



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
SECOND SESSION
1999

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 12 May 1999

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 12 May 1999

THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland) took the Chair at 12.00 noon, and read prayers.

VACATION SWIMMING CLASSES

Petition

Mrs van de Klashorst (Parliamentary Secretary) presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 43 persons -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned petitioners, call on the Minister for Education to abandon plans to contract out vacation swimming classes as it could risk:

- the current high standard of teaching
- the affordability of classes
- the availability of classes, particularly in country areas.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See petition No 208.]

CAMPING LAWS, AMENDMENTS

Petition

Mr Bradshaw (Parliamentary Secretary) presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 41 persons -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We the undersigned, call upon the State Government to amend certain laws which are seen to be unfair, restrictive and discriminatory towards us, the Australian public.

We therefore ask that the following legislation be amended.

1. The Caravan Park 50 km protection zone be returned to its former 16 kms.
2. The 3 night Camping Law be amended to 28 nights on rate payers own property allowing for holiday visits by family and friends without having to seek special written permission from authorities.
3. That country road Park/Rest areas limit of 4 hours be increased to 12 hours allowing long distance tourists, travellers and truck drivers to vacate roads during the hours of darkness if they so choose.
4. That en route country Rest Stops of up to 12 hours be not defined as camping.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See petition No 209.]

CITY OF JOONDALUP PUBLIC RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Petition

Mr Baker presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 55 persons -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned residents and ratepayers of the City of Joondalup, most vigorously oppose the City of Joondalup implementing any proposal to charge junior sports using or utilising City of Joondalup public recreational facilities - a "user pays" fee structure of any description. We call upon the Minister for Local Government to intervene in any such decision making process and to override any such future decision by the City of Joondalup.

We cannot believe that such a proposal is even being suggested and we expect that a reasonable portion of our annual municipal rates be specifically expended upon the provision of important sporting, community and recreational facilities for our new City's young children.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See petition No 210.]

ROADSIDE TOURIST BAYS

Petition

Ms MacTiernan presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 1 126 persons -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned demand that the Government repeal the regulations which forces caravan owners to rest at road-side tourist bays for no longer than a four hour period between the hours of 6 pm and 7 am. For safer roads, long distance travellers need adequate rest breaks without the fear of having a fine imposed on them by local authorities. Thus, in the interest of road safety, we call on the Government to reintroduce the 24-hour time limit for caravan owners utilising tourist bays.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See petition No 211.]

FIRE SERVICES LEVY

Statement by Minister for Emergency Services

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Emergency Services) [12.08 pm]: As many members in this place would be aware, the State Government, together with the WA Municipal Association and the Insurance Council of Australia Ltd, has for some considerable time, been developing a more equitable and fairer user pays system for all Western Australian households served by a permanent fire service.

Currently, all property owners in gazetted fire districts who insure in Western Australia contribute an amount of money to the Fire and Rescue Service of WA through their insurance premiums. These fire districts cover Albany, Bunbury, Northam, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Geraldton-Greenough and the Perth metropolitan area, including parts of Armadale and Rockingham.

A great proportion of property owners are under insured, insure offshore or do not insure at all, and they do not pay a fire levy but they receive services from the fire and rescue services.

The Fire Brigades (Fire Services Levy) Bill and the Fire Brigades Amendment Bill propose to shift the existing fire levy from insurance premiums to property owners to ensure all property owners contribute in a fair and equitable manner to the fire and rescue service. That contribution, calculated as a proportion of the gross rental value of a property, is proposed to be collected by local government under the Bills to fund the Fire and Rescue Service of WA. However, due to the widespread implications of the Bills, the extensive consultation and the complexities of the drafting process which have taken considerably longer to finalise than ever anticipated, it is simply not possible to introduce and pass this legislation through Parliament before the anticipated 1 July introduction date. In fairness, I shall today inform the 34 affected local governments which are in the throes of finalising their budgets for 1999-2000 and the Insurance Council of Australia of this decision.

The framework for inevitable changes to fire levy contributions, and potentially emergency services funding, in this State is now well advanced and we will maintain our commitment to develop further legislation to address these issues. With the enforced delay in introducing this legislation, this is an opportune time to review our achievements to date and look at continuing to address other funding inequities in our emergency services - including the bushfire brigades, the fire and rescue service volunteer brigades, the State Emergency Service and volunteer sea search and rescue - in the future. Other Australian States are in the process of restructuring funding arrangements to the fire and rescue services and Western Australia will closely monitor progress in those States as part of its continued push for funding changes to this State's emergency services.

In the meantime, the current collection system for funding fire and rescue services in this State will rest with the ICA, which together with local government authorities - 12.5 per cent - contribute 87.5 per cent of the total Western Australian Fire Service budget. However, the Western Australian community can be reassured that it will continue to receive a highly professional and expedient service from our firefighters who are always ready to serve and protect fellow Western Australians from the devastation of fire.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FUNDING INCREASE

Statement by Minister for Family and Children's Services

MRS PARKER (Ballajura - Minister for Family and Children's Services) [12.11 pm]: I am pleased to announce that in the federal budget released yesterday, the Commonwealth Government made a commitment to allocate additional funding of \$2.6m a year for supported accommodation assistance program services in Western Australia affected by the crisis assistance supported accommodation award, as well as a back payment of \$2.4m to the State Government for pre-payments incurred. The State Government has been negotiating persistently with the Commonwealth on this issue over the past two years.

The CASH Award took effect from 1 January 1998 in a sector which had previously been largely award free. The State Government has been well aware of the pressures this has placed on emergency accommodation services for the homeless, those at risk of homelessness, women's refuges and other SAAP services. For that reason the State Government has taken a number of measures to help those organisations. It contracted the Chamber of Commerce and Industry to provide a statewide industrial information and advisory service to the community services sector to assist it with the implementation

of the federal award. I also invited affected organisations to apply for increased funding on a case-by-case basis. The assessment process has given priority to 24-hour and extended hour services pending a response by the Commonwealth. Since that time, 48 applications have been approved at a total value of more than \$3m, including additional funding a year and back payment, with further applications currently being assessed. In the meantime, I agreed to pre-pay the Federal Government share of these increased costs out of the 1998-99 Family and Children's Services budget.

Emergency accommodation services in Western Australia would have faced dire financial difficulties if the State Government had not agreed to pre-pay services in 1998-99. The State Government recognises that increasing funding for the crisis response on its own will not be sufficient; a clear focus on early intervention and prevention services is necessary. In that context I welcome the announcement by the Commonwealth Government to commit a further \$60m over four years to a new program to provide early intervention support for young people at risk of homelessness and their families. The program responds to the findings of the Prime Minister's Youth Homelessness Task Force and is expected to result in an additional 10 early intervention services for Western Australia. The Commonwealth Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Jocelyn Newman, will be in Perth next week and I will be taking the opportunity to advise the Commonwealth on the State Government priority areas for these additional services.

The supported accommodation assistance program is a vital and successful program which has responded well to the needs of homeless people in Australia. Future development should build on the strengths of SAAP over the past 15 years with added emphasis on early intervention and prevention as a significant component of any future strategy, especially in responding to youth homelessness.

BILLS - INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Water Services Coordination Amendment Bill 1999.

Bill introduced, on motion by Dr Hames (Minister for Water Resources), and read a first time.

2. Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Amendment Bill 1999.

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr McGowan, and read a first time.

SESSIONAL ORDERS - ESTIMATES COMMITTEES

On motion by Mr House (Minister for Primary Industry), resolved -

That for the present Session, so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable any member to speak on the third readings of the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 1) 1999 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 2) 1999 for 15 minutes each and for the Committee of the Whole procedure on the Bill to be replaced by a series of Estimates Committees, as follows -

- (1) There shall be two Estimates Committees to be known as Estimates Committee A and B, which shall examine and report on proposed expenditure for the Parliament and Government departments and agencies funded from the consolidated fund.
- (2) After the second readings of the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 1) 1999 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 2) 1999, such proposed expenditure contained in the Estimates shall stand referred to the Estimates Committees.
- (3)
 - (a) There shall be a management committee which shall comprise the Leader of the House, one member nominated in writing to the Speaker by the Premier, and two members similarly nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;
 - (b) before the Estimates Committees first meet, the Leader of the House shall present to the House the report of the management committee, which report shall prescribe -
 - (i) which parts of the estimates are to be considered by each committee; and
 - (ii) the maximum period of time allotted for consideration of each part or any division or program of the estimates;
 - (c) on the presentation of the report of the management committee, the Speaker shall forthwith put the question, "That the report be adopted" and debate, for a maximum period of one hour, may ensue on that question and any proposed amendments thereto.
- (4) Each Estimates Committee shall consist of the chairman, the minister or Parliamentary Secretary responsible in the Assembly for the proposed expenditure under consideration, or another Minister acting in that capacity, and six other members.
- (5) When an Estimates Committee is considering the vote for "Parliament", the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker shall, for the purpose of this sessional order, be deemed to be the minister responsible for the proposed expenditure.
- (6) Each Estimates Committee initially shall include three members appointed by the Leader of the House and three members appointed by the Leader of the Opposition, and every appointment of a member of the committee shall be forthwith notified in writing to the Speaker. A member may be discharged from a

committee by appointing another member in his place and any such change shall not take effect until notified in writing to the clerk to the Estimates Committee. The Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition may each nominate another member who can also effect appointment and consequent discharge of members, by written notification to the clerk of the Estimates Committee.

- (7) (a) The Chairman of an Estimates Committee shall be the Chairman of Committees or a Deputy Chairman of Committees;
- (b) any member of the committee may take the Chair temporarily whenever requested so to do by the Chairman of that committee.
- (8) The quorum of an Estimates Committee shall be four, excluding the chairman, and if at any time a quorum is not present, the chairman may suspend the proceedings of the committee until a quorum is present, or adjourn the committee.
- (9) Members of the House who are not members of the committee may participate, at the discretion of the chairman, in the proceedings of the committee, but shall not vote, move any motion, or be counted for the purpose of a quorum. The chairman shall ensure that an independent member has in all the circumstances a reasonable opportunity to ask questions.
- (10) Advisers who are present at an Estimates Committee to assist ministers may not directly answer questions or otherwise address the committee except with the approval of and in the presence of a minister or Parliamentary Secretary.
- (11) Minutes of proceedings of each committee shall be recorded by the clerk to the committee, and shall be signed by the Chairman of Committees and the clerk to the committee.
- (12) In each Estimates Committee -
 - (a) the question shall be proposed for each division of the estimates referred to that committee, "That the vote be recommended", and if there is an equality of votes on any such question, the committee shall include in its report to the House, its inability to report on that division;
 - (b) voting in a division shall be taken by a show of hands of those members of the committee, exclusive of the chairman, present when a question is put and tellers shall not be appointed;
 - (c) any question of procedure or point of order shall be determined by the chairman of the committee, subject to the ultimate decision of the committee; and
 - (d) at the conclusion of consideration by Estimates Committee A of the estimates referred to it or at the expiry of the time allocated to that committee, the question shall be put forthwith - "That the clauses, schedules and title of the Bill be agreed to".
- (13) If during a meeting of an Estimates Committee a minister agrees to provide supplementary information, the minister shall, within 14 days of the meeting, forward to the clerk to the committee either the supplementary information or advice in writing of the date by which the information will be made available.
- (14) Reports of the Estimates Committees shall state which parts of the estimates have been considered and whether the proposed expenditures are recommended. The time for presentation of the reports may be as determined by the House. Failure of an Estimates Committee to report on any part of the estimates within the time required by the House shall be deemed to be a report recommending the proposed expenditures.
- (15) The reports of the Estimates Committees shall be presented together to the House by the Chairman of Committees and may be considered forthwith, the question being proposed for each, "That the report be adopted". Debate on that question and any amendment thereto shall not exceed one hour in total, but that shall not preclude an amendment being moved and the question being put thereon. If the reports of the committees are adopted, the third reading of the Bill may be moved forthwith.

ACTS AMENDMENT (MINING AND PETROLEUM) BILL

Second Reading

MR HOUSE (Stirling - Minister for Primary Industry) [12.18 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill proposes to amend the Mining Act, the Petroleum Act and the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act. The amendments contained in this Bill are important initiatives of the Government as they will assist the mining and petroleum industries in title administration. Part 1 simply contains the short title for the Act and how it will commence operation. Part 2 contains amendments to the Mining Act as follows -

It provides for a general purpose lease to be granted over an area in excess of the standard 10 hectares. This change will allow major mineral resource projects which require secure title over larger areas for their infrastructure to apply for one

lease rather than multiple leases. The standard 10 ha will remain however, and any party wishing to apply for a larger area will need to demonstrate that there are satisfactory reasons for a larger area.

It provides that when the holder of a mining tenement transfers that tenement, any lease application previously made in substitution for that tenement will be transferred at the same time to the incoming party. For commercial reasons, the holders of these primary tenements may wish to transfer their tenements, but currently there is no provision to also transfer the substitute lease applications. The transfer of one without the other creates legal problems and causes uncertainty, factors which have been accentuated by the long delays in having leases granted because of native title.

It provides that a condition may be imposed on the grant of a mining tenement or at any subsequent time requiring the lodgment of a security. This security will be held to ensure that proper environmental and rehabilitation measures are undertaken following the completion of any exploration or mining activity.

Currently a retention licence is granted to protect a delineated mineral resource that is considered uneconomic at present or is held for future ore reserves. To ensure that satisfactory investigations on the viability of the resource are carried out on a regular basis, provision has been included that requires the holder to undertake a specified work program over a given period.

It provides that a general purpose lease may be renewed for further periods of 21 years beyond the initial 42 years. There is currently only provision for one renewal of 21 years. This could be a problem in the future as there is no apparent avenue for continuity of tenure beyond 42 years. This change will bring general purpose leases into line with similar provisions applying to mining leases.

I now move to those parts of the Bill which relate to petroleum legislation. Part 3 of the Bill amends the Petroleum Act and, as mentioned earlier, is intended to improve the administration of petroleum titles. A provision has been included that extends the authority of a petroleum title to encompass reserved land. Currently, before reserved land can be included in a petroleum title, consultation is held with the vested authority and then the reserve is proclaimed crown land for the purposes of the Petroleum Act. This proclamation procedure, however, is seen as an act invoking the "right to negotiate" process of the Native Title Act even if that process had already been followed up to the grant of a title. By redefining "crown land" in the Act to include reserved land, the requirement to submit the title to the Native Title Act process more than once is removed. Reserved land will, however, remain protected because a system of formal consultation with the minister responsible for the reserve prior to any petroleum activities being allowed has been introduced into the Act.

The Bill also provides for the 12-month term of a drilling reservation with its discretionary renewals to be replaced with a three-year term plus a one-year extension as a matter of right where all conditions have been observed. This increased term is a more realistic period to plan for and undertake a drilling program.

Finally, a new provision has been included which will enable sensitive areas within a petroleum title to be protected by the imposition on the title of conditions which will prevent the holder from entering those areas.

Part 4 of the Bill amends the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1982. In this part some amendments have been included to reflect certain amendments to the Commonwealth Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1967. There is a need under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement to maintain a commonality of codes, and these largely clarifying amendments achieve that.

The Bill has been considered, and is supported, by both the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association Ltd and the Mining Industry Liaison Committee. The Mining Industry Liaison Committee comprises representatives from the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of WA Inc, the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies Inc, the Australian Mining and Petroleum Law Association Ltd, the Amalgamated Prospectors and Leaseholders Association and the Department of Minerals and Energy.

I table for the information of members the explanatory notes for the Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

[See paper No 946.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 1) 1999

Second Reading

Resumed from 11 May.

MR RIPPER (Belmont - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.25 pm]: I will address the overall budget outcomes in terms of deficit and debt and compare them to the Treasurer's previous pronouncements on these matters. I refer first to the comments the Treasurer made during the 1996 election campaign. Members may recall that during that election campaign the Treasurer released the forward estimates, a document prepared by Treasury, which he went on to describe as the Government's four-year financial plan. In his comments on that so-called four-year financial plan, the Treasurer placed great emphasis on his commitment to manage deficits and debts. He said -

Treasury's financial statement clearly shows that under a Coalition Government there would be continued commitment to good financial management in the State . . .

This commitment to good financial management is critical to delivering improved community services, because if State debt levels rise as under the previous Labor Government, then public money is diverted to meeting interest payments.

He went on to say in comments clearly aimed at the Opposition -

Today is a watershed in Australian political history, because the release of these financial figures is a safeguard for the public that there can no longer be extravagant promises being made on financial management and at the same time on spending.

That was a very clear commitment from the Treasurer in the last election campaign not to embark on a process of increasing debt; in fact, it was a very clear commitment to reducing debt.

The Treasurer continued with that same theme in his remarks in the 1998-99 budget speech when he said -

This budget marks an end of the discredited political practice of mortgaging our children's future to win votes today.

This budget will break the shackles of excessive debt that has tied governments down since the 1980s . . . With the shackles of debt now being broken, and lower interest payments, the State Government has the ability to deliver further dividends to the people of Western Australia.

At least there was some consistency between what the Treasurer said in last year's budget speech and what he said in the election campaign. It is clear he tried to maintain this consistency in the budget speech he delivered recently in this Parliament for the 1999-2000 financial year. The tragedy is that he has not been able to maintain that consistency as far as the facts and reality are concerned; he has been able to do that only so far as the rhetoric is concerned.

I will quote just one remark from this year's budget speech. The Treasurer stated -

It is our second budget presented with full accrual accounting and, on that basis, an operating surplus of \$171 million is expected in 1999-2000, despite weaker revenue growth, with larger surpluses in the out-years.

Fortunately for this House and the public, a section of the budget papers is entitled *1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview*. At the back of that volume is a chapter headed "Uniform Reporting of Public Sector Finances". The purpose of that chapter is to allow parliamentarians, journalists, the media and others to compare public sector finances across jurisdictions and across time. The explanation of this chapter states -

Western Australia's public sector finances are assessed throughout this chapter on a basis consistent with Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) standards. Analysis presented in this chapter relies on the government finance statistics (GFS) series and on the financial assets and liabilities series, commonly referred to as net debt.

Later on in that chapter the authors explain why we need this chapter and its analysis. They say -

In recent years, governments of all Australian jurisdictions at State, Territory and Commonwealth levels, the media, credit rating agencies and other commentators have increasingly relied upon GFS and the net debt series to provide comparability between jurisdictions and across time.

Clearly, this chapter of the budget papers is the chapter that is meant to keep the Government honest. Whatever the Government does with the presentation of the budget outcomes in any other section of the budget papers, this is the section which is consistent with Australian Bureau of Statistics standards; this is the section which enables us to compare what happens in this jurisdiction with what happens in other States and in the Commonwealth. It is very instructive to see how the budget looks when it is reported according to these uniform Australian Bureau of Statistics standards. When one looks at the outcome according to those standards, one can see that the Treasurer has departed significantly from his rhetoric in 1996 and 1998 and from his claims in this year's budget speech.

First, let us consider the question of deficits. I am taking these figures from page 207 of the *1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview*. The table on page 207 lists all the figures for a variety of financial years. Let us consider the figures for the financial year for which this budget applies, 1999-2000. Under general government, there is a current surplus of \$390.8m but a capital deficit of \$1 029.3m, leading to a total deficit in the general government sector of \$638.4m. That is a long, long way from the Treasurer's claim of an operating surplus of \$171m. These are the figures that are presented according to uniform standards based on ABS criteria.

Public trading enterprises also show that there will be a deficit in 1999-2000. In the public trading enterprises sector there will be a current surplus of \$680m but a capital deficit of \$826.1m, leading to a total deficit of \$146.2m. Only in the public financial enterprises sector is there anything like a surplus. For public financial enterprises, the current surplus will be \$119.5m. There will be a capital deficit of \$0.6m, leading to, after rounding, a total surplus of \$118.8m.

When all of those figures are put together and one looks at the totality of Western Australian public sector finances according to ABS standard reporting procedures, the current surplus for 1999-2000 is \$1 190.3m. The capital deficit is \$1 856m, leading to a total deficit of \$665.7m. There we have it. The bottom line is a total deficit of \$665.7m compared with the Treasurer's claim in his budget speech of an operating surplus of \$171m.

In his budget speech, the Treasurer also said that there would be larger surpluses in the out years. That claim is also belied by the Western Australian public sector finances table in chapter 6 of the *Economic and Fiscal Overview*. The estimate for the general government sector for 2000-01 is a deficit of \$261m. The estimate for the public trading enterprises sector is a deficit of \$50.4m, and the estimate for the public financial enterprises sector, which shows a fair amount of stability, is a surplus of \$124.1m. The total outcome for all of the public sector - one might say the bottom line - is a deficit of \$187.3m in 2000-01.

It is fortunate for this Parliament and the public that we have these uniform reporting standards and that there is a moral obligation on the Government to publish these figures, because they show that the situation is very much different from the situation claimed by the Treasurer in his budget speech. What we have seen is a total departure from the Government's claimed financial management credentials. What we have seen is a backflip from this Government. After telling us for years that debt was evil, that debt was mortgaging the future in order to meet current needs and that debt inhibited governments' abilities to spend on social priorities because of the requirement to pay interest, the Government has now done a total backflip, is running a huge deficit, is planning to run another huge deficit next year, and debt is increasing. That is the real story of this budget - not according to the Treasurer's rhetoric, but according to the uniform reporting standards for public sector finances based on Australian Bureau of Statistics criteria.

It is not surprising, given that we have this sort of deficit, that net debt will increase quite substantially. That debt is dealt with on page 217 of the *Economic and Fiscal Overview*. A correction has been published to page 217, so I will quote from the correction. It indicates that for 1998-99, net debt was \$5 008m. For 1999-2000, net debt will go up to \$5 800m, an increase of \$792m. It will increase again in the following financial year to \$5 915m, an increase of a further \$115m.

Therefore, we have a Treasurer who in the election campaign preaches against debt and deficits, who in the 1998 budget speech preaches against debt and deficits, who in the 1999 budget speech claims a surplus, but who in fact delivers both increased deficits and debts this financial year and next financial year.

Mr Johnson: How do you explain our AAA rating?

Mr RIPPER: Indeed we do have an AAA credit rating. However, if the Treasurer is to continue with this sort of policy, with this sort of backflip, he will undermine the policy and the credentials which sufficiently impressed the rating agencies to win that rating. There is a real risk with this budget, which is this: The growth figures may not be accurate, the Government may not get the revenue that it expects to get, and it may not be in the position in which economic growth enables it to cover the increased debt, deficit and interest repayment levels.

Mr House: You would agree, though, that our AAA credit rating does not have much to do with the financial position in which you left the State?

Mr RIPPER: The Treasurer has attacked the Labor Party over and over again on financial management issues, yet he has hypocritically done exactly what he has criticised the Labor Party for doing. The State's credit rating has a lot to do with the position of the State's economy. In fact, the rating agencies said as much when at one stage they refused to upgrade the State's credit rating because they were concerned about the stability of the economic activities in the State. The credit rating is about not only government financial management but also the position of the economy of the State. I want to focus on the hypocrisy of the Treasurer, on the change of policy of the Treasurer, and on the misleading nature of the forward estimates - the famous four-year financial plan that was produced in the 1996 election campaign. People on this side of politics and the public are entitled to conclude that the Treasurer has been hypocritical on these matters. Over and over again, he has preached against debt and deficits, yet in this budget he has substantially increased both. Over and over again he has claimed to have good financial management credentials, yet in this budget he has thrown away all of the credentials which he has claimed.

In the 1996 election campaign, the Treasurer said he had a four-year financial plan. He implied - in fact, he did more than imply - that the public was entitled to conclude from the election campaign that that was the policy to which the Government would adhere during its term of government. The forward estimates produced in that election campaign bear no relationship to what is now taking place in government finances. It is clear now that the purpose of those forward estimates in 1996 was to artificially restrict the level of the commitments which the Opposition could make in the election campaign. The purpose of the publication of that four-year financial plan was to convince the public that on the basis of financial responsibility, the Opposition's commitments for policy initiatives could not be afforded. That whole four-year financial plan has proved to be meaningless.

The Government has not stuck to it. The Government is now making spending commitments which it told the public Labor could not make during the election campaign. The whole plan was a device to artificially restrict the promises Labor could make in that election campaign. It is worth our remembering that, and I intend to raise it in every budget debate, because I do not want the public of this State to be subject to a similar scam next time we have an election. In the next election campaign, there will be no point in the Treasurer's producing forward estimates and claiming that he has a four-year financial plan, because he has not stuck to the plan this time, the outcomes have been totally different from the outcomes projected in those forward estimates, and he has been spending money which he told the public Labor could not spend. That is a matter which we will not let the Treasurer forget, because we do not want the public to be subject to that sort of scam next time we have an election campaign. No-one will believe the Treasurer the next time around, and perhaps no-one should believe him now with regard to this budget.

I have already indicated that there are potential problems with the growth figure. The Treasurer's budget is based on a growth figure of 4.5 per cent. Members opposite know that major sources of economic advice, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and the National Australia Bank, are projecting much lower growth figures than that. This is not an academic matter. This affects the revenue which the Treasurer will get in his budget. A small note in fine print underneath the table of major economic parameters at page 96 of the *1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview* states -

Growth in GSP -

that is gross state product -

- is used in forecasting a number of State taxes, including stamp duties and financial transactions taxes and analysing movements in major budget aggregates.

Therefore, if the growth figures are wrong, the revenue projections will be wrong; and if the growth figure is substantially lower than has been assumed in the construction of the budget, the deficit will be larger than the deficit that is forecast in chapter 6 of the *1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview*. Therefore, the situation with regard to deficit and debt may be worse than I have been arguing.

Another assumption that is made in this budget also appears to be a bit shaky. One of the economic parameters for the construction of this budget is an exchange rate between the Australian dollar and the United States dollar of 63¢. Page 97 of the *1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview* states that -

The total annual mining revenue estimate varies by around \$10 million for each 1.0 cent variation in the \$A/\$US exchange rate;

I saw in *The Australian Financial Review* this morning that the Australian dollar is currently valued at US66.65¢; therefore, it is 3¢ ahead of the assumption on which the budget is based. If the statement on page 97 of the document is correct, and if that exchange rate continues to be evident throughout the rest of the financial year, that means we will be \$30m short of the projected revenue from mining royalties.

Mr House: In fairness, only four weeks ago it was about 61¢ or 62¢.

Mr RIPPER: I am pointing out that the Australian dollar is on the upward move, and that presents a risk for the budget and the revenue estimates. I am saying we now have two reasons to be concerned about whether the deficit will be larger than indicated by the uniform reporting standards chapter in the *1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview*.

I turn now to some of the priorities in the budget. It would be very easy for me to talk about belltowers and the sinking of Riverside Drive, and to compare the \$88m that is proposed to be spent on those two activities with the failure of the Government to solve the problem of hospital waiting lists. I could go on at some length about that aspect of priorities, but I will not do that, because many of my colleagues have, no doubt, canvassed those issues. I want to look at some of the hidden priorities in the budget. I recommend that members read the *1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview* closely, because it has an interesting section dealing with major tax and royalty expenditure. One of the problems of our budget process is that we focus closely on expenditure and we analyse at some length the last detail of information about what is appropriated by this Parliament and how it is spent.

Mr Shave: Do you not think that is appropriate?

Mr RIPPER: It is appropriate that we do that, and it is not a problem that we do that. What is a problem is that we do not analyse the impact of the tax concessions that we give. In some senses, that is equally a use of public resources. However, the revenue is not received in the budget and it is not appropriated by the Parliament; therefore, it is not scrutinised in the way it should be. It is very good that the Government is now publishing this information. Parliament should give it more attention. I look at two of the major tax and royalty expenditures canvassed in this section of the *Economic and Fiscal Overview*. First, a cap applies to the amount of financial institutions duty paid if a large deposit is made. When a deposit exceeds \$2m, the maximum payment of duty is \$1 200. Therefore, when a wealthy corporation makes a deposit in excess of \$2m, the corporation pays no FID on any portion of that deposit above \$2m. On the other hand, when low-income families make a deposit, they pay FID on every dollar of that deposit. This concession represents a large cost to the State; namely, \$21.5m a year. This Government is spending more than \$21m a year to let people off FID when they make a deposit to a financial institution of more than \$2m. Is that a proper priority when people cannot get hip replacements or other urgent surgery performed and are waiting in pain? Is that proper use of taxpayers' resources? I do not believe so. Why should pensioners and people on social security pay FID on the extra little money they may earn beyond the pension and social security entitlements while large corporations and those making deposits of more than \$2m do not pay FID on the portion of the deposit beyond \$2m? When that matter is brought into the light of day, it is not justified. No restriction or cap should apply to financial institutions duty when workers, pensioners and others are paying it on every dollar of their deposits, except for the social security payments made into their bank accounts.

Another exemption is also unjustifiable when examined in the harsh light of social priorities. An exemption on stamp duty applies for corporate reconstruction, which is one of the esoteric exemptions introduced by the Minister for Finance. When the legislation came before Parliament, I am sure we were told that it would not cost much, and that it was a business efficiency measure. It costs the State at least \$11m to exempt from stamp duty transfers of property between commonly owned companies. However, the gross loss is much larger than \$11m. The gross loss to revenue is \$33m, according to the *Economic and Fiscal Overview*. The only reason that the Government costs this concession at \$11m is that it claims that only one-third of corporate reconstructions would continue if it were not for the exemption. Therefore, it states that two-thirds of the \$33m does not count because those corporate reconstructions would not proceed if the concession were not offered. That is a pretty arbitrary assumption. The true cost of the concession is no doubt somewhere between \$11m and \$33m. In any case, the exemption does not stack up when one considers the urgent social priorities we face.

Why should schools in the goldfields, the midwest and the Pilbara be without teachers because we cannot pay teachers enough to get them to country locations when we spend between \$11m and \$33m on exempting corporate manipulators from stamp duty for transfers of property between commonly owned companies? Why should people be waiting on hospital waiting lists for urgent treatment when we let big corporations and wealthy people off financial institutions duty when they make deposits beyond the \$2m to which the cap rate applies? They do not represent proper priorities. I would like to see a much closer examination by Parliament of the tax and royalty expenditures.

I give the Government one commendation: It is very good that this information is now published as it enables such debate to take place. In the absence of such information, the subsidies, exemptions and other such de facto expenditure would go unscrutinised and unchallenged.

Increased spending on education is welcomed by the Opposition. We calculate the increase in the budget at slightly over \$91m, taking into account both capital and recurrent expenditure. The recurrent increase is a little more than \$83m, and the capital expenditure increase is almost \$8m. This increase needs to be put into perspective. If one adjusts the increase for population growth, which is important as more students are entering schools, and increases in the consumer price index, the total increase in the Education budget allows for 2.53 per cent. This is a welcome, but not massive, increase.

Also, the Government should not be allowed to claim credit for education initiatives twice. Page 110 of the *Economic and Fiscal Overview* contains a table which outlines the impact of policy decisions made during this financial year on the 1999-2000 budget. The Government made a number of decisions in the education arena in 1998-99 which, according to this table, had an impact on the 1999-2000 budget of \$98.4m. In other words, in order to accommodate all the policy announcements the Government made in education in the past year, this budget requires an increase of \$98.4m. However, the increase is only \$91m. I make two arguments: The Government should not take political credit for all the announcements made in the last year, and then gain a second lot of political credit for essentially the same announcements made when the budget is released. The budget increase does not even pay for the cost of policies already implemented, let alone allow for any further growth in education or education initiatives in the financial year.

In conclusion, the increase in the Education budget is welcome, but it should be put in perspective.

Mr House: You should have seen how busy your Whip was on the telephone upon hearing you were concluding. He nearly had a heart attack!

Mr RIPPER: I am concluding the Education part of my speech. On a real per capita basis, the Education budget has increased by only 2.53 per cent. The Education budget has room for nothing beyond the initiatives announced in the last 12 months.

I reassure the Whip that I will discuss another matter which relates to the performance of the Education Department. Members would have been quite disturbed to find that a major government department and employer in this State, the Education Department, was not able to reliably pay its employees. The Education Department has embarked on a new human resources management system. That system came into operation towards the end of last year. Numerous problems with the operation of this expensive new computerised payroll system have occurred. Teachers have not been paid and others have been underpaid. Naturally they have protested vigorously and caused a lot of focus on the issue.

A related issue is that teachers and other employees have also been overpaid. My understanding is that the Education Department has a very significant problem with unrecovered overpaid salaries. I placed a question on notice weeks ago asking the minister to indicate what was the extent of the overpayments that are still unrecovered. I have not yet received an answer from the minister. There has been a long delay in providing that information. I suggest that the Education Department will wait until it has got back some of the overpaid money and the figure looks halfway reasonable before it will provide me with the information. I am sure that had that information been made publicly available at the time I asked the question, the Education Department would have been considerably embarrassed, having spent at least \$21m on the new payroll system and then finding that it could not pay teachers correctly - it either failed to pay them, underpaid them or overpaid them.

I will give an example that has been brought to my attention. It relates to a teacher from Busselton. I do not need to mention her name, but any member who would like to look at this document is welcome to read her letter. The letter is long and so I will summarise her experience. The teacher went on leave without pay in term four of 1998. She undertook some relief teaching during that period. Finally, she decided that she would not continue her teaching career and resigned from the Education Department on 16 December 1998 by fax. She was paid for the third-term school vacation, which is the vacation between the third and fourth terms. She was paid for her relief teaching days in term four. She was paid over the summer vacation at a reduced rate. She continued to be paid during the first term of this year, although she had resigned from the Education Department on 16 December 1998. She was conscientious and on numerous occasions advised the department of her circumstances. She sent the fax which contained her resignation on 16 December 1998. She made four phone calls to the department over the time she was being paid. Each time she was told that the money was hers and that she was entitled to it. Finally, after four phone calls in which she received those assurances, she contacted the department on 7 April of this year and was told that she must pay back all of the money paid during the first term. She calculated it to be a total of about \$2 000. On 16 April she was again given different advice when she was told that she had to pay back all of the money paid to her from 1 January 1999, which was a total of \$3 500. Therefore, she had six sets of advice from the department, four of which said that she was due all the money she had received, one of which said she must pay back about \$2 000 and another which said she must pay back \$3 500. That is an example of the disarray of the Education Department's payroll system. In her letter she writes -

Dear Mr Ripper

The level of service and disparity in information received from the Salaries Department of the Education Department in relation to my pay has been appalling. . . .

My concern is that I will not only have to re-pay the money, but also that I will apparently be requested to pay this in full, which is not possible. I feel it is an unrealistic expectation and another sign of the Education Department's incompetence that after being told on a number of occasions that the money was rightfully mine and the more than

five month period it has taken to receive 'accurate' information, I will now have to be inconvenienced further to fix their mistake.

Another concern is that most of the information that I received in response to enquiries, at great expense to myself, was in fact incorrect. I would not have felt in a position to be able to spend the money, if I had not repeatedly been informed that the money I was paid, was due to me.

She then makes a very reasonable suggestion. She writes -

I suggest that all enquiries only be answered by those who have sufficient skills and information to do so.

That is a reasonable expectation of an employee of a major government department. The Education Department's payroll system has been a fiasco; it has been very expensive and has not delivered the minimum requirement which is a reliable payment system for the employees of the department. It has been so expensive and such a failure that the Government should be asking the Auditor General to conduct an investigation into the department's handling of this matter.

I have sought some information by putting in a freedom of information request for all the documents related to this matter. Regrettably I am somewhat frustrated by the department's answer. It has advised me that it has 164 files and would I please specify which of those 164 files I would like to have. If I make the wrong guess about which file contains the relevant information, I will not get the information. If I play it safe and ask for all 164 files, no doubt I will have to pledge my parliamentary superannuation to meet the freedom of information request bill. That is not an appropriate response from the department. I will pursue the question through the rights available to me. The minister cannot preside like a constitutional monarch above this fiasco. He is responsible to this Parliament and to the public for what is going on in his department. On the face of it, what is going on in the department's human resources and payroll management systems is not satisfactory. The minister needs to take a more hands-on approach. I suggest that he contact the person responsible for the accountability of the efficient use of the State's resources, who is the Auditor General, and ask him to conduct an inquiry into this very regrettable fiasco. If the minister does not do that, I fear that many more people, like the person who took the trouble to write to me, will not be well served by the Education Department's human resources and payroll management systems.

MS McHALE (Thornlie) [1.09 pm]: My task for the next half hour or so is to have a close look at what the budget means to my shadow portfolios of Arts and Heritage. I also want to canvas the impact that the budget will have on people in my electorate. In doing so, I will focus in particular on elements of the Education and Health budgets because I am concerned about the large proportion of Aboriginal people in my electorate for whom this budget offers very little. I will develop my reasons for saying that and try to indicate what the budget means for the people in the Thornlie electorate. As we have read in *The West Australian*, many people in the community think very little of this budget and the positive aspects it may have for them. It is interesting that the first telephone call I received on this subject was from a constituent who is a bus commuter. She rang on Friday, the day after the budget was handed down, to complain that the bus fares had already increased. The fare from Thornlie to Perth had increased by 10¢ one way, 20¢ for a return trip, and \$1 a week. This commuter was very angry and upset, and taken completely by surprise that the bus fares were increased immediately after the budget had been handed down, bearing in mind that the Bill has not been passed by the Parliament. The speech had merely been read by the Treasurer, and one would expect any increases to be effective from the next financial year. No; within 24 hours or less of the budget being presented to Parliament, commuters were presented with what they regard as a significant price increase. The increase in bus fares had added \$1 a week to the already stretched budgets of people in Thornlie in their everyday lives. That increase was in place before I could explore the notion, expressed by the Treasurer, that the negative impact of the budget would be a mere 80¢. That impact is evident before consideration can be given to the real impact of the budget.

