I shall refer now to the other details of the scheme. One of the matters mentioned to the House today by the Honorary Minister was the situation which would arise in the case of the unfortunate death of a child or the breakup of a family. We propose a mortgage insurance scheme to cover these aspects. We already have a magnificent mortgage insurance scheme with the Housing Loan Insurance Corporation and we propose that a similar sort of system could be worked out as far as this scheme is concerned.

Mr Laurance: What happens if the Federal Government cuts out the family allowance?

Mr I. F. TAYLOR: The only Federal Government which would do that is a Liberal Federal Government.

Mr Laurance: Which was the only Government which ever brought it in.

Mr I. F. TAYLOR: That may well be the case; but only a Liberal Federal Government would stop the payment of family allowances. If such a situation occurred, we would deal with it when it arose.

We realise there are problems with this scheme, but we believe it is worth looking at from a positive point of view and that is what we are proposing and we ask the Government to do that also.

We ask the Honorary Minister to present this scheme to his department and to Treasury, to let them have a look at it, examine the positive aspects of it, and arrive at a conclusion as to whether or not it is something the State Government can put into effect.

Mr B. T. Burke: Have you ever referred it to Treasury?

Mr Laurance: Yes, we have. It has been raised by Government members.

Mr B. T. Burke: And referred to Treasury?

Mr Laurance: I understand so.

Mr I. F. TAYLOR: How long ago was that?

Mr Laurance: Probably before your time, because it was before mine.

Mr I. F. TAYLOR: We would have to go back a long way!

Another matter of particular relevance to the Bill is, of course, interest rates. One of the principal factors pushing up interest rates in this country is hot money—speculative money. We have all heard of the “gnomes of Zurich”, the secretive money men of the world. The people pushing hot money into Australia are not gnomes, but they are parasites—the parasites of London, New York, and Zurich. They are the people who are pushing hot money into Australia and forcing up interest rates for ordinary Australians who cannot afford to buy houses. They are the people the Commonwealth Government has failed to cope with and has made no attempt to do so.

The Commonwealth Government has produced a surplus Budget. According to the Budget figures for the last financial year the domestic surplus was approximately \$400 million, whereas this financial year the figure has increased to \$1 500 million. That is an indication of the manner in which the Commonwealth Government proposes to cope with this sort of hot money. The Federal Government does not have the gumption to stop this sort of money coming into the country and forcing up interest rates. By pursuing the idea of a surplus Budget, the Federal Government will encourage more money of this type to come into the country.

Many years ago we heard Liberal members say that the deficit Budget of the then Labor Government was forcing money out of the country and people were not bringing money in. Therefore, the reverse situation must surely apply and if we are producing surplus Budgets they will bring in more money. As a result, the Government will not be able to cope with all this hot money coming into the country.

That is the crux of the problem surrounding increasing interest rates in this country. It is one of the matters the Commonwealth Government has refused to face and has no intention to face. I shall now move for leave to continue my speech.

Point of Order

Mr LAURANCE: The member for Kalgoorlie indicated he was prepared to table papers to which he referred at the beginning of his speech and I wonder whether now is an appropriate time to ask him to do so.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with long standing practice, I ask the member for

Kalgoorlie to make available the papers from which he was quoting in order that they may be laid on the Table of House for the balance of this day's sitting.

Mr I. F. TAYLOR: I intended to table the documents at the conclusion of my speech.

Leave to Continue Speech

Mr I. F. TAYLOR: I move—

That I be given leave to continue my speech at a later stage of the sitting.

Motion put and passed.

Debate thus adjourned.

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR MENSAROS (Floreat—Minister for Water Resources) [4.27 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill incorporates a number of relatively minor amendments, the desirability of which became evident from past experience in administering the Act.

To deal with them one by one, I turn firstly to the definition of "farmland" which is used for rating purposes.

Under the existing definition, applications for farmland rating classification are being received from owners of properties which are not being used for the type of broadlands farming purposes for which the farmland scheme was established. Examples include the small hobby farm type of holding, vacant blocks used for grazing, etc. located in or adjacent to townsites, and properties where the supply is not from a farmland reticulation main.

The proposed amendments are directed towards a more specific definition. At the same time, the Bill proposes that those properties currently classified as "farmland" will continue to be rated on this basis.

Secondly, the Bill introduces a new section 12EE to provide for the recognition of certified aerial photographs as evidence in prosecutions for breaches of the land clearing controls. This type of evidence is important in an attempt to establish that an offence has been committed.

It further proposes that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the aerial photograph is

to be accepted as providing *prima facie* evidence that the owner or occupier carried out the clearing activities indicated by the certified photographs.

Thirdly, the Bill proposes amendments to section 32 to define clearly the procedures for the testing of meters and the allocation of these costs.

The existing provisions appear to require the Minister to initiate the testing of a meter whenever disputes occur. The Bill provides for the dissatisfied party to initiate such action and if the meter is found to be registering within the prescribed limits, the costs associated with the testing are to be met by the applicants.

It is further proposed to prescribe a standard fee wherever possible. However, there will be situations where this should not apply—for example, where the costs associated with the meter test involve additional expenditure such as travelling—and, in these cases, the actual costs will apply.

The Bill also will remove any deficiencies which may have existed as to the authority of the Minister to use actual or assessed consumption in cases where the meter is found to be out of order.

Fourthly, it has been the established practice when a water supply service has been disconnected for the non-payment of water rates or other charges to charge a fee for re-connection. The authority for this action is specified in the by-laws. Although costs are incurred in both disconnecting and connecting, no charge has been raised for the disconnection action.

The Bill ensures that there is statutory authority for prescribing a disconnection and reconnection fee or to charge the actual costs involved where this is considered to be appropriate.

It is only right that persons in default should be required to meet these costs and not expect other consumers generally to absorb this expense. Further, the person in default should not be entitled to a rebate of rates for the period in which the service is disconnected.

I now turn to the remaining two amendments. These cover the ratable area and the maximum rate for farmland rating purposes.

In respect of farmlands, holdings shall be ratable only so far as they extend to a distance not exceeding 2.414016 kilometres from a water main. This distance is a direct conversion of an imperial measure being 1½ miles formerly specified in the Act. In the interests of easier measurement and administrative simplicity the

Bill proposes to amend this distance to 2.5 kilometres.

Because the amount of additional revenue is negligible, it is not intended to adjust all existing rated land to the new distance and the Bill provides the Minister with discretionary powers in this regard.

The Act provides for a maximum rate of 4.942c per hectare. Again, this is a direct conversion to decimal currency and metric measurement of the former two and two-fifths pence per acre. Apart from specifying this amount in an easier applicable rounded metric number, it also has to be adjusted to a more realistic figure. The present maximum rate has been levied and not varied since 1964 and has become quite obsolete.

The proposed new maximum is 30c per hectare. Members are assured, however, that there is no intention to apply this new maximum, but rather to allow for some increase beyond the old maximum as may be necessary from time to time.

Finally, the Bill contains special provisions which will preclude the application of the proposed changes in both distance and maximum farmland rates for the financial year that is current when the amendments come into operation.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr B. T. Burke.

House adjourned at 4.33 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FRUIT

Fruit-fly Baiting Schemes

1593. Mr EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) What was the total amount which was expended on control of fruit fly by fruit-fly baiting schemes in each of the past three years?
- (2) Of these amounts how much came from—
 - (a) registration fees;
 - (b) charges levied by schemes?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) 1979-80 — \$51 779
1978-79 — \$58 252
1977-78 — \$73 653

Amounts for 1980-81 not available as accounting period does not end till 31 August.

- (2) (a) Not separately accounted; estimates to be between \$100 and \$150;
(b) \$181 094.

HOUSING

Boulder and Kalgoorlie

1620. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing:

- (1) How many State Housing Commission homes have been built in—
 - (a) Kalgoorlie;
 - (b) Boulder;
 in each of the past 10 years?
- (2) In each case and in each year, what types of accommodation were built?

Mr LAURANCE replied:

- (1) and (2)

YEAR	KALGOORLIE COMMON- WEALTH/ STATE RENTAL	ABORI- GINAL	COMMON- WEALTH/ STATE RENTAL	BOULDER ABORI- GINAL
1971/72	6 x 3 BR	2 x 3 BR 1 x 4 BR	2 x 3 BR	2 x 3 BR
1972/73	1 x 3 BR	4 x 3 BR 5 x 4 BR	—	1 x 4 BR
1973/74		6 x 3 BR 2 x 4 BR	35 x 3 BR	
1974/75		—	5 x 3 BR 4 x 2 BR	
1975/76			30 x 3 BR 6 x 4 BR	
1976/77		4 x 3 BR 1 x 4 BR	6 x 2 BR 5 x 3 BR	

1977/78

8 x BSR
6 x 1 BR
12 x 2 BR
4 x 3 BR

1978/79
1979/80
1980/81

—
—

2 x 4 BR
4 x 2 BR

2 x 3 BR

FISHERIES

Shark

1621. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Does his department take samples of sharks above a certain weight from the Perth fish markets for mercury testing?
- (2) If "Yes"—
 - (a) what are the details of the scheme;
 - (b) how does it operate;
 - (c) how many tests were conducted in each of the past 18 months;
 - (d) what were the results of the tests?
- (3) When was the testing commenced?
- (4) Have the proprietors of the markets or others had reason to complain about the behaviour of departmental inspectors in the past 18 months?
- (5) If "Yes"—
 - (a) when was the complaint lodged; and
 - (b) what are the details?
- (6) What action was taken as a result of any complaint?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) Departmental officers visit on random basis to survey size of sharks for sale.
(b) Fish is examined before sale commences and suspect shark—18 kg and above—withdrawn for sale, labelled, and sampled.
Release or condemnation is according to laboratory result.
- (c) Only three tests have been necessary and these were done in September, 1980.
- (d) In excess of permitted levels and the fish accordingly condemned and destroyed.
- (3) September 1975.
- (4) No, but a complaint was received from one proprietor.
- (5) (a) September 1980;

- (b) objection by market operator to departmental officer's presence and attitude.
- (6) Complainant was interviewed by senior officer and the matter resolved.