I also indicate that the commuter in question rang Transperth about the increase, and was told that at two o'clock on the day of the budget speech a notice was released indicating that fares would be increased at that time. It is extraordinary that no forewarning was given to commuters that bus fares would increase. That has increased the budgets of households with one person by \$1 a week, and \$2 and above if there are two or more people in the household.

The second response I had related to the increase in compulsory third party insurance premiums. Again, the Treasurer referred to this as a modest increase of 3.6 per cent in compulsory third party insurance premiums. I relate to the House an incident that occurred after the last state budget, when a constituent came to my office and was very distressed about the increase in vehicle licence fees in the 1998-99 budget. This constituent is a taxi driver who is representative of a number of taxi drivers in my electorate and in the metropolitan area who had recently received their notification of the increase in insurance and vehicle licence fees. It became patently obvious when I read the papers, that these people had suffered a significant and totally unjustified increase in vehicle licence and insurance fees.

Let me now refer to the calculations of the increases to illustrate why this taxi driver was angry and upset, and why his livelihood was being threatened. The licence fee had increased from \$119 per annum to \$192 per annum, which is a massive 61 per cent increase. That is not a modest 3 per cent increase. His third party insurance premium had increased by 32 per cent after the 1998-99 budget, which equated to an additional \$235. Overall for the 1998-99 financial year, this taxi driver had to pay \$1 175 per annum for those items compared with \$867 in the previous year. Overall, it was a 35 per cent increase in the cost of a licence and insurance for his taxi. He told me that many taxi drivers would be forced to consider whether they could survive in the industry as a result of the significant increases. This guy has been involved in the taxi industry for 25 years, and his family are also involved. Members will appreciate the skill, knowledge and customer service he has developed over that period, and this State cannot afford to lose that expertise from its taxi industry. It is almost irreplaceable. Given the role that taxi drivers play in the tourism industry, Western Australia needs that level of experience within the industry. It is also important from a safety point of view.

That is an indication of what the budgets of the Court Government have meant for the people in my electorate. This taxi driver, who must cope with a 35 per cent increase in overall fees, will be subjected to yet another increase. I do not know whether it will be a 3.6 per cent increase or even higher for taxi drivers, because the Treasurer referred only to insurance premiums for private vehicles. I am sure the taxi drivers will let me know soon enough, but I am most concerned about that sort of increase affecting the lives of people such as this man and his family, and the impact of these increases which is given scant attention by the Government. It will have a significantly negative impact on the lives of many people.

In my electorate there is a significant population of Aboriginal families, many of whom have lived in the electorate for many years. A number of schools in the electorate have a significant proportion of children from Aboriginal families and backgrounds. Therefore, I am keenly interested in what the budget has in store for education and health for Aboriginal people. When I look at these areas of the budget, I understand what it will mean to a significant number of constituents whose livelihoods and quality of life are of central concern to me. I deliberately chose education and health because until those two areas of social policy are addressed, this Government will not address the fundamental difficulties and problems in Aboriginal communities. Those problems ultimately spin off into law and order and other social policy areas. It is important for my people that education and health policies home in on quality programs for Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, the Government still has not got its policies correct. It is probably an issue that goes back a number of years. I am not saying that the Labor Party has got it all intrinsically right and this Government has it all wrong. I am saying that until collectively Governments deal sensitively and appropriately with the issues to do with Aboriginality and history we will not be addressing a range of social policy issues.

In the Health budget for 1999-2000 the Office of Aboriginal Health has identified four key strategic domains of action through which health outcomes for Aboriginal people will be improved. They are listed at page 664 of volume 2 of the Program Statements. The first key strategic domain of action is Aboriginal self-determination, community development and personal empowerment. That is critical. The second is gap closing in disease-specific, gender-specific and age-specific health outcome areas. The third is development and innovation in the health system. The fourth is development and innovation in the health workforce. Although I think that those four key strategic areas go a long way to highlighting some of the problems, they stop short of acknowledging what is generally recognised and has been recognised for a number of years, particularly in the medical field, about the relationship between Aboriginal health and land. I will quote an extract from this month's May 1999 *Australian Journal of Medicine* in which the writer says -

To Aboriginal people, ill-health is more than physical illness; it is a manifestation of other factors, including spiritual and emotional alienation from land, family and culture.

The article goes on to say -

... Aboriginal health is not just the domain of the healthcare system. By accepting the need for an approach that is multifaceted and covers all aspects of people's lives, including housing, education, employment and social justice, we can then understand that physical and symptomatic relief of disease will not in itself redress the burden of Aboriginal ill-health.

It is very important and is clearly recognised that the connection between land and health and other indicators of disempowerment are critical to understanding -

Mr Osborne: How would you explain the apparent anomaly in the Northern Territory which has had Aboriginal land rights since 1975 yet the outputs of Aboriginal health there are as bad as they are anywhere else in the country?

Ms McHALE: They are not as bad as they are in Western Australia, and I will show how the indicators in a number of key areas identify that Western Australia is worse than South Australia or the Northern Territory.

Mr Osborne: I will be interested to see if you can prove in a properly scientific manner that it relates to land rights rather than making an assertion that it is important.

Ms McHALE: I am not making an assertion. Having researched the area and read a number of reports it is clear that those who have done a thorough analysis highlight the connection between land and health. I was not going to quote this paragraph of the journal article, but the member for Bunbury has prompted me to do so. The article reads -

In 1990, the National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) developed a widely accepted definition of Health as perceived by Aboriginal peoples:

Health does not just mean the physical well-being of the individual but refers to the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural well-being of the whole community.

The work that has been done clearly establishes that link. I urge the member for Bunbury not to be so defensive about the established link between land and health, but to look at it as a factor that needs to be explored further and recognised so that we can develop programs which will work.

Mr Osborne: In my own defence I was not being defensive or aggressive, I was merely asking you to explain what appeared to be an apparent anomaly.

Ms McHALE: If we were to consider land rights in the Northern Territory I wonder whether it would be as clear-cut as the member for Bunbury says. Let us not get into a debate which will take us off on a tangent. Suffice to say there is a connection between land and health.

Mr Ainsworth: The other factors you mentioned as well as land are very important and they probably apply to the whole

community. Let us consider a person who goes to a doctor with some ailment. If the doctor does not look at his background and state of mind as well as his physical health, he only treats the symptoms not the cause and that goes right across the board.

Ms McHALE: I agree with the member for Roe that in treating the individual one must treat the whole being and it may be that the symptoms belie the real causes. For example, a marital breakdown, financial difficulties or the death of a close relative might be causing some physiological problems. When that same sensitive approach is transposed to Aboriginal communities one must take in the issue and the notion of land.

Mr Osborne: There are a couple of blocks of land in Peppermint Grove I would like to have and that would make me happy.

Ms McHALE: The member for Bunbury is being facetious and is being led astray by the Acting Speaker (Mr Baker). I caution the member for Bunbury. If he does not want to lose my respect he should desist from interjections like that. I will accept any sensible interjection, but not that sort of facetious comment.

I remind members about the health indicators of Aboriginal people. I will highlight the figures for Western Australia. We know that in 1996 Australia's infant mortality rate was 5.8 deaths per thousand live births. However, for indigenous infants in Western Australia it was 24.1; in the Northern Territory it was 19.4 and in South Australia it was 12.6. The national death rate is 5.8, yet in Western Australia for Aboriginal infant deaths it is 24.1, which is the highest of the three States where sound data can be collected. Again when one looks at the age standardised death rate for the nation and those three States, one sees the national non-indigenous rate is 6.3 and for indigenous persons in Western Australia it is 19.4, which is much higher than in South Australia and the Northern Territory. The Western Australian figures clearly indicate that the Government is failing its Aboriginal community in addressing health issues. Based on 1996 figures, the estimated life expectancy for Western Australian indigenous males is 53.7 years; for eastern Australian indigenous males it is 59.2 years; and the total for Australia is 75.2 years. Even in the late 1990s, an Aboriginal male's life expectancy is 22 years less than that of a non-indigenous male. While I commend the office of Aboriginal health for identifying those key areas, they can be strengthened.

After examining the budget, it is difficult to determine how much will be set aside specifically for Aboriginal health. That is an area I will be examining closely in the Estimates Committee. Last night the member for Fremantle said that the Health budget represents an overall decrease in funding. We will determine clearly and carefully what that will mean to Aboriginal health programs because to me, as the member for Thornlie, it is vital that proper health programs are in place for Aboriginal people to deal with the disproportionately high number of deaths from coronary heart disease and diabetes, infant and maternal deaths and the overall reduced life expectancy. These are real health problems for my people. This matter gives me great concern and I will endeavour to explore that in the Estimates Committee.

When considering health outcomes it is interesting to look at the figures for the income distribution among Aboriginal families. Recent census figures indicated that 48 per cent of indigenous families received \$20 000 or less per year; that is, almost one in two Aboriginal families. That compares with a figure of about 25 per cent for non-Aboriginal families which is almost half the number of Aboriginal families. That indicator must be taken into account when developing health policies and it helps us to understand the health issues which arise from that great inequity and social disadvantage. I am pleased that the indicators of personal empowerment and community development are explicitly recognised, but they can be strengthened. We must look at how much of the budget has been invested in those four key strategies.

I now turn to Education. As at the first semester of 1999, approximately 16 000 Aboriginal students were in government schools, of whom 9 700 were in primary schools and 4 000 in secondary schools. I tried to determine the most recent retention rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It is a great curiosity at best, and an indictment of the Education Department that the 1997-98 annual report is still not available. It is now May 1999, but we cannot examine figures on retention rates and other educational indicators because the Education Department has not yet tabled its annual report in Parliament. Apparently, it was given an extension until September 1998, but still nothing has happened; unless something has occurred in the past 24 hours - it could have, but who knows? I am most distressed that the Education Department has not yet tabled its report and I hope that somebody will look into that. As a consequence, I cannot comment at this stage on retention rates for Aboriginal students, but we might be able to explore that in the Estimates Committee.

Mr Osborne: What sort of retention? Do you mean in years 10 and 11?

Ms McHALE: Yes, the proportion of year 1 students who remain at year 12. We know that the retention rate for Aboriginal students was approximately 19 per cent in 1996-97. I might be a couple of per cent out because I am quoting from memory.

Mr Osborne: If your memory is as dodgy as your ideology, we are in trouble!

Ms McHALE: No, my ideologies are strong, my principles are stronger, and my memory is a steel trap, so be assured that I can remember.

Mr Osborne: The retention rate in years 10 to 11 at Newton Moore Senior High School in Bunbury is 68 per cent and it is the best in the State.

Ms McHALE: That is a worry because that percentage will skew the rest of the figures. The average retention rate is 19 per cent, but one school's retention rate is 68 per cent. I wonder what may be the real figure for many metropolitan schools; it may be much less.

Mr Osborne: I think five of the eight Aboriginal students who completed the TEE were from Newton Moore Senior High School.

Mr House: It shows that statistics do not always mean a lot.

Ms McHALE: Statistics, as we all know, can be used either way, but let us establish that the retention rates for Aboriginal students are much lower than for non-indigenous students. I would have liked to comment in Parliament on whether the retention rate has increased since 1996-97, but at this stage I cannot because the data is not available. However, that is one crude indicator of how Aboriginal students are faring at school because if they are dropping out before years 6 and 7 or 9 and 10, they are obviously not leaving school with an adequate education. Their chances of being literate or numerate are much lower and their chances of employment are much lower. Those are the sorts of indicators which lead to anti-social behaviour. Therefore, we must question whether our policies are addressing the needs of Aboriginal people. The indicators show they are not.

During the Estimates Committee last year, the minister recognised that the system was failing Aboriginal students. We must all carefully consider the policies and funding for next year. Given that comment, it is interesting to note that one of the initiatives for the next 12 months is to devolve Aboriginal education funding to the schools to improve student outcomes. I am reading from page 369 of volume 1 of the *Budget Statements*. One of the stated initiatives is to devolve the funding, including \$2m in 1999. That is not necessarily new money. It is a devolution of the funding from head office to the schools. At this stage I will not say whether that is right or wrong because I have not had the opportunity of speaking to the schools in my electorate that have a high proportion of Aboriginal students. It may well benefit those students. We must recognise that is a shift in the management of the funds for Aboriginal education. During the Estimates Committee I will want to explore with the minister the background to that decision and the expected improvements in service delivery. By then I will have had some opportunity to get feedback from the schools in my electorate to see whether that is an adequate way of managing Aboriginal education funding.

Another budget initiative for 1999-2000 is to focus on Aboriginal youth suicide. This is a commitment of the Education Department and, in principle, I welcome it. On a number of occasions members on this side of the House have spoken about the alarming rise in youth suicide amongst Aboriginal communities, particularly around Carnarvon and also in the metropolitan area and in my electorate. I will be interested to see how the focus on Aboriginal youth suicide will be translated into funding and service delivery.

In my speech during the budget debate last year I gave an account of the status of computers in each school in my electorate so that the detail was on the parliamentary record and so that over the coming years I could report on how that commitment of \$80m to government schools was being translated in my electorate. I have spoken to the relevant people at a number of schools and the general response is that they have done their technology plan, the money is coming through and the schools in my electorate are benefiting from that. One comment has been that whilst the money was available for hardware and some software, the schools have had financial difficulties because they have had no money for the cabling or additional desks required for the computers. When I get more information on this issue, I will be quizzing the minister on whether funding will be available for those - not unforeseen consequences of the commitment; they should have been foreseen - items for which no money has been available. That is stretching the budgets of the schools. I will examine that more closely during the Estimates Committee; likewise, the needs of schools for maintenance.

I have written to the parents and citizens associations asking them to tell me the key maintenance issues faced by the schools, which I can raise on their behalf during the Estimates Committees. One of the schools has been waiting for fencing for three years; another is seriously in need of an administrative upgrade, but was unsuccessful last year. Once again, I will be putting in another bid for an upgrade for that school. I will be exploring the education, maintenance and capital works needs of the schools in my electorate through the Estimates Committees.

In summary, the budget brings no ease to the difficulties faced by the people who live in the electorate of Thornlie. The past few budgets have increased taxes and charges for services. This is yet another budget that delivers small increases in charges - for example, the increase in bus fares - but they have a significant impact on budget capacity of many people who live in electorates such as Thornlie.

I now turn to the Arts portfolio, for which I am shadow spokesperson. I looked at the budget to get an initial feel for this portfolio overall. On first examination this budget is devoid of new funding for the arts. As in the past two budgets, it lacks any vision or creativity in delivering to the arts community. I will not traverse the argument of how important the arts are to the community, both economically and intrinsically. I have done that previously. Some accept it; others do not, which is a great pity. This budget for the arts community delivers almost nothing, with one exception; that is, the deal between the Granada film group and ScreenWest announced a couple of months ago. It was announced that at least \$6m would be invested in the film industry over five years. It is a little difficult to find that money in the budget. One statement suggests that \$4m will be made available over four years; already we have lost \$2m of that funding, and I am not sure what has happened to that sum. The Government has committed \$2m less than it said it would over four years. That money obviously will not be committed over the first year. Assuming that \$1m will be committed, it is difficult to see where that money has gone and whether it is in the budget.

When we look at the detail of the budget, we see what has happened. There is a reduction in library funding. At this time that is a terrible blow for local government libraries. Already they are struggling to provide not only new works but also a turnover of books. If this Government has decided to reduce the funding to libraries, that is an appalling indication of its lack of commitment to not only the arts but also the many people who use public libraries. There has been a reduction in funding to the Western Australian Museum. I am not talking about capital funding, but recurrent funding. We now begin to see that the Arts budget has been reduced. Page 297 of the *1999-2000 Budget Statements Volume 1* shows a reduction in support to Western Australian arts and cultural industries. There is an increase in capital works; however, when we look

at what they are and the justification for them, the *Budget Statements* indicate that the capital expenditure for the various institutions mainly relate to computing, building maintenance, furniture and equipment, and minor works.

Many maintenance programs relate to occupational health and welfare issues. Of course there must be capital expenditure on buildings such as His Majesty's Theatre, the Art Gallery, the Museum and the Concert Hall, which had its twenty-fifth anniversary last year. All those buildings require significant capital expenditure, but that does not involve major upgrades, and that is the concern. As I have said, the maintenance programs relate to occupational health and welfare issues and some expenditure for seat replacement in the Concert Hall, which will be welcomed, but, even though there has been an increase in the budget, let us not kid ourselves that it will result in major new buildings or major upgrades.

From the arts perspective there is certainly no growth and there can be no room for optimism in the arts industry, and that will have a significant negative impact on local companies. What will happen to the West Australian Ballet Co Inc which, in all honesty, is struggling to survive? Minister Foss will have another scalp on his belt if, after 40 years, that company must close. What will happen to new music and contemporary music? They are critical to young people for whom music is perhaps the only way in which they can express how they feel. What will happen to the arts? As we know, the goods and services tax will impact very significantly on the arts.

Our heritage does not often grab media attention or the limelight, but it is extremely important to look after our history and heritage and to prepare the ground for our future. If we do not look after our cultural heritage, we will have no record of who we are and where we have been. I am concerned that there has been a reduction in funding to assessment and registration programs and in funding to education and promotion. However, there has been a relatively significant increase in conservation incentives for property owners, but on looking at the budget further we see that it is a reflection of commitment from this financial year. On paper, there has been an increase, but it reflects moneys that were committed this year. I am greatly concerned about the reduction in the anticipated number of assessments to be done next year. If certain buildings are not placed on the heritage list, they will be demolished. An example occurred in Broome recently, when the Treasurer was most upset about a 1960s building, and I hope that he does something about it. To summarise, the budget does nothing for the arts or for heritage, and it offers no hope for the electorate of Thornlie.

MR GRAHAM (Pilbara) [1.54 pm]: It was very brave of you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Baker), to look towards government benches for a speaker. It is what Sir Humphrey would call a courageous decision. You and I know that this is probably the first budget debate in the history of this State when the Government has gagged its members. It is extraordinary. The Government has gagged its members from speaking in support of its budget, and that is within the context of the new sitting hours that the Leader of the House and Mr Speaker introduced as the great reform of our time, bearing in mind that we still have the institutionalised guillotine. We have thrown out those sitting hours after a short two weeks in practice - the major initiative of parliamentary reform of the Government. Members will recall that initiative made a difference of some 15 minutes sitting time to the system that the Government jettisoned when it came to office in 1993. Fifteen minutes is the total difference between the system that was jettisoned in 1993 and the system that was introduced but two sitting weeks ago as the great reform, which also has been jettisoned by the Government, and we are back to long sitting hours for the budget debate. As I have said, extraordinarily the Government has gagged its own back bench.

Mr Bradshaw: If you didn't waffle on we wouldn't have to extend the time.

Mr GRAHAM: Members opposite should not bother interjecting on me; they can speak if they want to do so. They could make 45-minute speeches if they were allowed to. Let us proceed. This is but the sixth budget of the Court Liberal Government and it is the sixth budget format in six years. I congratulate the Treasury on introducing the budget on CD ROM. It is a positive initiative - it has taken us three years to get it to a position in which it can do that - but it is nigh on impossible to compare the budget with the previous five budgets. Those in government might say that that is a desirable outcome for government, but as the Government was elected with the clear mandate of introducing transparent and accountable budgetary processes, it is somewhat different.

Three matters are clear: First, it is interesting that the Treasurer looked back 100 years and not ahead 100 years. The Government is spending much of its time and effort looking back, not forward. It is not a budget for the future. Secondly, the Government has not marginally increased its revenue, it has significantly increased its revenue. I remember being in this place when the Government's revenue reached the \$5b mark. I listened to the howls of members opposite about how the then Labor Government was extorting money from the taxpayers of Western Australia. We are now approaching the \$8b mark - that is, nearly \$8b in revenue coming from the citizens of Western Australia. Thirdly, in relation to the region that I represent, the Pilbara, the glossies that have been put out by the Government are nearly identical to those which it put out last year. In my speech on last year's budget, I said that the glossies were identical to those of the year before.

A simple example is the \$19m for the Rippon Hills Road in the Shire of East Pilbara. During four budgets in a row a company has claimed that initiative as one from that budget. The road is completed, although it has not been opened by the minister - it is in place and intact. I do not know whether the Government intends to build another road alongside the one that it has built. However, if it has \$19m to do that, I know of some other roads that I would prefer it build.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on page 8245.]

[Questions without notice taken.]

PROSTITUTION LEGISLATION*Matter of Public Interest*

THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland): Today I received a letter from the member for Midland seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this House calls upon the Minister for Police to honour his promise to introduce prostitution legislation during this autumn session of Parliament or failing that to at least release a draft Bill for consultation to be made available to all interested persons.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis, with half an hour allocated to members on my left, half an hour to members on my right, and five minutes to the Independent members, should they seek the call.

MRS ROBERTS (Midland) [2.36 pm]: I move the motion.

For six long years the Court Government has been promising to regulate and control prostitution in Western Australia. We first had the undertakings of the member for Wagin when he was the Minister for Police. We then had the undertakings of the member for Darling Range. We now have the undertakings of the member for Albany, who is now the Minister for Police. The member for Darling Range said over two years ago when he was the Minister for Police, in a media statement dated November 1997, that -

"Since the coalition Government came to power there has been a move towards introducing effective control of prostitution in WA and I commend the former Police Minister Bob Wiese for his commitment in addressing this difficult issue," he said.

He said also -

"This Coalition Government is showing the courage and conviction to tackle a difficult and sensitive community issue - an issue on which I am sure the Opposition will support the Government.

The member for Darling Range as Minister for Police was right about one thing: The Opposition supports the regulation and control of the prostitution industry in Western Australia. We want to see the legislation, and we want to get some bipartisan agreement so that for once and for all this issue will be dealt with and we can have some regulation and control. I am also fairly confident that both the Greens (WA) and the Australian Democrats in the upper House will take a similar approach to that of the Labor Party in trying to get the Government to bring forward some legislation which they too can support.

From the Labor Party's point of view, both I and our former spokesman for police, Nick Catania, have been calling for the regulation and control of prostitution by way of legislation for all of those six years. However, we have received the same tired response from the Government. Its only response to its failure to act in this matter has been to ask us what Labor did when it was in government. Firstly, I say to that that in 1991, Beryl Grant chaired a community panel on prostitution. That was an initiative of the Labor Government, which involved wide consultation with the community and affected parties, including people in the sex industry and a wide cross-section of people in the community.

There are also two key differences which members opposite choose to ignore: First, the Labor Party in government never had control of the upper House. All indication throughout that time was that prostitution reform legislation would not be accepted in the upper House. I note that the Premier when in opposition made a submission to Beryl Grant's community panel in which he opposed moves to regulate and control prostitution. That indicates clearly how the coalition views this matter. Secondly, a change in attitude by the hierarchy in the Police Service has taken place. The previous Commissioner of Police said that the containment policy was workable and manageable, and that the police could enforce the containment policy. However, when Commissioner Falconer came to Perth, he took a look at the situation and made comment to the effect that it was farcical. He said that he did not intend pursuing the containment policy, and outlined that prostitution needed to be regulated and controlled by way of legislation. Various commitments were made by various Ministers for Police, partly as a result of the commissioner's comments, that the Government would act at last.

I return now to the former minister's press release. He said at the time that the Bill would be an important opportunity for community discussion and comment. I agree. However, we need to see the Bill in order to have community consultation and comment. Earlier this year, the current Minister for Police, partly as a result of concerns which arose about street walking being out of control in the Northbridge area, reiterated that he would bring prostitution legislation to Parliament in the autumn session. That was then toned down as the legislation was to be introduced during the autumn session. The Opposition calls on him today to honour that commitment to at least introduce the legislation. Insufficient time remains this session, given that no-one has seen the Bill yet, to have proper consultation to enable the Bill's passage before the end of the session. The minister should do the right thing and introduce the measure.

As outlined in this matter of public interest motion, if the minister cannot introduce the Bill because he cannot get agreement in his party room or the coalition parties room, at least he should release a draft so comment can be received from interested persons and those to be affected by the measure. The chief criticism I receive from people is that they do not know what the Government is proposing. They would like to be consulted - upon which the former Minister for Police gave an undertaking - to engage in community discussion and to make comment. If the minister cannot deliver on the promise of

introducing the legislation, he should release the draft Bill so we can get to work adopting a bipartisan approach to produce legislation to control prostitution in this State.

Time is marching on and the Government's proposal was still under wraps until a document headed "Briefing Note - Subject: Prostitution Control Bill 1998" was recently released. This document comprises a number of pages and clearly outlines what six years of ignoring the prostitution problem in this State, with the Government sitting on its hands, has achieved; namely, a 600 per cent increase in the number of prostitutes working in Western Australia. Page 2 of the Police Service document, under the heading "Why have the industry and the community not been recently consulted?", reads -

Since 1977 there have been a number of reviews and reports into prostitution. Most significantly, there was the Report of the Community Panel on Prostitution 1990/91 under the Chairmanship of Ms Beryl Grant OBE. The report involved wide community participation through written submissions and interviews with key stakeholders.

Between 1990/91 and 1998, the issues and concerns remain the same. What is different, is that the 1990/91 Report estimated that there were 400-500 people working in prostitution, approximately 200 in brothels and the remainder as escorts or individuals working from home. It is now estimated that over 3 000 are involved in prostitution.

That is a shocking indictment of the Court Government. As a result of its head-in-the-sand attitude pretending that prostitution does not exist and its refusal to act, the increase has been sixfold.

Dr Turnbull interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: A 600 per cent increase in the number of people involved in prostitution has occurred from the time of the 1991 review report to 1998.

Ms MacTiernan: We might be getting some interesting interjections explaining why it is going nowhere. We have a "Just say no" policy on prostitution.

Mrs ROBERTS: Is that from the member for Collie?

Dr Turnbull: All I asked was whether the member wanted more or fewer prostitutes. Answer the question.

Mrs ROBERTS: What a nonsense! We want prostitution regulated and controlled in this State.

Dr Turnbull: Obviously, you want more.

Mrs ROBERTS: When the Government ignores the problem, it does not go away. The Police Service report indicates a massive increase in the number of prostitutes working in this State. We have the obvious evidence of the massive increase in the number of advertisements in the classifieds for prostitutes and similar sex services. Many more advertised brothels, home operators and whatever are operating throughout not only the Perth metropolitan area, but also country areas of this State.

Further, this document for the first time gives a look at what the Government's proposal entails. The briefing note states that a prostitution control board will be established. The Labor Party has no difficulty with such a board. The briefing note, under the heading "What powers will the Prostitution Control Board have", reads -

The PCB will have sweeping powers which will allow it to act in any manner it determines, and will not be subject to review.

Such totally unfettered power is inappropriate. All government boards need to be accountable. This proposed board should be accountable to the Ombudsman or some other appropriate authority. The same paragraph of the briefing note states -

The independence of the Board is considered necessary due to the nature of the activity being regulated and particularly the need to empower the Board to obviate organised crime.

This is quite an admission because for years the Government has not admitted the connection between prostitution and organised crime, which is a very strong reason for the Government to act and regulate the industry. This Police Service document, for the first time, admits something which the Government has failed to admit; that is, that organised crime and the sex industry go hand in hand.

The argument for the regulation and control of prostitution is clear. Previous Ministers for Police have commented that they intended to move on this matter. Some members opposite - perhaps the member for Collie who interjected, others in the backbench and ministers - have obviously been thwarting this legislation. When one looks at what I can only imagine are well-intentioned press releases and statements by previous Ministers for Police, they indicate they were keen to press ahead with the regulation and control of prostitution in this State. However, as I have been advised, when these matters have been raised in the party room, the views put forward have been far from a consensus. Suggestions of committees and so forth to look at the question have got nowhere. At this stage it seems that members opposite cannot agree on a document for public comment. They have not even been able to release something along the lines of a draft Bill. This document also confirms that a draft Bill exists, obviously called the Prostitution Control Bill 1998, for which these Police Service briefing notes were prepared. That Bill has not seen the light of day. I can only assume it is because members opposite have failed to agree on the contents of the Bill. We have an awful hiatus in which nothing is progressing. While members opposite continue to adopt that head-in-the-sand attitude, the community will get nowhere on this issue.

The arguments for the regulation and control of prostitution are very clear. I believe that most people in the community would like to see prostitution regulated and controlled rather than the existing situation which is basically a free-for-all and

out of control. Where a containment policy used to apply to about 10 or 12 brothels in Perth, the Commissioner of Police and the Police Service are now saying that they no longer operate a containment policy. Western Australia has hundreds of brothels and thousands of prostitutes. In comments made by the previous minister, he suggested that some 80 per cent of sex workers are working outside of brothels. The situation is totally out of control. The Government continues to have this sweep-it-under-the-carpet, head-in-the-sand attitude which has not progressed anyone anywhere. We have a ridiculous situation in which the Government points out that prostitution is not illegal but living off the earnings of prostitution or having premises for the purpose of prostitution is illegal. It is really a nonsense. That is why we need to clarify the situation once and for all. Police officers are currently in an invidious situation in which they are being required to supervise, police and negotiate with people in the industry who quite obviously break the law by living off the earnings of prostitution and by operating and owning premises for the purposes of prostitution. Those very people who are supposed to be enforcing the law are being asked to ignore it. That is quite clearly totally unacceptable.

Another reason we need to move in, regulate and control this industry is the quite obvious connection with organised crime. For the first time this document expresses the belief that organised crime is involved in Western Australia. To most people that has been obvious for a very long time. One has only to look at some of the things that came out of the Fitzgerald inquiry in relation to Fortitude Valley in Queensland and the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service to realise that some pretty awful connections exist between prostitution, organised crime and drugs. If we are to deal with some of those problems, we must deal with prostitution. A number of serious health matters need to be addressed involving both sex workers and their clients. Having no controls puts in jeopardy not just the health but also the lives of those sex workers and their clients. I do not suppose that I need to remind the House of the occurrences this year when prostitutes have been murdered or in one case gone missing presumed murdered in this totally unregulated industry.

This Police Service document sets out an indictment of the Court Government's failure to act. Ignoring the problem has dire consequences; it has far more serious consequences than regulating or controlling the industry. As I have pointed out, the consequences noted in the document include an absolute explosion of 600 per cent in the number of sex workers in this State. This document contains an admission of the involvement of organised crime which needs to be dealt with. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is from the workers in the industry themselves, we know of the concerns about drug dealing and so forth. We also know the impact that failure to act on regulating and controlling prostitution has had in the residential areas of this State where supposed massage parlours are set up because they cannot be formally set up as brothels. For the first time in the history of this State, so far as I am aware, open street walking is happening on the streets of Northbridge. This is a very recent event. In this totally unregulated situation, in which police turn a blind eye to people operating premises and living off the income of prostitution, the police do not know where to draw the line. They have not got the back-up of legislation to deal with the problem of street walkers, some of whom and their clients have made life hell for people living in the residential areas of Northbridge.

The Opposition has deliberately not worded this matter of public importance motion in a confrontational way. I have not moved to condemn the Government, or made any of the typical kinds of moves that we often make when we deal with matters of public interest. I have asked the Government to bring forward the legislation, which is what this Minister for Police promised to do at the beginning of the year, after promising to do it last year and after our having promises from both the previous Ministers for Police. The Opposition wants to see prostitution regulated and controlled in this State. We do not accept that ignoring the problem will make it go away.

We have indicated our support for prostitution legislation. I believe the Government would be likely to get the support of the Greens (WA) and the Democrats. In that case, if the Government has some problems in its party room or some members for one reason or another are not enabling the minister or the Government to progress, perhaps they need to bring forward their own private members' Bill with the backing of the Police Service and other government agencies. The current situation cannot be allowed to continue. These matters need to be brought forward and out into the open so there can be public comment, debate and consultation with people involved in the sex industry and with the general community, which is being very badly affected by the Government's failure to act to regulate and control prostitution.

MS WARNOCK (Perth) [2.59 pm]: Like my colleague, the member for Midland, I have a special interest in the subject. Perhaps my reasons are slightly different from hers. She is the shadow minister. Firstly, as a woman involved in the women's movement, I was among a group of people trying, unsuccessfully as it happened, to change the laws on prostitution in the 1970s. Secondly, as the member for Perth, I have a large number of "official" brothels in my electorate, and for several years I have had a series of approaches from angry constituents asking for changes to the laws governing prostitution. They have also asked for something to be done about street prostitution in residential areas around Hyde Park.

I should declare my interest in that I am associated with a group which has put together a submission for the street worker outreach program, for which it is seeking funding from the crime prevention strategy fund. It is directed towards looking after the interests of people who are obliged to be street workers; that is, trying to deal with their drug problems, look after their health, and eventually reduce the number of people working on the streets. I have a file in my office full of speeches, letters to ministers, approaches to police and notes from many meetings on this subject, and I can wave any number of them at members. I note from them that until a couple of weeks ago, I was still writing letters about street workers in Stirling Street. What has the Government done? It has talked about legislation for at least two years, possibly longer, and yet still we wait for draft legislation to be presented to the Opposition.

Mr Prince: It is just on two years.

Ms WARNOCK: I seem to remember the minister talking about it long before that. A committee investigated prostitution before then.

Mr Prince: I will explain that.

Ms WARNOCK: Please explain that. It seems that drafts are floating around but so far, not in the direction of the Opposition. Has the Government consulted widely on this subject? Has it consulted members of the public most likely to be affected and members of the street working community? I do not think so. Uncertainty about the law and when it is likely to change is one of the problems. Another is the curious status of street prostitution. As most members know, prostitution itself is not illegal, but many aspects of the practice are. Street soliciting is illegal and although I am assured that the police are doing their best, they are obviously struggling to cover the territory. People from Stirling Street, the area to which police moved street prostitutes after residents complained about soliciting in Palmerston Street - which is a much more densely populated residential area - are ringing my office and writing with new complaints. They complain about the debris of prostitution, the aggressive minders or pimps, being unpleasantly approached by the johns - or potential clients - and the kerb crawlers.

These are the things which upset my constituents and for perfectly good reasons. Why should they have to put up with this ridiculous situation? The Opposition wants prostitution to be regulated and controlled. We shall never eliminate prostitution, although when it is publicly discussed, as is often the case, I still receive letters from moralists who suggest from time to time that we can eliminate that. I think that is a dream, and it is much more sensible to regulate it so that it is safer for the women involved; undesirable characters are not allowed near the business; it is not allowed in residential areas but is restricted to commercial or light industrial areas; and people are not accosted in their own suburbs as they go about their business. That has certainly been the case in my electorate for some time.

The Government must properly resource the Police Service so that it can respond to complaints quickly and in sufficient force to deter repeat offenders. I briefly refer to a series of questions I asked the Minister for Police at the end of last year about the success of Operation Roxanne in the Northbridge area, which was connected with street soliciting. I asked whether the minister accepted that significant undercover operations were required on a regular basis. The minister advised -

The Vice Squad acknowledges that another significant undercover operation is required to again target street prostitution, and that, in fact, such operations should be conducted three to four times a year in order to minimise the activity of street prostitutes.

He further advised that the vice squad drafted another operation to be conducted in September last year, in cooperation with the Perth district. However, it had to spend the money on something else. That was a very important murder investigation, and since that time no resources have been available to run another operation. That is not good enough. The Government must find the money to conduct these operations. They are required by people who live in the area, and the people in Perth in general want the Government to deal with this situation. Most people accept that prostitution will continue, for all the reasons that we, as adults, know about, but it must be controlled in a reasonable way and not be allowed to take place in a residential area, as it has been for some time in various parts of my electorate around Hyde Park.

Together with my colleague, I well understand how difficult this issue is. I have had something to do with it for a long time and I understand that it cannot be dealt with as easily as a more mundane matter can be. The Government must be courageous and realistic, and stop dithering. It must get on with it. Planning controls must be in place, and that involves local government, and people must be assisted to get off drugs because, without question, many street prostitutes have a problem with drug addiction and they become involved in it because of the quick returns. Street prostitution must be tightly policed and restricted to commercial or light industrial areas. Health checks must be carried out regularly, although prostitutes say they are the first to have health checks and that it is the clients who need them. There must be absolutely no under-age prostitution. There has been much discussion about that in recent days, and Family and Children's Services should be interested in that aspect, as well as the police. It must be controlled. As adults, most people accept that prostitution will continue but under-age people should not practise it, and the community must do its best to stop that occurring.

The police will be required to control this - they get all the difficult jobs in the community - and they must be properly resourced. Otherwise, they will tell people, as they have been telling me, not unreasonably, over the past 18 months or so, that they would like to be on the spot every hour of the day when they receive telephone calls but they have many other things to do which they regard as more, or equally, serious. They do not have the resources to conduct operations such as Operation Roxanne when various raids were conducted in the area to dissuade people practising in the Palmerston Street area. The police do not have the necessary resources and that must be remedied because if we are to rely on them to be our guardians, we must give them the means.

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Police) [3.08 pm]: I want to go back into the history of this subject, and its debate in Parliament and publicly for the past 150 years. It is interesting and instructive to know how long this subject has been around. In 1850 a Bill was introduced into the then Parliament of this State to discuss legitimate general businesses that were fronting as brothels. During debate it was agreed that the next legislation to be introduced should relate to prostitution.

The Bill under discussion did not proceed, and I gather that the problem at the time was that tobacco shops were fronting as brothels. That was 149 years ago. Subsequently, with the Police Act of 1892, the provisions from the English legislation that dealt with policing matters and summary and street offences were incorporated. In summary form, they made an offence of soliciting in a public street, living off the earnings of prostitution and keeping premises for the purpose of prostitution. Those are the three offences that have remained as part of the law for the past 100 years. A number of statements have been made over a long period that something should be done.

I am not pointing a finger on this, I am giving a few of those instances, so that members, the media and others will understand that this is not a matter which has only just come to light and has not been thought of or addressed before. In

March 1983 Mr Hassell, the then member for Cottesloe, asked Mr Carr, the then Minister for Police about, among other things, the Government's intention to decriminalise prostitution and change the law. Mr Carr replied -

I have had preliminary discussions with the Commissioner of Police on the general question of the law relating to prostitution and the policing of that law and no decisions have been made.

In 1985 the then member for Maylands undertook a study on the containment policy. I am not sure what happened to the study. In 1989 Hon George Cash in the other place asked the Minister for Racing and Gaming representing the Minister for Police, "What changes, if any, is the Government considering in the control of prostitution in Western Australia?" In reply Hon Graham Edwards, who was the minister of the day, said that the matter was still under review. Again, in asking about prostitution, Hon George Cash asked if the Government intended to decriminalise prostitution and whether it was satisfied that the police containment policy was working. In reply Hon Graham Edwards said that it had not yet been determined. Those are matters that occurred in the 1980s.

In the 1990s Hon Graham Edwards, as Minister for Police, appointed a community panel on prostitution headed by Beryl Grant. The member for Midland referred to that report which was presented in 1990. Subsequently some work was done by the Labor Government of the day which looked at and reworked the report - I do not mean that in any devious sense - and sometime in 1991 came up with a series of recommendations. In any event nothing happened.

This matter has been debated in this place or its predecessor since 1850. The only law that has ever been enacted was part of the Police Act of 1892. Here we are again. I do not think there is any doubt that the subject is one which we should address. However, it should be addressed in a way which will be compendious; in other words, it will cover the whole area. In the 1850s and to the turn of the century prostitution was largely confined to brothels and to streetwalking which was a fact of life in this city. It was a fact of life during and subsequent to the Second World War in Roe Street and places in Fremantle. It probably disappeared from most streets in the late 1950s and early 1960s; it has returned in recent times.

Mrs Roberts: That is when I was born, so it is the first time in my lifetime.

Mr PRINCE: I only came to Western Australia in 1964, so I am reliant on what has been told to me by others. The advent in the 1980s of massage parlours and other places which effectively are brothels but which call themselves something else has come about principally as a result of some legal cases, one in particular I will refer to in a moment. The net effect of all this was that in the previous Parliament, when the member for Wagin was the Minister for Police, after considering the matter, he made the statement that we should have more modern prostitution control legislation and commenced that process. In 1996 there was some agreement in principle at Cabinet level that further work would be done, and a report was prepared by a government official.

That report involved consultation with a great many people, and I will list some of the organisations, not the individuals. They included the Western Australian Municipal Association, the Registrar of Brothels and Escort Agencies in the Australian Capital Territory, Coopers and Lybrand, the Taskforce on Drug Abuse, different sections and branches of the WA Police Service including the Commissioner of Police, an officer from the office of the Minister for Planning, the Director of Disease Control at the Health Department, the Chairman of the Prostitution Licensing Board of Victoria, the Human Rights and Community Law Division of the Office of the Attorney General in the Australian Capital Territory, officers of the ACT Fraud Branch and the Australian Federal Police, the Senior Legal Officer of the Victorian Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs, the Gaming and Vice Squad of Victoria Police, the legal officer of the legislation unit of the Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs in Victoria, the Office of Racing and Gaming in this State, the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Subiaco, the Criminal Investigation Branch and the Vice Squad, among others.

In preparing the report major references were made to the final report of the community panel on prostitution in 1990 and the revised recommendations in 1991 which were produced by Beryl Grant; a discussion paper on the various issues and policy options in the regulation of prostitution in the ACT issued by that Territory's Attorney General's Department; the Prostitution Act 1992 of the Australian Capital Territory; the Prostitution Control Act 1994 in Victoria; some papers that were internal to the police in Western Australia; the regulations from Victoria; the report from the WA Parliamentary Justice and Fair Trading Committee of the coalition party room in 1996; proceedings from a public forum on prostitution law reform held in 1995; the Australian guidelines for the maintenance of sexual health and sex industry workers from the National Virology Council in 1994; and a State Labor Party discussion paper from this State of November 1995 headed "Decriminalising Prostitution". I list those so that members are aware that the work that was done by the principal officer and then by a working party of other officers of government from various departments and agencies was extensive and covered the field.

Late in 1996 they reported back on a number of major areas. These were the issue of a registration board; ministerial and departmental responsibility; health considerations; constraints on ownership and location; occupational health issues; educational activities that should be part and parcel of any control mechanism for prostitution; planning controls; advertising; strongly minimising corruption and criminal connection with prostitution; and issues like the age of workers, male prostitution and the legislative context. In reporting on those matters a considerable degree of work had to be done. That report was delivered late in 1996.

After the state election, with changes in portfolios and so on, Cabinet determined to establish a ministerial working group on the proposed legislation for the control of prostitution in this State. It comprised the Ministers for Police, Health, Family and Children's Services, Women's Interests and the Attorney General. That ministerial working group, of which I have been a member since January 1997, first as Minister for Health and now as Minister for Police, has worked through an extraordinary number of contentious and difficult matters that are attendant with the issue of control of prostitution that will

work. In many respects what this State seeks to do is unique, because what has been done in the ACT and Victoria - the situations in those States are different - has, depending on one's point of view, either largely not worked or has given rise to a situation that is untenable in society.

We seek to create a Western Australian solution to the situation in which we find ourselves in this State. In other words, it is unprecedented. It is not a matter of being able to pick up legislation from somewhere else and make reasonable and sensible modifications. It is a matter of having to write it from the very beginning without anything in particular to follow. That is difficult. It has required a great deal of intellectual effort and endeavour by a great many talented officers from the Police Service, Health and elsewhere. It has been difficult to formulate. Some of the officers who were involved in this, and still are, have made the point that, initially, when this group of half a dozen officers from different departments came together, it took three or four weeks simply to define the issues that must be canvassed and to think those through in a logical and sensible form.

The work of the ministerial officers' working party occupied most of 1997 and went well into 1998. The result is summarised in the briefing note headed "Prostitution Control Bill 1998" to which the member for Midland has referred and which I table.

[See paper No 950.]

I table this with the author's name removed because if this were to be a public document, which it now is, it should not incite telephone calls or inquiries to the officer who wrote it. I know that the member's copy has the officer's name on it. I do not know from where the member obtained it. This document outlines in summary form the work that occupied the time of many very good government officers and ministers over two years. It sets out a framework for the way in which legislation should be developed. Much has been said by the member for Midland about various ministers having made all sorts of promises. The coalition has made no election commitment on the issue of prostitution. The member for Wagin, who was the Minister for Police on 12 September 1996, is the only person who has issued a press release. It stated -

Police Minister Bob Wiese said Cabinet had recognised that there were problems with the current police policy of containment and he had previously stated that legislation would be progressed on the regulation of the sex industry in Western Australia.

Mr Wiese said Cabinet had requested that a detailed proposal for a legislative framework be prepared and submitted back to Cabinet for further consideration.

That is the only formal statement to the media. However, my predecessor, who is now the Minister for Health, and I have both commented to community groups and others about our perceived desire to progress the matter and to develop workable prostitution control legislation. I said as much in an answer to a question put to me by the member for Midland last year, which was in the context of the murder of a prostitute. Questions on notice have also dealt with the matter over the past two or three years. A great deal of excellent work has been done to define the issues and to work out how to progress them because it is not an easy area in which to deal. The member for Midland has made some political points about information on the briefing paper. I want to correct those and put them into context because it has been said that the number of prostitutes has doubled since the Liberal Party was elected to government in 1993; that is not correct. An estimate was made in the Beryl Grant paper. In 1995, a deliberate strategy was put in place by the vice squad of the Police Service to encourage all businesses and prostitutes to register because the prostitutes were subject to much pressure and, as we know, at least one has recently been murdered. If the prostitutes are not known to the police, it is more difficult for the police to protect them from that sort of activity as well as to regulate the way they act. Many of them have registered with the police. That is a de facto situation; it is not one mandated by law although the new prostitution -

Mrs Roberts: Previous estimates have been based on tax returns and other matters.

Mr PRINCE: An increase may have occurred as well, but the member for Midland's conclusion from the briefing paper is incorrect because it ignores the fact that the vice squad has actively worked to encourage these people to register. The strategy at the time in 1995 as part of the work up of this exercise was to identify business premises and workers; that is still happening. More and more information is being added each week.

The member commented today on organised crime and the involvement of organised crime. While petty crime is involved, particularly in the drug area, police inform me that they have not been able to charge any criminal figures in running or controlling prostitution in this State. Some doubt exists about whether organised crime occurs in a big way. No doubt a great deal of apocryphal information is available about it, but no real evidence exists yet to suggest this. The police are very active in the area and I will say no more about that.

Containment has been considered in the past as the only means of policing prostitution in the State. Credibility was given to that policy in 1975 in the royal commission chaired by Justice Norris. He stated that a containment policy not set down in writing or known to the public was to be endorsed. In 1982, Mr Oliver Dixon, the then Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, said in his final report to the Parliament that the containment policy was supported as the only realistic response to prostitution within the bounds of legislation. Successive Governments and members have looked at not only the containment policy but also the practice of prostitution in this State in an attempt to establish a way of regulating and reviewing it. I have given some of those examples to the member for Midland and others. I have also talked about what we have done by way of the ministerial working group and the way in which we are proceeding.

The legislation in draft form has reached the fifth draft stage, which was given to me in early March. It contains many questions and inquiries from parliamentary counsel, which is not unusual in any draft Bill. Parliamentary counsel is querying

the way he or she has written a group of sections and clauses and whether they meet the requirement by way of legislation. That of itself requires me and people from the Police Service to work through that and give further instructions to the draftsman.

At the same time the Department of Health has been heavily involved in this. I think health officers will be meeting again with my colleague the Minister for Health, tomorrow on issues raised by parliamentary counsel, that arise out of the legislation reaching the fifth draft stage. If we can resolve these issues shortly, we will be able to move to the sixth draft of the legislation. Since the 1982 decision in the *Deveraux v Powell* Supreme Court case, which virtually legalised things such as escort agencies, we have had to deal with a much wider industry than was previously the case with brothels and street walking. That 1982 decision has allowed escort agencies, massage parlours, aromatherapy parlours, beauticians and people and organisations with all sorts of labels to be used for prostitution. I am not suggesting that legitimate massage or aromatherapy organisations do not exist; I am saying that those are the labels that have been used to cover prostitution. The fifth draft of the legislation is not in a form which is appropriate to be put on the Table of this House or to circulate because it is still very much a working paper. It contains 155 pages and it requires further work before I am in a position to make it available for public comment. The prostitution issue has been considered a law enforcement issue in the past. The breakdown of a containment policy has been the major factor in driving a form of policing and should play an integral role in controlling prostitution, because it is very much a law and order issue, and health issues are just as important.

We intend to regulate the health of a prostitute and the client to protect the community. The incidence of sexually transmittable diseases among prostitutes in this State is lower than in many other parts of Australia and the world. It is a matter of great concern that we maintain the health status quo and ensure that sexually transmitted diseases are not transmitted through prostitution; it is very much a government responsibility. We will endeavour through the legislation that we are drafting, not to condone, encourage, or support the establishment or expansion of prostitution but to introduce responsible and transparent controls to protect health and to minimise corruption in a practice which is part of society, no matter whether we like it - and most people would say they do not. It is intended to be a comprehensive package of regulatory and control measures, public education, health protection, health initiatives for prostitutes and clients, and law enforcement.

It has six objectives: First, to safeguard public health and wellbeing against the adverse effects of prostitution; second, to promote the welfare, occupational, health and safety of prostitutes, whether male or female, and whether acting as prostitutes in brothels, agencies or self-employed; third, to protect and control the social and physical environment of the community by controlling the location and operation of brothels and prostitution agencies, and controlling the operations of self-employed sole prostitutes; fourth, to protect children from exploitation in connection with prostitution; fifth, to deter organised and other crime in connection with prostitution; and sixth, to control the advertising of prostitution. The major component by which we intend to do this in the proposed legislation is to have a prostitution control board to regulate the industry, to act in such manner as it determines.

Its proceedings will not be subject to the requirements of natural justice, nor to administrative or judicial review. This is an area that could lead to disaster. The board must have fairly extreme powers, by any judgment, which it can use to control this area for the benefit of the public. The board will consist of a chairperson appointed by the Governor, and members nominated by the Minister for Health representing both the health area and the police, and six other positions. I expect nominations from local government and Family and Children's Services as part of this. It will perform functions, such as registration, disciplinary matters, information dissemination, education and so on. That is the way in which we seek to regulate control.

There will be extra powers that do not presently exist; for example, to enable the police to deal effectively with street soliciting, which is a major problem. The police deal with this very effectively at present, but it then appears somewhere else. It is a move-on power. Currently the police have no power to stop a person, male or female, who is simply walking the streets unless they have reasonable grounds to suspect an offence has been, or is about to be, committed. The move-on power will enable the police to say, "We believe you are touting for business as a prostitute; you move on. If you don't do that and keep away from a particular area, that's prima facie evidence to support a presumption that your behaviour leads to or gives rise to a belief that soliciting is being committed." Written notice will be issued, and these people can be prosecuted if they breach it. That is intended to get prostitutes off the streets.

It is also intended that there be an offence for the client. Although the prostitutes are an absolute menace to the people who live in the area - I have met with people from various parts of the Northbridge area where this occurs and they despair in many respects about the way in which these young women behave - the more offensive issue is the continual stream of motor vehicles that drive around a particular circuit, often for hours at a time. We intend to deal with not only the prostitute but also the client. The police will be able to stop that sort of thing happening. It is said apocryphally to me by police officers from the vice squad that they believe 80 per cent of the street prostitutes are addicted to some form of narcotic drug. It is the ultimate degradation and destruction of humanity to see people behaving in this way, but it happens. It is necessary that there be powers to deal with prostitutes who behave in this way. We do not have those power at the moment. This is a typical example in this area.

It is very difficult to craft legislation that will enable police to take prostitution off the street without its being draconian or capable of abuse. I see that the member for Perth is acknowledging that. It is not an easy exercise. It is equally difficult to give police the proper power to deal with the johns - as the member for Midland put it - who continually driving around the circuit without that power not being capable of abuse. We must empower, but it must be done in such a way that it can be used in this area and in respect of this activity, and nothing else. The intellectual activity that has gone into just that has taken weeks. The parliamentary counsel, quite rightly, asked questions about what has been drafted, whether it is adequate,

etc. As I said, a great deal of intellectual effort has gone into that area alone. We want to capture as many prostitutes as possible in this registration system. We do not want it to be so onerous that they just ignore it and operate outside the registration system because that will defeat the object. We want it to be sufficiently all-encompassing that it works. Of itself, that has been very difficult to work through. What do we do as a requirement to disclose who owns the brothel and their financial background; who is in the background, if anybody; how do we regulate that; what powers are required not only to investigate books of account, but also to get further back into the ownership ladder of premises; and what do we do about sole operators?

Mr Carpenter: Why don't you do something about the heroin addiction that drives them onto the streets?

Mr PRINCE: I have only three minutes in which to finish my remarks.

Mr Carpenter: You just said 80 per cent of them are addicted to heroin.

Mr PRINCE: We do an enormous amount. If the member likes, I will arrange for him to have a briefing from the police and other agencies in this area.

Mr Carpenter: You just said -

Mr PRINCE: If the member wants to make a speech, he should do so; I do not have the voice to shout him down at the moment.

The issue of owners and drivers and telephone services has been difficult. Then we come to advertising, which largely is in the print media. Recently, on a visit to London, I talked with officers of the vice squad and was told that there is no advertising of this sort in the daily newspapers there - certainly not in the major newspapers. Why? Because it is far too expensive. I observed from my hotel room, telephone boxes which were clean at nine o'clock in the morning being covered with postcards by midday. That is novel. They were clean again at four o'clock in the afternoon, but soon after were covered again. These leaflets were postcard-size photocopies, in colour, of prostitution brochures for girls. If we try to abolish advertising in the popular Press, it will appear somewhere else. Those are examples of just some of the work we have had to do. While appreciating the motives behind the matter of public interest, I seek to amend it.

Amendment to Motion

Mr PRINCE: I move -

To delete all words after "House" with a view to substituting the following -

acknowledges the community concern about the effects of prostitution in Western Australia and the continuing work being undertaken by the Minister for Police and the other ministers in seeking to respond adequately to these concerns.

MR PENDAL (South Perth) [3.38 pm]: I will take part in the debate briefly. I am indifferent about whether my remarks relate to the original motion, which they cannot, or to the amendment. Nonetheless, I will address the general issue raised by the member for Midland. She used one phrase which has been associated with this sort of debate for many years - turning a blind eye - as the rationale for our needing new prostitution laws in Western Australia. There is probably something in that argument. I will dwell on this rationale in the few minutes available to me. I happen to think the rationale for a new prostitution Bill has probably been undermined by no less a person than the Commissioner of Police. The rationale which Mr Falconer expresses - it is a valid one which I have heard expressed many times in this House - is that tolerance and containment has not worked, that it does not work, that it is unenforceable, and that it paves the way for corrupt practices in its enforcement.

Essentially that is the nub of the issue. The Commissioner of Police and, perhaps unwittingly, the Government have shown that in their recent response to the drug crisis. The Commissioner of Police has been quoted as having said several things in that regard. For example, I refer to an article in *The West Australian* as recently as 7 May in which he is reported as saying, in respect of an associated social evil, the drug problem, that the police would not take action against youth support services which overlooked illegal drug use in the interests of saving lives. I find it incompatible and inconsistent that we can have an otherwise sensible Commissioner of Police saying, "We must get new prostitution laws because tolerance and containment have failed", and then have the same Commissioner of Police and, presumably, the Government that he serves, advocating that very course in respect of drugs. I will not canvass, because I do not have the time to do so, whether one method is superior to the other, but by such advocacy in the drug war we will get ourselves into the same bind as we appear to have got ourselves into in enforcing laws against prostitution; that is, laws are written and certain people in society are exempted from having to obey them.

We have lived with prostitution for generations. My concern is that such a rationale will institutionalise itself in the drug debate and that if it were to take hold for the next decade and the decade after that, when we face the real test in respect of the drug war, we will send out mixed messages. The whole point in seeking to have new prostitution laws, apparently, is to give clarity. I do not have a lot of objection to that, but in the very same month when we seek to debate that issue, we are sending out not a clear message but a mixed message in respect of the drug trade. That is as important an issue for the House to address as the general issue of whether we want to see pronto a new prostitution Bill introduced into the House. It is inconsistent and incompatible, and we are heading for trouble as a result.

Amendment (words to be deleted) put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (28)

Mr Ainsworth
Mr Baker
Mr Bradshaw
Dr Constable
Mr Court
Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes

Dr Hames
Mrs Hodson-Thomas
Mrs Holmes
Mr House
Mr Johnson
Mr Kierath
Mr MacLean

Mr Marshall
Mr Masters
Mr Minson
Mr Nicholls
Mr Omodei
Mrs Parker
Mr Pental

Mr Prince
Mr Shave
Mr Tubby
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Wiese
Mr Osborne (*Teller*)

Noes (19)

Ms Anwyl
Mr Brown
Mr Carpenter
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop

Mr Graham
Mr Grill
Mr Kobelke
Ms MacTiernan
Mr Marlborough

Mr McGinty
Mr McGowan
Ms McHale
Mr Riebeling
Mr Ripper

Mrs Roberts
Mr Thomas
Ms Warnock
Mr Cunningham (*Teller*)

Amendment thus passed.

Amendment (words to be inserted) put and passed.

Motion, as amended, put passed.

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 1) 1999*Second Reading*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR GRAHAM (Pilbara) [3.47 pm]: As I represent a remote area of the State, I will devote some of my time to regional development. A couple of points must be made about regional development. Interestingly, at the previous election I was the Labor Party spokesman on regional development. In the many debates around Western Australia in which I was involved with the Minister for Regional Development, I made the point that in the Court Liberal Government's first term its regional development policy incorporated the formation of development commissions. This was an initiative of the previous Labor Government, which established the first development commission in Australia; that was the Pilbara Development Commission.

The second point I made in those debates was that it was interesting that in its first term in government the coalition did not develop a regional development policy. By that I mean that the coalition parties may have had one-liner platforms that they put in place after the coalition was elected in 1993, but at no stage did they implement a regional development policy. The minister used to get cranky when I remarked about that and say that the Government had a comprehensive policy on regional development. Two and half years later it is interesting that the Government is developing a regional development policy. After six and a half years in office it has begun to develop a regional development policy. It will not be difficult for members who have non-metropolitan seats to understand why their areas are in decline and why government services have declined in each of their electorates. That is not open to members opposite to dispute for two reasons: Firstly, it is true and they have been speaking on it throughout the year; secondly, they are not allowed to speak during the budget debate! Even if they wanted to express their views they cannot.

In the absence of a government policy on regional development, I refer to the Regional Development Commissions Act to see what was the Government's view. Division 2 outlines the objects and functions of a commission. Section 23(1) outlines the objects of a commission. I recall that when the Bill was debated in this House I wished that I had thought of the words because they are very good words to have in a piece of legislation of this kind. It reads -

- (1) The objects of a commission -

It is referring to all of the commissions and lists a number of them -

- (e) seek to ensure that the general standard of government services and access to those services in the region is comparable to that which applies in the metropolitan area;

As I said, when that legislation was debated here in 1993 I wished I had written those words. I would have been doing what the Deputy Premier did - running around non-metropolitan Western Australia beating the drum about the new era of regional development coming to Western Australia. I defy members who represent non-metropolitan seats in this place to say that from 1993 until now the general standard of government services and access to them in the regions they represent have been comparable to services in the metropolitan area.

Mr McGowan: I could not say it.

Mr GRAHAM: I am waiting for the interjections from government members. I wish that *Hansard* could show the time that has elapsed since my question and the silence from the government benches. As you and I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, not only have we not achieved that admirable aim but also regional Western Australia has gone backwards since 1993.

I refer first to planning. Nothing empowers people more than the ability to plan for their personal future and for their town community and region. One of the first acts of the Court Liberal Government was to remove any planning powers from the

development commissions or regions and to place those powers with the State Planning Commission. It was dressed up as an initiative that was good for the State in the guise of, for the first time, having coordinated planning in Western Australia. That is false; that is not the case. For the first time in the history of this State we have a central planning bureau. The State Planning Commission in metropolitan Perth now controls every planning aspect of the regions. That is indisputable. That is the first and most fundamental policy error the Government made.

I refer now to the issues that have flowed from that and will argue the position I often argue in this place for the Pilbara. When the Premier mouths his rhetoric in the eastern States about Western Australia being the powerhouse of the nation and the export centre of the nation, an amendment should be made that reads "delete Western Australia and insert Pilbara". The reality is that without a doubt the lion's share of the State's export income is generated in the Pilbara region. Previously I have pointed out the disproportionate levels of productivity in the Pilbara versus those in every other region in the State and the metropolitan area. I could point out the disproportionate amount of export income generated by that region. I used to say that 3 per cent of the State's population produces 37 per cent of the export dollars. I can no longer say that because both percentages have changed. Under this Government the population of the Pilbara has fallen from 3 per cent of the State to 2 per cent, but its output is growing and it is now producing 41 per cent of the State's export income.

The Regional Development Council prepared a paper on taxation in regional Western Australia and makes the point in some pie charts that the Pilbara has 2 per cent of the State's population but produces 3 per cent of the taxpayer revenue. The people there are not only producing more but also they are being taxed more for that privilege. A graph of the mean net individual tax collected by region indicates that the Pilbara collects more than \$10 000 per head; next is the Goldfields, at about \$8 700 per head; then comes Perth, at more than \$6 000; and the Peel region, which falls behind somewhat at just on \$6 000. Without a doubt the Pilbara pays its way.

We dealt with much of the material that comes out as flim flam in the Government's budget. One initiative is the support for the business enterprise centres in the region. It is interesting that, along with the Small Business Development Corporation, these initiatives are widely applauded in the State as being of vital importance to small business. Both of those were Labor Party initiatives when in government and were added to by the fact that the Burke Labor Government appointed Australia's first ever Minister for Small Business. It is interesting how Labor initiatives are picked up by conservative Governments and worked into their system. I am pleased to say that I have not yet heard this Government claim credit for the initiatives, but I am sure that time will come.

The Pilbara region has been allocated \$140 000 for business enterprise centres. When the Port Hedland business enterprise centre - the only town in the Pilbara in which such a centre was established - was started 10 years ago, in 1989, in conjunction with the chamber of commerce, it received a grant of \$40 000 - the current figure is \$140 000. That is interesting when one goes through the regions and looks at the figures. The amount allocated to the business enterprise centre in Mandurah in the Peel region is \$60 000, to the wheatbelt region, \$480 000; to the midwest region, \$120 000; to the Kimberley region, \$210 000; to the Gascoyne region, \$70 000; to the Goldfields-Esperance region, \$120 000; to the south-west region, \$300 000; and to the great southern region, \$150 000. There is no rhyme nor reason for those allocations.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on page 8266.]

CARAVAN PARKS AND CAMPING GROUNDS AMENDMENT BILL 1999

Second Reading

MR MCGOWAN (Rockingham) [4.03 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill has been moved by the Opposition following an undertaking given by the member for Burrup and me to various people involved in caravanning and camping recreational pursuits to attempt to solve one of the major problems facing this State. Under the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997, a great many caravanners and campers are no longer permitted to camp in areas where they have traditionally camped, particularly throughout the north west of the State.

This matter has been raised many times by way of petition to this Parliament, by numerous letters and phone calls to the Labor Party and by calls to talk-back radio. Under the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997, which were promulgated under the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995, there is currently a prohibition on people camping anywhere outside a caravan park or a registered camping ground. I understand the Government will be moving amendments to these regulations to allow some roadside camping in the future, particularly to alleviate safety concerns for people driving long distances at night. I applaud that decision. However, it still leaves a major hole for people caravanning and camping; that is, under regulations 10 and 11 of the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations people are no longer permitted - and, strictly speaking, have not been permitted since 1974 - to camp in areas where they have camped in the past. The major problem relates to people from the south-west, particularly older people and people without a great deal of money, who have traditionally travelled north throughout the winter months and set up their caravans and camps at various sites along the north coast of this State. Some of those sites were in Broome, Karratha and Gingin.

A distinction must be made between the people who are transitory, set up camp for a period and then leave, and those who set up permanently in shacks. This Bill is designed to overcome the situation for caravanners whose sole holiday every year

is to travel north during the winter months and set up in a beach-side camping spot where they have a rudimentary but enjoyable lifestyle. There are hundreds of people who enjoy that lifestyle in my electorate; in fact my next door neighbour is one of them. During winter he travels north to Cleaverville Beach, sets up his caravan, catches fish, swims at the beach and has a good social life with the other people who do the same. I recently visited the site on which they camp and it is only a few hectares. They spend a great deal of money in the local businesses in Karratha and have a holiday. It is particularly good for older people in the winter months, who do not find the climate in Perth very pleasant, to travel north and have an enjoyable time. This Bill is designed to allow that to continue. The Opposition would like the Government to join with it in enabling these older people, primarily pensioners, to continue to travel north through the winter months, to set up at defined locations on the coast and to have their holidays; that is not an unreasonable demand. The Opposition has put forward a good mechanism to enable that to happen.

I will refer to the situation that exists currently under the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations. Under regulation 10 a person can camp only at a licensed park or camping ground, on land which they own or on land on which permission to camp has been given by the minister. That is a fairly onerous requirement. It means that councils throughout this State are now enforcing these regulations to prohibit people from camping in places where they have in the past. The Opposition's Bill is a very mild effort to address the situation. I have heard of organisations that are lobbying for regulations to permit people to camp willy-nilly on any public land whatsoever.

Mr Omodei: Have you read regulation 11?

Mr McGOWAN: Yes, I have. Some organisations would like there to be unrestricted camping throughout the State. I do not intend to express an opinion on that at this stage.

This Bill is an attempt to assist those people who are trying to go caravanning to areas to which they have travelled in the past. Some people have set up caravans and tents in these beach side areas during the winter months in the north west of the State for some 20 or 30 years. The original regulations enacted in 1974 prohibited camping outside caravan parks, but they were never enforced by councils. However, with the passage of the new Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations, all councils prohibit this form of recreation. I will use the example of the beaches around Karratha and Cleaverville and Forty Mile Beach. Hundreds of people have camped in those places in the past but are no longer permitted to do so. I visited these sites recently and they are deserted. When people set up camp there they receive a reminder notice from the Shire of Roebourne ordering them to move on. The Shire of Roebourne is doing this in a friendly way by giving people an order informing them that they have committed an offence under the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations and they must move on; it is simply a friendly reminder, not a fine. However, the regulations make provision for an infringement notice to be issued. These people can no longer stay in the places they have visited for 20 and 30 years and that is causing them a great deal of heartache. The ban is being enforced because of the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations. On 19 May 1998 in a question on notice I asked the Minister for Local Government -

Is the Government aware that Cleaverville Beach and Forty Mile Beach near Karratha are popular locations for caravanners?

I also asked how access to that area was being hindered. The minister's answer stated -

The Shire of Roebourne is applying the Caravan Park and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997 which prohibit camping on land that is not a caravan park or camping ground.

People cannot stay in the areas they have always visited because the Shire of Roebourne is applying the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations. I have a copy of a letter the Minister for Local Government sent to a person in Dandaragan. This person liked going north during the winter months and raised the issue of the regulations with the minister whose reply, dated 19 October 1998, stated -

. . . DOLA (as the owner/controller of the land) is not prepared to allow camping at these locations.

The Council has obtained legal advice which indicated even though it does not own/control the land, as it is within its districts it is obliged to apply the caravan legislation (ie: remove the illegal campers).

Under the regulations the council is required to move on people who camp in these areas. There has been a lack of cooperation from the Department of Land Administration. It is deliberately not allowing people to stay on its land. I received a submission from the Western Australian Recreational Campers Association which represents many caravanners. It quotes extracts from a letter received from the Minister for Lands and states -

. . . Regulation 11(1)(b) requires permission from a person who owns or has legal right occupy the land, where a person wishes to camp on that land.

I am the minister responsible for Crown land. Where there is no legal occupier of such land (such as a lessee or management body), then it is my permission which must be sought if a person wishes to camp on Crown land. Whether such permission will be given depends on the circumstances. The relevant land needs to be clearly identified in each case to determine its legal status. As a general rule, permission to camp will not be given, especially if there are established camping facilities within a reasonable distance.

The minister is saying that the Crown will not permit people to camp on public land and that that is a requirement not only laid down by the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations but it is also a policy decision of the Department of Land Administration. I find that unreasonable.

Mr Omodei: For a start, it is not true and if you had read the rest of the letter it would give you the answer.

Mr McGOWAN: I do not interrupt the minister's second reading speeches.

Mr Omodei: I do not have a copy of your speech.

Mr McGOWAN: I never interrupt the minister's speeches. We have it in black and white from the Minister for Local Government that camping in these areas is not permitted under these regulations and from the Minister for Lands that he will not permit people to camp in these areas. Local governments throughout the State are enforcing these regulations. The Shire of Roebourne is enforcing the regulations but when I visited the shire a few weeks ago, I was told that it did not want to do so; that it likes people coming to stay in these defined areas; and they generally keep to themselves, they do not cause any trouble, there are no wild parties, no fires are lit and there are no major problems. The campers spend money in the small businesses in the town. The council said it wants these people to keep coming but it is not permitted to allow them to do so under these regulations. The council has received legal advice to that effect and I received advice from the minister in response to a question on notice that that information is correct. We need to fix the situation, not exacerbate it. The Opposition is trying to devise a way of fixing the problem.

In a letter dated 22 May 1998, the Kalamunda Lapidary Club sent me a copy of a submission it made to the Minister for Local Government. The submission states -

When this regulation becomes known across Australia, it will have a very negative effect on the tourist industry. Caravaners will not be prepared to travel to Western Australia to be bemused and penalised by this regulation.

Obviously this club is concerned about the impact of these regulations on the tourism industry. A letter I received from the Karratha Tourist Bureau states -

I am writing to you in my capacity of manager of the Karratha Tourist Bureau. I received your fax earlier today in relation to the changes or the now enforcement of the State Caravaning and Camping Act.

This stupid act has had a very negative effect on the Caravaning in the North of the state as it once again appears to travels from the eastern states, that W.A. just doesn't want them to be here. . . .

A lot of our caravaners come to the Pilbara to experience bush camping in the true sense of the word. The majority of these are older couples that have spent a lot of time and effort purchasing and modifying equipment to make themselves basically self sufficient.

In other words, the Karratha Tourist Bureau would like these people to keep coming to that area.

I have a letter from Mr Mike Venn of Safety Bay, who has done a great deal of good work on this issue. He said -

I as spokesperson for what were the Cleaverville and 40 Mile Bush Campers take it upon myself to, I am sure, voice the opinion of every other Caravan, Motor Home, Camper Van, Camper Trailer, tent or swag owner, not only in W.A. but throughout Australia to demand and expect our freedom of choice between Caravan Parks, Bush Camping Areas and the convenience of enroute Overnight Rest Stop Bays.

He continues -

I therefore on our behalf seek your support to ensure . . . that existing Bush Camping Areas are protected and hopefully many new ones created.

He is obviously passionate about the issue.

I also have an article that I pulled out of *The West Australian* of Thursday, 6 May, concerning a book called *A Guide to Priceless Campsites & Rest Areas in the South of Western Australia*. This book was written by Jan Holland, and it sets out all the excellent campsites that people have traditionally visited. In this article, Jan Holland complains about the fact that these laws are closing down these sites. This book is now available in BP service stations and some newsagents. What these regulations are saying is that this sort of recreational activity will no longer be available.

What is the solution to this problem? The Opposition proposes a simple solution, and one that will ensure that these excellent, low-impact areas that people have always visited will be protected. We are not proposing a radical change whereby people can camp willy nilly. That is an issue for another day. We want to set aside certain areas as traditional camping areas. Our solution is contained in the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Amendment Bill 1999. Under the Bill, I intend to insert a head clause in the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act which will give the minister the capacity to enact regulations which will allow certain areas to be made exempt from the operation of the regulations. Therefore, an overall general prohibition will be retained throughout the State, with the exemption of certain defined geographic areas where people can stay. Furthermore, we will not say that people can stay in those areas and not be subject to conditions. Caravanners accept that there should be some regulation in these areas. This regulation may include things such as rubbish collection and inspections by local councils. It may also include sewerage-type regulations. However, it will allow people to continue to visit these areas that they have always visited.

We are getting into the winter months. This is the time that people like to go north. This is the time for action. Unless we have some action now, huge numbers of people from the south west of this State and interstate tourists will be upset and disappointed. This is a simple amendment to allow these camping sites to continue to be used by people who have always camped at these sites. I urge the minister to consider it carefully. I urge him not to take a negative approach to this issue but to support what the Opposition is trying to do. Knowing the minister as well as I do, I suspect he will be negative about what I am trying to do.

Mr Omodei: I suggest you do not know me at all.

Mr McGOWAN: Will the minister be positive about it? I urge him to examine the matter carefully. If the minister wants to amend the Bill, I am prepared to agree, provided we come up with a solution for these people.

Mr Tubby: The Bill does not say anything; it does not do anything.

Mr McGOWAN: The member has not been listening.

Mr Tubby: You have been rabbiting on, but the Bill does not do much.

Mr McGOWAN: It gives the minister the capacity to gazette certain areas.

Mr Omodei: Including private property and property owned by Aborigines?

Mr McGOWAN: The Bill refers to a public place. In any event, I can see where this dialogue is leading. I would not be averse to the Government's putting in amendments to make it easier for this legislation to operate. I want people who have always undertaken these recreational activities, who normally do not have a great deal of money, to be able to continue undertaking them. That is what this Bill is about. I urge the House to support it.

MR OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood - Minister for Local Government) [4.26 pm]: It is normal procedure for the minister to adjourn a debate like this. However, in this situation it is appropriate that I respond during the second reading debate. This is about the Labor Party further propagating innuendo and fear among old people prior to winter, which is the time when these people travel north to escape the cold. It has been good at it, because many people have written to me and other members of Parliament about this issue. There is no doubt that at Cleaverville and Forty Mile Beaches there has been a problem in that local government in that area has been policing to the letter of the law. We have since changed the regulation. Even further confusion has been propagated about the 50-kilometre protection -

Mr McGowan: I never propagated anything about that; you are wrong.

Mr OMODEI: It has come back to me, and there is confusion about it. The prohibition is on allowing a nature-based caravan park within 50 km of a caravan park. We have clarified that, and I intend to remove that 50 km restriction from the regulations to clear up any confusion. There was a 16 km limit within which people could not camp under the old Health Act regulations. However, although that was removed four or five years ago, people still refer to the restriction. Although the member may be right when he says that he has not propagated that issue, it certainly has been debated on a number of occasions.

The member for Rockingham has quoted the regulations selectively. With respect to the issue of camping for four hours while people are travelling, I have already issued instructions to extend that to 24 hours.

Mr McGowan: Didn't I just give you some credit for that in my speech?

Mr OMODEI: Yes.

Mr McGowan: That is not the issue.

Mr OMODEI: Let me make my speech. I will let the member interject as much as he likes because I have 58 minutes.

A number of petitions have been presented, most of which have come about as a result of misinformation spread by the Labor Party. One of the petitions that was presented this morning referred to the four hours being increased to 12 hours. We intend extending that to 24 hours. In relation to rest stops, Main Roads has agreed that it will have rest stops every 80 km for those people who are travelling, which is more than generous.

The Bill proposed by the member for Rockingham suggests that the minister be allowed to give people exemptions to camp on any public land. I challenged the member earlier to read regulation 11, titled "Camping other than caravan park or camping ground", which states -

- (1) A person may camp for up to 3 nights -
 - (a) on land which he or she owns or has a legal right to occupy; or
 - (b) on any other land if he or she has permission to do so from the person who owns or has the legal right to occupy the land,
 and may camp for longer than 3 nights on such land if he or she has written approval under subregulation (2) and is complying with that approval.
- (2) Written approval may be given for a person to camp on land referred to in subregulation (1) for a period specified in the approval which is longer than 3 nights -
 - (a) by the local government of the district where the land is situated if such approval will not result in the land being camped on for longer than 3 months in any period of 12 months; or

In other words, the local government can give people approval to camp on land other than a camping ground for less than three months. The regulation continues -

- (b) by the Minister, if such approval will result in the land being camped on for longer than 3 months in any period of 12 months.