SHOPPING CENTRE

Development: Balcatta

1622. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

- (1) Did she approve the development of the Village Square shopping centre near the intersection of Wanneroo Road and Amelia Street, Balcatta, against the advice of her department?
- (2) Is she aware that several of the shops are now empty and that the centre is in significant difficulties?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.

WATER RESOURCES: RATES

Increase: Limit

1623. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Is he aware that under the present charging system some commercial users will face accounts next year in excess of 50 per cent higher than the present year?
- (2) Is it his intention, if the situation arises, to again limit increases to a maximum of 50 per cent?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Yes, a very small number.
- (2) No. As I have publicly stated, an endeavour is being made to devise different methods of charging. Only if this endeavour were to fail could such limit be considered.

HOUSING: STATE HOUSING COMMISSION

Staff

1624. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing:

By how many employees has the State Housing Commission been below its permitted staff level in each of the last 18 months?

Mr LAURANCE replied:

February 1980	24
March	20
April	20
May	20
June	23
July	32
August	30
September	37
October	41
November	40
December 1980	39
January 1981	47
February	49
March	34
April	42
May	37
June	45
July 1981	45

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Bureau

1625. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

By how many employees has the department been below its permitted staff level in each of the past 18 months?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

Presumably the question relates to the Bureau of Consumer Affairs. The bureau was one officer under strength for a period of approximately six weeks in April-May 1980.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Liquid: Policy

1626. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Is he aware that unauthorised dumping of liquid waste is occurring in various parts of the metropolitan area, including the Herdsman Lake area?
- (2) Is he aware of problems arising from the lack of a coherent forward plan for liquid waste disposal in the metropolitan area?

- (3) Will he please outline details of the policy presently being followed in the disposal of liquid waste?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Unauthorised dumping of liquid wastes does occur throughout the metropolitan area, but no specific cases near Herdsman Lake have been reported.
- (2) A Cabinet subcommittee is investigating the problems of liquid waste disposal in the metropolitan area.
- (3) Liquid wastes can be disposed of in sanitary sites licensed by the Public Health Department and administered by local authorities.

WATER RESOURCES: UNDERGROUND

Bores: Private

1627. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Is his department requiring the registration of any private bores?
- (2) If "Yes", what are the details of any such requirement?
- (3) Does the Government believe it is necessary to—
 - (a) control the sinking of private bores;
 - (b) charge for the right to own and operate a private bore?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) A licence is required for bores only within a Public water supply area proclaimed under the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Act.
Throughout the State artesian bores are required to be licensed under the provisions of the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act. The Act also requires non-artesian bores in proclaimed areas to be licensed.
- (3) (a) Yes, in the cases referred to in (2);
(b) no.

LIQUOR: CLUBS

Licensed: Raffles

1628. Mr JAMIESON, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Under what circumstances can raffles be held in clubs holding a liquor licence?

- (2) What criteria govern the issue of raffle permits to licensed clubs for conducting raffles?

- (3) Is there any limit imposed by the Lotteries Commission on the number of permits issued to licensed clubs each year for conducting raffles?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) Under permits issued by the Lotteries Commission. In all cases, sale of tickets is restricted to members only.
- (2) The criteria applied by the Lotteries Commission for large raffles is as follows—

The person applying for a permit shall sign the application for the permit which should state:

- (a) the proposed opening and closing date and date of drawing;
- (b) the locality in which tickets are to be offered for sale, or in which subscriptions may be received;
- (c) the purpose for which the lottery is to be conducted;
- (d) the total number of tickets to be offered for sale, or the total number of subscriptions proposed to be called for;
- (e) the price of each ticket or subscription;
- (f) the total amount of the prize money or other prizes proposed to be distributed in the lottery;
- (g) such other details as may be prescribed.

If it is found necessary to postpone the drawing date to a date beyond that shown on the permit, then application must be made to the Commission before the scheduled closing date of the lottery. Any such postponement of the drawing date duly authorised by the Commission shall where necessary be advertised by the permit holder in the issue of the paper in which the results were to have appeared. Once the drawing date of a lottery has expired the authority of the permit ceases to exist unless an extension has been granted by the Commission in writing.

Please note that the Act states that the closing date shall not be more than three months from the commencement date. The Commission will consider applications for the conduct of large raffles on the following basis:

- (a) Where the total retail value of prize/prizes does not exceed \$100, organisations may have up to 3 raffles in any year provided the total gross proceeds do not exceed \$1 200.
- (b) Where the total retail value of prize/prizes exceeds \$100 but is less than \$1 000 organisations may have up to 2 raffles in any year provided the total gross proceeds do not exceed \$5 000.
- (c) Where the total value of prize/prizes exceeds \$1 000, organisations may conduct one raffle in a year to allow maximum gross proceeds of \$10 000.

In all cases the cost of the ticket may be decided by the organisation concerned. If any variation in regard to items (a), (b) or (c) is proposed, the proposal may be discussed with the Raffles Section either by calling or telephoning.

The tickets must have printed thereon the full name and address of the permit holder, the value of the prizes, the date of drawing, the name and address of the organisation or permit holder, the name and date of the paper in which the results will appear, the price per ticket and the permit number.

The permit form should be produced to the printer of the tickets then retained by the permit holder.

The Lotteries Commission also issues club special lottery permits which cover any number of small lotteries conducted during the term of the permit, which is three months. Permits are renewable.

- (3) Answered by (2) above.

EDUCATION: FUNDING

Cutbacks: Literature

1629. Mr PARKER, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is he aware that at 12 noon on 23 July 1981, the member for East Melville, Mr Trethowan, rang the principal of

Applecross Senior High School to advise him that the school should not provide any literature concerning the education cuts, or the controversy surrounding those cuts in the school library or in classrooms where it might become accessible to students?

- (2) Is he aware on what basis or on whose authority the member made that approach?
- (3) Is it the Government's policy that backbench members of Parliament should provide these sorts of instructions to school principals, or, if not, what is the Government's policy on this?
- (4) (a) Is the Government concerned that students should not have access to the material referred to; and
(b) if so, for what reason?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) In response to a circular sent to parents on 16 July, signed by both the Principal of Applecross Senior High School (Mr J. Eggleston) and the President of the Applecross Branch of the State School Teachers' Union (Mr M. Daw), which stated—

It is also this staff's firm resolve that we discourage any desire on the part of students to discuss or become involved in this issue.

Mr Trethowan, on the complaint of a parent that material dealing with the controversy over education cuts was freely available in the school's library, contacted the principal as this did not appear to be in keeping with the resolution of the staff as noted in the above circular.

- (2) Answered by (1) above.
- (3) No. Government policy should be transmitted to schools from the Minister for Education through the Director-General of Education.
- (4) (a) The Government would be concerned if students do not have access to balanced factual information;

- (b) within the existing pressures of the curriculum, schools should provide a forum for national debate of topics of public interest appropriate to the age of the student but, irrespective of the outcome of any debate, should not foster industrial-style action within the student body.

PRISONS: PRISONERS

Aborigines: World Council of Churches

1630. Mr JAMIESON, to the Premier:

- (1) In view of the recent World Council of Churches' inquiry committee statement that the chances of Aboriginal persons being gaoled in Western Australia were 13 times greater than non-Aboriginals, and the fact that statistics show the chance actually to be 18 times greater, does he consider this statement to be an "exaggeration"?
- (2) Is he aware that almost 50 per cent of new prisoners, including remand prisoners, are of Aboriginal background?
- (3) Is he also aware that the percentage of Western Australian Aboriginal imprisonments is 3½ times higher than "blacks" in South Africa?
- (4) In view of the above, what policy has the present Government for overcoming this problem?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) to (4) Because the Government was concerned with the statistics relating to the rate of imprisonment in Western Australia, it appointed a committee of inquiry, which presented its report to the Government in May 1981. The committee's recommendations will be considered by Cabinet shortly, following which the Government will indicate what action it intends to take.

TOWN PLANNING: MRPA

Parliament House

1631. Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

- (1) Would she request the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority to release

the Parliament House precinct policy review interim report for public scrutiny and participation?

- (2) Is she aware that some properties previously within the precinct have now been recommended to be excluded?
- (3) In view of determinations already made, would she clarify the position of the Forrest House complex which the council suggests is in jeopardy because of Parliament House precinct requirements?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) No; a development application related to the proposal is in the hands of the MRPA for determination as it falls within the parliamentary precinct now under review. As the member is aware as a member of that committee, the matter is still under consideration. I would not wish to prejudice its consideration of the matter.

HEALTH: DENTAL

Therapy Centres: Schools

1632. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) How many dental therapists have been employed in school dental clinics within the Lockridge to Darlington area in—
 - (a) 1974;
 - (b) 1975;
 - (c) 1976;
 - (d) 1977;
 - (e) 1978;
 - (f) 1979;
 - (g) 1980;
 - (h) 1981?
- (2) (a) What was the extent of Commonwealth Government funding over the same period;
- (b) what has been the extent of State Government funding?
- (3) What are the criteria used for the employment of dental therapists within a particular area?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) (a) to (h) Clinics in the area are established at Lockridge, Guildford, Middle Swan, Swanview, and Darlington primary schools. Darlington is a mobile unit.