Therefore, under the current regulation, local government can give permission for a person to stay for up to three months, and the minister can give approval for a stay for longer than three months. That regulation renders the member's Bill unnecessary. He mischievously introduced this measure into Parliament to spread further fear in an attempt to gain political points with old people in the community. That is a very poor attitude!

Let me talk to the member about Forty Mile Beach and Cleaverville. A briefing note was provided to me by the Department of Local Government which refers to 24-hour stays being permitted in designated roadside rest areas and on any other road reserve for emergency reasons. It is anticipated that these amendments will come into operation at about the end of July 1999. People travelling north will be able to stay. In most cases, if the member read through the rest of his letter, he would understand the laws have not been pursued assiduously by councils. A couple of cases of such application of the law have occurred as a result of legal advice. The briefing note, dated 5 May 1999, reads -

In regard to the situation at Cleaverville Beach, the Department of Local Government is currently involved in discussions with the Shire of Roebourne, the Department of Minerals and Energy (DOME) and the Department of Land Administration to see whether an area of land can be set aside for camping. The attached letter from the Department of Local Government to DOME indicates that DOME's objection is the only impediment to this being achieved.

The member has a point in that DOME and DOLA have been part of the issue. Also, a native title issue is involved. The briefing note further reads -

From preliminary discussions that have been held between officers from the above Departments it would appear that an agreement may be possible for an area to be set aside for camping at Cleaverville. However, it is too soon to announce this to the public.

The situation at Forty Mile Beach is more complicated with native title issues standing in the way of an area being set aside for camping.

The letter from the Department of Local Government to DOME refers to the fact that the Shire of Roebourne, in particular, received advice from solicitors that it should enforce requirements of the relevant regulations; that is, that anyone who camps in the area without permission can be prosecuted. The Shire of Roebourne did so. Despite the shire taking the softly, softly approach, numerous letters of complaint have been received from various members of Parliament and other people. This was propagated mainly by the members for Burrup and Rockingham, rather than their trying to find a solution to the issue. The member said that people had camped there since 1974; however, as I have advised the member and others, people could not camp in those areas since 1974, but local government did not police the regulations. Under the new Local Government Act, as a result of public liability and other aspects, it was decided to prosecute in some cases.

Mr McGowan: Why in every question asked in Parliament did you say that the councils are enforcing the new regulations?

Mr OMODEI: I think they are going over the top in enforcing the regulations rather than trying to find a solution to the problem.

Mr McGowan: This is a solution to the problem.

Mr OMODEI: No, it is not. As Minister for Local Government, I cannot tell people whether they can camp on other departments' land. The minister responsible can do so, as can the local government. The matter is dealt with in regulations. The member did not have a prepared second reading speech - which I find amazing on such an important issue for elderly people - but why did he not read into his speech regulation 11 of the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations which gives local government the power to grant camping approval for three months, and the minister to give approval for more than three months? The member presumed that I would not respond to this debate. He wanted a headline: "The famous member for Rockingham is helping old people; it is a terrible Government". I hope people see this process for what it is.

Mr McGowan: You have a nasty streak in you.

Mr OMODEI: No, I do not. It is no more nasty a streak than the member's when he talks about my shares, my dear friend. If the member wants to play hard ball, we will do so.

Mr McGowan: They are not your shares.

Mr OMODEI: They are not. The member for Rockingham mischievously tried to introduce a Bill which he thought would go nowhere. He thought it would be adjourned and go to the bottom of the order of business on the Notice Paper as it was unworkable. He was trying to gain some political points. That is poor form.

Native title is making it difficult to fix not only the Forty Mile Beach situation, but other areas as well. Maybe if the Labor Party had been more sensible on native title, we could have resolved this matter before now. The member cannot ignore the issue of the DOLA land, and the DOME requirements on some of that land must be resolved. I will do anything I can to help the Shire of Roebourne resolve this issue. I am sure the Ministers for Lands and Minerals and Energy do not want to make life hard for elderly people or caravanners in general travelling around the State. I have received letters from people in the eastern States on this matter, so the member's campaign has been effective. Claims were made that the number of interstate tourists will be reduced by these regulations. In fact, an increase has occurred in the number of travelling public, and in the number of caravan parks opening in this State. The claims by the Labor Party are untrue and are set to cause elderly people trauma as they travel around the State.

Mr McGowan: You have said that a number of times now. I cannot let it go.

Mr OMODEI: It is true.

Mr McGowan: I assume you're referring to the caravan regulations and controls on people's vans and annexes. I made reference to them - you have accused me of this before - and then you put in regulations which were exactly as I said they would be in relation to the size of people's annexes. You keep saying that I am trying to frighten old people, but I raised the issue and the council was putting out -

Mr OMODEI: The member raised the issue after the event, and after I had given instructions to change regulations to allow local governments to leave existing caravans and their annexes in place. The regulations were directed at new caravans and new annexes. I will not let the member get away with being mischievous and telling untruths in Parliament and spreading misinformation to the public. One of the main councils with which the Government had problems in the south west was the Busselton Shire Council, from which the building inspector policed matters to the letter of the law. However, a meeting was held, chaired by south west member Hon Barry House, and the problem was resolved in a matter of weeks. Following that, the member for Rockingham jumped up in this Parliament and talked a load of rot about the same issue, after it had been resolved. Likewise in the case of camping being permitted for only four hours, that matter was raised with me, and I issued instructions to amend the regulations. They are being amended to the extent that people will be able to camp overnight for 24 hours, not 12 hours as was requested by some in the caravan industry. In relation to this issue, Cleaverville and Forty Mile Beaches are frequented by many people in my electorate. At the end of May each year many people in Augusta pack up their caravans and camping gear and head north. Does the member seriously think that I would want to enact regulations that would hurt the people who vote for me? In Augusta, 70 per cent of the people vote for me.

Mr McGowan: They will not any more.

Mr OMODEI: They will not if the member for Rockingham continues to spread misinformation. I make it clear that if there is a press article as a result of this debate - it would not surprise me if the member for Rockingham had already arranged that - I will respond to it. If my position is not made clear in the media, I will write to every caravan owner in Western Australia setting out the true situation. This is an example of the Labor Party spreading misinformation to elderly people to frighten them, and trying to lay blame on the Government even though these issues go back to 1974. The member for Rockingham and members opposite know that, but it does not alter their intention to frighten elderly people. That is exactly what they are trying to do.

A constituent of mine who lives in Windy Harbour telephoned my office just yesterday about Cleaverville and Forty Mile Beaches. I plainly said that the Government is attempting to work through the issue. It is a native title issue and it is the subject of a minerals and energy claim. The Department of Minerals and Energy has an interest in the land. If the Government can find somewhere suitable for a camping ground, whether at Forty Mile or Cleaverville, it will assist the shire to allow people to camp there for as long as they like. I presume they would still need the permission of the landowner. In days gone by, people camped wherever they chose and that was the order of the day. However, in these days of litigation, where public liability can be a major issue for local governments and the people who control the regulations, it can no longer be ignored. It is not too onerous to ask people to telephone ahead to see what the situation is and to obtain permission to camp on the land.

I will not take too much of private members' time, but I wanted to respond to this issue immediately and indicate that the Government will oppose it. It will oppose it not because it has no concern for caravanners but because the current legislation, and regulations 10 and 11 in particular, cover the area adequately. It is a question of educating the people. I make a plea to members opposite not to do this to elderly people. They do not need to write copious letters to the minister. I will send a circular letter to every local authority in this State -

Mr McGowan: Will you make it clear?

Mr OMODEI: If the member for Rockingham spreads misinformation, I will write to every caravan owner in the State and tell the truth about the mischief that the member has been up to.

Mr McGowan: Do you know how many caravan owners there are?

Mr OMODEI: I do not have a clue; I do not care if it is 10 000. I will not allow the member and his mate, the member for Burrup, to scurrilously spread misinformation about caravans and camping in this State. I support caravanners, camping and eco-tourism and I want to make it as easy as possible for people to camp in Western Australia. The Government will oppose the legislation, not because it has no concern for elderly people, but because it believes the current regulations are adequate. If they need to be changed, I will change them to make it easy for people with caravans in this State. This legislation is a stunt by the Labor party and it should be treated as such.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

INCENTIVE PACKAGE FOR COUNTRY HOSPITAL STAFF

Motion

MR McGINTY (Fremantle) [4.46 pm]: I move -

That this House condemns the Minister for Health for his obstructive role in preventing country health service boards from offering realistic wage and condition proposals to country nurses and calls on the Government to implement a country incentives package for difficult-to-staff hospitals in rural and remote areas.

Today in Western Australia a major problem is confronting the delivery of health services to rural communities. Throughout the length and breadth of this State nurses are voting overwhelmingly to reject a proposition put to them by the Government in relation to their wages and working conditions. Not only are they voting to reject the offer on wages and conditions from the Health Department of Western Australia, but also the very viability of many country hospitals has been threatened by the intransigence of the Health Department and the vote by the nurses to reject the wages and conditions proposed by the Health Department.

In many country areas, the nurses say they will leave the health care system rather than accept the proposed reduction in conditions being foisted upon them by the Health Department. Western Australia runs the serious risk of nurses in many country hospitals voting with their feet and walking away from the hospitals in which many of them have worked for a number of years. That will result in staff shortages in country hospitals and greater importation of agency nurses in a way that threatens, to a degree, the very viability of many country communities. Fly-in fly-out hospital staff will no doubt have the same effect on many country towns as the fly-in fly-out mining operations have had on the viability of many towns in the mining regions of Western Australia. Not only is the viability of the hospitals threatened, but also the viability of the local communities.

The Health Department has proposed an agreement for nurses, which has been and is still being voted on, that will take accumulated days off from part-time nurses employed in country hospitals. We all know that following the very protracted nurses' dispute in the metropolitan area last year, an arbitrated decision resulted in a pay rise for nurses in the metropolitan area in return for nurses employed on a part-time basis losing their accumulated days off. I am told that in country hospitals a far higher proportion of nurses are employed on a part-time basis, and the impact of the loss of accumulated days off will be far greater in the country than it was in the city. I have no doubt that nurses in the city were upset and angry about the loss of those days off. It had a major impact on the lifestyle of nurses, particularly those who work almost, but not quite, full time. I have no doubt that this played a major role in the outcome of the recent ballot for the secretaryship and control of the Nursing Federation. Nurses in country areas are being offered a pay rise in return for the loss of their ADOs. That is causing the consequences in our rural hospitals and communities which I have already described. Having spoken to people in a range of country hospitals, most recently at the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital two weeks ago, and a great number of other hospitals throughout the length and breadth of the State, I have ascertained that it is common for senior and experienced nurses who are part of the local community to work essentially full time, but they do not work 38 or 40 hours a week. It is common for a nurse in a country hospital to work perhaps six hours a day, five days a week. Although these nurses work five days a week, they will lose two weeks' leave a year as a result of the implementation of this agreement. That is what they are voting no to.

Nurses in the south west region have been meeting and overwhelmingly voting no at the following hospitals: Albany Regional Hospital, Beverley District Hospital, Boyup Brook and District Soldiers Memorial Hospital, Bridgetown District Hospital, Brookton Hospital, Bunbury Regional Hospital, Denmark Hospital, the District Gnowangerup Hospital, Harvey Hospital, Katanning District Hospital, Merredin District Hospital, Pemberton District Hospital, Plantagenet District Hospital, Warren Blackwood Health Service, Yarloop District Hospital, Augusta Hospital, Busselton District Hospital and Margaret River Hospital. There may be other hospitals in which nurses have met and said, "We will not accept this." I am referring only to the south west area of the State.

Mr Bloffwitch: Geraldton has done the same.

Mr McGINTY: I understand that an issue exists in Geraldton and I thank the member for Geraldton for his intervention. I have been told that the Geraldton Health Service has put together a retention package designed to keep the nurses at the hospital. It has been waiting three months for the Health Department to advise whether it can formally make the offer to the nurses. For three months, the minister's own department has been sitting on its hands, doing nothing and causing enormous aggravation. The only reason that I did not mention the Geraldton Regional Hospital, although I was aware of what had occurred there, is that I was describing the situation only in the south west region of the State. Nurses from a massive number of hospitals have said to the Government, "What you are proposing to do to us is unacceptable". The same is true at other major hospitals, and the Geraldton Regional Hospital is one of the most important hospitals outside the metropolitan area.

Mr Day: Plenty have voted in favour of it.

Mr McGINTY: Not one major hospital in the south west has done that. Most hospital workers are overwhelmingly saying no to the minister. Some smaller country hospitals have accepted the package. The minister must reassess his attitude and that of his department because it is verging on negligence not to even bother to respond to a proposition put to him by a local hospital board three months ago. He is creating a situation in our hospitals whereby staff morale is plummeting and nurses are angry and threatening to leave. The Minister for Health has the ability to fix this problem. This is a significant issue. The nurses are being offered a pay rise but they are refusing to accept it. Nurses in the country who have voted no are currently being paid marginally less than their counterparts in hospitals who have voted yes. A level 1 nurse at the top of the incremental scale is currently receiving just over \$10 a week less. As at 1 July 1999, that will increase to \$33.40 a week less, before penalty rates and the like are taken into consideration. We are talking only about the base award rate of pay. As at July next year, nurses in the country will be paid \$56.60 less per week. This is what nurses throughout the State are saying no to.

Putting aside the issue at Geraldton and Kalgoorlie where the retention package is crucial, the overwhelming issue at other hospitals is the loss of accumulated days off - the extra two weeks' leave a year, which is now being demanded by the Health Department as the price they must pay for the pay rise. They are also putting at risk a significant amount of back pay, which

is quantified at about \$800 for an average nurse. The Health Department is now saying to the nurses in the country that unless they vote yes within the next month, by the middle of June, they can forget about the back pay; therefore, that \$800 will disappear as well. That sort of blackmail has no place in the health care system in which the emphasis should be on looking after the patients and ensuring that doctors, nurses and other hospital staff are reasonably content and enjoy acceptable wages and working conditions.

The Health Department should not be holding a gun at someone's head and saying, "We will take \$800 from you if you do not vote yes to our proposal, which you do not like, within the next month." Essentially, that is what is occurring presently. It is not as though local communities support the Government on this matter. In a significant number of areas, including Geraldton and Kalgoorlie, the local hospital board, which represents the Government and the local community, is saying to the Government about the retention component of the package, "Let us make this offer to our staff".

Mr Bloffwitch: They are the people they should be dealing with; the people who control the funds.

Mr McGINTY: That is correct.

Mr Day: Who provides them?

Mr Bloffwitch: You are giving them the responsibility of running the hospital so they should be the people to deal with.

Mr McGINTY: The member for Geraldton can vote with us! I support the point of view he is putting as long as that does not embarrass him too much. The hospital boards which have been entrusted with the proper management of the hospitals are saying to the Health Department, "We want to make this offer to our employees". The employees are aware of the board's view. That package should be put to the nurses and that is the reason that nurses are currently voting no. In other areas it is the issue of the accumulated days off. However, breaks in the ranks are occurring everywhere. In the south west, for instance, we are all aware of the very public stance taken by the senior management at the Vasse Leeuwin Health Service in support of its own staff and against the Government. The general manager, on behalf of the board of the Lower Great Southern Health Service, has put in writing his opposition to the Government's demands. In a letter dated 3 May 1999, Keith Symes, General Manager of the Lower Great Southern Health Service, wrote to the Australian Nursing Federation -

From recent articles that have been published in the local newspaper it would appear that there can be a resolution of issues if nurses are given assurances on the following issues:

- ◆ non reduction of hours for existing part time employees
- ◆ part time employees will continue to have an entitlement to 10 public holidays.

This is the guarantee and the most important part -

I am able to reiterate what was publicly stated during the information sessions and given as a commitment from this health service. That is, that existing part time employees will not have their hours reduced as a result of the implementation of the proposed agreement, hours currently worked in existing roster will still be required.

The Government wants to take from the nurses the 10 accumulated days off. It then wants to reduce the number of hours worked each week by the nurses. This has happened in many metropolitan hospitals including the Fremantle Hospital. That reduction causes a double-whammy effect. The Lower Great Southern Health Service is writing to its employees stating, "The Government is demanding that the accumulated days off are taken from you, but we will leave you with the extra hours that you are currently working in order to earn that amount of money; in other words, you will not suffer a wage cut as a result of the proposal." No economic benefit will flow to the health service from that change. If there is no economic benefit to it - no cost saving to the Health Department - why on earth will the minister and the Health Department not let the health service go ahead and settle the dispute with its nurses on favourable terms so that the matter can be put to one side and the hospital and the nurses can be left to get on with looking after patients, which is what they are there for? If there is no economic benefit, what the hell is the minister on about?

Mr Day: There is.

Mr McGINTY: No, there is not. The minister has missed my point. Once it says that there will be no reduction in hours for the nurses - in other words, the nurses will be paid for those hours which they are working and which they used to work in order to accumulate their rostered days off - there will be no economic benefit whatsoever to the hospital. Once it says that it will not reduce their hours each week -

Mr Day: There is, because they do not need to bring in additional staff for the extra leave that is taken - the extra two weeks' leave or whatever - and that is a real saving which is being traded off for a substantial salary increase.

Mr McGINTY: No, because the minister is paying more each day and each week because nurses are working longer. The minister is losing it there. Before, nurses effectively worked that time for nothing in order to get the time off for which replacement staff needed to be employed. As I am the union official who many years ago saw the introduction of ADOs in the hospital system, it is a matter in which I can claim a measure of expertise and knowledge. The minister is profoundly wrong on the issue. There is no economic benefit if he is to retain the hours and pay people for those hours which they previously worked unpaid in order to earn ADOs. In essence, that is happening in the lower great southern region.

Mr Day: That is correct, yes, but they are being paid for what they are actually working rather than being paid for a lesser amount than that which they are working and accumulating. By not accumulating it, it means that health services do not need to employ additional staff for the extra time they are on leave, and that is a real saving.

Mr McGINTY: Has the Health Department said that they can proceed along that basis with the lower great southern health service, as has been outlined in the letter to the staff?

Mr Day: There is certainly room for some local flexibility. The other important point is that the arrangements that are being offered are a result of an Industrial Relations Commission decision.

Mr McGINTY: Yes, but it is in respect of the dispute between the Australian Nursing Federation and metropolitan hospitals. Now the minister is seeking to take that well outside the ambit of what was arbitrated on that occasion to a different situation in which, to a degree, the very viability of country hospitals and country towns is under threat.

Mr Day: Because the ANF wanted that to occur.

Mr McGINTY: If the minister now says that there should be a measure of local flexibility, why can he not give the green light to local boards such as Geraldton? Why can he not do that if there is a degree of local flexibility? It seems as though there is absolute centralisation of decision-making and no local flexibility.

Mr Day: There is, and it is happening.

Mr McGINTY: Why does the minister not let Geraldton go ahead?

Mr Day: It is happening in Geraldton.

Mr McGINTY: No, it is not.

Mr Day: It is happening; it is being negotiated.

Mr Bloffwitch: I get involved in Geraldton and I talk to them. That is why it is happening there.

Mr McGINTY: So it is all happening; everything is under control. I thought the member was agreeing with me five minutes ago.

Mr Bloffwitch: No, it is not under control. The member is quite right; the deal which has been put to them and which they have accepted has not been approved.

Mr Day: It is very close to being approved.

Mr Bloffwitch: It is very close to being approved.

Mr McGINTY: After three months, if it is very close to being approved, frankly I do not understand why the minister does not get off his butt and fix it.

Mr Bloffwitch: When I first spoke to them, they had not seen the agreement.

Mr McGINTY: We have reached the stage at which nurses are prepared to say no to back pay of \$800 and no to a pay rise in base award rates of \$56.60 a week in order to maintain those wages and conditions, and in respect of some major centres such as Geraldton and Kalgoorlie, the retention allowance which is being pressed on the Government by local hospital boards, and the Government has refused to say yes to that. It seems that the Government is just trying to pick a fight and create a problem in our major country hospitals and, for that matter, in a range of smaller country hospitals. That is why we have moved the motion. I am sure that other members will elaborate further on the issue. The motion calls for action where so far there has been inaction and negligence by the minister.

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [5.04 pm]: I second the motion. I shall make some general comments on what appears to be occurring at a political level in the dispute. I shall also make some specific remarks about my electorate and Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital. We have a general crisis in attracting public servants to live and work in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Many efforts have been made lately to attract teachers to Kalgoorlie-Boulder. If we contrast the situation within the Education budget that was handed down recently, dollars have been put into next year's budget to ensure that incentives packages are available for difficult-to-staff schools. Of course, Kalgoorlie-Boulder is not the only place that has had some difficulty in attracting teachers. Certainly, we are still down eight teachers in the goldfields. Another area in which we have difficulty attracting permanent staff is the nursing profession. That is not new. Over the years many friends of mine who are in the nursing profession have visited Kalgoorlie on short-term projects as agency nurses. Although that is great for me in keeping some social contact, I do not know whether it is so great for the hospital to need to rely -

Mr Bloffwitch: It is very expensive for the hospital.

Ms ANWYL: Absolutely. The member for Geraldton has hit the nail on the head. It is expensive, but there are other implications for patient care and consistency. Before I detail what is happening in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, I will make some general brief remarks about the nursing profession. No member would dispute that nurses carry out a very difficult job and that they are the backbone of health provision in this State. In some remote areas, there are no general practitioners, only nurses. In some remote Aboriginal communities, in effect nurses must be on call 24 hours a day to answer any query that may come to their door. They certainly are a vital part of the health service network in the State. Nurses are held in very high esteem in the community. I do not think that would surprise any member. Whenever opinion surveys about the ranking of certain professions in the community are undertaken, unfortunately politicians are not near the top.

Mr Bloffwitch: They are very close to journalists.

Ms ANWYL: They are, and unfortunately car salesmen are at the bottom.

Mr Bloffwitch: Used car salesmen.

Ms ANWYL: That is right. Lawyers are not much higher, but they are a bit higher than car salesmen. Nurses are at the top of the scale, with a 97 per cent approval rating.

Mr Day: Similar to dentists.

Ms ANWYL: No. I do not think that dentists are even on the scale. Nurses are at the top from year to year. There is no doubt about it. Given that nurses are so dedicated and that they work so hard in a difficult job and face many threats to their personal safety, particularly in some of the more difficult and remote areas of the State, why does the Court Government want to give nurses a hard time?

Mr Day: It is a silly question because we don't want to give nurses a hard time, and what's more, we don't.

Ms ANWYL: What can happen is very simple - the minister can authorise health service boards around the State to put incentives proposals to nurses to ensure that accrued days off are part of a package in each health service board. Let us consider what has happened to the provision of health services in this State. The Government has implemented a system in which there are supposedly semi-autonomous health service boards in regional areas. The nursing dispute has revealed that those semi-autonomous health service boards do not have authority from the Health Department to make offers to nurses or to negotiate packages which reflect the nature of the community. They are not allowed to do that under the minister.

Mr Day: They are.

Ms ANWYL: No, they are not.

Mr Day: Yes, they are, as long as it is within the general framework of the industrial relations system.

Ms ANWYL: I will quote from a letter addressed to the secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation from the Northern Goldfields Health Service Board. The letter, signed by the acting general manager, makes it clear that the health service board wants to make a proposal to nurses in the goldfields which will take account of the need for incentives to attract and retain nurses at the difficult-to-staff hospital. We know a substantial amount of money is being spent on agency nurses. The situation is set out in the letter. It states -

The Health Service is providing the Health Department of WA with some additional information relating to the attraction and retention submission and will be meeting with the Department on Monday the 10th of May to try and expedite the process. As soon as we are advised of the outcomes to our proposal your organisation will be informed immediately.

In conclusion, the Health Service is keen to provide our nurses with the same core benefits as those enjoyed by Metropolitan Nurses and would like to see the ballot conducted again, with the full support of the union. Unfortunately further delays place our capacity to continue to offer the Metro deal, with retrospectivity to January 1998, in jeopardy.

If we go to the core of the letter, the health service wants to offer Kalgoorlie nurses an attractive incentive to come to, and remain at, the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital. However, it must put it to the Health Department again. We must remember that a vote has already been held in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. It must be put to the Health Department again, and the health service hopes that the department will allow it some autonomy to make an offer of settlement to nurses which will recognise the fact that they are working in a difficult-to-staff hospital. The health service board will go to the minister, hoping to get permission from the Health Department to make realistic offers of incentives to country nurses. My electorate needs a well-staffed hospital.

Mr Day: Exactly, and that is why we are building new accommodation for nurses and doctors in Kalgoorlie. Are you aware that 13 units will be built?

Ms ANWYL: I am aware of that and I am also aware that there is a dispute. I saw the minister in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, but I do not know whether the dispute has been resolved.

Mr Day: Are you aware of the desire to build them in Finnerty Lane? Do you support that proposal?

Ms ANWYL: My concern with that proposal is that another option may be more acceptable to the whole community, but I do not have time to discuss that with the minister.

Mr Day: I would like to hear you support what is being proposed, because it will be high-quality accommodation designed to do exactly what you want it to do; that is, attract nurses and doctors to Kalgoorlie.

Ms ANWYL: Accommodation is one vital issue that has been neglected for some time. I am pleased to see that an amount for capital expenditure has been included in this budget. However, if the minister is not prepared to offer the nurses in my electorate more than that received by a metropolitan nurse, we will continue to have a crisis in nursing staff. Let us look at what is happening in another town. I am sure the minister would be aware that a small number of nurses are employed at the Norseman District Hospital, a town of less than 1 500 people, given the downturn in the gold industry.

Mr Day: It is about six.

Ms ANWYL: Yes, I think that is right. The local health service board has made it clear that it wants to offer nurses something above that received by their Perth counterparts. Why should it not want to do that? The nurses live in one of the

most remote areas of Western Australia, and in a community that is not renowned for its facilities. I have been informed - if I am wrong please correct me - that the health service board has been in a position to provide free accommodation to those nurses. The health service board has been told by the Health Department that it has not authorised that and it should not do it. It said that it will not authorise any incentives for the retention and attraction of nurses by offering money above that received by their metropolitan counterparts. The nurses in Norseman are saying that if this is not sorted out, they will resign. These women reside in Norseman; but, if they resigned, what would it cost to staff the Norseman hospital with agency nurses? It will be a huge economic cost. What about the social cost to the small community of Norseman? It is not good enough to prevent the local health service board having some autonomy. What was the point of setting up health service boards, if they are not able to make realistic and appropriate offers to nurses? I am sure the minister will address that issue when he makes his response.

I will take a few minutes to outline the problems at the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital. Firstly, a ward at the hospital has been closed for about 18 months. Two reasons for that closure have been supplied: Firstly, it is too difficult to find the nurses to keep the ward open; and, secondly, it is undergoing routine maintenance. It must be extremely routine maintenance to keep the ward shut for 18 months, so I discount that. Clearly, staffing of that ward is an issue. Some might say that there is no pressure on the beds at Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital, but there is pressure. General practitioners have told me that they are under constant pressure to move their patients quickly through the hospital. I am not suggesting there is any negligence in that. It is a fact of life; there is pressure for beds, particularly respite beds, given the fact that the population is ageing and a much wider geographical area is being serviced. I see the member for Roe is in the Chamber. Due to the decreased surgery time available in the Esperance District Hospital, I have been told that increasing numbers of Esperance residents are accessing the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital. We do not have a difficulty with that; we are not so parochial to say that we do not agree with that. We want adequate resourcing so the increasing number of patients can be properly serviced.

Secondly, there is no permanent director of nursing and there has not been one for a long time. The acting director of nursing is either the second or third acting director. That is an example of the difficulty in staffing the hospital at Kalgoorlie. We know that agency nurses cost more. There is roughly a 20 per cent loading on their salary; however, that will decrease if a three to six-month contract can be negotiated. When agency nurses come to town, they have a better standard of accommodation than the resident nurses and they get a better type of travel to and from the town; for example, recruited permanent nurses might have their train fares paid, but agency nurses might have their plane fares paid. That is the type of cost involved. We know some patient care will be affected by a high level of agency nurses. I am not criticising the professionalism of those nurses, but one does not have to be Einstein to work out that if a number of nurses are working on a busy ward, it will take time to learn the layout of the ward, the personalities in the hospital, and the general practitioners and specialists in town. Nurses who are experienced at a hospital will be able to perform their duties more efficiently than a raft of agency nurses.

In addition, the nurses at the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital have difficulty accessing their leave entitlements. There are not enough relieving nurses, agency nurses or, indeed, permanent nurses available to work when nurses want to go on leave. I was interested to read a recent letter to *The West Australian* from three Kalgoorlie nurses who asked what was this concept of taking annual leave, because when they try to take leave they are told they cannot because there is no-one to cover for them. We cannot overestimate the impact that will have on the morale of the nursing staff.

Members also know about the difficult cases admitted to the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital. The hospital has many "frequent flyers"; that is, patients who have chronic health problems and who are regular visitors to the hospital, many of whom are Aboriginal. The area also has a very high number of mental health patients and a much higher than the state average number of attempted suicides that must be dealt with by the nurses. The hospital has no specific psychiatric nurses and no dedicated psychiatric ward, unlike the Esperance hospital.

Mr Ainsworth: It is a very good service.

Ms ANWYL: Kalgoorlie would like one just like it. Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital also deals with more than 800 live births each year. As a result of that high number, the hospital is required to manage a high number of post-natal depression cases.

The Kalgoorlie-Boulder region experiences 4.5 times the state average use of needles. Detoxification treatment of people with alcohol or other drug problems - often involving illicit drugs - is a major task for nurses. The best example of personal safety being at risk I know of is a case involving a nurse who was assaulted by a female illicit drug user who was in hospital undergoing detoxification. The nurse sustained a broken arm, and unfortunately it was a complicated fracture that affected her ability to nurse. The personal safety of nurses is frequently at risk in the hospital either from visitors or from patients. I want to give credit where it is due: Steps have been taken to address those issues. Security has been improved and entrances and exits have been minimised. However, we must remember the people we are discussing - the hardworking nurses.

For the reasons I have outlined, Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital is difficult to staff. I have not referred to the cost of living in the area, and I probably do not need to say that we are dealing with much higher than average living costs for food and other necessities of life. Kalgoorlie-Boulder also has a reputation among young single women as not being the best place to live. About 10 years ago Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital was seen as a very good place to train for a variety of reasons. However, the word I now hear from nurses, particularly younger nurses, is that the hospital no longer has that status.

Why have nurses involved in the enterprise bargaining agreement process found themselves pitted against their health services boards, which are not allowed to negotiate a package that reflects the reality of country living? Why will the Health

Department not allow health service boards to make realistic offers? In particular, why is an element of blackmail now being used? We know that country nurses are currently earning about \$10.79 less a week than their metropolitan counterparts. We also know that the nurses have been told of a deadline. I referred to that earlier, and I believe it is 14 June 1999. The nurses are being told that if they do not accept the packages on offer by that date they will miss out on back pay, which could be worth as much as \$800, and that a completely new negotiating process will be put in place. If that new process is implemented, which I am told by the Health Department is taking 18 months to resolve, a number of the other conditions and wage increases that have been negotiated for city nurses will not be available to country nurses. By the middle of next year that could result in country nurses earning about \$56 less per week than their city counterparts. If members think that will help us to staff these country hospitals, they had better think again. If they think that having a group like the Norseman nurses threatening to resign is a good thing for the health system, they should also think again because that creates massive problems.

Why will the Health Department not allow health service boards to make appropriate offers? I am at a loss to understand. It appears that the Government does not have a genuine interest in resolving this issue. Politically I cannot understand that, because nurses are highly esteemed in our community and hospitals are vital in both the city and the country. I have referred to the Norseman situation, but it is not an isolated case. Leonora has no community health nurse. Remote Aboriginal communities are experiencing problems because they cannot attract community health nurses. Kambalda may lose its only general practitioner. At the end of this month or next month the region will lose the only general practitioner prescribing methadone for the high number of people who rely on that drug. I am told that the other general practitioners do not wish to prescribe from their surgeries, and I acknowledge that there are good reasons for that in some cases. We may end up with a fly-in fly-out doctor coming from Perth to prescribe methadone. How that is in the interests of the community, I do not know.

I ask the minister to start looking at some of the options for incentives. The major stumbling block in Kalgoorlie is the lack of incentives. Although an aspect of the accrued day off dispute is still relevant in the area, it is of more importance to some of the other regional hospitals than it is to the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital.

We have heard from the Education Minister in this place and we have seen in the budget that a specific amount has been set aside for incentives for difficult-to-staff remote and rural schools. Why is the same not happening for country nurses? Some lateral thinking could be used to address this issue.

One of the most frequent remarks I hear from former nurses - that is, women who still reside in the local community but who no longer choose to nurse, many of whom have small children - is that if child care or some form of subsidy were available they would return to work. Of course, the Federal Government has presided over cuts to the child care system. Such a facility would not necessarily need to be based at the hospital, but that might be the most cost-effective arrangement. If such a service were available, these nurses would happily return to work. That must be preferable, even if they are part-time nurses, to flying in agency nurses.

Child care is one significant issue. Another significant issue is the options that exist for country nurses to train, particularly in the context of the removal of their accrued days off. I understand - I wish the member for Collie were here, because I am sure she could help me - that many of the nurses in country areas use their accrued days off to undertake training. Let us be realistic. It benefits the Health Department if nurses use their approved days off for training. We want nurses to train so that they can provide a quality level of patient care. Therefore, it is beyond me to understand why the minister will not make a constructive effort to sort out this issue.

Nurses in country areas feel real resentment that they are in this position. Country nurses are dedicated and hardworking, and they deserve some measure of pay and conditions that sets them apart from their metropolitan counterparts, not just because of the high cost of living in country areas, but also because of the huge range of factors that mean it is better to employ nurses on a permanent basis in the country than to employ agency nurses; and that is occurring often. I quoted earlier from a letter from the Northern Goldfields Health Service Board. I hope the minister will be in a position to advise the House that after the meeting on 10 May that is referred to in that letter, the health service board will now have some room to offer incentives to the nurses in my electorate. I hope the minister will tell the House also that he will be involved in constructive efforts by the Health Department to ensure that regional health service boards can negotiate packages which are relevant to nurses who work in those geographical regions. The member for Fremantle and I have dwelt on certain geographical areas. I hope the level of anger and resentment that I have seen in my electorate and that I have heard about from some of the south-west hospitals is not replicated around the State. However, I suspect that it is, because if I were a nurse working in a remote Kimberley hospital, I would expect to receive some incentives for working there.

Mr Day: What was the specific point about that letter?

Ms ANWYL: I want the minister to tell me whether he has now authorised that health service board to make an incentive offer to those nurses.

Mr Day: The short answer is yes.

Ms ANWYL: I want to know some detail about that, and I want also to know what steps are being taken to allow remote health service boards to offer realistic packages, particularly in the Kimberley. A threat has been made by some nurses - I gave the Norseman example - that if this matter is not sorted out, they will not work. What would be the cost of employing agency nurses across all of our country hospitals, because that is what the minister is confronting?

MR DAY (Darling Range - Minister for Health) [5.33 pm]: I am happy to respond to some of the comments made by the Opposition and to put on the record some of the facts. The motion does not reflect the facts about the employment

conditions for nurses in country health services. I state emphatically that there has been no obstruction from either me as minister or the Health Department of Western Australia with regard to seeking a resolution to the current negotiations. I therefore oppose the motion, and the Government will vote against it, not surprisingly. The true situation is opposite to the sentiments that have been expressed in the motion, and I will demonstrate that by referring, firstly, to some details about the current enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations; secondly, to the improvement in accommodation which is being provided for country nurses; and, thirdly, to the nursing scholarship scheme that is in place to encourage people to take up nursing as a career, and to encourage people who have taken up nursing to continue their education and to focus on encouraging people who are working in country locations.

Two essential points need to be appreciated in this debate. The first point is that the offer which has been made to country nurses is in general terms the same as has been put in place for and accepted by metropolitan nurses. That set of arrangements flows from an arbitrated decision by Senior Deputy President MacBean of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission during 1998 following a protracted dispute in the metropolitan area. Part of that decision was a 10.5 per cent pay increase over two and half years, combined with the removal of accrued days off for part-time nurses. That was determined not by the Government or the Health Department, but by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

The second point I make is that the reason the offer is being made in toto to country nurses is that the Australian Nursing Federation requested that the same offer be made to country nurses as had been put in place for metropolitan nurses. It is certainly correct that the leadership of the nurses federation has since changed; and perhaps that was a factor in the change of leadership. I accept the point of the member for Geraldton, and others, that there must be some flexibility in what can be offered to country nurses. That is occurring, and it is recognised by me as the minister responsible and the Health Department. Clearly, what is offered to country nurses needs to fit within our overall industrial relations framework in Western Australia. It would be of concern from an overall government point of view if arrangements were arrived at for individual country health services that were not sustainable around the State. We would also be concerned about the flow-on effects if major variations were offered. Any Government would need to take the same attitude. I have no doubt that if the Labor Party were in government, it would take the same sort of attitude, because there is no other reasonable and rational way to manage the situation.

Ms Anwyl: The difficulty is that because you cannot offer something in Perth, you will not offer it in the country, but the fact is that is where the real dispute lies. Have you talked to your colleague the Minister for Education about the way he is gearing policy around difficult-to-staff schools, because it is exactly the same issue with difficult-to-staff hospitals?