Dental therapists were employed as follows—

1974	Nil
1975	Nil
1976	6
1977	6
1978	8
1979	8
1980	10
1981	9

- (2) (a) Capital expenditure within the area and the expenditure of State and Commonwealth funds occurred as follows:

Financial Year	\$	Funding	
		Commonwealth	State
1974/75	Nil	—	—
1975/76	113 900	100%	—
1976/77	Nil	—	—
1977/78	42 200	75%	25%
1978/79	33 700	50%	50%
1979/80	Nil	—	—
1980/81	Nil	—	—

- (b) It is not possible to differentiate the amount of recurrent expenditure for the individual clinics in the period. The approximate cost of conducting a centre in 1980-81 is \$50 000 per annum.
- (3) Each therapist provides dental care for up to 1 000 children. The precise number at any one time is influenced by the current dental condition of children.

LAND: AGRICULTURAL

Release: Hay-Mitchell Area

1633. Mr EVANS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Lands:

- (1) Does the Government intend to release for agricultural purposes any land in the Hay-Mitchell area which was the subject of a study reported in the 1980 forests report under the heading of "A Forest Worth Preserving"?
- (2) Did the rural and allied industries sub-committee on land release policy make any recommendations with regard to this area, and if so, what were these?

- (3) Does the Government have any plans for this area, and if so, what are these plans?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) There is no current intention to release land in the area covered by the 1980 Forests report for agricultural purposes except for a small area in the north-eastern corner which is intended to be utilised by the Rural Adjustment Authority to assist farmers affected by clearing bans.
- (2) I would refer the member to the committee's comments at page 18 of the Rural and Allied Industries Council committee's report.
- (3) Consideration is being given to reserving the bulk of the area for the purpose of timber under the Land Act.

ABATTOIRS

Fees

1634. Mr EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (a) Is it proposed to increase abattoir fees in Western Australia;
- (b) if so, by how much; and
- (c) from when will these increases take effect?

Mr OLD replied:

- (a) to (c) Fees charged by the WA Meat Commission were increased in July 1981. The new fees were published in the *Government Gazette*, 17 July 1981, and took effect from 30 July 1981. Slaughtering fees for cattle and calves were increased by 10 per cent, and fees for sheep, lambs and goats by 7 per cent. Slaughter fees were increased by 15 per cent. No further increases in fees are planned at this time.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Liquid: Gnangara

1635. Dr DADOUR, to the Minister for Works:

- (1) (a) Who is undertaking task A7 of the Fimmel-Troyan programme;
- (b) how much is it costing;
- (c) has it commenced?

- (2) (a) Is the Gngangara Road liquid waste disposal site to be closed;
- (b) where will the waste be dumped if it is closed;
- (c) whether or not the site is closed, what steps are being taken to ensure that no toxic materials such as heavy metals, or phenolic wastes, are dumped?
- (3) The liquid waste disposal site in Canning Vale accepts both septage and industrial wastes. Is the groundwater being monitored at this site for microbiological and chemical pollutants?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) (a) Caldwell Connell Engineers in conjunction with the Public Health Department and Metropolitan Water Board.
- (b) It is portion of a liquid waste study estimated to cost \$150 000.
- (c) Yes.
- (2) (a) Yes.
- (b) This matter is being investigated by the Public Health Department.
- (c) This site is only licensed to accept septage and similar biological wastes and is supervised by the Local Authority.
- (3) The Canning Vale site is not within a public water supply area and is not being monitored.

EDUCATION: TEACHERS

Music Advisory

1636. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Can he confirm that a former music advisory teacher attached to the north east metropolitan regional office who was appointed to fill a vacancy at West Morley Primary School as a remedial teacher has since resigned from the department?
- (2) If "Yes", what was the reason for this teacher's resignation and loss to the school system?
- (3) Can he confirm that the school to which this music advisory teacher was appointed already had a music specialist teacher on its staff?

- (4) What further arrangements have been made to fill the vacancy concerned at this school?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The teacher's resignation was a personal decision.
- (3) The teacher was appointed to the school as a classroom teacher, not a music specialist.
- (4) Since the teacher took sick leave before resigning, the position was filled by an experienced teacher re-entering the service.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

NOISE

Morley Bus Depot

385. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) In view of further action since May of this year in connection with the noise nuisance emanating from the Morley MTT bus depot—including further noise readings by a WAIT expert, a survey by an officer of the Public Health Department, and the issue of a questionnaire by the Shire of Bayswater—what action is now proposed to overcome the noise nuisance?
- (2) What decision, if any, has been made by the Government regarding the expiration of the noise abatement exemption order later this week?

Mr YOUNG replied:

I thank the member for Dianella for some considerable notice of the question and reply as follows—

- (1) As I advised the member recently, changes have been made to the operating routine of the MTT's depot at Morley to reduce noise.
- (2) An extension of the current exemption is being considered.

For the further edification of the member for Dianella in respect of some detail applying to the answer to (1) and for the edification of the House, I advise that some of the steps which have been taken in respect of the depot in question are as follows—

(a) An acoustic consultant was commissioned to investigate and report and a number of alternatives have been considered and costed. The following steps have been taken to reduce noise—

1. Late fuelling of buses altered to cease at 11 pm instead of 1 am.
2. Movement of buses adjacent to units restricted after 11 pm.
3. Total bus movements reduced.
4. Air compressor enclosed.
5. PA system has been modified.
6. Buses leaving in the early morning are taken from the eastern side—Camboon Road side—of the depot.
7. Tyre inflation programme moved away from units.
8. Depot workers have been issued instructions to restrict noisy activities.
9. Some equipment has been replaced by newer quieter equipment.

(b) An extension of the current exemption is being considered.

FEDERAL BUDGET: SALES TAX

Unified Opposition

386. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Premier:

- (1) Is he aware of the stated intention of the Australian Democrats and the ALP in the Senate to oppose that part of the Budget which permits an increase in sales tax?
- (2) Would the Premier inform the House whether he is prepared to raise this matter with the senators representing Western Australia with a view to their presenting, with those other parties mentioned, a unified front in opposition to this imposition?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) and (2) I assume the member put this question with his tongue well and truly in his cheek.

The SPEAKER: The question is out of order.

Mr B. T. BURKE: But the answer might be in order.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The member would have appreciated that the

question would be out of order and that only suggests he asked it facetiously. I do not have the task of framing the Federal Budget—thank goodness I do not. If I had that task on this occasion it may have been better.

The SPEAKER: In regard to questions without notice I make the plea to members that they ensure the questions they intend to ask come within the provisions of the Standing Orders of this House. The question asked by the member for Balcatta was a glaring example of a highly politically charged question, and by the time I reached the point of view that it was out of order, it had been answered.

I would put the Government at a disadvantage if I were to rule the question out of order. I think it is in order to allow some sort of response from the Government to such questions. I simply ask members to ensure their questions conform with the Standing Orders.

If an increase occurs in the practice of asking questions not within the provisions of the Standing Orders then I must take some action to ensure questions come within the Standing Orders.

HERBICIDES: 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T

Workers

387. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Has the Minister seen the article in *The Western Mail* of last weekend which referred to alleged agent orange victims at Kununurra employed at the Agriculture Protection Board's Aborigine training project?
- (2) Is he familiar with the story?
- (3) Is he able to confirm that burning and blistering took place? Is he able to advise us of the action taken subsequently?
- (4) Is protective clothing used in similar circumstances in all departments under his control?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) to (4) I have not seen the story personally, but I am familiar with the circumstances. Whilst it seems to be an

accurate story, no evidence exists that any reaction occurred to the chemical used. The chemicals 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T are used widely. Some of the staff were used in hand pulling Noogoora burr, and with many people I understand there is quite an intolerance to this burr. The situation involved relates more to an allergy associated with the burr than to a reaction to a chemical. I understand the workers were treated and put off work under workers' compensation. Further treatment will be provided if their conditions continue. At this stage nothing indicates the problem was created by the spray used.

DAIRYING: MILK

Bottles

388. Mr EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

My question arises from the answer the Minister gave to a question I asked previously. He indicated he had no knowledge of the sale of milk in bottles being terminated. In view of the fact I have received further information from the processing plant at Brunswick that an announcement is imminent that milk in bottles no longer will be processed in that way, will he indicate whether he is aware of this change and the implications in regard to the price of milk this change may cause in the retailing side of the milk industry?

Mr OLD replied:

The answer I gave previously was based on information supplied to me by the Dairy Industry Authority. If the factory at Brunswick ceases bottling milk then it is incumbent upon that factory to advise the authority of the situation. The only factory of which I am aware in Western Australia not providing bottled milk is the factory in Albany. That change was agreed to after negotiation and demonstration of the capital cost of renewing the bottling plant at Albany. The cost was exorbitant and would have had to be passed on to consumers. After consultation it was agreed that consumers in Albany would be better served by having milk in cartons only rather than with the option of having milk in bottles. Bottled milk is available, but carries a freight charge because it

comes from Perth. I have no knowledge of the Brunswick factory ceasing its bottling operations, but I will pass on the information to the authority. If there is any truth in the information we will determine the exact position.

MINING: GOLD

Royalties

389. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Premier:

Last night in this Chamber the member for Murray said he saw no good reason for the Government's not imposing a royalty on gold mining, and that if one were imposed it would not cause him any great concern. Can the Premier tell the House whether the member for Murray reflected the attitude or policy of the Government?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I did not hear the part of the member for Murray's speech to which the member for Balcatta referred, although I heard most of the speech. I could not be precise as to what was said, but I will base my answer on the remark of the member for Balcatta that the member for Murray made it clear he was expressing a personal opinion. At no stage did I gather the member for Murray professed to speak on behalf of the Government.