Mr DAY: I am saying there is room for some local variation retention packages, incentive allowances, or whatever the case may be, and that what is in place for the metropolitan area is not exactly the same as needs to be offered or is ultimately put in place for country nurses. I agree that some local variation should be possible. However, it must be within the industrial relations and financial circumstances that exist in this State. No Government could take any other approach and manage the health system in a rational and reasonable manner. It is also important to realise that while the nursing staff in some health services have voted against the offer that has been made, a significant number of nurses in other health services have voted in favour of what has been offered. In total, the latest figures indicate that nurses in 25 health services voted in favour of the offer, and nurses in 26 health services voted against what was offered. On a statewide basis, including the metropolitan area, 7 500 nurses voted in favour of the offer and 1 200 voted against it.

Ms Anwyl: That includes the metropolitan nurses.

Mr DAY: Yes. It includes the metropolitan area - we cannot ignore what has taken place there. The offer is generous with a 10.5 per cent salary increase with some trade-offs. It is not possible these days to pay substantial salary increases without some improvement in productivity so we have a win-win situation. We put a large amount of our state budget into our health system. It is under increased pressure to provide more services, both in range and quantity of treatment. More demand is placed on funding available, and we must do all we can reasonably to achieve maximum productivity while ensuring that the system provides good working conditions for all working within it. Some of the trade-offs are entirely reasonable to consider, as is occurring in country health services.

Importantly, as part of the agreement reached with the Australian Nursing Federation in June of last year, health services are free to include variations within their EBAs within government labour relations policy and financial constraints. Examples can be found of such agreements in the Geraldton health service, the Midwest health service, which surrounds the Geraldton area, and the Kalgoorlie health service. Additional benefits are proposed to address the retention problems referred to by the members for Kalgoorlie and Geraldton.

I refer to the agreement with the Nursing Federation arrived at last year for the metropolitan outcome to be offered to country nurses. That was consistent with an agreement reached with the Commissioner of Health, the State Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation and Senior Deputy President MacBean of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission at a conference on 13 June 1998. I am advised that at the insistence of the Nursing Federation, it was agreed that the arbitrated outcome for metropolitan nurses' EBA also be offered to rural nurse. That is why the process has occurred.

Mr Osborne interjected.

Mr Bloffwitch: You can understand why they do it. It is a bit tricky as country cousins do not want to miss out.

Mr DAY: We are doing everything we can to ensure that country cousins do not miss out. In some cases, they have voted to accept the offer and in other cases variations are being offered. The EBA has been rejected by country nurses for a variety of reasons. I understand that a high proportion of country nurses work part time, and that the removal of the accrued day off provision would have a significant impact. I understand that the rejection of the metropolitan deal is a way of some

country nurses saying that additional time off is more important to them than the financial benefit of a salary offer. That aspect can be dealt with through flexible rostering arrangements. It is important for the management of health services to put in place rosters to deal with the aspirations of staff on an individual and collective basis. We do not need an ADO system for nurses to be satisfied in the time off they want.

Mention was made of 30 June as the cut-off point for the current offer to be accepted. Otherwise the backdating to 1 January 1998, and consequent back pay, may be lost. That simply recognises the reality of the situation. Obviously, if nurses do not want to accept what is on offer at the moment, which includes backdating to 1 January of last year, with a 10.5 per cent pay increase over two years, we need to enter new negotiations for a new package which may or may not include back pay. We cannot guarantee that back pay will be included if people reject the package offered at the moment. I encourage nurses to accept what I believe to be a reasonable and generous offer from their point of view, with trade-offs which can be managed in a reasonable way.

I understand that nurses in Kalgoorlie who rejected the EBA have developed an expectation that their EBA will contain retention and attraction benefits. I am advised that the Kalgoorlie health service has listened to its nurses and is proposing to offer some additional incentives, such as those proposed for Geraldton.

Ms Anwyl: At a meeting on 10 May they said that they could offer some increased benefit. Is that right?

Mr DAY: That would be consistent with my comments and the advice I have received; namely, there is the ability to make some local variations to put in place retention packages or incentives to encourage people to work in localities, such as Kalgoorlie.

Ms Anwyl: Is that above and beyond the last offer?

Mr DAY: It can be above and beyond, and different from, the metropolitan offer.

Ms Anwyl: The Kalgoorlie nurses have already voted to reject it once.

Mr DAY: Obviously, if nurses in any health service voted to reject the previous offer, new negotiations must reach, we hope, some mutually acceptable outcome. It may involve some variation to what was reasonably offered. We hope this will be acceptable to nurses in the health services.

I also refute the suggestion in the second part of the motion moved by the member for Fremantle that the Government is standing in the way of incentive packages to overcome difficulties in staffing hospitals in rural and remote areas. I demonstrated that point in reference to Kalgoorlie and Geraldton. The Geraldton health service and the Midwest health service have sought Health Department and Department of Productivity and Labour Relations approval for a number of variations to the metropolitan agreement as part of their retention programs. These include a retention bonus, improvements in on-call provisions and the cashing out of some leave entitlements.

Dr Turnbull: In relation to Kalgoorlie, Merredin and some other places which have rejected the offer, if the health board were to develop an incentive package, would that then go back to the nurses for another vote? There would not be much point in going back for a vote without some variation to the package.

Mr DAY: That is unless the nurses want to reconsider their position. In some cases, nurses have probably voted without a full understanding of all the implications of what is being offered. It is up to them whether they will change their minds and reconsider, and whether they want to take up the 10.5 per cent salary increase immediately, and be paid it as soon as possible. If they want to have further discussions with the management of the health service, they can do so. They must work it out on a local basis, but it must be within our overall industrial relations framework; therefore, any package in any health service will be sustainable on a statewide basis.

Dr Turnbull: Do you see the Kalgoorlie nurses going back to vote again?

Mr DAY: After some further discussions, yes. Cabinet approval was given for the inclusion of a specific attraction and retention package in the certified agreement for the north west of the State. The benefits include significant funding for improved accommodation, up to \$9 000 per annum gratuity payment, enhanced on-call allowances, additional access to professional development and enhanced relocation benefits. The member for Kalgoorlie spoke about the difficulty of staffing Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital; however, this is not as difficult as staffing in the north west and more remote parts of the State, particularly the Kimberley and Pilbara regions. For example, Warmun, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing are far more isolated than places such as Kalgoorlie. I also draw to the attention of the House that the Health Department is currently considering a submission from a health service for the provision of an attraction and retention package that may have industry-wide application. It is being considered outside the current enterprise bargaining process. There is a strong desire on the part of both the Government and the Health Department to provide packages that will attract nurses to country areas of Western Australia. The Health Department is certainly advocating a policy of flexible rostering in rural health services to ensure that the trade-off of ADOs does not detract from lifestyle issues for those highly valued nurses working in country hospitals on a part-time basis. Contrary to the sentiments expressed in the motion, the Government and the Health Department are playing a facilitating role to reach a satisfactory outcome in the current negotiations.

I draw to the attention of the House some of the health services in which the metropolitan offer has been taken up. The member for Fremantle mentioned some health services in which it has been rejected; however, a significant number have accepted the offer, including the Esperance Health Service, the Upper Great Southern Health Service, the Boddington District Hospital, the Avon Health Service, the Cunderdin District Hospital and those in the areas of Kellerberrin, Kununoppin, Mukinbudin, Naremben, Southern Cross, Wyalkatchem-Koorda, Laverton, Leonora, Gascoyne, Jerramungup,

Kojonup, Murchison, West Pilbara, East Pilbara, Ashburton, Nannup, Northcliffe, Corrigin and Bruce Rock. That is a substantial spread of places around the State in which the previous offer has been taken up.

I take the opportunity of placing on record that a substantial program is in place for upgrading accommodation for nurses and other health service staff in country Western Australia. The Government recognises that the provision of high standard accommodation is of great importance in being able to attract and retain health professionals. As a result, it has a substantial program for building new staff accommodation and upgrading existing accommodation. In the capital works program between 1998-99 and 2000-01, \$9.6m has been allocated to undertake such works. That is in addition to an allocation of \$3m in the capital works program from 1996-97 to 1998-99. Also various allocations are made from the minor works and special repairs and equipment program, and some funds are available from the staff accommodation trust fund. Projects are under way or will soon be under way in the following areas: Northam, \$110 000 for a new two-bed unit; Gnowangerup, \$100 000; Corrigin, \$135 000; Port Hedland, \$200 000; Carnarvon, \$250 000; Exmouth, \$250 000; and Onslow, \$300 000, \$66 500, \$46 000 and \$51 000. In the Kimberley region the following amounts have been allocated: Broome, \$250 000; Derby, \$250 000; Halls Creek, \$170 000; Oombulgurri, \$622 000; and Warmun, \$575 000. In the mid-west region, \$260 000 has been allocated to Moora, and in Leonora in the northern goldfields \$200 000 is allocated for improving accommodation. The Government had hoped that a further project would be under way in Kalgoorlie to build 13 high quality units for health professionals. It is proposed to be constructed in Finnerty Lane, in the North Kalgoorlie area. I am aware of local debate about that project, and the strong desire on the part of the local health service board for the project to go ahead on that site. The board has released a media statement today calling for the project to proceed as soon as possible. I hope the member for Kalgoorlie will support the project.

Ms Anwyl: Have you now lodged an appeal against the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's decision not to allow that building program?

Mr DAY: Yes. Obviously, the project cannot go ahead unless appropriate approval is given, and that will be determined by the Minister for Planning. The point needs to be made that high quality accommodation would be built that would allow the preservation of the park area adjacent to the site. It is a good location which is relatively close to the hospital, and that is obviously of importance to the health professionals. Also, it will help to attract well-qualified and skilled health professionals to Kalgoorlie. I believe it will have the broad support of the people of Kalgoorlie; it certainly has the strong support of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Health Service Board and I hope it has the support of the member for Kalgoorlie.

Ms Anwyl: Nowhere is very far from the hospital in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. It is not a geographically large city. The concerns I have are that some other land proposals were made which would preserve the recreational space at the existing park, but still provide an excellent site for accommodation to be built for nurses. I am not sure why those other options have not been pursued, but certainly I think it is desirable that proper accommodation be provided for nurses. At the same time, there is pressure to preserve what recreational space there is in that town, because although it is surrounded by natural bushland, there is not much recreational space in the town. I do not know whether the minister is in a position to respond to that, and I will understand if he is not. We can take that up later, but I am not sure why the other options proposed have not been pursued.

Mr DAY: One problem would be the delay that would occur, but this is essentially a debate for the people of Kalgoorlie. As Minister for Health, I am between a rock and a hard place. The health service board wants the units to go ahead on the proposed site, and other people in Kalgoorlie, including the majority of councillors, do not want it to go ahead on that site. I have visited the area, inspected the various sites, and spoken to a number of people. On balance, it seems better for it to go ahead on the previously planned site, but that is a debate for the people of Kalgoorlie.

Dr Turnbull: Would people be able to walk to the hospital from the proposed site? That is a very big question for night staff.

Ms Anwyl: It is about a 25-minute walk. It is not very close. They would need some form of transport at night.

Mr DAY: It is probably within walking distance, but people certainly would not walk it at night. Some staff might choose to walk to it in daylight hours, but generally speaking I expect they would drive. Certainly, that site is closer than the other sites that have been considered, particularly the alternative site in O'Connor.

I continue with information on improved staff accommodation in country areas: In Ravensthorpe, two projects at a cost of \$130 000 each are under construction, and in Karratha \$403 600 has been allocated to upgrade four houses. An extensive program has been implemented to upgrade staff accommodation around the State to attract people to work in the hospitals and health services.

A significant scholarship scheme has been implemented through the Health Department of Western Australia which is available to both undergraduate nursing trainees and graduate nurses. For undergraduates, \$163 000 is being made available in the current financial year to offer assistance. Concern has been raised about the current average age of the nursing work force and we are keen to attract more and younger people into nursing as a career, and especially to work in the country areas of Western Australia. Scholarships up to a value of \$2 500 per year per student are available to enable those students who identified nursing as a first career choice to complete the undergraduate program and enter the nursing work force. In addition, clinical nursing scholarships are in place to provide assistance to cover the costs of postgraduate and continuing education for nurses. The Health Department has funded these scholarships to provide opportunities for nurses to gain further professional development in those areas that are urgently required in the workplace. The funding available in this financial year totals \$358 000. Scholarships up to a value of \$5 000 are available particularly for postgraduate studies in the areas of critical care, peri-operative nursing, emergency nursing and gerontology. In addition, mental health and

midwifery have been especially targeted due to ongoing shortages in those areas. Mental health and midwifery scholarships up to a value of \$13 000 each are available. In addition, a scholarship scheme named after Helen Bailey, a distinguished nurse educator, offers scholarships up to a value of \$10 000 each. Those scholarships are to assist nurses who are studying at the masters or doctorate levels and are especially targeted to assist them in the completion of nursing research. The Margaret Beard scholarships up to a value of \$4 000 each are available to assist in providing community education, and continuing education scholarships are available up to a value of \$1 000 each to assist both registered and enrolled nurses to undertake short-term, continuing education courses. The total number of undergraduate scholarships which will be offered in July 1999 is 13 in the metropolitan area and 25 in rural areas. At the postgraduate level 36 midwifery scholarships, 11 Margaret Beard scholarships and 56 postgraduate and continuing education scholarships are available in the areas that I mentioned.

It is clear the Government has a comprehensive program to do whatever it can to attract nurses to work in the country areas of Western Australia. It is being addressed through the current EBA negotiations, the scholarships that are offered, and the accommodation upgrade scheme. Therefore, I oppose the motion and will be voting against it.

MR BLOFFWITCH (Geraldton) [6.03 pm]: I cannot agree with the motion because I believe that the system is working in the only way possible. The nurses must consult with the board and they must work within their own hospitals, particularly in regional areas. I can understand in the Perth metropolitan area where major teaching hospitals and very large organisations are located that it is all part of solidarity and being part of the union movement. However, when one is in the little Mt Magnet Health Centre or Cue Hospital, it is an entirely different scenario from the situation in the Perth metropolitan area. I have talked to nurses - at one time I talked to about 20 nurses about their workplace agreement - and have told them that their future must lie in their negotiations with the hospital board. It is no good their relying on the people in Perth who represent them and who do not understand the conditions in the hospitals in which the nurses work. As a result of those different conditions, some of the things the people in Perth agree to, country nurses will not. That is obvious, because the hospital in my electorate totally rejected the award that was agreed to in Perth. Part of the reason is that many part-timers work in the hospital. When one refers to "part-timers", it is a bit of a fallacy to brand them in that way, because a part-timer can be someone who works 76 hours a fortnight, 38 hours a week, which one would think was a normal week. However, anybody who works less than 80 hours a fortnight is treated as a part-timer. This is what is totally wrong. This is the way the system works in Perth and most of the nurses in Perth work between 20 and 24 hours a week so one can understand them being termed part-timers. However, because of that huge flexibility, nurses in my electorate who work a couple of hours less each fortnight are treated as part-timers. They have been told that, under this new award, they will lose their days off in exchange for the 10 per cent pay rise they have been seeking for the past two years. That does not seem like a lot of money to people who have been trying for two years to get a pay rise. As a matter of fact it seems like an insult.

These are the things that we in government must learn; if people are asked to give up benefits - to give up days off - we must be overly generous. We cannot be under-generous, because we must remember that when entering into these agreements, people are naturally frightened and for the first time in their lives they are not protected by the award in the big outside world; they are dealing on a one-to-one basis with someone. In dealing with them, it is important that they gain confidence and to enable that to occur, I honestly believe one must be overly generous because they must be reassured that they are worth dealing with and that the undertakings which are made will be honoured.

I am pleased the Minister for Health has offered an extra incentive package to the nurses in Geraldton and the mid west. I admit that Geraldton does not have - I do not mean this as an insult - some of the drawbacks of Kalgoorlie; Geraldton's average temperature is in the 30s while Kalgoorlie's is in the 40s in summer; it has an ocean in which to swim; and it has some of the best seafood available in the world. However, as does Kalgoorlie and many other places, it suffers the disadvantage of not having the attractions of Perth, particularly for the younger nurses. The regional areas do not have the excitement of Perth and Northbridge, the nightclubs and the various things that are available, and one makes some sort of sacrifice when one comes to these regional areas. I am pleased to see that the minister is recognising that. He is now allowing the boards to give extra incentives; he will allow them to examine what they are doing, and as a result, members will find that nurses will accept this type of offer, and we will end up with a far happier hospital. We will end up with nurses who are rewarded in the way they should be. They will not be asked to give away all their benefits for the 10.5 per cent they are being offered. Provided we are flexible enough, I am sure the matter can be resolved. Having talked to the minister, I am sure we will go down that road and get there. All I can do is commend the job he is doing, and totally reject the sentiments in the motion.

DR TURNBULL (Collie) [6.10 pm]: I am pleased to be able to talk about the wages and conditions, and attraction and retention of country nurses. The minister said incentive packages are being prepared for nurses in country hospitals which are difficult to staff. During this speech I will refer to the very large issue of attraction and retention of nurses and health professionals in country areas, in both the long term and the short term. In the short term, country nurses are voting on the package of wages and conditions in the enterprise bargaining agreement which was negotiated last year in the Industrial Relations Commission. When it was before the commission this package was negotiated on behalf of metropolitan nurses. It is a very great disappointment to many country nurses that they are now being offered exactly the same package as was negotiated for the metropolitan nurses. The minister has said that this is because the leadership of the Australian Nursing Federation, in front of Commissioner MacBean, agreed that country nurses would receive exactly the same package as that negotiated for the metropolitan nurses. Despite the minister's statement, country nurses were not of that impression, and that is one reason they are now particularly concerned. Having spoken to some of these nurses in my electorate, I know they are concerned that country nurses who work part time are being asked to give up their accrued days off to achieve the 10.5 per cent increase in salaries. The sacrifice of accrued days off is being regarded as a productivity payment.

We must look at the country hospital in three categories - regional, subregional and small country hospitals. The nursing structure and the timetabling varies markedly between the three categories. The picture in the bigger hospitals, where a lot of full timers are keeping their accrued days off, is very different from that in the hospitals where there is a high percentage of part timers who are now faced with having to trade off their accrued days off. Further, in an enormous number of country hospitals, nurses have already achieved the productivity gain by the removal of overlapping shifts. The nurses have already done that through the action of becoming part timers.

Every health district in the area has some specific, unique issue related to the local hospital. The minister has said that hospital management within the health boards can offer different incentive packages to nurses, according to the conditions within their hospital. He added a rider that that must stay within the wages policy of the Government. I put forward this case: For quite a lot of nurses in the country at the moment, their ability to have time off, which suits their family requirements, is of far more value to them than more money in their pay packets. This is not the same argument as that for the nurses in Kalgoorlie and Geraldton - it is totally different - where the health boards can provide an incentive package including better accommodation, or increased pay, or a retention bonus. Such an incentive will not appeal to the nurses who are located in the south west or the great southern areas, who want flexible timetabling which will fit in with their family lifestyle.

It is unfortunate that the Health Department negotiating team and the Government salaries management section have said that the factor of accrued days off is a core issue and not negotiable. When talking about attracting and retaining nurses - in the south west and great southern regions the major problem is retaining nurses, rather than attracting them - we must be able to offer them something they want. This is the most crucial part of the whole debate. I have already met with the minister and the officials at the Health Department and had discussions about this issue. The alternative to accrued days off being put forward is flexible rostering. I have looked at that suggestion compared with that of accrued days off and have had a very short discussion with nurses about them. Nurses could accept flexible rostering as an alternative to accrued days off if that was enshrined in something stronger than just policy.

I ask the minister to ask the Health Department in the current negotiations to look at some way in which the introduction of flexible rostering can have some structure when applied to a single workplace. Unfortunately, very often the results of the rostering are influenced very greatly by the officer who has responsibility for preparing the timetable. If the rostering is being formulated only for the benefit of the hospital or the health board management, the interests of the nurses are less likely to be attended to. It is all very well to say that there might be a policy or a guideline on how flexible rostering could work; however, it could be applied very differently from one place to another. I feel the management and the nurses will need to spend a lot of time discussing this issue before nurses are confident that there is goodwill in the recommendation of flexible rostering and that it is being implemented to the benefit of the nurses, rather than exclusively for the benefit of the budget of the hospital, as occurs in some places. I am concerned that the negotiations are not rushed through.

The minister read out a list of places at which nurses had voted in favour of the package. In the country, apparently, about 550 nurses have accepted it and more than 1 000 nurses have rejected it. We need time in which to negotiate. On behalf of other parliamentary members from the country, particularly National Party members, and the nurses whom we represent, and especially for the ultimate good of the health boards, I trust that the negotiation in places which have voted against the package will not be rushed or forced and that it will be done with goodwill. The minister discussed the incentive packages which are being developed for areas in which hospital budgets allow extra payment. In our area one could not get an extra payment out of the hospital budget. I am trying to point out that nurses do not really need extra money. Nurses want flexibility to have time off with their families when they need it.

Tonight the minister has presented a very good case. He is not obstructing health service boards in the country from offering realistic wage packages and conditions. He is allowing health service boards to negotiate with nurses in different areas a specific package for their area. He has said that nurses can take a second vote on the new issues. I hope that that will flow on to other country hospitals, particularly in the south west and the great southern, where nurses might want to consider an option that gives them an incentive to stay in their jobs in the country, and that might not be extra money. That would certainly be to the benefit of the budgets. As to the long term, we have the crucial problem of the retention of nurses. I predict that if nurses in the south west and the great southern do not reach an acceptable position with the Health Department, more will leave, and then we will have a problem in the south west and in the great southern.

Unfortunately, many things are conspiring against making it attractive for professional people of any type to come to the country. Lack of teachers is the worst case of all. It was precipitated by a case which went before the Equal Opportunity Commission and it involved a woman from the education system. The commission's ruling was that she could not be disadvantaged in her promotion due to the fact that she had not been to the country. That has set a terrible precedent. As we know, even areas such as Collie are short of teachers, whereas before people were happy to come to Collie, which has a lovely environment and very good facilities. People were happy to come to Collie for several years if they could go back to the city and be assured of promotion. We must make sure that in the long term no professional, particularly a professional who is employed in a government agency, finds that going to the country will be detrimental to his or her career. We must ensure that if professionals go to the country they help their career prospects through the experience and wide exposure that they receive and then have the opportunity to slot back into their department when they go back to the city. That is the first point that we must consider for a long-term policy. We must examine the Equal Opportunity Commission's ruling and consider whether we can negate it or even amend the Equal Opportunity Commission legislation.

Secondly, we must get more younger people into the country. The best way of doing that is to attract them soon after they graduate - in other words, when they are not set in the ways of the city, when they are unmarried or when they do not have children and their spouses do not have other jobs. We want them to make an early commitment. The best way of doing that

would be through a higher education contribution scheme forgiveness program. Such a HECS forgiveness program would need to be federal government policy, but there is already such a policy in the armed services. If one goes into the armed services and does a tertiary degree, as long as one stays in the armed services for the period equal to the HECS forgiveness, one does not need to pay back that HECS. That commitment can be made at any stage in the undergraduate years. Such a process could apply to all tertiary-trained people who go to the country - for example, nurses, health professionals, physiotherapists, nurse teachers, doctors, engineers and agricultural science graduates. It could be applied to the many people whom we are unable to attract to the country. If young people were forgiven HECS payments during the training years in return for a commitment to work in the country, it would be set in their minds early in the piece and they would continue the commitment after they graduated. This recommendation, which has been put forward by Kathy Finlayson from Kalgoorlie, is being discussed by people in the Kalgoorlie area.

I could go on at length about how to attract and retain nurses in the country. It is a short-term issue in relation to the current salaries package and it is also a long-term issue. I fully support what the minister has done so far and I trust that in the next few weeks he will continue to support nurses from the country, particularly part-time nurses who want flexible working hours.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (17)

Ms Anwyl	Mr Graham	Mr Marlborough	Mrs Roberts
Mr Brown	Mr Grill	Mr McGinty	Mr Thomas
Mr Carpenter	Mr Kobelke	Mr McGowan	Ms Warnock
Dr Edwards	Ms MacTiernan	Mr Ripper	Mr Cunningham (<i>Teller</i>)
Dr Gallop			

Noes (29)

Mr Ainsworth	Dr Hames	Mr Marshall	Mr Shave
Mr Baker	Mrs Hodson-Thomas	Mr Masters	Mr Trenorden
Mr Bloffwitch	Mrs Holmes	Mr Minson	Mr Tubby
Mr Bradshaw	Mr House	Mr Omodei	Dr Turnbull
Dr Constable	Mr Johnson	Mrs Parker	Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Court	Mr Kierath	Mr Pandal	Mr Wiese
Mr Day	Mr MacLean	Mr Prince	Mr Osborne (<i>Teller</i>)
Mrs Edwardes			

Pair

Mr Riebeling

Mr Cowan

Question thus negatived.

TELECAST OF AUSTRALIAN RULES STATE GAME

Motion

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [6.30 pm]: I seek leave to amend the motion on the Notice Paper.

[Leave granted.]

Ms ANWYL: I move -

That this House congratulates the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on its decision to provide a statewide telecast of the Australian Rules state game to be played between Western Australia and Tasmania in Kalgoorlie-Boulder on 19 June 1999.

Many members may recall that a different motion stood in my name yesterday afternoon. I am very pleased to be the first person in this House to congratulate the ABC on its decision to broadcast this very important game. This game is important to not only Kalgoorlie-Boulder but also the State of Western Australia. Its telecast is particularly important as a sign of commitment to regional Western Australia. I understand that it will also be shown in Tasmania, from which State the other team will come. It is particularly significant for regional Western Australia that the ABC will travel to Kalgoorlie-Boulder to broadcast the game throughout Western Australia and to Tasmania. Some of the other States may also pick it up.

Much work has gone into the arrangements for this game to be played in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. On 19 June a number of activities will be held leading up to the game. On 20 June a special meeting will be held of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Racing Club. Its original date has been changed to 20 June to mark a special meeting of the race club, which I understand will be broadcast by Sky Channel Pty Ltd. Much commitment has gone into this weekend to ensure it is a premier sports weekend on the Western Australian calendar. I have no doubt that as a result of the groups and individuals coming together to organise this game, it will be an excellent weekend. For example, I understand that the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder will host a civic function for the players and officials involved in the game. A great deal of work has been done by the members of the Goldfields Football League under the chairmanship of Ian Clark. That work is held in high esteem by the Perth chapter of the organisers, in which Westar Rules have also been involved.

I am also pleased to say that the Government has provided sponsorship for this initiative. My constituents welcome the involvement of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Norman Moore, and his Parliamentary Secretary, who will make some remarks later in this debate. I often say in this place that I am happy to give credit where credit is due. On this occasion credit is certainly due to the minister for his support of this initiative. In particular, I give credit to the ABC for its decision to make this broadcast. I hope that some members will travel to Kalgoorlie-Boulder. If they are not in a position to do that, they can rest assured that they will be able to watch it on the ABC from Geraldton, Perth and even I think Peel, where the member for Dawesville will be. If members cannot travel to Kalgoorlie-Boulder, which is what they should do, I urge them to watch it on television.

MR MARSHALL (Dawesville - Parliamentary Secretary) [6.38 pm]: I am very pleased to support the remarks made by the member for Kalgoorlie. I and most other football fans of Western Australia have been waiting for this match between Western Australia and Tasmania to be played in the rural area of Kalgoorlie. It will be a wonderful occasion. We are aware that representations were made to the ABC for a statewide direct telecast of this important sporting event. As a former player for East Fremantle, a life member of that club and the No 1 badge holder of the Peel Thunder Football Club - there is conflict there - I chaired the steering committee that obtained the first country licence for a football side to enter the Westar Rules competition. Originally the idea was engineered in Kalgoorlie when it thought it might like to have that licence, but it found the distance was too great.

This is an important game for Westar rules players because it will give them a chance to demonstrate their abilities at a higher level. I remind them that the last time Western Australia played Tasmania in 1997, Tasmania soundly thrashed Western Australia. The game has been played in Kalgoorlie because of the efforts of the Westar Rules board and its commitment to take the game to rural Western Australia. The board must be commended for this because we must promote Westar football out of the metropolitan area. The board has been ably assisted by the Goldfields Football League and the Western Australian Country Football League in the preparations for this match. Financial assistance, as mentioned by the member for Kalgoorlie, has come from the Ministry of Sport and Recreation through its country sport enrichment scheme. I am told that the budget for the game is \$82 000 and the State Government is contributing \$26 000 to assist the board in the promotion of this game. I add that international games such as basketball, triathlon and hockey have already gone to the country with great success. I compliment my minister for setting up the country sport enrichment scheme; there will be a few more games in the country.

I diverge to remind members that the cyclone-ravaged towns of Exmouth and Moora will also have games. The flyer being circulated shows that the Swan Districts v Perth game will be played on Saturday, 29 May in Moora and the Subiaco v East Perth game will be played at Exmouth on 24 July. Therefore, the Western Australian Football Commission and the Westar Rules board are doing a marvellous job getting football to the country.

However, let us just think about Kalgoorlie. What a wonderful place to promote football. In the history of the game, Kalgoorlie has sent many champions to the metropolitan area. I will name a few and start from the top. Dean Kemp comes readily to mind. He had his 200th game last Saturday, and what a little champion he is, and the following day Luke Toisa starred with the Dockers. Then there are the Essendon boys, Alex Epis and Colin Hebbard, who years ago stood out of football for 12 months just to get a crack at the big time in AFL; they did it well and were in premiership sides. Michael Symmons, a Kalgoorlie-Boulder boy, is playing for Essendon at the moment. Members may not have heard of Peter Ding or Professor Higgins, but Ding played for Claremont and Higgs came to Perth and played in my year at East Fremantle. I hope members have heard of Steve Marsh. One of the ironies of football is that Steve Marsh came from Kalgoorlie to play for East Fremantle and in those days East and South shared the same pavilion at Freo oval at a time when there was a bike track around it. Steve Marsh, with his bandy legs, walked into the wrong changing rooms of South Fremantle and became one of the all-time greats of Western Australian football with a red and white guernsey on his back. He was appointed a coach of East Fremantle which enabled him to be the first South Fremantle player to coach a premiership at East Fremantle.

Mr House: That is not exactly how he tells the story. He reckons he went into the East Fremantle changing rooms first and nobody made him welcome.

Mr MARSHALL: That is not true. The South Fremantle changing rooms were closest to the gateway and he missed the major club in Western Australia, the blue and whites.

I will go back even further. At the turn of the century there were two footballers playing for Boulder by the names of Nipper Truscott and Arthur Dix. They were both offered two shillings and sixpence per game to play for East Fremantle in a job on the wharf. Arthur Dix ultimately became a premiership player for East Fremantle - he happens to be my grandfather - and Nipper Truscott became one of the all-time greats of Western Australian football being a premiership and state champion and inducted into the hall of fame; such was the heritage of the great players that came from Kalgoorlie.

It is interesting that Fremantle, in the heritage of our State, has always been known as the club that sent footballers to all the other clubs to teach their players how to play the game; it really all happened from Kalgoorlie. In the days of the Depression people came across from Ballarat and Bendigo in Victoria following the gold rush to the Kalgoorlie and Boulder goldmines. When they left that area when the gold petered out or they wanted other thrills and adventures, the unskilled work force of that era went to work in the Fremantle wharves. In those days there were 15 000 people on the payroll at the wharves and all of the people from Victoria who went to Kalgoorlie moved on to Fremantle and played a Victorian style of game. Fremantle players were tough and hardened, did not squeal and everyone asked why they were so good. It was because of heritage, Victoria to Kalgoorlie, and there are only two places in this State of ours that have that bondship. Kalgoorlie and Boulder people feel special; Fremantle people are special; and to throw another one in - because 90 per cent of Fremantle people go south - Mandurah people too are just as special.

I am pleased that it was confirmed today that the Australian Broadcasting Corporation will provide a statewide live telecast of this game. I will read a portion of the press release so that members will get a feeling for the emotion for this game. It reads -

Football fans will get the opportunity to see the Western Australia v Tasmania State of Origin match from Sir Richard Moore Oval in Kalgoorlie *LIVE* only on **ABCTV Saturday 19 June 1999**.

The match is considered an exciting event on the Australian Rules calendar and **ABCTV** announced today that it is pleased to be televising the match from Kalgoorlie to a statewide audience.

WA State Manager for the ABC, Mr Geoff Duncan, said, "The ABC has already demonstrated a huge commitment to local Westar football and we are confident that the Kalgoorlie match will be a highlight in our continued coverage. We believe that this match reflects our ongoing commitment to Westar Rules and emphasises the ABC's loyalty to its regional audience.

This is a wonderful opportunity to promote Kalgoorlie, one of WA's fastest growing areas. I congratulate the former member for Kalgoorlie, Mr Ian Taylor, who now chairs the Westar Rules football competition; he is on the Western Australian Football Commission board and is just the man, as an avid football fan, to be working not only for football in general in Western Australia but also to ensure that Kalgoorlie is highlighted when a big game comes along.

Mr House: He also barracks for East Fremantle.

Mr MARSHALL: Yes, he is an East Fremantle football fan, as are many Kalgoorlie people.

Mr House: His son plays for East Perth, did you know? He made a good decision.

Mr MARSHALL: East Perth and Peel Thunder are going as well as each other at the moment.

In conclusion, I have great pleasure in supporting the amended motion put to the House by the member for Kalgoorlie. This interstate game in Kalgoorlie is a first and I am sure it will be watched by hundreds and thousands of football fans in Western Australia.

Motion, as amended, put and passed.

LIQUOR LICENSING AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MS WARNOCK (Perth) [6.58 pm]: As there may be members present who have not had an opportunity to look at the notices of motion in the orders of the day, I refer to the Liquor Licensing Amendment Bill. The Opposition supports this private member's Bill presented by the Australian Democrats dealing with the issue of a 15 per cent cap on the ownership of liquor outlets in this State. The Opposition had intended to propose a similar amendment to the Liquor Licensing Act but was persuaded by the liquor industry that it was more important to push the major Bill through the Parliament at speed, because of various issues arising in the liquor industry at the time, than to delay the Bill with any further attempt to amend it. Therefore, here we are, time has passed and this Bill was proposed by Hon Norm Kelly and introduced in the other place. To my surprise the Bill is supported also by the Government. It is obvious then that there is general concern about the effect on smaller retailers of the growing power of a few big retailers. In the area of general retailing, rather than liquor retailing, I was shocked to see the size of the slice of the market that is held by a handful of retailers in Australia compared with similar grocery or retailing chains in other countries. We are startlingly more monopolised than other similar western countries.

I will quote some facts from *The West Australian RETAILER*, issue 9 of 1999. It has a series of fascinating graphs which basically detail the percentage of retailing held by a few top retailers in various countries. In Japan, for example, the top five grocery retailers have 17.5 per cent of the market and other competitors 82.5 per cent. The top three in the United States have 21 per cent and other competitors have 79 per cent. In 1998, the top three grocery retailers in Australia had 80 per cent of the market and independents had 20 per cent. I was shocked by that and I mentioned it because this issue is essentially about protecting smaller liquor sellers against the larger companies, no matter how desirable it may seem to some of us to obtain goods cheaply.

Mr Bloffwitch: Why are we not addressing those figures to grocery trade rather than liquor trade?

Ms WARNOCK: I am happy to consider that. I am fascinated by this issue. More people are beginning to talk about it in this way. We are a free enterprise country. Every one of us supports that. The plain fact is that without any kind of regulation, smaller retailers are suffering. They are suffering in the member for Geraldton's area and they certainly are suffering in mine. Like everyone else, I am beginning to be concerned about this. Whether we relate it to the liquor trade, or any other trade, even though it may be desirable as a consumer to get things cheaper, we are not protecting the retailers in the way we should. The gradual disappearance of smaller retailers, and the struggle they have had to maintain their slice of the market share, has had a devastating effect on some communities. That is not a good thing. There is too much concentration in the media. As a former journalist, I am shocked by the chunk of the market which is held by two or three proprietors. It is dangerous for a lot of separate reasons. There is also too much concentration in general retailing and in liquor retailing. This Bill is not about any other issue dealing with liquor retailing. We canvassed all of those issues widely last year during the debate on the principal Bill about liquor regulation in this State. That was debated about the middle of last year, and, as we canvassed all those areas, I will not refer to them.

The proposal for a cap has been around since 1997. The Government rejected it at the time because, like all of us, it had internal difficulties and it was dealing with different views about the regulation of the retail market in general. It is pleasing to see that a large number of government members now recognise the effect on smaller retailers of the amazing and growing dominance of larger companies such as Coles Myer Ltd through its Liquorland, Vintage Cellars and Charlie Carters chains. This Bill is not a specific attack on those retailers; it is simply an attempt to try to protect the interests of smaller retailers. Since all members have many small retailers in their areas, I am sure we all agree. In August 1998, when this matter was debated, the figures indicated that of the 440 liquor licences in Western Australia, 74 were controlled by Coles Myer, representing 16.8 per cent of the total number and a market share of 32 per cent. The number of outlets grew from 50 in 1994 to 74 in 1998, a 48 per cent increase in four years. I am sure members will agree it is a large increase. There has been some concern in the industry about whether this type of legislation contravenes either the state or commonwealth Constitution. I am sure all members who are interested in the issue and have read the material on it will recall the arguments that were coming and going about 18 months ago on whether the suggested legislation -

Mr Bloffwitch: It was more to do with national competition policy and whether it was restricting trade.

Ms WARNOCK: That is right. It was also about whether it contravened the state or commonwealth Constitution and whether it was illegal to introduce legislation that, on the face of it, sought to restrict trade. Learned legal opinion from Malcolm McCusker suggests that it is not. A large monopoly or growth that suggests that an almost monopolistic control of a previously diverse industry can instead be seen as being anti-competitive; it is largely the American anti-trust argument. I will read a little of that opinion from Malcolm McCusker QC. His opinion states -

I am asked to advise whether there is any . . . impediment to the enactment by the Parliament of Western Australia of an amendment to the Liquor Licensing Act 1988 limiting to 15% the number of licences in any category that any person or corporation may hold . . .

In my opinion, there is no legal or constitutional impediment to the State Parliament enacting the Cap legislation.

There is nothing in the State's Constitution which limits or affects power to enact the Cap legislation.

We now have this 15 per cent legislation in front of us. It continues -

It is pertinent to observe that the State of Victoria already has in place similar "Cap" legislation - with an 8% restriction. Victoria, like Western Australia, has plenary constitutional power to legislate in this area.

He said that the Trade Practices Act does not affect the State's power to enact the cap legislation, which concerned some people. He continues -

. . . but even if that were arguable (which it is not, in my opinion) it is clear that the Cap legislation is not anti-competitive. To the contrary, it is anti-monopolistic in its design, and is aimed at preserving competition.

It continues further -

So the question is whether the Cap legislation is restrictive of competition and therefore in breach of the "guiding principle". In my opinion, it clearly is not.

He says that the purpose is to ensure competition is preserved and promoted, by preventing any one licence holder from dominating the industry. That is an interesting opinion and it might guide us on this legislation.

The liquor industry, with the exception of the Coles Myer group, supports this legislation generally. It is interesting that in this case, both package liquor stores and hotels - which, as we all know, are sometimes at loggerheads about these matters - are supporting the 15 per cent cap. There are critics of course. The Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has attacked the Government for supporting this legislation. The CCI stated that the legislation was in breach of national competition council rules, which was mentioned by the member for Geraldton. As far as I am aware, the council had not yet commented, but it is investigating Victoria's cap of 8 per cent. The Government is of the opinion that the legislation does not breach the competition council rules. Insofar as I understand anything about the law, I agree with that. A private member's Bill which appears to be supported by both government and opposition parties is seeking to regulate the liquor industry in a particular way. I support this legislation, the Opposition supports this legislation and I hope that it will be useful for the small retailers in the liquor industry in Western Australia.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Bloffwitch.

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 1) 1999

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR GRAHAM (Pilbara) [7.00 pm]: Before the three-quarter time bell went, I referred to the business enterprise centres and the interesting way that they have been funded in the regions, which bears little resemblance to population bases or needs. The situation gets more interesting when one moves on to consider health issues. I will not go through the detail of the health needs of the Pilbara, because I have done that previously in this place. Not only do successive Ministers of Health not argue to the contrary, but they also produce publications that reinforce the statistics that I have quoted. In nearly every indicator of health, if the good end of the scale is the top, the Pilbara is either at the bottom or the second bottom and vice versa. The health needs of outback Western Australia are extraordinary. It is interesting to note that the authors of the North

West Health Plan make the point that the rate of expenditure of the Medicare dollar in the Perth metropolitan area is \$283 a head per annum and in the north west of the State it is \$67 a head per annum.

Mr Prince: That is right.

Mr GRAHAM: We cannot justify that level of spending when we match it with the greatest area of need.

Mr Prince: That is because Medicare is flawed in dealing with a State like this. It is designed for the urban areas of Sydney and Melbourne and it relates to the number of doctors in an area. About 80 per cent of the doctors in this State are in the metropolitan area and there are very few in the member's electorate.

Mr GRAHAM: I could not agree more. I have used those figures as an indicator. If the minister were to do a similar analysis, he would find a similar result in respect of state spending. The minister has said, and I agree with him, that there is a disproportionate weighting of spending in the federal arena towards the south eastern corner of the nation.

Mr Prince: It is not as disproportionate in state spending because it is more related to institutions than to individuals providing a demand-related service.

Mr GRAHAM: I do not want to get into the semantics of the issue. We are effectively saying the same thing: A disproportionate amount of the health budget is being spent in the capital cities.

Mr Prince: That is correct.

Mr GRAHAM: The plan that has been put forward for the north west has some strengths and some weaknesses. One of its major weaknesses is its inability to deal with the telehealth issue. The very comprehensive documents that have been produced by the study group outline the issues and, as one would expect, they are supported by hundreds of other documents. The authors clearly outline the problem and the initiatives that the study group believes will deal with the problem. It is there that I part company with the authors. The second last page of the document contains the reference to telehealth.

That brings us back to where I started with my budget speech, when I said that this Government is very good at looking back but not so good at looking forward. The future of medicine in the outback and in non-metropolitan Perth is telehealth initiatives.

Mr Prince: And technology.

Mr GRAHAM: No, the technology exists.

Mr Prince: I am referring to technology generally, of which telehealth is a very important part.

Mr GRAHAM: Absolutely. Telehealth is borderless. There is no reason that people in outback Western Australia cannot consult medical practitioners in the United States, the United Kingdom, Sydney, Melbourne or wherever. We are told there are some practical reasons that the technology cannot be implemented.

Mr Prince: Practitioners in the United States do not have a Medicare provider number.

Mr GRAHAM: That is a question of payment, not treatment.

Mr Prince: True.

Mr GRAHAM: Those on the conservative side of politics say that people need encouragement to take out private health insurance. I would have thought that members opposite would be more inclined to say that it is open to people to pay for the treatment with or without insurance.

Mr Prince: It is, and some people do.

Mr GRAHAM: I had a skin cancer cut off my eye last year and it cost me \$1 000. I would prefer to pay that than have private health insurance.

One of the emerging issues as one looks at telehealth is whether I, as a citizen of Western Australia, should have the right to use the Internet to consult a clinical psychologist in the United States, if that is where I want to be treated, and to pay for that treatment. Whose business is that other than mine and the practitioner with whom I am dealing?

Mr Prince: You take the risk with regard to the competence of the person and so on.

Mr GRAHAM: Yes. I suspect that while members opposite are in government and as telehealth comes into the system, they will be confronted by medical unions, or should I say "associations", protecting their interests by restricting citizens exercising those rights.

Mr Prince: They will not be able to because the Internet cannot be restricted in that way.

Mr GRAHAM: The minister should explain that to Senator Harradine, who does not seem to understand that minor point.

Mr Prince: He is one of yours, or was.

Mr GRAHAM: No, he is not.

One of the things I find offensive about the current Federal Government is that it understands that using the telecommunications world is the way not of the past but of the future. I give Senator Alston credit in that I have

communicated with him in a variety of roles and he understands that point. I find it very offensive that the Federal Government understands that the problem exists and has identified the action that needs to be taken, but it has now put it all on hold subject to the sale of Telstra. I do not want to get into that argument; that is for the federal politicians to resolve. However, having promised SBS services to remote, rural and regional areas, it has now announced that it will cost \$120m and it will not do it.

Mr Prince: At least they are bringing it to Albany. We had to pay for our own satellite.

Mr GRAHAM: Port Hedland is in the process of doing that now.

Mr Prince: The programs are three hours out, which could be corrected by changing the time of transmissions. They will not do it, so we are required to install the equipment. It is absurd.

Mr GRAHAM: I could not agree more. The Federal Government has identified that it will cost \$150m to provide untimed local call access to people in remote Australia, but that is on hold. It will cost \$70m to establish a rural transaction centre to deal with banking, postal and other services on the Internet and that, along with mobile phone coverage and local connection to the Internet, is on hold. They are on hold as a result of the Federal Government blackmailing rural and remote Western Australia so that it can sell off a share of Telstra. As I said, I have no view either way on that matter. I know that federally the Labor Party has a view, so I suppose that is the correct thing to do. However, the Centre for Telecommunications Information Networking has released umpteen statements saying that the Federal Government is not giving serious consideration to regional telecommunications. It is indisputable that the problem is capable of being remedied, but that is not being done.

There are consequences, not only in respect of Internet access, but also there are serious questions for people in rural and remote Western Australia. Even if the Norhealth 2020 plan were funded in full by the Government - it is interesting to note that nothing leaps out of the budget papers to show that it has been, and I would be interested to hear from the Minister for Health at some time that it has been funded in its entirety - that puts health services in the north west of the State on a par with those in Australia during the late 1960s. It does not take the Pilbara forward to the next century. That is the political point that I have been making about the Government looking backwards and not forwards.

Mr Prince: Are you prepared to give credit where it is due in that until recently nobody has ever looked in a predictive sense at planning and health? Reactionary planning has been looked at.

Mr GRAHAM: The Norhealth 2020 initiative, which was an initiative of the former Minister for Health, is a good initiative. A group of clever people were chosen to be involved with it. They did a pretty good job.

Mr Prince: However, it is the first time anybody has ever tried to do predictive planning.

Mr GRAHAM: No, it is not. In 1990-91 a health plan in the Pilbara - I think I sent a copy to the minister; if not, I sent it to Tony Finucane - did similar things, but only for the Pilbara, not for the north west.

Mr Prince: You are right.

Mr GRAHAM: Therefore, with respect to accurately identifying the problems in the Pilbara, which has been done previously, the answers are similar.

Mr Prince: I am talking about predictive planning in health generally, not just in that area.

Mr GRAHAM: I am interested only in the Pilbara region. When I am Minister for Health, maybe I will take a wider interest.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GRAHAM: Without the implementation of the telehealth initiatives in the north west, the region cannot improve because, as I stated to the previous minister and the Commissioner of Health, it is not possible to provide health services in every town and community. All the goodwill or political strength in the world will not change it. All the money in the world could probably change it, but only as long as the money lasted. The only alternative to deliver services into the outback is telehealth; the only alternative that will improve existing services is the telehealth system. It is interesting that in the time I have been bouncing around the telehealth issue publicly and have been told that things will or will not work, or may or may not work, other States in Australia have moved ahead of us. For example, people can now see Telstra advertisements on television depicting live-time ultrasound scans. The Health Department told me six or seven years ago that it physically was not possible to do these ultrasound scans that I had seen in Canada and the United States. They can now be seen in advertisements on our television. Incidentally, they still cannot be done in Western Australia, and none of the plans that are in train will allow for that to happen in outback Western Australia, even with all the goodwill in the world, because the Health Department's view is that the cost of the bandwidth is prohibitive.

Mr Osborne: Dr Johnny Walker can do x-rays.

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, he can do digital x-rays, but he does not do live-time ultrasound scanning. There is a significant difference.

I will deal with the standard of health in the north. A report was released by the Regional Development Council called "Living in the Regions". It is interesting to look at the assessment of local health services. People who live in the regions

were asked for their views on health services there. The region that was assessed as having the lowest standard of health services was the Pilbara. It was significantly behind all the other regions. There were only two regions, the Gascoyne and the Pilbara, in which people expressed overall dissatisfaction with the standard of general practice. I had not thought of this point before: I think the good doctor senator was practising then, so it has probably increased since he moved into the Senate.

It is a similar situation with specialist care. As I said earlier, the question in this case was the other way around. The question that was asked related to the availability of specialist medical services being a real concern to people in the region. In the Pilbara, 80 per cent of the people polled agreed that specialist medical treatment is of concern to them. It continues at that level throughout the survey. That is disgraceful, given the health needs of the region.

Apart from the overall health issue, some political issues come out of that. The subset of telehealth is communications and the issue is how it is dealt with. I have spoken on that issue previously and pointed out what was a demarcation between the Office of Information and Communications and the Health Department over who would become involved in the development of telehealth. That responsibility has shifted from the Health Department to the OIC and has died a natural death. It was moved out of the hands of the practitioners with expertise and moved into the area of the generalists, and it has been lost from sight; it is missing in action.

I am sure that the Government would argue that it has a program which rolls out communications to different areas, which is what I think is called the STEP program. However, the facts of life are that that program is five years behind the times, is off the pace and will not deliver the sorts of programs necessary to introduce widespread telehealth and tele-education initiatives into the region. I did not want to - I hope I have not done so - turn these comments into solely a telehealth initiative. I commenced in stages by talking about the budget and the issues that it does not address in the Pilbara region.

The next area is education. If the Minister for Education were here, I am sure he would point out that a new school has been built at Cook Point, for which we are all eternally grateful. Nonetheless, the education system in the Pilbara - I do not mean just in the centre of the Pilbara; I mean in the Pilbara region - is in disarray. There are kids in the second term of primary school who have not had a permanent teacher this year. That is unacceptable. It is all very well for the Government to say there are reasons for that. However, I have been living and working in the Pilbara for 25 years, and prior to the current minister gaining control of the education system, I do not remember a period in which there were no permanent teachers by the middle of the second term. It is unprecedented.

It is not open to the minister to argue that his teachers' incentives package is working, because it is about more than a teachers' incentives package. It is about permanency for young people who do their country service. It is about the promotion trail for senior teachers who do their country service later in their careers. The money helps and always helps, and the standard of accommodation helps and always helps, but fundamentally if a teacher is sent to an area to which he does not want to go to carry out his required length of service and is given no guarantee that he will be sent back to the city at some stage in his career or will be made a permanent teacher, he will do what teachers are doing currently and say, "Thanks for the training, but I am not going", and we will be left with teacher shortages in an area that is already below the national averages in educational outcomes. The package that could and should be put in place by the Government is one of encouraging teachers to go to the regions. In the earlier debate we had a discussion about nurses. The Government is again about to make a decision, for what it believes are all the right philosophical reasons, that will have a severe impact on the non-metropolitan areas of the State.

Probably the best example I can give of misguided decision making is the electricity tariff system. I am talking not about the universal electricity tariff but the electricity tariff system that allows businesses in Perth to operate at off-peak times and thereby benefit from lower electricity rates. That advertisement to encourage businesses to use power sensibly appeared statewide. However, when people in the Pilbara applied, they were told, "We know we advertised statewide, but it does not apply to your region." The Minister for Energy is probably correct with what he has said about that system. A clever intellectual argument lies behind his reasoning and rhetoric about how it is worked out and deduced, and he is 100 per cent right with all of that wonderful logic. However, the application of that logic means that electricity is more expensive in non-metropolitan areas than it is in the city. A McDonald's hamburger costs more to make in Port Hedland than it does anywhere else in this State because of the higher cost of electricity. I do not care much about McDonalds, but one of the staples of small business is electricity, and those higher costs for electricity in the non-metropolitan area flow through to every avenue of business, yet this Government, for what it considers to be all the right reasons, has ramped the charges. It is interesting that the Government does not generate any electricity in my part of the Pilbara. It does not have a power station. It does not have any workers. It is all done by private enterprise. If people were allowed to buy electricity from private enterprise at what it cost private enterprise to produce, we would pay about 3¢ per unit. We cannot do that because of government regulation, but we cannot access the cheaper priced off-peak electricity either.

That kind of decision making is entrenched in this Government at the moment. It is looking backwards, not forwards, and it is making decisions that are inherently centralist. I started my speech by giving what I believe is the best example of that fact; that is, one of the first acts of this Government was to remove from the regions the planning powers that they used to have and centralise those powers in the Western Australian Planning Commission in Perth. Appeals under the local government system now go back to a central body in Perth.

I know that what I say will not be disputed by members opposite, because they will not be speaking in this debate, but there is little in this budget for the people of the Pilbara, and absolutely nothing in this budget indicates to me that this Government has learnt from the past six years and is about to improve regional development in Western Australia.

DR EDWARDS (Maylands) [7.25 pm]: I will make a few remarks about some of the areas for which I have responsibility

for the Opposition, and also about some electorate matters. The first issue I will raise is that one of the big unknowns in the budget - and the Minister for Local Government may be able to assist me - is what will happen to the Department of Conservation and Land Management following the Regional Forest Agreement. I am not blaming the Government, because it is a matter of timing -

Mr Omodei: What does that have to do with local government?

Dr EDWARDS: The minister may know the answers, because he is from the Government and is here to help us. The budget statement for CALM has some blank lines drawn on it, whereas in the future we will expect projections and figures. I know that the Regional Forest Agreement was signed only two days before the budget was released publicly, and negotiations about the future of CALM probably went on until the budget papers were printed - who knows; we certainly do not know on this side - but one of the big unknowns with the budget is what will be the fate of CALM and what will happen to its funding and to the other entities that will be created following the restructure of CALM after the release of the RFA. When the RFA was released, the Minister for the Environment put out a media statement about what would happen to CALM. As people know, at the moment we have a Department of Conservation and Land Management that is overseen by the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority on the national parks side, a Lands and Forests Commission in which the state forests are vested, and a Forest Production Council which is supposed to provide advice about the use of the forests. The minister has told us that the NPNCA will be replaced by a new state conservation authority which will take on all of the functions of the NPNCA and in addition will have vested in it the state forest lands and will audit and monitor what CALM does and what the new Forest Production Council will do. That sounds very good, but it is unclear from the budget whether this new authority will comprise just 10 people around a desk or have a certain number of FTEs attached to it. I assume it will have, and the minister has tended to signal that, but so far I have not been able to come across any concrete information that describes what the new authority will be and how it will operate. If it will be just an expanded NPNCA, we will have reason to be a bit suspicious. One of the problems we have had in previous budgets is that we were not told how much money the NPNCA had, but I note from its most recent annual report that it is now giving us a figure. That is a step forward for accountability. I look forward, presumably in the Estimates, to hearing what the Government has in mind for this restructure of CALM.

Mr Omodei: Whether it will become a reality will depend on whether the Labor Party supports the Government's proposition and on what happens in the other place.

Dr EDWARDS: At the moment it is difficult to evaluate the Government's model. Obviously we are in favour of a split or restructure of CALM, and, as I said last week, some aspects of this model are good.

Mr Omodei: It has been made very clear by the Minister for the Environment that there will be a restructure of CALM. I understand that Hon Christine Sharp from the Greens (WA) supports that restructure, so it will be interesting to see how that evolves. The Minister for the Environment may be able to respond by interjection and I will go back to my local government portfolio.

Dr EDWARDS: Did the minister see it as a promotion?

Mr Omodei: She might be willing to concede one of her ministries to me, but she would have to convince the Premier!

Dr EDWARDS: Although in the minister's media release she pointed out that the forest production commission will comprise seven people including two officers of the Public Service who are not Department of Conservation and Land Management officers and although we have a much clearer idea of what its role in the forests will be, it is not clear what will happen in CALM. My understanding from the minister's media release and the other small bits of information I have gathered is that basically CALM will remain and there will be a separate state conservation authority. Some of CALM's activities will be monitored on one hand by the state conservation authority and on the other by the forest production commission. Is that correct?

Mrs Edwardes: The state conservation authority will audit and monitor both the forest production commission and the operations of CALM.

Dr EDWARDS: But will CALM still be involved in forest management?

Mrs Edwardes: Yes, very importantly for conservation purposes.

Dr EDWARDS: How much will change on a day-to-day basis? If I am taking the minister into issues we should discuss in the Estimates Committee she should not answer, but it is still unclear to people outside who are trying to draw up the models and understand how they would work practically.

Mrs Edwardes: Essentially the forest production commission will be responsible for the setting of contracts and doing the allocations of the woods. It will be the commercial arm of the management of the native timber hardwood industry as we know it today. That side of it will be totally removed from CALM and be run by the forest production commission. Most of the functions of the land and forest commission will be vested in the state conservation authority. Both of those will be independent agencies, they will have their own executive directors, their own staff and their own budgets. They will be totally separate from CALM. CALM will be specifically excluded from the forest production commission primarily because of the links and the perceived or actual conflict of interest and, therefore, the forests will be managed according to ecologically sustainable principles which will be set by prescription or however it will be done by the state conservation authority.

Dr EDWARDS: I thank the minister for that because it clarifies much of -

Mr Omodei: It makes good sense.

Dr EDWARDS: Yes, I agree, it does make good sense.

Mr Omodei: So you are going to support it.

Dr EDWARDS: I need to see the legislation first. I would not want to agree to something I did not totally understand. I thank the minister for her contribution; it helps. This is an issue in which the detail has been lost in the drama of the Regional Forest Agreement. However, it is an important issue for managing both forests and conservation into the future. My only difficulty with the model the minister is talking about is that at the moment there seems to be a culture within the Department of Conservation and Land Management that one is either for CALM or against CALM. An example of that is the editorials the executive director writes for CALM news. Those editorials often talk about the attacks being made on CALM and how it is coping with them. I fear that if thought is not given to how to manage the change, we may not get the optimal model. I hope the Government is giving thought to how it will manage people through that process of change, how it will explain the change and what it needs to put in to get a shift of culture within the organisations to make them feel good about the good work they do. Something which has been lost in all of this is the fact that the Department of Conservation and Land Management does some excellent work. In many ways, CALM has a lot of vision and is at the forefront, particularly with some of its timber and conservation activities. That tends to get lost in the fight about the forests. I look forward to seeing the detail of the plan and the legislation being introduced into this Parliament.

There is very little indication in the budget about the RFA, the money coming in and how that money will be spent. Although some reference is made in the Treasurer's speech, it is only a few sentences. I could find only very minor references in the *Budget Statements*. The only reference was one paragraph in the Department of Conservation and Land Management's budget statement. When the RFA was released, we were told that \$17.5m was being spent on tourism. However, when one looks more closely at what is promised, one finds that some of this money has already been earmarked and allocated. It is certainly not the huge new injection of money which was portrayed. The \$2m for sealing Mowen Road between Nannup and Margaret River is an example. The day after the RFA was released, the Minister for Transport was answering questions in the other place and explained that that initiative was announced in Transform WA and that \$17m has been allocated to work on that road under Transform WA. It is not a new initiative -

Mrs Edwardes: It allows it to be brought forward.

Mr Omodei: There is only \$350 000 in this year's budget so the funds are being brought forward. It is possible other funds may be brought forward as well.

Dr EDWARDS: I hope that is the case because under Transform WA the project was not due to start until 2004. It is a good initiative to bring it forward. However, Transform WA speaks of Mowen Road as much as a regional freight road as being a tourist road. It is a trick to say that it is a huge tourism initiative when it is needed for regional freight transport.

Mrs Edwardes: For tourism, though, it is very important if we are trying to get that link between the coast and Margaret River. It is extremely relevant if we are going to be putting in place new eco-tourist lodges and the like and to encourage tourists, to actually have the extra ability to bring people inland.

Dr EDWARDS: I agree, and the Opposition is pleased that it is being brought ahead rather than waiting until 2004. However, when it first came out people were excited about it being a brand new initiative, but it is not; it is something which had already been promised. Similarly, the money for the Wellington Dam was announced in Parliament some time ago; it is hardly a new initiative.

Mrs Edwardes: But it is a good contribution to the CAR reserve system.

Dr EDWARDS: Which is very good. However, we were told that a whole new pot of money is being spent and when we tease it out, we find that most of it has already been promised; it is hardly a major new announcement.

Another area I want to deal with is environmental protection. There has been a cut in the Department of Environmental Protection's budget. Looking over the figures, it is too simple to say it is all due to Omex. When one compares this year's budget with that of last year and the year before and what was said about Omex, it is too simplistic to say that the entire budget cut is due to the lack of the Omex money which was there before. On the face of it, the Environmental Protection Authority has received a budget cut. Last year and in the year before there was talk and acknowledgment by the Government that the EPA needed more money to do its job properly. We know that the EPA has an increasing workload. It has become involved in more assessments in addition to the proposals which come in through the door. It is providing a lot of section 16 advice - that is, giving strategic environmental advice - and, following the changes to the planning laws in the State, it is much more involved in planning schemes, both town planning schemes and metropolitan region schemes. The EPA was also very involved in the RFA. The EPA has an increasing workload, one which is more complex, and in many ways it is coming under more scrutiny from the public. It worries me to see the level of funding for the EPA decrease. I hope it is not a trend that will continue.

Before the last election, the Government launched the salinity action plan amid great fanfare. We were told and reminded of the problem and that it is the State's No 1 environmental problem and how it is a very serious social and economic problem. A number of country towns are directly affected by the rising watertables literally crumbling their buildings. This year I was alarmed to read in the Agriculture budget statement that the National Heritage Trust will contribute up to \$30m over the trust's five-year lifespan, with the State matching it on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Initially I thought I might have misread that alarming statement but I checked. This is a long way from the promised \$3b needed to fight salinity and really get on top of it. The thought of \$100m per annum being poured in, made up of \$30m from the State, \$30m from the Federal

Government and \$30m from the private sector, and to have in the Agricultural budget statement in black and white that the NHT will fund up to \$30m over the trust's five-year lifespan is very worrying, given the reliance that we have placed on the NHT. Similarly, salinity did not get the mention that it had in previous years. That is disappointing. We have a good salinity action plan that has been out for public comment. We know that shortly the revised plan will be released. I am disappointed that this budget does not contain the hoo-ha that has been made about salinity in the past. I look forward to the Estimates Committees and to getting a better appreciation of the exact amounts of money that will go in and how they will be spent over the next financial year.

I also have some concern about one of the issues raised in the Kings Park Board statements. Kings Park performs a very valuable role in the State. It is the city's number one tourist attraction with over two million visitors a year, so it is a huge icon in Perth. What is less known but became very clear when late last year we debated the Bill to modernise Kings Park is that Kings Park also does a lot of very valuable research work. It has helped propagate threatened species. It was responsible for the amazing findings about smokebush which received international attention. One of the comments that the board makes in its statements is that the park's past good success rate of getting external support for its funding and research programs is under pressure. I wish the board all the best.

Mrs Edwardes: Is that not the case with a lot of sponsorship? Similarly, Perth Zoo had a lot of sponsorship coming from mining in the past. When there are pressures, such bodies will feel the impact.

Dr EDWARDS: It is a very sad state of affairs. The budget papers describe very eloquently the contribution by WMC Resources Limited and the work going on at Kings Park. It would be sad if the research done by this No 1 icon in our State were to slip away.

I cover the area of Planning for the Opposition. I am disappointed that the Premier has made no mention at all of planning in his budget speech. Unless we have good planning, it is very hard for other good decisions to flow from it. Each year the Ministry for Planning and the Planning Commission do a huge amount of work. I am sent their documents. About every fortnight some huge, thick, well-done document arrives on my desk, yet the ministry and the commission get very little attention. I hope that in future years we will see more about planning. We have a state planning strategy which drives much of the decision making about development in this State, yet not much is made of that in the budget.

One area I welcome is the allocation in the Planning budget towards the Bushplan. I note that \$360 000 a year has been allocated to the appointment of a bushplan coordinator to assist with the implementation of the Perth Bushplan. In the Estimates Committee I intend to follow up how the Government intends to fund the rest of the Bushplan and when it will be introducing further mechanisms to preserve the identified bits of bushland. A disappointment is that in the Planning sections I find no reference to legislation to do with planning appeals. The minister released the Chapman report which looked at the town planning appeals system, I think in September 1997, and certainly in the last quarter of that year. The Opposition had a briefing on the whole issue nearly a year ago. We knew then that the minister had plans for implementation. He was talking of a new planning appeals authority. We were told that legislation was to be drafted. However, I am disappointed that in the statements of the Ministry for Planning and the Planning Commission no mention is made of this legislation. Other planning legislation is mentioned and we will be following that up with the minister.

One disappointing feature of the budget is some of the cuts to various agencies. I will mention only a few. For example, the Kings Park Board has received a cut of \$175 000 to its budget, and the Perth Zoo has received a cut of \$74 000. The minister has not done too well in some of her areas of responsibility.

Mrs Edwardes: We are quite happy to pull in our belts and assist.

Dr EDWARDS: I understand responsible financial management and the need to be lean and accountable and all the rest of it. However, when we get through this decade, I wonder whether we might not look back on the nineties and see this as an era in which in our attempt to restructure, pull in our belts and to do things properly and accountably, we might not have managed people in the best way. In the course of my work, I periodically come into contact with public servants. Although they are very careful about what they say to the Opposition, my impression is that they are doing more work than before and that it is somewhat more complex. When someone goes on leave, they will pick up on that bit of work while that person is away. This is true of not only the Public Service but also the community in general. People who are fortunate to have work now find they are working longer hours. With all the talk about lean organisations, they are often being asked to do tasks in the same job that they were not asked to do five years ago. There is a lot of stress in the community. People are saying that they want more quality time in which to see their families. Perhaps we are making a rod for our own backs. We are asking men to play a much greater role in raising families but at the same time we are asking them to work as hard as they have ever done, to do a bit of overtime, to read documents at night or at the weekend, and to prepare for a meeting on Sunday or whatever. I wonder whether we might not look back on the nineties in the same way as we look back on the sins of the eighties. The sins of the nineties may be how we have managed people and what measure of support we have given them in these times of change.

I will comment on the impact of this budget on my electorate. I want to go through a number of items on which I have been working, mostly areas in which we are not seeing a lot of joy from this budget. The first issue I want to raise is the asbestos roof at the East Maylands Primary School. I have been working on this issue since 1991. Fortunately, not long after 1991 the asbestos roof was encapsulated. However, since then it has had ongoing problems. One major problem is that the parents and citizens association and the school want to put in airconditioning, but because the roof is asbestos, there is a great reluctance to install airconditioning. The first reason is that it is asbestos and the second reason is that the roof will be replaced at some stage in the near future and people are asking why put in airconditioning when builders will be fiddling with the roof. We have been lobbying the minister regularly, particularly when the weather gets hot. It is then that the

airconditioning issue arises and it is then, usually at the end of the year, that we try to get something done. The most recent correspondence advises that the roof will be replaced, but not until 2002. That is pretty alarming for the parents when the matter was raised in 1991 and will not be fixed until 2002. That means that a whole generation of primary school kids will have gone through that school listening to these complaints.

One other variable in this equation is that currently the East Maylands and the Maylands Primary Schools are discussing combining and perhaps forming a new school. I urge the Minister for Education and other ministers when investigating these sorts of initiatives to contact the local member. I signalled a number of years ago to the Education Department that if it ever looked at that issue I would like to be involved because I had a contribution to make. There is merit in getting the two schools to work together to get a single facility for the whole area. It was somewhat to my chagrin to find out through local gossip that meetings had started. Since then I have made it my business to find out what was going on and will be involved in the process.

Mr Osborne: Do you think it is any different for members of the Government?

Dr EDWARDS: I thought the Government might think I would automatically oppose the idea, so it did not want me to know about it. These are not the things one automatically opposes. They are the sorts of things one works together with one's community to get the best educational outcome for children now and into the future. I hope things will change somewhat for members of the Opposition and the Government.

I want to make reference to Beaufort Street, Inglewood and the road realignment and rectification program that the City of Stirling has planned. People probably know the big kink in Beaufort Street, Inglewood where the old Civic Theatre is located. There have been plans for some time to decrease the road reserve, to slow the traffic and to do up the area and make it much more friendly. Inglewood is unusual in some ways in that it has the old shopfront design that people like. Some small businesses there are quite successful for small suburban businesses. However, the difficulty is that Beaufort Street literally breaks the suburb into two. A couple of years ago the City of Stirling began a conservation program with local people and came up with a good plan to give the area a facelift and to give greater attention to some of the heritage aspects. The City of Stirling now is all set to go ahead with that plan. Unfortunately, it is being hindered by Transport WA which is looking at the feasibility of an express bus lane. That is fine, but it will take the department four to five months to do that and it has already been looking at it for some time. It is holding the whole thing up. Small traders there are desperate to have a greater sense of community, to make it a place to which people can walk more easily and to give a greater heart to Inglewood. I hope the Minister for Transport, to whom I have written about this issue, will tell Transport WA to speed up on this so that a definitely needed improvement can go ahead.

I turn now to the issues in Bedford, with which the Minister for Water Resources will be familiar, that involve the Family and Children's Services hostel in Grand Promenade. This hostel has been located in Bedford for a number of years. Periodically, there have been problems with some of the children who live there. However, usually, everything settles down after some minor intervention. I am sad to report on this occasion that that is no longer the case. Last year the department came to me and told me that it was thinking of building an extension to the house within which the hostel is located. I expressed my surprise because, like local residents, I believed that the hostel was moving. It seemed to all of us that it was a much better idea that it not be in the middle of the suburb. I am sympathetic to the work that Family and Children's Services does and I know hostels like this are needed. I fully support the principles under which they operate. However, the difficulty in Bedford is that whereas in the past when problems have blown up we have been able to resolve them, this time it got out of hand.

I have now received extremely alarming reports. Initially I received them from residents who asked me to treat the reports carefully and constructively and to not make them political. However, in recent months they have told me that they have written to everyone they can think of and have complained and jumped up and down, but things are still desperate. I am not attempting to politicise this issue; I am attempting to get the Government to listen to the concerns of residents who are suffering because of what is happening in this hostel.

Elderly women residents are complaining of feeling threatened by some of the younger male hostel residents. There have been numerous break-ins and theft, some of which have been linked to residents in the hostel. Knives, petrol bombs and glass have been thrown into people's backyards and syringes and other drug paraphernalia have been found in the park. There has been a lot of localised graffiti and reports of children running onto the road and daring cars to stop. Residents have been so intimidated that they are now demanding that something be done. Worse than that, it appears the hostel has completed its extensions without consulting either the local residents - they did not know about it until they saw the big bins and concrete mixers arrive - or the City of Bayswater. I am alarmed about a letter I received from a constituent who said that when he asked the department what was happening with the extension, he was informed by a manager in the department that the department did not need to consult either local residents or the council "because they are not subject to the law in regard to planning". I am not sure whether that is true technically. I know that sometimes it is thought that government departments have the shield of the Crown and they believe they do not have to comply with some of the rules. However, from a public relations point of view when a government agency is trying to introduce what is potentially a difficult situation into the community, it should consult with the community to get them on board. I hope that the minister intervenes and gets something done.

In the past when I have visited the site and spoken to the staff I have been informed of the difficult situation they are in. However, if the kids are so out of control - as all the complaints appear to indicate - something drastic should be done. Remodelling an old house which is almost certainly inappropriate for its functions is probably not the best way to go.

The Maylands Police Academy has been located in Maylands since 1963. As we all know, it will be moved from its present

site. A large part of it will go to the Joondalup area and a section will go to the Midland area. The issue that concerns local residents is the lack of consultation that has occurred about the plans for Maylands. We are aware that consultants are looking at the site to work out the best options for using it. We also know from questions asked in Parliament that the Police Department has been told that money from the sale of land in Maylands can be used to help fund new facilities in Joondalup. However, the community is unhappy about any notion of high density development on that site.

The Maylands peninsular, which is a narrow piece of land, is served by only one road named the Peninsular Road which goes right down to the bottom of the peninsular. In the past couple of years there have been huge developments in that area. They are fine developments that the community was reluctant to have but ultimately is happy with. Our concern is that as there is more and more development, the infrastructure will not cope.

The other issue about which people are concerned is the history of the site. There is a belief in the Maylands community that in 1963, when the Commonwealth Government handed over the aerodrome to the State, the whole area was reserved as an A class reserve. My understanding following lots of meetings and discussions with the Department of Land Administration and after dragging out the old maps is that only the land at the edge of the river is an A class reserve and the rest is reserved for police purposes. I have been told by the various ministers with whom I have been in touch that a metropolitan region scheme amendment will be needed to change the use, and when that is out for public comment the public will have their chance for input. The concern the public have is that when the MRS amendment comes out, the Government will have already decided what it wants, and it will be a formality to get a land-use change.

Recently the Maylands Ratepayers Association organised a tour of the Police Academy site. We were accompanied by a large number of representatives from the film-making industry. The filmmakers were ecstatic with the potential of the site as film studios, which surprised me a bit. We went to one fibro house where the people acting as police practise murder scenes. The filmmakers and people involved in the film industry were detailing how they could film various grizzly crimes and use this building. We also went to the stables and were treated to cowboy films that could be made, using horses and various facilities. There were also dog kennels at this location, and there was a lot of excitement about that. On top of this, some of the hangars are heritage listed. They were seen to have huge potential as film studios because they are big, open barns. This idea has some merit and it needs greater investigation than a local ratepayers group can provide. The ratepayers association has written to the Treasurer, the Minister for the Arts and various other ministers seeking support, at least, to have this option investigated.

I am concerned with the way in which the Government is handling the site. First, it is hard to get information about what is going on and, secondly, we are not sure that all possible options for the site that could be considered, have been investigated. Although I am not sure the film-making option would ever be viable, at least it would be good to know it was looked at. We had a public meeting in Maylands about the future of the site. One person who turned up at that meeting was employed by an environmental company. We asked him what he was doing at the meeting. It turned out that this company was doing work for the Government on the site, but he could not tell us anything about that work because he felt bound by some sort of secrecy arrangement. We are aware that a number of companies are doing work on the site. It is frustrating for me as the local member and also for the local community to know all that is going on on our doorstep, but we cannot find out exactly what the issues are.

I refer to a survey conducted in my community about what people in my electorate wanted to see in the budget. The main concerns were to do with education, health services and law and order. Interestingly, a number of other issues arose. Quite a number of people spoke about the need for teachers to have better education; I do not know where that came from, but it is a surprising answer. Some people commented that we should be encouraging people to buy homes versus renting them, and they will be pleased with the Government's initiative in that regard. One of the most alarming comments was that the State Government and State Parliament should be abolished altogether, and I will not be pursuing that issue.

Having looked at the budget in some detail in the areas that I cover for the Opposition, I am extremely pleased to have the budget Estimates Committees. Each year, although we get figures, it is fairly difficult to compare them year to year, and it is also hard to understand exactly what the figures mean in terms of the activities that will be occurring within the departments and what is going on in those programs. Having said that, I conclude that the cuts in the areas I look after, particularly the environment, are disappointing. In relation to the things my constituents want and for which we have lobbied the Government for quite some time, the result is disappointing. I look forward to the Estimates Committee hearings so I can sort out all that.

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [8.03 pm]: First of all, I will make a few comments about not only the way in which, once again, the south west corridor has been very badly treated in the budget, but also the disgraceful and deceptive conduct by the Government to hide what it has done to the people in my area. Journalists rang my office on Tuesday afternoon and were very excited. They said, "We have \$58m over three years for the extension of the Tonkin Highway". That is a bit like the Perth-Rockingham rail line - an annual event, an announcement that Eric Charlton liked to make each year; however, we have never seen an inch of the Tonkin Highway extended. There was a great deal of excitement and celebration in Armadale because people had received a press release in the budget package saying that over \$50m would be spent over three years on this project. Whoopy-do! Finally it will start. Being a diligent person, I checked to see what is happening. Can members guess how much money is in the budget for the Tonkin Highway extension, south of Gosnells? There is a big fat zero - absolutely nothing.