Mr B. T. Burke: He did not say he was or he wasn't.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I inform the member for Balcatta that the member for Murray expressed a personal opinion. The Government will make its own decision. On the basis that the Opposition would place royalties on all minerals I take it the Opposition supports a royalty on gold.

Mr B. T. Burke: What is your policy?

Mr I. F. Taylor: Haven't you made a decision yet?

Sir CHARLES COURT: Recently in the absence of the Leader of the Opposition the then acting Leader of the Opposition made the Opposition's position in relation to royalties clear. Some Opposition members may not have agreed with him.

Mr B. T. Burke: Our policy is not to place a royalty on gold.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Haven't you made a decision?

Sir CHARLES COURT: I think it is fair to remind members that the acting Leader of the Opposition made it clear he wanted royalties on everything including gold.

A member: Our position is to exclude gold from royalties.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I remind members that the acting Leader of the Opposition referred to calculations which included a royalty on gold. He said such a royalty would raise a certain figure, and it should be raised. He castigated the Government for not raising the amount which could have been raised.

The short answer to the question is that a decision on royalties has not been made. Royalties are a matter for budgetary consideration. I will not canvass the matter any further than that, in relation to gold or anything else.

RAILWAYS: GRAIN

Freight Rates

390. Mr McPHARLIN, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) What progress has been made in discussions between the grain freight rate committee and Westrail in regard to grain freights?
- (2) Are the discussions reaching finality, and, if so, can he indicate when an announcement may be made?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) Progress has been made between the grain freight rate committee and Westrail towards negotiating a contract for the transport of grain.
- (2) At present I am not in a position to indicate whether or when the contractual arrangements will be completed.

TRANSPORT: BUSES

School: Kalgoorlie-Kambalda

391. Mr GRILL, to the Minister for Education:

While noting the Education Department intends to discontinue next year the school bus operating between Kambalda

and Kalgoorlie subject to negotiation with the Director of Catholic Education, could the Minister advise—

- (1) What response has the department received to approaches made to the Director of Catholic Education to fund jointly the service which costs currently \$40 000 per annum?
- (2) In the event that suitable arrangements cannot be come to with the Director of Catholic Education—
 - (a) How it is proposed to arrange for transport from Kambalda to Kalgoorlie of Government school secondary students taking courses in Kalgoorlie?
 - (b) What responsibility does the Government take to ensure Catholic school students are provided with transport from Kambalda to Kalgoorlie to attend school?
 - (c) How is it proposed to arrange for transport of Catholic school students from Kambalda to Kalgoorlie?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) The Director of Catholic Education has advised that the private school will make its own arrangements for transporting its students.
- (2) (a) Government secondary school students are not now required to travel to Kalgoorlie, as Kambalda Senior High School provides upper secondary school courses.
- (b) and (c) Refer to (1) above.

TRADE UNION: TEACHERS' UNION

Victorian Legislation

392. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister for Education:

I understand that the Victorian Government has experienced serious problems with regard to industrial action in schools by that State's Teachers' Union and that irresponsible union militancy could pose a similar threat in W.A. Would the Minister please advise—

Opposition members: Where is that letter?

Mr B. T. Burke: This was on the agenda at the last meeting of the League of Rights. He has been given the job of raising it. Tell us about the commos and the Catholics.

Mr Bryce: And the Jewish plot to take over the world.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am just about ready to go home. It will not worry me if questions are terminated.

Mr Tonkin: What about the elders of Zion?

Mr BLAICKIE: The question is as follows—

- (1) What does the 1980 second reading speech of the Victorian Teaching Service (Amendment) Bill reveal?
- (2) To whom has this document been circulated in Western Australia?
- (3) Is there any solution in the future to the militancy problem?

Mr Parker: It certainly has not been circulated to us.

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

Mr Parker: The record should show that the Minister is laughing.

Mr GRAYDEN: The reply is as follows—

- (1) The speech to which the member refers is the most strong indictment of union militancy I have read in recent times. It reveals that—
 - (a) there were 140 separate teacher stoppages in Victoria in the first 198 days of the 1980 school year.
 - (b) the Victorian union's tactic has been to confine strikes to mid-week so that members do not miss out on weekend pay. The result of this strategy, related to what the Victorian Minister described as "the somewhat quaint system of payment" for teachers, means a teacher can attend school for as few as 76 days yet be paid for 256.

It tells us that these indefinite strikes go on, unfortunately for extended periods.

To continue—

- (c) the speech also reveals many obvious parallels to the Western Australian situation in that—

- (i) Victorian union militancy has the specific purpose of giving union branches control of the schools in place of control by principals.

Mr Tonkin: That is not part of your ministerial responsibility.

Mr GRAYDEN: To continue—

- (ii) disruption has occurred whenever transfers from overformula schools are effected, a direct parallel with union tactics in Western Australia.

- (iii) Disruption has occurred over non-teaching time available to teachers, another direct parallel with the tactics of militants in Western Australia.

- (iv) disruption has occurred whenever the Government has insisted schools are accountable to the Education Department, yet another direct parallel with militant tactics in Western Australia.