Mr Cunningham: Nothing?

Ms MacTIERNAN: It was the most scurrilous misuse of information I have seen. None of the entries for this \$58m is in the budget papers; one can only presume they are in the never-never of the forward estimates. I see the member for

Girrawheen is so horrified that he must get a glass of water. Even knowing the level of perfidy of the Government, this is an extraordinary engagement in untruthfulness and deception. That was act No 1.

Act No 2 was that we would get a hospital. We got telephone calls from people from all around the State, including from those up north. People in the regional areas said, "The Government says that we cannot get any money for our regional hospitals because Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital is gobbling up all the funds." Again I went to the budget papers and saw in the overview a figure of \$48m; but when I looked at what is in the budget, can members guess what I found? The figure is a piddling \$6m. This means there is no opportunity for this hospital to be completed by anywhere near the now deferred time line of early 2001. It is quite evident that the construction of this hospital will not commence until very late into the next financial year, and is unlikely to be completed before the end of 2001, rather than by the beginning. That is yet another lie.

The big one, the even more glorious lie, is that relating to the Perth-Rockingham-Mandurah rail line via Kenwick, something that has been promoted heavily in the region by the Government with annual announcements. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the wraparound, the propaganda, that went out with the community newspapers, which included huge pictures of trains for the promised rail link to Rockingham. It implied that this is the budget that brings home the bacon, that capital works will be expanded, and there will be a train service to Rockingham and Mandurah, the assumption being that the Government will put it in. It has said that if AlintaGas is sold, it will come on stream early. We scoured the budget and found a total allocation of \$4m, not the \$40m that the Treasurer thought, off the cuff, the figure might be. A mere \$4m appears in the Transport budget; but nothing in the budget for Main Roads Western Australia. That \$4m is only 0.4 per cent of the overall budget requirement of \$940m to build that line. If the rail line is constructed at that speed, it will be finished in another 235 years. Again, we have blatantly misleading propaganda, suggesting some meaningful contribution in the budget to the future construction of the rail link. Once against there is nothing. Once we scrutinise many other elements of the Transport budget, I am sure they will be seen to be equally flawed.

Tonight I will speak on a different theme; it is an area that has fascinated me for a long time. I was interested to see the prominence that this program received in the budget. I am referring of course to Keystart. I was interested to see the Treasurer's speech in the Government's budget overview in which he says that the total capital works program will increase by more than \$600m from the forward estimates to a record \$3.3b in this budget. In 1992-93 the total capital works expenditure across government was \$1.6b, less than half of that of the proposed budget. That is very interesting.

In this fabulous capital works program the biggest item is none other than the \$499m that has been allocated to Keystart. I was mystified by the use of the words "a capital works program" in relation to Keystart. Members on the other side often say that we should compare apples with apples. In the Labor budget of 1992-93, no reference was made to Keystart, not because there was no Keystart program - a significant Keystart program existed which was initiated by Labor - but because on any realistic analysis we could not possibly describe the Keystart program as a capital works program; nor did the Government in its first budget list in any way, shape or form the Keystart scheme as a capital works program. However, suddenly in the 1994-95 budget, Keystart emerges as a capital works program. In response to my question to Treasury about the definition of a capital works program, I was told that there was none. I asked how Keystart could possibly be described as a capital works program when the Government is not engaging in any capital works. The Keystart scheme basically operates to provide a warehousing facility for certain funds raised on the private capital market.

It is evident when I raise this issue with people that they do not understand how the scheme works. People thought that almost \$500m in government funding was allocated for Keystart projects. That is not the case.

This is a finance warehousing program which is entirely self-funding. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Housing is in the House. The minister is on record as saying that the Government does not spend a cent on Keystart; that it is 100 per cent self-funding. The Government has a contract with a company called Oakvale Capital Limited which raises funds on the capital market. Those funds are then borrowed by Homeswest and drawn down as they are required.

Unfortunately, as I was about to enter into detailed discussion on Keystart, the Minister for Housing left the Chamber. I hope he has gone to get a briefing. Hypothetically speaking, potential home buyer Tracey Smith approaches Westfield Building Society for a loan to buy a house and land package in Wungong. It is approved. Westfield then approaches Homeswest or Keystart and applies for the money to lend to Tracey. Keystart then refers to the facility arranged for it by Oakvale Capital, which company's source of funds is not apparent because of the secretiveness involved - the most likely could be the Macquarie Bank Ltd, from which some funds are drawn down. The funds are handed to the Westfield Building Society which lends them to Tracey. Tracey then enters into a contract to build a house. It is Tracey's capital works program; it is certainly not the Government's capital works program. Indeed there is no relationship between the builder and Keystart. Homeswest basically is acting as an investor.

Far from this being an act of generosity by the Government; it is making a tidy little profit from the scheme. I have made a number of suppositions on this matter because no data has been released. Based on the rates given for state Treasury bonds for a five-year-plus period, for example, one presumes that it would not be paying more than 5.6 per cent for this facility. On the basis of the equivalence to the Treasury bonds - there would be no reason for thinking the rate would be less than the 5.6 per cent - like any other finance wholesaler, Keystart gives Westfield Building Society half a per cent margin to act as the retailer. That takes the rate to about 6.1 per cent. The market rate for home loans at this end of the market is about 6.15 per cent. It is probably a bit lower if we take into account that a loan for most new home buyers can be accessed at a much lower rate in the first year. That is not what Keystart borrowers are paying. They are paying 7 per cent, which is nearly 1 per cent higher than the market rate and 1 per cent higher than should be needed, given the rate at which the Government borrows and the margin it must add to pay its retailer. The Government has about 8 per cent to play with.

Mr Bradshaw: It is an average interest rate, not the normal rate.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The situation is much worse for the older loans. I am talking about loans approved since about 1995-96.

Mr Bradshaw: Did your Government set it up or did we?

Ms MacTIERNAN: We did.

Mr Bradshaw: I have a feeling it was established based on a rate other than what was normal at the time.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Since the Government took over the scheme, the interest rate has been much higher than the rate offered by the general market. Until the Opposition made a fuss in I think 1997-98, the differential in the rate of the old loans was about 1.5 per cent. It is now about 0.8 per cent.

Dr Hames: Are you talking about Keystart interest?

Ms MacTIERNAN: Yes.

Dr Hames: I have had an analysis done of the base Keystart rate plus the transposition of that, given there are no administration fees or other fees by Keystart in real percentage interest terms and that it is marginally above most of the other banks although not all of them. I think the Challenge Bank is slightly higher when all its ongoing management fees and charges are added. It is very competitive.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The reason the Government does not charge the other oncosts is that they were all added on, by and large, to the capital sum. It is not because the punters are getting a free kick; they are being added on at the other end of the transaction. One of the contributing factors -

Dr Hames: All of the other banks have a much lower default rate because people must have much greater equity in their properties and they must have much bigger deposits. It was never meant to be a low interest loan in comparison with other banks. It was always meant to have a slightly higher rate.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister might argue that. For the Government to say that it has entered into a capital works program, when in fact it is basically acting as a finance warehouse for a scheme, which, under the minister's statements to this Parliament, is entirely self funding, is an absolute fraud. This is not a capital works program.

Dr Hames: There was \$300m in the forward estimates in total overall government borrowings. The Government has tried - unlike your Government - to keep those borrowings down. The question was whether we should be going back to that. The fact is that we are not; we will maintain it. There is \$500m in new money going to new housing that might not otherwise have been the case.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is new money; it is not a capital works program of the State. The minister has a totally self-supporting scheme that does not require any financial input from the Government. That is based on the statements he has made in this House.

Dr Hames: It is an excellent scheme and one of which we are very proud.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I am not saying it is not an excellent scheme. The minister should listen to the argument. It is not a capital works program, and it should not be in this budget as a capital works program. The minister has said, "This is how much we are putting in as a capital works project compared with the Labor Government." The Labor Government which started this scheme never pretended that it was a capital works scheme, and it never appeared on the budget documents under Labor as a capital works scheme, because it is not a capital works scheme. It is basically a finance broking arrangement.

Dr Hames: The scheme you started was called Newstart or something.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It was called Keystart and it was started by Labor in 1989. In the first year of government, the minister did not have it in the budget. He did not consider it a capital works program.

Dr Hames: There are heaps of dollars involved in rescuing your program.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Does the minister understand the point I am making? He claims that the Government is spending a certain amount on a capital works program, yet the largest item included in the capital works program cannot, in any way, shape or form, be considered a capital works program. The minister is not developing any capital works. They have been developed by the people who borrow money. Does the annual statement of Westpac Banking Corporation describe every housing loan that it was undertaking as some sort of capital works program for Westpac?

Dr Hames: What do you call the \$476m capital works program that I am spending through the Water Corporation? We are borrowing money within that. It is a corporation. It is a major capital works program.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Is a facility being built?

Dr Hames: It is all self-funded by the Water Corporation.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Who owns the facility at the end?

Dr Hames: The Water Corporation.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Who owns the Water Corporation?

Dr Hames: The Government is the shareholder in it.

Ms MacTIERNAN: At the end of the construction period, who owns Tracey Smith's house? Not the Government. That is the fundamental difference; the Government is simply acting as a finance intermediary.

Dr Hames: You are being pedantic. Who owns my house? The bank mostly owns my house.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The Government is not engaging in capital works. It is not costing a single cent.

Dr Hames: It costs your Labor mates in New South Wales an enormous amount of money.

Ms MacTIERNAN: A tidy little profit has been made out of this by the Government. From the evidence that we have, far from being a generous scheme, although it allows people on low incomes to get into housing, which is positive, the fact that the interest rates under the current management regime have been rammed up -

Dr Hames: They have not been rammed up; they have come down.

Ms MacTIERNAN: They have been rammed up in comparison with the market rate.

Dr Hames: Give me one iota of proof that those interest rates have gone up since I have been here.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is in comparison with the market rate. It does not make sense to talk about them -

Dr Hames: We brought them down twice in the past year.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister has behaved better since we first exposed the inequity of this scheme.

Dr Hames: If you look at the records, you will see I brought them down before you became involved.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No, the minister did not. He brought them down while he was under the hammer and when we were showing enormous numbers of people were folding under the negative equity. As the minister is so full of information, can he give us some idea of how much the management takes home from the scheme each year?

Dr Hames: No.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No? The minister indicated that he knew a bit about this scheme and that he had an analysis done. That is a relevant and interesting point.

Dr Hames: I am not saying that I have not known or I have not read about it.

Ms MacTIERNAN: However, he just will not tell us.

Dr Hames: On the spur of the moment, I do not recall specifically.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Does the minister have a rough idea?

Dr Hames: No.

Ms MacTIERNAN: As I have said before in this place, the Government handed over management of Keystart.

Dr Hames: I have a board that looks after that for me.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister has a board. Does he appoint the board?

Dr Hames: Yes. I think Greg Joyce is on it as well as the chair of Homeswest.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Anyone else?

Dr Hames: Yes.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Does he appoint them?

Dr Hames: Yes.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Does he know about the people he has appointed?

Dr Hames: This is not question time.

Ms MacTIERNAN: That is certainly the impression I was getting. The minister was asking me questions. He was engaging in debate. I am happy to make this a question session. At last we are getting some information about what is going on.

Dr Hames: I will leave you to it.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister said earlier that a board is responsible for all of this. Does that board report to him?

Dr Hames: Yes.

Ms MacTIERNAN: There is a ministerial responsibility at the end. The minister has flagged that he will no longer participate in the debate because he cannot remember anything. The fundamental principle of the Keystart scheme is fine. It is desirable to provide the wherewithal for people on low incomes to get into private housing. I do not have any difficulty

with that. The difficulties that I am raising are fourfold. First, one could not describe this as part of the Government's capital works program. If the Government is including this as a capital works item, it is inaccurate to compare its capital expenditure with that of the Labor Government in 1992-93 because we are not comparing apples with apples. In 1992-93, as was the case in the first budget of this Government, this scheme was, quite properly, not characterised as a capital works program. This has been a recent invention of the Government in order to ramp up the appearance of its capital expenditure. The Government is really operating as a financial intermediary; it is not engaging in a capital works program. That is my first concern.

My second concern is that the interest rates that are charged are significantly above the market interest rate. The minister has been wrong on the detail of this scheme before and he has been caught out time and time again. I do not believe that this is because this can be explained away on the basis that there are no administration costs. What happens with these schemes is that those costs tend to be added on to the capital cost. Therefore, they are still paid for by the punters, and indeed paid for twice because they attract an interest payment on top of those. This is one of the reasons that we have seen negative equity problems arise. Part of the excess that is generated by the Government from this extra interest rate goes into providing a fund which is there to cover the losses. Is the minister prepared to give us details of the size of those funds? Does he have any idea how much is in them?

Dr Hames: I think the total amount of Keystart loans is in the order of \$71m.

Ms MacTIERNAN: In loans or in the fund?

Dr Hames: The assets in the fund that are being reinvested back into housing partially cover the cost of the loans. Perhaps the member is talking about something different from me.

Ms MacTIERNAN: After the cost of capital has been paid, which I understand is about 5.6 per cent, plus the half a percent that is provided to the retailer, which comes to about 6.1 per cent or a bit less, 7 per cent is then charged. Therefore, there is 0.8 per cent to play around with. What does the Government do with that 0.8 per cent?

Dr Hames: I do not know the exact answer to your question. The point I was making was that it must include some profit that is made.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Who has to make a profit?

Dr Hames: There is a margin in there to cover bad loans and other contingencies.

Ms MacTIERNAN: That was my earlier point.

Dr Hames: That creates an asset value, which is currently in the order of \$71m. That amount of money is actually being put back in to provide loans. I do not have the answer to those questions in precise detail. It would be better if the member wrote to me, and I will provide the answers.

Ms MacTIERNAN: On average, I have been waiting for about six months for answers to questions that I have asked the minister.

Dr Hames: That is not true. You get your answers very quickly.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I do not. The minister is the worst in answering these questions, particularly on sale and purchase of assets.

Dr Hames: You are making this up as you go along.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No, the minister is certainly the worst.

Dr Hames: No, definitely not.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Even the minister with the red boxes is speedier than this minister.

Out of this 8 per cent, a certain amount is set aside. I would be concerned if some of that was being put into new loans. I understood that was supposed to be providing some sort of buffer. We also know that a generous slab of that money goes to our friends who manage Keystart. Keystart was managed by - I have raised this before today - a consortium of International Financing and Investment Pty Ltd and Stanton Partners. However, I understand there has been a falling out in Stanton Partners, of which I think Mr Kevin Palassis is one of the partners. There are problems with the way IFI and Stanton Partners operate. Not only do we have concerns about the amount of money they are making in administering the scheme, but we are also concerned about the amount of money that they are making on the side. I have raised in this place previously the situation in which one of the partners of IFI set up a business that was then being given all the home improvement work that was undertaken by Keystart on loans in default. That same company was telling subcontractors to add an extra 10 per cent onto their quotes, which was then syphoned off directly by that company. Therefore, one of the managers of Keystart is engaged in a fraudulent scheme to bleed money out of Keystart.

Mr Bradshaw: Have you got proof of this?

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister knows it is true.

Dr Hames: It was an agency that was appointed, and those people have been taken to court and been prosecuted.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Was one of the directors of IFI, which is the company that controls Keystart, also a director of this company that was taken to court?

Dr Hames: That is right. We have been through that before.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is a disgraceful story. Has the minister considered whether this company is a fit and proper company to run Keystart?

Dr Hames: We went through that in some detail.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Was the company convicted?

Dr Hames: The people doing the work who had engaged in the fraudulent practice were convicted. That was nothing to do with the company that appointed them.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The company doing the work was Donbar Holdings Pty Ltd, and one of the directors of Donbar Holdings was one of the directors of the company that manages Keystart.

Dr Hames: That is right. We discussed this with them at some length. What happened was that the director who was listed as a director of the other company did so to help somebody out when he first came some time before. I know it sounds a bit iffy, to coin a phrase.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is just unbelievable.

Dr Hames: However, he put forward a very good case.

Ms MacTIERNAN: If the minister believes that rubbish -

Dr Hames: It is a matter of belief. However, the fact is that I believed his story, and I still do. We made it clear to that organisation that we did not believe that was appropriate. In effect, it is still acting as manager on the understanding that such a thing should not happen again.

Ms MacTIERNAN: If that had been done by a Labor Government, there would have been hell to pay. What concerns me is that if the minister actually believes that absurd story, the standards of corporate government that the Government sets for these private operators of government agencies are just frightening. If the minister who was responsible for appointing this company thinks that it is acceptable for a director to claim, in an arrangement like that, that he knew nothing about it because he only became a director to help someone out, and that he obviously had a cavalier disregard for the requirements of the Corporations Law, even on the basis of his own story it is -

Dr Hames: He was not the one who made the arrangement; it was one of the other directors.

Ms MacTIERNAN: He was the manager of the Keystart company, and it was just pure coincidence that he was also director of the company that was the beneficiary of contracts given by the management company.

Dr Hames: All I am doing here is providing grist for your raving on in your speech. If you do not believe it, go outside this House and say so and you can test it in the courts.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Therefore, we are not able to raise here with the minister specific concerns about the conduct of the people that he put in charge of these schemes, particularly when questions are being asked -

Mr Trenorden: I thought this was a budget speech.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is a budget speech. I am looking at the Keystart budget.

Dr Hames: You have raised this in the House before and asked questions, which I have answered. This is your contribution to the budget debate. I will not make your speech for you.

Ms MacTIERNAN: We know the minister's propensity to appoint people close to the Liberal Party to these various positions claiming, as he did earlier, as nice as pie, that these people were there by virtue of ex-officio positions. However, when pressed on the point, the minister reluctantly agreed that he did appoint some people. That is a story for another day. The other concern about the company is its conflict of interest not only in handing out contracts which are abused by its directors, but also in competing for business with the Keystart company. Is the minister aware that IFI is running a rival organisation called WA Home Loans? The minister is suddenly strangely silent.

What makes this even more bizarre is that every year I turn up to the Minister for Housing's Estimates Committee session to ask questions about Keystart. Guess what? People from Homeswest just do not turn up. The minister tells me that this is because Homeswest did not have an appropriation, although it turns up in our budget documents and it is absolutely starring in delivering supposedly the biggest capital works program in the entire budget! Nevertheless, representatives do not turn up to the Estimates Committee hearings. It is a pity the minister has gone into a bit of a sulk. It would be nice to know whether he proposes this year, given Homeswest's starring role in the budget, that officers will attend so we can ask about the fabulous capital works program. A yes or no answer will do. Will we have an opportunity to talk to Homeswest about the capital works program as presented in the budget?

Dr Hames: This material I am reading is very important - it is about funding for remote Aboriginal communities. No, Homeswest is not listed to appear in the Estimates Committee hearings.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Why would that be?

Dr Hames: Because it is a statutory authority; we have our budget presentation at a later stage of the year.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Is the minister suggesting that Homeswest is a statutory authority, so we will not have an opportunity to examine its capital works program?

Dr Hames: As I understand it, no. The situation is the same as last year, and probably the same as when you were in government.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No. When we were in government, we did not claim that Keystart was a capital works project, as this Government is doing.

Dr Hames: That is perhaps because you had no understanding of the concept of total borrowing of government and government departments. We have included in total debt of government consideration of the Water Corporation and Homeswest budgets. We are keeping our total budget costs down. The point is that in our forward estimates, we were supposed to keep our Keystart borrowings down to a capital expenditure figure of \$300m, but we have decided not to do so - we will increase it to \$500m.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Why was the minister supposed to keep it down to \$300m?

Dr Hames: I will not contribute further to your speech - you make your own speech. Address the Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Baker): The member for Armadale will address the Chair.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I will speak to you, Mr Acting Speaker, as you are a more reasonable person and more prepared, as you have a training in law, to appreciate the accuracy of my comments.

Perhaps the minister could help us here.

Dr Hames: I am studying important material on funding for remote Aboriginal communities.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister is sitting in Parliament drawing a salary of \$150 000 as the Government's most senior representative in this place; in fact, he is the only minister currently in the House, and this is supposed to be a budget debate.

Dr Hames: No. It is supposed to be you speaking and me listening to debate.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister is supposed to be taking notes. If he can answer questions immediately, so much the better. The Premier today in question time said that all capital works are being funded out of surpluses, which I find very puzzling. I hoped we would get some erudition from the minister. As he admitted, this Keystart program is funded 100 per cent-plus from borrowings. Indeed, no surpluses are directed towards this half a billion dollars warehoused through the Keystart scheme. Seriously minister, I would like to hear the explanation, if there is one. How can one say that the most significant capital works expenditure - namely, the Keystart scheme - is funded out of surpluses when we know all the money is being borrowed?

Dr Hames: I am doing as you requested and taking notes.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Does the minister know the answer?

Dr Hames: I will pass on your question to the Treasurer.

Mr Trenorden: What will you do next week now you have the estimates out of the road?

Ms MacTIERNAN: Interestingly, the Chairman of the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee, as a reasonable man who believes in the scrutiny of budgets, would naturally have assumed that members would have an opportunity to examine Keystart, given that it is the Government's star performer in this budget. I regret, member for Avon, that Keystart and Homeswest will be absent yet again from the process. Even though Keystart represents the biggest capital works program, not one question will be asked about it.

Mr Trenorden: What are you doing now? What do you do at question time?

Ms MacTIERNAN: The member asked me why I did not raise the matter in the Estimates Committee.

MR MARLBOROUGH (Peel) [8.49 pm]: I take this opportunity to raise a number of issues about the budget as it affects my electorate and the State in general. It is fairly obvious that very little in this budget will provide for the needs of or benefit my constituents in Kwinana and Rockingham. I will go through the key areas of my concerns on behalf of that community.

It is obvious that the health area once again will be under-funded in real terms. As a result, the Rockingham-Kwinana District Hospital, which in the past four years has needed to be bailed out before the end of the financial year, will once again require a bailout. In previous years when that has happened, we went through the obnoxious process of the Minister for Health saying there was no requirement to support hospitals because there had been no blow-out in their budgets. A number of Ministers for Health have deliberately misled not only the State Opposition but also the public of Western Australia by saying there was no crisis in health and no need to bail out particular hospitals. Usually, by the December-January period of the financial year, when it is impossible to hide the problems associated with the lack of funding because the whole system is haemorrhaging, the same minister has admitted that there is a requirement to bail out the health system. Amounts of \$28m-plus per annum have gone to Royal Perth Hospital, and millions of dollars have gone to Fremantle Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital for Children.

The same process has applied to the Rockingham-Kwinana District Hospital. When the need for further funds became

evident, the ministers adopted their second tack. Having previously said there was no problem, they then argued that the problem was inefficient management. Massive pressure has been applied to people who work within the health system to bring about greater efficiencies. Even at the end of that process, when efficiencies have been achieved, further pressure has been applied to nursing, cleaning and administrative staff. Ultimately, that does not stop the Government in many instances from contracting out those services. In the history of this Government, numerous areas in the health system, such as cleaning, catering and some nursing duties, have been contracted out. In the Rockingham-Kwinana District Hospital, a large number of the nursing staff, particularly at weekends, are contracted from agencies and are not employed directly by the hospital. Regardless of the efficiencies introduced, the Government has simply contracted out when it has suited it. More importantly, the Government, having in the first instance said that the system was in good shape, has accused members on my side of the House of deliberately misleading the community and building up an image of crisis in hospitals, even though in December or January of each financial year it has had to bail out the health system. The Rockingham-Kwinana District Hospital has been part of that process.

The fundamental problem is that not only does this Government refuse to recognise the health needs of the Rockingham and Kwinana community in general, but also it has adopted a special approach to the needs of that community, whether they be health, education or policing needs. It is a similar approach across those three fields and I have seen the impact of the Government's policy on that community. The Government's approach is that it does not hold these seats politically, and because it will never hold those seats it makes decisions in Cabinet not to fund services to that community on the basis of need. The Rockingham health service is clearly not provided with funds on the basis of the needs of the community. I predict that once again a bailout will be necessary halfway through the financial year to provide additional funds to the Rockingham health system, and that reflects the Government's refusal to recognise the health needs of that community in this budget. In so doing, the Government jeopardises the health of that community on the ground of basic politicisation of budget allocations. Rockingham has a population of 70 000. I compare that with Mandurah, which has a population of 40 000, and has access to the latest in hospital design and health services. Health facilities were placed in Mandurah, in an electorate held by the Government, and the Government has said Mandurah is a community much in need and that the health dollar in this area is well spent in an efficient way. Because Rockingham does not have adequate facilities, its population of 70 000 must access the facilities in Mandurah which has a population of 40 000. Everyone knows the hospital was located in Mandurah on the basis of pure political bastardry. The Government decided that the community in Rockingham could be ignored.

That is only one area of the budget in which the Government has played politics. It has happened in all areas of health. Rockingham, with a population of 70 000, has no community health service. It is serviced by the Kwinana community health service. Rockingham is growing more rapidly than any other community in the metropolitan area but this Government does not take account of its health needs. The allocation of funding is politically based; it has nothing to do with the needs of the community or the fact that in similar areas in the northern suburbs people are far better catered for. The Government ignores the community needs in Rockingham because it knows it cannot win an election in that area.

The same can be said about disability services available to the community. Families in that area who have severely disabled children have been on waiting lists for six years to get some respite care. These families need a break from the pressure of providing 24-hour a day care for their children. The pressure never leaves those families, but respite care enables them to give appropriate care to other members of their families. I visited a house the other day in Woodbridge, where a working couple has three young boys, one of whom is 12 years of age and is severely handicapped. He requires care 24 hours a day. Under this Government's regime, its lack of compassion and blatant lack of political will has resulted in a 12-year-old child not being able to get an appropriately designed chair to hold him while he is being showered. That family has had to put up with the same chair that was provided by the Disability Services Commission when their child was two years of age. When they asked the Disability Services Commission for funding for a new piece of equipment they were told no money was available and they will have to continue without it. This fully developed 12 year old is lying in a bed that was designed to cater for his disability when he was two years old. The bed has sides because this child can suffer from fits up to 12 times a day and can roll out of bed and be found on the floor by his parents. This child has had the same bed since he was two years of age. It is not for want of trying. His parents have been to the Disability Services Commission and have been told, "Sorry we have no money." The best offer from Disability Services is if the parents purchase a bed the department will see if it can find some money within its budget to remodel it for their son's purposes. That is a reflection on how this Government treats the disabled, and particularly on how this Government treats its community in the Rockingham-Kwinana area. The respite care situation is atrocious. No respite care is available for families south of Fremantle. For parents to be told that their children are on a six-year waiting list for respite care is a disgrace. There is no social dividend for those families. They have been waiting for many years. They have listened to the promises of the Government and it has not delivered.

The Government boasts about a surplus budget. Who wants a surplus when people are struggling to survive? I thought Governments were about caring for the community by providing the services that allow people to get through a day as a family unit, that allow the elderly to go into hospital and their families to know they are being properly cared for. Is that the picture in the provision of health in the Rockingham-Kwinana area? It is not. This budget will not fix that, because the same problems are built into this budget as in previous budgets. In real terms the Opposition has calculated that the budget falls far short of what is required to make the health system work properly. We will see the same cycle of broken promises, of ministers misleading members and the public in the first instance by saying there is not a crisis in Health, and then when they are pressured more and more by the Opposition with the facts and the community is screaming, halfway through the financial year the Government will come up with a rescue package because the health system cannot haemorrhage any more without going into its death throes.

Mr Thomas: In the Health Department it is called April showers because it happens every April.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I will tell the member for Cockburn that it is called a social disgrace in Rockingham-Kwinana. It is a reflection of how out of touch this Government is with its community.

Mr McGowan: When the Government took away those services the shadow ministers for health, both state and federal, attended a meeting about the Rockingham-Kwinana District Hospital and not one representative from the Government attended.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That is a reflection of the point I made earlier. I would be happy to stand here as a member representing that area if I had heard in the past four years an argument that the community has all its needs met, is well serviced and does not have the problems that I suggested. I have never once heard a minister say that to me. The minister would not dare to go on the record as saying it, because he knows how untrue it is. The minister knows how easily he would be caught out. What benefit is there, other than ego, for the Treasurer to boast that he has created this budget with a surplus when people are still waiting for the social dividend and are suffering in the way I have suggested in the health area alone? Surely it is meaningless; it carries with it no value. It may work with accountants. Are accountants running the community these days? Are accountants going to be in charge? When the Treasurer talks about a social dividend does he really mean a social dividend that will be determined simply by Treasury figures? I would have thought that, instinctively, as a politician the Treasurer would know that a social dividend is about those things that are provided to sustain a community. One of the basic creeds of government is to look after community health needs.

I am now entering my fourth year of predicting a bailout of the Rockingham-Kwinana District Hospital. It will not be required because of inefficiencies in that hospital. The Government cannot blame the administration, the nursing staff, the cleaning staff or the caterers any more. It will be a bailout that is required because for the fourth year running this Government has refused to recognise that the Rockingham-Kwinana area is one of the largest growth areas in the State and in Australia and refuses to budget accordingly for its health needs. The tragedy is that the rationale that goes into that thinking has got nothing to do with balancing a budget. When it gets down to that micro level of service provision throughout the metropolitan area I am saying on record that Kwinana-Rockingham misses out because it is not important politically to the Government.

Mr Trenorden: How much money did you get in the budget this year? Was it a couple of hundred million dollars?

Mr MARLBOROUGH: We get very little. If we got that much, can the member for Avon point out where it is?

Mr Trenorden: Aren't you happy about the port down there?

Mr MARLBOROUGH: The member for Avon has been smoking those funny cigarettes again. What port? Four ports have been mentioned in the past two years. We have had two Ministers for Transport in the past 12 months and who knows what port they are talking about these days! Nobody in the Department of Transport or in the Department of Resources Development knows. What port is the member for Avon talking about? We will have another port next week; the member can ask Len Buckeridge whether he wants to build it somewhere else next week. I can assure the member for Avon that no port is being built in my patch.

Let us look at another area of concern for my electorate, the area of education. How diabolical and political is this budget? Last week the Treasurer announced the provision of two primary schools in Bunbury and one in Halls Head. I understand the Minister for Education - it is a pity he is not in the Chamber - went to Bunbury and advised the community that, in his opinion, 650 children at a primary school is far too many, and it is not appropriate to have primary schools of 650-plus children. Of the eight primary schools in the State that have the greatest population, four are in my electorate. There is a desperate need for a primary school in the East Waikiki area. Last year the member for Rockingham and I took the Minister for Education on a tour through the school in East Waikiki and the Koorana Education Support Centre, and the Rockingham Senior High School. The needs were obvious to the minister. Those schools have populations of over 1 000 children; the primary schools have populations of over 900 and 800. The Minister for Education can see fit to go to Bunbury and suggest that 650 children are too many for a primary school and, therefore, two more primary schools will be built there; however, he cannot see that need amongst the schools in the Rockingham area, where the number of demountables attached to the schools is the same as for permanent classrooms. Those demountables are evidence of the overcrowding. Do we see a new primary school being placed in the Waikiki area? No; we do not, but we do see a new primary school placed in Bunbury on the basis that 650 children at a primary school are too many.

The evidence shows that the Government will do the work in Bunbury because the seats of Bunbury and Mitchell are held by government members, and it wants to retain those seats. It does not hold the seats of Kwinana and Rockingham and does not have much chance of winning them at the next State election, so they get no priority. It has nothing to do - as people would hope it has in a Government that is responsible - with providing facilities, without fear or favour, to the whole of the community, particularly in education and health, or with proper budgeting, or with savings, or with how much is in the Education budget; it has everything to do with making a political decision to put resources of that type - that is, in health and education - in Liberal strongholds and seats that the Government wants to win at the next election. I suggest that when we get closer to a state election - we will probably have one more state budget before that occurs - we will see it happen again.

Mr Cunningham: I doubt it. I do not think there will be an early budget. They will hold an early election. They will go next June.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I always bow to the political wisdom of the member for Girrawheen. Given the opportunity to have

another budget before the calling of the next election, we will continue to see the same thing happen again. I am not jumping up saying this in the first year the Government has brought down a budget. I am not on the record as having said it in its first, second, third or fourth year in office. There is clear evidence that the Rockingham-Kwinana region is being singled out in budget allocations for health, education, policing and transport to be underfunded so that the pork-barrelling of safe Liberal seats can take place. There is a massive need to put a primary school in the East Waikiki area.

Mr Trenorden: My seat has done pretty well, but I am a National Party member. I am in a marginal seat.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That is a key point that has obviously been pretty well thought out! It is now clear that in this budget there is no money for extra police officers to be employed in this State. All the money for policing in this budget goes into capital works, for new training centres and new police stations, one of which will be in my electorate. A new police station for Rockingham has been announced for the fourth year, and it is clear from this budget that it will not be established until probably the end of the year 2000, if not beyond that. Not enough money is allocated in this budget to complete that new police station and courthouse. This financial year that funding will be spread over the next two budgets. Although we will be getting a belated facility, very much needed by the police who are presently working in atrocious conditions in Rockingham -

Mr Trenorden: Belated because your Government did not do it.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Everybody recognises how bad those conditions are. The problem not only relates to the conditions in which the police officers who do a fine job must work, but also to the fact that the Police Force is totally underresourced. The figures I read last week in the *Hansard* show that, according to the minister's version, 47 or 48 police officers are involved in Rockingham. Our figures show closer to 37 or 38 police officers are involved. Shortly I want to pursue with the minister the differences in those numbers. Whether the number is 38 or 48, one aspect is clear: Figures for the policing numbers throughout the metropolitan area as a ratio to population show there is approximately one police officer for every 400 people. In the Rockingham area, that ratio is four times higher; that is, one police officer to every 1 600 people. It is no use the minister trying to cover that up by saying, "We have 67 police officers in Fremantle on call." What is the point of that for the people of Rockingham-Kwinana? The police officers must be in the community, working with the community, building up a rapport with the community, getting to know people in the community and, at the local level, making sure they put in place community initiatives that will assist in reducing the level of crime in our community. No, we see an exaggerated difference in the ratio of police officers to population, a difference that, once again, reflects a community that has been hard done by under this Government. I am suggesting that police numbers are not what they should be in the Rockingham region because this Government sees it as a seat it cannot win at next election. If there is a choice to be made of which seats should benefit from pork-barrelling through enhancing policing, education and health to put the Government in a good light prior to an election, that is what it will do.

Mr Trenorden: Why were the ratios the same in your time?

Mr MARLBOROUGH: They were not.

Mr Trenorden: Yes, they were; they were worse.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: The ratios were not the same. In the past seven years in the Warnbro-Port Kennedy region, an average of seven houses a day have been built. The member for Avon is not aware of the concept of growth; he has little growth in his electorate.

Mr Trenorden: You are saying there has been no increase in police numbers in the past seven years.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I said that the number of police had not increased to complement the growth of the population. Otherwise the ratio of police officers to population in my electorate would be in line with the rest of the metropolitan area. That is clearly not the case. In the eight-year period of the last Electoral Commission Review, the number of people eligible to vote in my electorate increased from approximately 19 000 to 34 000. That is an indication of the growth in that area. The Government cannot continue to ignore policing, education and health needs which are all basic community requirements and which keep intact the fabric of society, for the sake of winning marginal seats at the next election. If it does that, it cannot then talk with credibility about a social dividend.

The Government should be at least honest enough to say that it is seeking the views of the member for Nedlands or the views of the Liberal-National Party coalition on social equity. It should announce that, as occurred in the past four years, Kwinana-Rockingham will get nothing; and then get on with providing social equity to the rest of the community. It should tell us that the northern suburbs, Bunbury-Mitchell and Mandurah-Dawesville will receive a social dividend but Rockingham-Kwinana will miss out. At least that would be an honest intention under the Government's social dividend policy. It is skewed only to advance the political position of the present Government in the lead-up to the next election.

The issue of transport is simply another example of how the Kwinana-Rockingham region has been neglected by this Government. Privatisation of the bus service has occurred to the detriment of the community. In growing outer suburbs in Australia, it is preferable to have a transport system that works for the whole community, not just a select part of the community. However, that is what is now occurring with transport in the Rockingham-Kwinana area as I am sure is the case throughout the metropolitan area. If we live near or on a route that is used by the appropriate number of people, the private operator will continue to provide a service. However, if the people in that community do not use the service as often as the private operator would like, he will cut off the service. Whole areas of my community in the Baldivis region no longer have a bus service. It is a growing community. However, it is not increasing rapidly enough for Southern Coast Transit to provide a bus service. It has cut it out. It told the Baldivis community approximately 12 months ago that insufficient passengers

were using the service to make it viable. That tells us how the transport policy has changed under this Government, and it continues to be reflected in this budget.

It is another indication of the Government's policy regarding a social dividend. It is symbolised in the attitude that there are insufficient passengers to make the provision of a bus service viable. It clearly demonstrates the division of political attitudes towards communities and their transport needs. Transport should not be provided based on a dollar return, but on providing an integrated service to the community. Why should the people of Baldivis not be able to catch a bus to the Rockingham shopping centre? People can catch a bus if they live in Port Kennedy, Warnbro, inner Rockingham or east Waikiki. The people of Baldivis are not denied a transport service because they do not pay the same rates and taxes or because they are not governed by the same laws as everyone else, but because a private operator cannot make a quid from that service.

Mr Trenorden: That is why 90 per cent of rural Western Australia does not have public transport.

Mr Bloffwitch: That is what happens in Geraldton where there has always been a private bus service. Of course, if nobody gets on the buses they will not operate. Why should they?