Mr Tonkin: Where are our documents? You promised me one last night.

Mr Bateman: Right-wing Nazi bastard militant!

Mr GRAYDEN: To continue—

- (2) The second reading speech notes are being distributed today to all Government members, because I believe it is important that they be appraised of the facts.

- (3) The militancy problem can and will be solved as the great majority of our highly-professional, competent and dedicated teachers realise the full implication of union militancy and rise above that by continuing their professional commitment to put the children first. I personally have a high respect for the professionalism of W.A. teachers and it could be valuable if this professionalism was embodied in some form of a code of ethics which expressed a commitment to the profession and the well being of children in the care of teachers.

Mr Bryce: You have not got any respect for your own mother, the way you are dealing with this. If she was responsible for you—

Mr GRAYDEN: It goes on—

It is obvious that the profession should be giving serious thought to developing such a code of ethics.

Mr Bryce: You are a disgrace.

Mr GRAYDEN: And the reply continues—

The particular question raised by the member could perhaps be covered by such a code since it could include a commitment from teachers that they would remain apolitical during working hours—

Mr Bryce: You are sick.

Mr GRAYDEN: To continue—

—and refrain from introducing political bias or industrial action into the school environment contrary to the long-established practices of the teaching profession.

HERBICIDES: 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T

Workers

393. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Agriculture:

As the matter at Kununurra has been treated as an ordinary compensation case, can he tell me how such an ordinary compensation case came to be brought to his notice and the reasons for it?

Mr OLD replied:

I am afraid I cannot answer that. I am just relaying information that I have received from my department. I do not know on what basis the case was taken as a compensation case. The fact that these people become ill at work, to my mind, would put it within the parameters of eligibility for compensation.

Mr Davies: How was it brought to your notice? Was it a worrying case?

Mr OLD: It was brought to my notice by the officers of my department. Whilst I am on my feet, there was one part of the question that I recall the Leader of the Opposition asked which I did not answer with regard to protective clothing. When these people are dealing with Noogoora burr they are issued with gloves as a normal precaution when handling spray, and other protective clothing is available to them. An interesting point is that I understand the same people who had undertaken this work regularly used both sprays which would point to the fact that the responsible agent is actually a burr and not the spray.

HEALTH: INSURANCE

Funds: Information

394. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

(1) Will the Minister have his department contact the five registered health funds in this State to ensure that the management and all the staff of those funds are fully and accurately informed about the services and charges that will be available to hospital patients in public hospitals? I have been given misleading information recently by four of the five health funds about hospital charges applicable to hospital patients with hospital-only insurance. I have had a number of phone calls in recent days from members of the public complaining that they are being given misleading and inaccurate information about hospital charges and services and about their entitlements under hospital-only insurance.

- (2) Will the Minister give an undertaking that he will have his department contact all the registered health funds to ensure that they fully understand the details and cease giving the public misleading and inaccurate information?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) and (2) I am not responsible for the management of the health funds and therefore—

Mr Hodge: You are responsible to the people of Western Australia.

Mr YOUNG: I cannot reply to the last part of the member's question because he asked me whether I would give instructions, in effect, to the offices to cease doing certain things. Obviously I cannot do that.

Mr Hodge: I did not say that.

Mr YOUNG: That was the last part of the member's question, with respect. As far as the rest of the question is concerned, the officers of my department have in fact been in contact with the health funds over a number of weeks and, I would think, over a number of months, for the purposes of making the calculations upon which they are basing their current tables. In the interests of the people who, according to the member for Melville, are being misled, naturally I would be quite happy to ensure that those officers check with the funds to ensure that the information upon which they are basing the tables is the correct information, in the hope that they will disseminate it. I obviously cannot instruct the office in the way the member for Melville suggests I should.

FEDERAL BUDGET: SALES TAX

Iron Ore Industry

395. Mr BRYCE, to the Treasurer:

Is it the Treasurer's impression of last Tuesday night's Budget that the

privately owned railway companies in Western Australia, namely those which service the iron ore industry, will be subject to a 17½ per cent sales tax applied to any purchases made for rolling stock, sleepers, or any equipment of any sort associated with the rail systems in the iron ore industry?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

In answer to the honourable member for Ascot, I have not specifically studied the question of the application of the sales tax provisions as they would relate to the private railways in the north. I will gladly have a look at it—I have not had occasion to yet. I will certainly have a look at it.

TRADE UNION: TEACHERS' UNION

Executive: Political Persuasion

396. Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister for Education:

In view of his oft-stated claim during the education dispute that, in part, the dispute was due to political interference, could he inform the House of the political persuasions of the executive of the Teachers' Union.

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

I would have thought the member for Welshpool would be more aware of the political persuasions of the executive of the Teachers' Union than I. If he is not, I suggest he carefully study their speeches at the forthcoming conference of the executive. I imagine that if he does, he will be able to glean their political leanings from their utterances at that conference.