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That supports my position. Why would a Government create a surplus that would give back to the community a social dividend when it believes that the best way to operate a public transport system is to contract it to a private company which must make a profit? A Labor Government would not do that; that is the point I am making. We have the view that we should provide for the community.

We cannot say to the people of Baldivis that not only is a transport service to their community not profitable but also its contribution in taxes towards maintaining the Rockingham police station is so small that if someone in Baldivis called the police on Monday they might not get there until Friday. We cannot tell those people that our money spent on crime must show more return, and, therefore, because one family occupies a half acre block in Baldivis, we will not send police to attend to their concerns and that people like them cause the police budget to blow out. That is the philosophy behind this Government's privatised transport system. There is not a social dividend in this for the community.

The Government should come clean. This budget is based on the same deceptions that we have been hearing in here for a number of years. The Government said it would reduce the budget deficit following the poor fiscal management of the previous Government and when it has done that it will return it to the community by way of a social dividend. The people of Kwinana-Rockingham are still waiting for that social dividend.

That is what the community of Kwinana-Rockingham is waiting for. It has not seen it in health, and I have demonstrated why. It has not seen it in education; it has not seen it in police numbers; and it is not seeing it in transport. There is no social dividend. It is like a family sitting around a table dividing a chicken equally, but the kids at the end of the table will not get the same share as everyone else. The kids at the bottom end, who happen to come from Kwinana and Rockingham, will get less than the rest. That is what is happening at the moment.

Mr Trenorden interjected.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: The tragedy of the member for Avon is that he is making more noise about his community during my speech on the budget than he has done in the past four years. He says nothing about the impact of this budget. He sits in his seat, acquiesces with the Government - a toady to the Treasurer - and says nothing about his electorate. When did members last hear him speak about the lack of doctors in Northam? When did members hear him speak about the difficulties of encouraging teachers into the bush? When did members last hear him speak about the lack of nurses? He does not. Why? He is a toady. The Government pulls his chain and he comes along. He does not have to be dragged; he runs by the Government's heels and he has been doing it for years. The member has made more interjections during my contribution to the budget debate about what he thinks is going on in the bush - there have not been too many - than he has made since he has been in Government. He is a joke! If he has something to say in this debate about his community, he should be on his feet saying it. I would be happy to listen to him without interjecting too much.

Mr Trenorden: I love being praised by you. If anyone in this House has no credibility, it is you.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: If the member for Avon thinks what I have said is praise, that is why he sits where he does on the government benches. The National Party has just enough members to hold a meeting in a telephone booth, and it will not let him out. He is the only one. All six members of the National Party meet in a telephone booth and they have locked him inside for the past seven years. Every now and then the door opens and we hear this voice in the wilderness yell out.

Dr Turnbull: I cannot understand how you can say those sorts of things.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: The member for Collie has just woken up. I know the lights affect the member. She has difficulty with the lights in this room and she has told me that they affect her and make her go to sleep. I will put it down to that this time.

Transport is another clear indication of the lack of a social dividend and the lack of commitment from this Government to the Kwinana-Rockingham region. The provision of rail transport which would open up the southern corridors has been put on hold once again. There is no real commitment. Yesterday, the member for Dawesville said that it will not happen and we agree with him. I read *Hansard*. He said that the railway link to Mandurah will not happen, and we, on this side of the House, wholeheartedly concur. It will not happen under this Government.

It is another reflection of the lack of commitment by this Government to the Kwinana-Rockingham region, and a budget

strategy that is based not on social equity, but on political expediency. It is based on pork-barrelling, of marginal seats for the Liberal-National Party coalition.

MR CUNNINGHAM (Girrawheen) [9.34 pm]: At a time when, seemingly and justifiably, so much endless negativity has been brought about by this budget, the community once again is requested to make many sacrifices. Any Government that forces suffering onto the community is no friend of that community. Education, health and community welfare are still experiencing, as they have over the many years of this Government, severe and disgraceful cutbacks in funding. The cutbacks that this Government has passed on are, at best, a total farce of gigantic proportions. Despite the misgivings and trepidation that the future holds, the good people throughout the electorate of Girrawheen, and indeed the wider community, rise above this setback and they struggle, together with their children, to make a better future. Despite the tragic circumstances of this budget, it is my duty to show the House the compassionate and conscientious work being done in the many schools in the electorate that I represent. This work is being done not only in schools, but also in church groups and many community organisations. There is a saying that without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community. As I have stressed in this House many times, schools have a tremendous impact on our local communities. Put simply, they are the heart and soul that formulate every new generation of young people. The vigour, the optimism and the hope of young people within our communities encourages me. This must always be encouraged, not only by people like me, but also by members on both sides of this House.

Every generation must have a desire to make this community, this troublesome world, a better place in which to live. The three senior high schools in my electorate have maintained exceptional educational standards and community involvement, constantly placing a caring and respectable value upon their students despite shocking cutbacks in schools such as Balga Senior High School, Girrawheen Senior High School and Warwick Senior High School. I take this opportunity to provide recognition of these schools and their staff. These educators do not seek publicity for their good endeavours. Their reward comes from providing the essential self-respect, guidance, nurturing and opportunities that our young people fundamentally seek and always deserve. The achievements I will outline are only a small example of what these schools have done and what they will continue to do. Warwick Senior High School, under the visionary leadership of the principal Brian Walters, who is in his thirteenth year as principal, and his committed staff have introduced a variety of programs too numerous to mention tonight. This school held a seminar only a few weeks ago during which staff members discussed issues such as learning techniques, technology, curricular improvement and the essential theme of student outcomes. The legal implications of education are another issue discussed at this school and a legal expert was brought into the school to teach years 11 and 12. Brian Walters is always maintaining a fresh progressive approach to education. This is reflected in his staff and their positive influence on the young people at the school has been a credit not only to the school, but also to the wider community.

This year Girrawheen Senior High School celebrates its twenty-fifth year. It has much to celebrate, despite a lack of funding from this Government, which has starved schools such as Girrawheen Senior High. Over the years, successive principals and their staff have always been at the cutting edge of education, always striving to build the esteem and talents of the young people. People in the Girrawheen electorate, like many other electorates, have had their problems, and those problems have been taken out into the wider community. However, Girrawheen Senior High School has overcome those many problems that have been experienced. The relieving principal, John Young, is maintaining and building upon the superb tradition that this school has nurtured over the years in which I have been the member for that area. Teachers at the school are actively engaged in a policy of beautifying the school classrooms. The school's philosophy advocates a positive learning environment. The teachers and students at Girrawheen Senior High are busily promoting what they call room ownership. It is reaping great rewards. Walking through that school, one cannot help but feel the energy or, as the students say, the positive vibe in the school. This energy naturally transcends into the wider community.

The student council is planning to beautify the front of Girrawheen Senior High School this year. Some people may ask what is significant about improving the front of the school. What is significant is that this school shows the pride that the students have, not only for their school, but also for the wider community. What a magnificent reflection this is on a school. Often we focus solely on a school's academic success, of which Girrawheen has much to be proud. However, when a school instills pride and self-worth in its young people, and in turn the community benefits, this is just as important as the school's academic success.

Balga Senior High School, as is the case with many schools in my electorate, continues to make great strides in education, despite the limited money that came out of this budget. Acting principal, Mrs Lois Di Giulio, and her staff have been encouraging the school's chaplaincy program. This is an initiative which complements existing student support programs. A school chaplain, such as Balga Senior High's Alice Staats, offers students another alternative or avenue through which to discuss the many problems they are experiencing in the school community and in their homes. Young people often see the chaplain as someone who is independent of the regular school counselling and support services. Alice has earned great respect from students in the school, and she is continually assessing and reassessing her strategies in helping students. This is indeed a progressive program which is constantly seeking to meet the needs of the students. Once again, this school has been starved because of budget restraints.

I strongly urge this Government to obtain the necessary funding for this valuable and successful program, not only for Balga Senior High School, but for the many schools throughout this State which are languishing because of lack of money for programs such as the chaplaincy program. There is not a member in this Assembly today who would not want greater support and encouragement for our young people. Balga Senior High School has had the foresight and vision to complement its student support services at the school and at home through this chaplaincy program. I also mention the exceptional work of the principal of Mercy College, Barrie Harvey. The standard and high regard with which this school is held in the community is extremely impressive. The same can be said of Emmanuel Christian School,

Girrawheen, which is a Baptist college. Principal Pedro Cruz and his staff have implemented positive educational programs as well as sound values for their students.

When we talk of dedicated educators, no better example than the Burbridge School can be mentioned, and the principal, John Brigg, comes to mind. John and his staff, as well as the parents, work tirelessly with their disabled students. They have to manage on the pittance that has been provided in this budget. They are providing the less fortunate young people in our community with the same opportunities that so many of us take for granted; that is, the prospect of being able to live in and contribute to the community in a positive way. As I have noted on many occasions, these young people have the optimism, the will and the confidence that we, as a community, should provide to not only a disabled school, but to all our schools.

The same can be said of the Gladys Newton School in Balga, which is a similar school to Burbridge. Recently, the federal member for Cowan, Graham Edwards, and I attended the launch of the school's new specialised multi-sensory playground, the first to be used in any school in Western Australia. The playground was a dream that became a reality after three years' hard work by all levels of the community, professionally and efficiently coordinated by deputy principal Barbara Lynes. The money did not come from this Government; it came from the business community. The school had to go to the business community because it could not get the money from the Federal and State Governments, from which it received only a pittance. Principal Marlene Brown and her dedicated staff are prime examples once again of visionary educators, who are essential in this important field.

One must not forget the primary schools, the important role they play in the development of our young people, and the respect that these schools garner in the wider community. Last year when Girrawheen Primary School library burnt down, it was a devastating blow to the school, to the staff and to the parents and citizens association. The children's hard work had perished overnight. However, the principal, Doug Grasso, and his staff rallied the school and the community. What happened was nothing short of inspirational. Today the library stands as a monument to the dedication, passion and camaraderie of the community when this tragedy occurred. It united parents, staff and students, as well the wider community.

I am fortunate to have an electorate such as Girrawheen, because the people in that electorate work for their schools. The P & Cs show their professionalism and dedication to the primary schools. I must use this forum tonight to acknowledge publicly these primary schools and their principals, their staffs and the parents and citizens association committees of Alinjarra, Montrose, Blackmoore, Dryandra, Hainsworth, Koondoola, Warriapendi, East Hamersley, Glendale, Majella, and North Balga and Our Lady of Mercy Primary School in Girrawheen. One must also mention the enormity of the job that the school P & C associations do. Without these associations the schools would flounder. As this Government's funding is always inadequate, the parents and schools must fundraise tirelessly and never-endingly. From selling lamingtons to holding school fetes, the P & C associations are continually under pressure. The P & C association committees in which I have been involved - I have been involved in many - are a shrine to the passion that parents have towards their children's education. If schools are the heart of the community, the various community groups are the soul of the community. They are varied and diverse and provide the individual with that sense of inclusion which is so important.

One cannot forget the importance of the senior citizens groups which are a vital element in our community. Girrawheen seniors under the fine leadership of Elizabeth Finlayson, Balga seniors president, Jean Sked, and Alexander Heights seniors under the leadership of Tom Dunderdale and Ann Stewart have developed and encouraged a bond with not only the community but also young people throughout the community. The Girrawheen electorate is blessed with centres that provide positive services to community members young and old. They operate on a small budget but still offer people very many beneficial services. One in particular is the Koondoola Neighbourhood Centre, which is an example of a drop-in place that offers so much. It provides playgroups, personal development courses, and much more, often utilising the talents of local community members. This is despite this lacklustre budget which this Government has forced upon this community.

I have tried to focus on the positives in our community. However, we must also deal with the negatives. The good people of the electorate of Girrawheen and the surrounding areas have grave concerns. I believe it is fair for all men, women and children to have the expectation of life in a very safe environment. The police must be commended for the massive effort that they put into policing the community despite the inadequate, shocking funding which this Government has bestowed upon them. As my colleague, the shadow spokesperson for Police and member for Midland, said in a press statement in the past few days, there is an \$8m shortfall in the Police budget. No doubt this will bring further despair to our community. Since 1993-94 drug offences are up 131 per cent, robbery is up 129 per cent, assault is up 45 per cent, deprivation of liberty is up 46 per cent and total crimes against the person are up by 41 per cent. Those figures are not plucked out of the air. They have been put out by the Police Union (WA). They are very accurate figures. It is no coincidence that as drug activity has escalated so has crime overall. In the same period police numbers increased a paltry 12.6 per cent. The community is demanding more police on the streets. The police need more funding so that they can carry out their jobs. The community and police are both equally frustrated.

Mr Bradshaw: Do you know the level of assaults per head of population, and where Western Australia rates in relation to other States?

Mr CUNNINGHAM: Western Australia may not rate higher, but the figures are not showing that we are doing the job. We are starving the police of money. In June of last year the then candidate for the federal seat of Cowan and now the federal member for Cowan and I were approached by concerned residents in Marangaroo which is just outside the seat of Girrawheen. I represented Marangaroo for many years. We were taken to crown land in Redcliffe Avenue, Marangaroo, which was and still is a disposal site for dozens of used needles and syringes. It was metres from a public bus stop and a footpath. As I have reported to the police on numerous occasions, there is a house in Redcliffe Avenue, Marangaroo, where

vehicles pull up morning, noon and night, clearly for the purpose of their occupants purchasing drugs. Often the occupants after visiting the house drive a few yards around the corner and shoot up on that crown land, which is where discarded needles are left.

Mr Bradshaw: You have reported it?

Mr CUNNINGHAM: I have reported it on numerous occasions.

Mr Bradshaw: What has happened?

Mr CUNNINGHAM: Nothing. That is why I am raising it again tonight. I was told last October, as the member for Wanneroo knows, to go softly on this address and that the police were going to do something about it. Nothing has been done about it. Last Friday I spent an hour near that address in Redcliffe Avenue where I saw eight cars come and go. The people in those cars were paying a very quick visit. This is happening not only in one street.

Mr MacLean: You have a terrible place down there.

Mr CUNNINGHAM: This is the member's electorate.

Mr MacLean: Will you tell the other members why you were asked not to make public the information?

Mr CUNNINGHAM: The police have done nothing about it.

Mr MacLean: They have.

Mr CUNNINGHAM: They are still operating. There is another pickup spot where drugs are peddled morning, noon and night. It is a public telephone box outside a shopping centre in Highclere Boulevard. Last Friday I left Redcliffe Avenue and went to Highclere Boulevard and watched a constant stream of people coming and going to that telephone box and peddling drugs. This is a disgrace. Local residents have expressed disgust and horror and feel totally despondent and disillusioned that this Government cannot provide them with a safe environment. The police have been approached on numerous occasions and asked to increase activity in this area, but they do not have the manpower or resources. They can go there at any time of the night or day. The member knows the address and so do I, but nothing has been done about it. This must stop now. It has been a grave problem since last year and nothing has changed. This is a disgrace, an outrage and a totally blatant show of contempt by the Government for the people of Marangaroo and surrounding areas. I am sure the Minister for Police will find this situation intolerable and he should demand immediate action. He should not wait. The people in this area have been subjected to this insipid behaviour over many years, and not just in the past 12 months. We must think of the children in this area who could step on a syringe on this crown land. That would be deplorable. The people of Marangaroo are desperate to have this serious problem of drug peddling on their streets cease immediately. I ask the Minister for Police to wake up before a tragic death occurs in this area.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Ms Warnock.

BILLS - RETURNED

1. Perth Parking Management Bill.
2. Perth Parking Management (Taxing) Bill.
3. Perth Parking Management (Consequential Provisions) Bill.

Bills returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 10.02 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, PROVISION OF SERVICES

1989. Mr BROWN to the Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Public Sector Management; Federal Affairs:

- (1) What steps have each department and agency under the Premier's control taken to ensure it provides an equal level of service to all West Australians wherever they live?
- (2) Has each department and agency examined the -
 - (a) quality; and
 - (b) ease of access,
 of the services provided in each of the regions compared to the average quality and access in Perth?
- (3) Will the Premier provide details of what changes/improvements have been made in this regard since 1 January 1997?
- (4) Has the level and/or quality of services provided by each department and agency throughout Western Australia been actively reviewed since 1 January 1997?
- (5) What was the outcome of that review?
- (6) Who undertook the review?
- (7) When was it undertaken?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(2) The current focus on improving agency performance in the Western Australian public sector reflects the continuing importance of achieving results. In the Western Australian public sector, the results or outcomes to be achieved are made clear in an agency's program and sub-program objectives. Activities used to assess the performance of public sector agencies include monitoring, auditing, review and evaluation. Service levels are commonly documented in annual reports, budget papers and customer service charters.
- (3)-(7) In May 1998 the Government announced the commencement of a process to develop a whole-of-government regional development policy for Western Australia. The policy will provide a framework for coordinated Government action to ensure that all regional communities receive a high standard of services.

A Steering Committee has been formed to oversee the policy formation process. The Steering Committee has membership from 14 State Government agencies, the Western Australia Municipal Association, the Regional Development Council, the Deputy Premier's Office and four community representatives. As an input to the policy, a scoping paper *"An Overview of Regional Development in State Government Agencies"* was written by the Department of Commerce and Trade which outlines the regional development activities of 42 State Government agencies. In addition, *"Policy Directions Papers"* have been written by a range of State Government agencies to identify opportunities to accelerate regional development and define appropriate measures for regional development outcomes. As a further input to the policy process, a *"Policy Framework Discussion Paper: Setting the Direction for Regional Western Australia"* was compiled in January 1999 by a consultancy firm, Synectics Creative Collaboration. The paper outlines a vision, principles, values, goals and objectives for regional development. Consideration of access to services is included in the framework paper.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, PROVISION OF SERVICES

1990. Mr BROWN to the Deputy Premier; Minister for Commerce and Trade; Regional Development; Small Business:

- (1) What steps have each department and agency under the Deputy Premier's control taken to ensure it provides an equal level of service to all West Australians wherever they live?
- (2) Has each department and agency examined the -
 - (a) quality; and
 - (b) ease of access,
 of the services provided in each of the regions compared to the average quality and access in Perth?
- (3) Will the Deputy Premier provide details of what changes/improvements have been made in this regard since 1 January 1997?
- (4) Has the level and/or quality of services provided by each department and agency throughout Western Australia been actively reviewed since 1 January 1997?
- (5) What was the outcome of that review?

(6) Who undertook the review?

(7) When was it undertaken?

Mr COWAN replied:

(1)-(2) The current focus on improving agency performance in the Western Australian public sector reflects the continuing importance of achieving results. In the Western Australian public sector, the results or outcomes to be achieved are made clear in an agency's program and sub-program objectives. Activities used to assess the performance of public sector agencies include monitoring, auditing, review and evaluation. Service levels are commonly documented in annual reports, budget papers and customer service charters.

(3)-(7) In May 1998 the Government announced the commencement of a process to develop a whole-of-government regional development policy for Western Australia. The policy will provide a framework for coordinated Government action to ensure that all regional communities receive a high standard of services.

A Steering Committee has been formed to oversee the policy formation process. The Steering Committee has membership from 14 State Government agencies, the Western Australia Municipal Association, the Regional Development Council, the Deputy Premier's Office and four community representatives. As an input to the policy, a scoping paper "*An Overview of Regional Development in State Government Agencies*" was written by the Department of Commerce and Trade which outlines the regional development activities of 42 State Government agencies. In addition, "*Policy Directions Papers*" have been written by a range of State Government agencies to identify opportunities to accelerate regional development and define appropriate measures for regional development outcomes. As a further input to the policy process, a "*Policy Framework Discussion Paper: Setting the Direction for Regional Western Australia*" was compiled in January 1999 by a consultancy firm, Synectics Creative Collaboration. The paper outlines a vision, principles, values, goals and objectives for regional development. Consideration of access to services is included in the framework paper.

The papers are hereby tabled. [See papers Nos 947, 948 and 949.]

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, PERFORMANCE AUDITS

2011. Mr BROWN to the Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Public Sector Management; Federal Affairs:

(1) Has an audit been carried out on each department and agency under the Premier's control to measure the performance of the department or agency in improving the equitable delivery of services in regional areas?

(2) How many audits have been carried out since 1 January 1997?

(3) Who carried out the audit?

(4) What were the findings of the audit?

(5) Have the findings of the audit been reported?

(6) When were they reported?

(7) In what document or media statement were they reported?

Mr COURT replied:

(1)-(7) The Regional Development Council and the Department of Commerce and Trade are drafting a regional development policy for Western Australia. The policy will provide a framework for coordinated Government action to ensure that all regional communities receive a high standard of services. As an input to the policy, a scoping paper "An Overview of Regional Development in State Government Agencies" was written by the Department of Commerce and Trade which outlines the regional development activities of 42 State Government agencies. The document, which is available in hard copy and on the project website, has been distributed to the policy's Steering Committee and Reference Group. In addition, 'Policy Directions Papers' have been written by a range of State Government agencies to discuss issues relating to regions, identify opportunities to accelerate regional development and define appropriate measures for regional development outcomes. The draft policy, scheduled for release for public comment in mid-1999, will provide further consideration of service delivery levels.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, PERFORMANCE AUDITS

2012. Mr BROWN to the Deputy Premier; Minister for Commerce and Trade; Regional Development; Small Business:

(1) Has an audit been carried out on each department and agency under the Deputy Premier's control to measure the performance of the department or agency in improving the equitable delivery of services in regional areas?

(2) How many audits have been carried out since 1 January 1997?

(3) Who carried out the audit?

(4) What were the findings of the audit?

(5) Have the findings of the audit been reported?

- (6) When were they reported?
- (7) In what document or media statement were they reported?

Mr COWAN replied:

- (1)-(7) The Regional Development Council and the Department of Commerce and Trade are drafting a regional development policy for Western Australia. The policy will provide a framework for coordinated Government action to ensure that all regional communities receive a high standard of services. As an input to the policy, a scoping paper "An Overview of Regional Development in State Government Agencies" was written by the Department of Commerce and Trade which outlines the regional development activities of 42 State Government agencies. The document, which is available in hard copy and on the project website, has been distributed to the policy's Steering Committee and Reference Group. In addition, "Policy Directions Papers" have been written by a range of State Government agencies to discuss issues relating to regions, identify opportunities to accelerate regional development and define appropriate measures for regional development outcomes. The draft policy, scheduled for release for public comment in mid-1999, will provide further consideration of service delivery levels.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, PRE-STRIKE BALLOTS

2167. Mr KOBELKE to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) How many applications have been made to the Commission to hold a pre-strike ballot since the introduction of the Labour Relations Legislation Amendment Act 1997?
- (2) How many pre-strike ballots have been approved by the Commission since the introduction of the Labour Relations Legislation Amendment Act 1997?
- (3) How many certificates have been issued by the Minister to hold a pre-strike ballot in accordance with section 97F(3) of the Act?
- (4) Have there been any charges or prosecutions for breaches of the pre-strike ballot requirements in accordance with the Labour Relations Legislation Amendment Act 1997?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(3) None.
- (4) No.

POLITICAL EXPENDITURE, COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS

2168. Mr KOBELKE to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) Has the Auditor reported on compliance with political expenditure requirements in accordance with section 97R of the Labour Relations Legislation Amendment Act 1997?
- (2) Have there been any charges or prosecutions for offences by organisations and officials relating to political expenditure?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) No auditor's report had made a reference to a failure to comply with the political expenditure requirements of the Act.
- (2) No.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, IMPACT OF GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

2257. Mr RIEBELING to the Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Public Sector Management; Federal Affairs:

- (1) Has the Premier received any written advice from any agency under his control on the impact of the Goods and Services Tax?
- (2) If yes, when was this advice received?
- (3) Will the Premier table this advice and if not, why not?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1) I have received, in the normal course of events, advice from my agencies on the Commonwealth's tax reform proposals including the impact of the goods and services tax.
- (2) This advice has been received since the release in August 1998 of the Commonwealth's "A New Tax System".
- (3) I (the Premier) released an analysis of the impact of tax reform on Western Australia on 6 September 1998. It is not normal practice to table advice, which is received on a whole range of matters, from agencies.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN, FREE TICKETS TO SPORTING EVENTS

2318. Mr GRAHAM to the Minister for the Environment; Labour Relations:

- (1) Has any sporting club or organisation provided the Minister with free tickets to any major sporting events in Western Australia?
- (2) If so -
 - (a) to which events were the tickets provided; and
 - (b) on how many occasions have tickets been provided?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) All members of Parliament, and the Minister in particular, receive hundreds of invitations to attend sporting, arts and social events every year. Whilst the Minister tries to attend as many events as possible, regrettably this is not always possible.
- (2) (a)-(b) This information is not readily available. Provision of this information would require considerable research which would divert staff away from their normal duties and I am not prepared to allocate the State's resources to provide a response. If the member has a specific enquiry I will endeavour to provide a reply.

MR BRUNO CAMARRI

2339. Mr RIEBELING to the Premier:

- (1) Is Mr Bruno Camarri currently employed as a consultant by the Government?
- (2) If yes, what is the nature of the consultancy?
- (3) When did the consultancy commence?
- (4) When does the consultancy conclude?
- (5) What is the total remuneration paid to Mr Camarri to date under this consultancy?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, PERSONAL USE OF CREDIT CARDS

2382. Mr CARPENTER to the Minister for Resources Development:

I refer to the three occasions where Department of Resources Development officers inadvertently used their corporate credit card for personal purchases (question on notice No. 438 of 1998) for each purchase will the Minister state -

- (a) the purchase made;
- (b) the cost of the purchase;
- (c) whether sales tax was paid at the time of purchase;
- (d) what action was taken over the misuse of the card; and
- (e) if no action was taken, why not?

Mr BARNETT replied:

Department of Resources Development

Purchase 1

- (a) Groceries.
- (b) \$87.15
- (c) No.
- (d) Nil.
- (e) The officer concerned identified the inadvertent use of the card and refunded the amount involved immediately. No further action was taken as the Principal Accounting officer determined that the use of the card was unintentional.

Purchase 2

- (a) Juice Extractor.
- (b) \$44.95
- (c) Yes.
- (d) Nil.
- (e) The officer concerned identified the inadvertent use of the card and refunded the amount involved immediately. No further action was taken as the Principal Accounting officer determined that the use of the card was unintentional.

Purchase 3

- (a) Domestic hardware items.
- (b) \$153.10
- (c) Yes.
- (d) Nil.
- (e) The officer concerned identified the inadvertent use of the card and refunded the amount involved immediately. No further action was taken as the Principal Accounting officer determined that the use of the card was unintentional.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, CREDIT CARD REGISTERS

2384. Mr CARPENTER to the Premier:

- (1) Is the Premier aware that the Auditor General, in his September 1995 Performance Examination of Corporate Cards, raised concerns regarding a failure by several agencies to keep their registers of issued and cancelled cards up-to-date and were hence not referred to?
- (2) Is the Premier aware of the Auditor General's view that failure to keep a register results in a greater risk of abuse or error in card usage?
- (3) Will the Premier assure the House that all corporate card registers have been kept up-to-date following the Auditor General's recommendation that "an up to date register of current and cancelled Corporate Cards" be maintained?
- (4) If the answer to (3) above is yes -
 - (a) who keeps the register; and
 - (b) where is it located?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(3) The Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet has kept a register of issued and cancelled corporate cards in accordance with the Office of the Auditor General's requirements since the introduction of the WA Government Corporate Card in January 1990.
- (4) (a)-(b) The register is maintained by the Financial and Administrative Services Branch of the Ministry and is located with that Branch.

PUBLIC SERVICE, APPOINTMENTS PURSUANT TO SECTION 64(1)(a) OF PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT ACT

2531. Mr RIPPER to the Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Public Sector Management; Federal Affairs:

- (1) At any time since 1994, has the Premier, or the Premier's office, requested the appointment of a person to the public service pursuant to section 64(1)(a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994?
- (2) Were any of the people the subject of such a request actually appointed pursuant to the Act?
- (3) If so, for each such appointment, will the Premier specify -
 - (a) the officer's name;
 - (b) their classification and position at appointment;
 - (c) the date their appointment took effect; and
 - (d) their relevant employing authority?
- (4) Were any of these officers subsequently seconded to work in the Premier's office?
- (5) If so, for each secondment, will the Premier specify -
 - (a) the officer's name;
 - (b) the classification and position to which the officer was seconded;
 - (c) the date this secondment was requested;
 - (d) the date this secondment took effect; and
 - (e) the Premier's office to which the officer was seconded to?

Mr COURT replied:

I am advised that :

- (1) Not to my knowledge.
- (2)-(5) Not applicable.

REGIONAL PARKS, DAMAGE BY VEHICLES AND FERAL ANIMALS

2569. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Does the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) have any power to stop the damaging effects of 4WD vehicles and feral animals such as deer in Regional Parks?
- (2) If the answer to (1) above is yes, does or will CALM act against such damage?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Yes. On land vested in the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority within regional parks, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) has authority under Regulations made or saved under the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. On land managed by CALM on behalf of another agency, such as the Western Australian Planning Commission, the powers rest with the owner or the vested authority. In addition, there is other such legislation that applies to various categories of land including the Control of Vehicles (Off-Road Areas Act 1978), the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976 (in relation to feral animals), the Litter Act 1979, the Dog Act 1976 and various local government by-laws and local laws.
- (2) Yes. CALM, using the appropriate regulations, will act against damage being caused to regional parks either directly or through the agency having vested control over the land.

WEALTH DISTRIBUTION

2624. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of a report by Access Economics on "The impact of increasing house and share prices on the distribution of household wealth in Australia"?
- (2) Is the Minister also aware that the report found that between 1993 and 1998, the wealthiest 10 per cent had increased their share of total wealth by 4.6 percentage points to 48.2 per cent and that the wealthiest 1 per cent had increased their share by 2.8 percentage points to 15 per cent?
- (3) What industrial relations policy has the Government implemented to redress this concentration of wealth?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(2) Yes.
- (3) It is beyond the scope of *any* labour relations policy to redistribute increased wealth that has arisen from booming share prices or a buoyant housing market. Instead, it is the role of the tax transfer system, for instance, the application of capital gains tax on the sale of shares and investment properties, to redress issues relating to the redistribution of wealth. This Government's labour relations policy is designed to facilitate effective bargaining, whereby employees are able to negotiate higher wages based on increased productivity levels. Through the WA labour relations system, there is far greater scope to raise incomes of those not engaged in the share or housing markets.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, UNDERPAYMENT OF WAGES

2632. Mr KOBELKE to the Minister for Labour Relations:

When a Department of Productivity and Labour Relations (DOPLAR) Workplace Liaison Officer becomes aware that an employer has underpaid a past or current employee through discussions with that employer, what are the guidelines for instructions regarding the appropriate action for a Workplace Liaison Officer to take with respect to the underpayment of statutory wages?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

When a DOPLAR Workplace Liaison Officer becomes aware an employer has underpaid staff, the officer's role is to:

- (a) identify the underpayment and explain to the employer why it is a breach of his/her obligations;
- (b) ensure the employer fully understands what is needed to be done to rectify the breach; and
- (c) advise the employer of the risk associated with not rectifying the breach. Specifically, employees can report the underpayment for up to 6 years after the breach has occurred, and a DOPLAR inspector may make a random visit at any time.

DOPLAR INDUSTRIAL INSPECTORS, ALBANY AND KARRATHA

2633. Mr KOBELKE to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) Have the Department of Productivity and Labour Relations (DOPLAR) Industrial Inspectors been withdrawn from Albany and Karratha?
- (2) If yes, then from what date were these Industrial Inspectors withdrawn from these towns?
- (3) Are DOPLAR Industrial Inspectors to be maintained in other regional towns in Western Australia?
- (4) If not, then from which towns are Industrial Inspectors to be withdrawn and from what date will this withdrawal be effective?
- (5) Is the Minister aware that a recent DOPLAR commissioned consultants report noted the importance of, and praised the work of, the regional Industrial Inspectors?
- (6) If so, will the Minister explain why yet another important service to regional Western Australia is being reduced?

(7) Will the Minister table a copy of the particular DOPLAR commissioned consultants report?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) DOPLAR has replaced its Industrial Inspector in Albany and Karratha with a Workplace Liaison Service for a trial period from 1 March, 1999 to 31 May, 1999.
- (2) The Workplace Liaison Service trial formally commenced in Albany and Karratha on 1 March, 1999. Inspectorate services have been conducted from Perth from that date.
- (3) There are no changes to be made to DOPLAR's other three regional offices at this stage.
- (4) Not applicable. Any changes to DOPLAR's regional services are pending the outcome of the trials in the Great Southern and Pilbara/Kimberly regions.
- (5) DOPLAR engaged a consultant to review the Department's regional services. A report on the review was completed in March 1998. I am advised the consultant found the work of the regional industrial inspectors to be generally well regarded.
- (6) There are no plans for DOPLAR's regional services to be reduced. The Workplace Liaison Service currently under trial is aimed at enhancing regional services, not diminishing them.
- (7) I am prepared to make a copy of the report available and have the Department brief the member on the contents of the report.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TASK FORCE

2634. Mr KOBELKE to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) What are the names and positions of the officers employed by the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce?
- (2) What is the name of the line officer to whom the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce is responsible?
- (3) Which department now manages the funding and budget for the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce?
- (4) From what date did this department become responsible for administrative support and financial controls for the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) The names and positions of the officers employed by the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce are:

Jeff Marsh	Executive Officer
Jim Zaknich	Manager Compliance
Allan Shuttleton	Senior Inspector
- (2) Jeff Marsh is the line officer responsible for the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce.
- (3) Contracts and Management Services (CAMS) manages the funding and budget for the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce. All administrative arrangements are the responsibility of the Department of Productivity and Labour Relations (DOPLAR). The financial responsibilities are to be transferred to DOPLAR effective 1 July 1999.
- (4) CAMS continues to be responsible for financial controls of the Building and Construction Industry Taskforce. DOPLAR became responsible for the administration of the Taskforce on 2 November 1998

SEA LIONS, DECLINE IN NUMBERS

2685. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Will the Minister advise to what extent are the number of Australian sea lions off the south coast decreasing?
- (2) How has this been assessed?
- (3) What are the reasons for this decline?
- (4) How can the trend be reversed?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(2) A survey of New Zealand Fur Seal pup production on the south coast was undertaken by CALM in January 1999. This survey indicated an increase of approximately 140% in the Fur Seal population since 1990, to an estimated 15,100. This survey was also designed to include visits to some islands where Australian Sea Lions were predicted to be breeding. Only one of the islands surveyed had Sea Lion pups less than five months old. The lack of young Sea Lion pups at other islands surveyed means either the breeding predictions were inaccurate, or there has been a significant downturn in breeding activity for the species in this area. Breeding predictions are complicated because of the Sea Lion's eighteen month breeding cycle, because breeding is asynchronous between different islands or colonies, and because extrapolations had to be made from 1990 breeding data. Sea Lion breeding levels are to be investigated further over the coming year. It would not be appropriate to speculate on the outcome of these further investigations and what changes, if any, there have been to Sea Lion populations on the south coast.

- (3) No decline has been established.
- (4) No trend has been established.

MINISTERIAL STAFF, PRESENTS AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

2734. Mr CARPENTER to the Deputy Premier; Minister for Commerce and Trade; Regional Development; Small Business:

- (1) Did the Deputy Premier use taxpayers money to pay for staff presents and/or for staff social functions during the 1998 calendar year?
- (2) If yes -
 - (a) on what date;
 - (b) for what purpose; and
 - (c) how much was spent?

Mr COWAN replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.

MINISTERIAL STAFF, PRESENTS AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

2737. Mr CARPENTER to the Minister for Primary Industry; Fisheries:

- (1) Did the Minister use taxpayers money to pay for staff presents and/or for staff social functions during the 1998 calendar year?
- (2) If yes -
 - (a) on what date;
 - (b) for what purpose; and
 - (c) how much was spent?

Mr HOUSE replied:

- (1)-(2) No.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, LEVEL TWO EMPLOYEES

2775. Mr RIEBELING to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice:

In relation to the employment status of Level Two employees of the agencies falling within the Minister's responsibility -

- (a) what was the total number of Level Two employees at each agency as at 20 April 1999; and
- (b) of these employees, how many were -
 - (i) permanent full time;
 - (ii) permanent part time; and
 - (iii) on short term contract?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

The Minister for Justice has provided the following reply:

Ministry of Justice:

- (a) 648
- (b)
 - (i) 398
 - (ii) 46
 - (iii) 49

The remaining level two employees include 42 casual, 4 timesheet, 1 supernumerary and 108 contractors engaged for periods greater than three months.

Law Reform Commission of WA, Solicitor General:

- (a) Nil.
- (b) Not applicable.

Director of Public Prosecutions:

- (a) 22
- (b)
 - (i) 18
 - (ii) 0
 - (iii) 4

Legal Aid:

- (a) 43
- (b)
 - (i) 29
 - (ii) 5
 - (iii) 9

Ministry for Culture and the Arts:

- (a) 124 (including 13 casuals)
- (b)
 - (i) 71
 - (ii) 11
 - (iii) 21 short term contract (less than 12 months)
8 short term contract (12 months or greater)

Office of the Information Commissioner:

- (a) 1
- (b)
 - (i) 1
 - (ii)-(iii) Nil.

Equal Opportunity Commission:

- (a) 1
- (b)
 - (i) Nil.
 - (ii) 1
 - (iii) Nil.

PYRTON SITE, ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

2855. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Disability Services:

- (1) Does the Disability Services Commission intend to honour their commitment to commission an ethnographic study on the Pyrtton site in Eden Hill?
- (2) If not why not?
- (3) Did the Commission pay Dr Stuart Fisher to commission a preliminary view for the ethnographic study on the Pyrtton site?
- (4) Will the Disability Services Commission authorise an ethnographic study to be carried out?
- (5) If not why not?

Mr OMODEI replied:

- (1) The Disability Services Commission (DSC) has performed an ethnographic survey of the site.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Yes, in conjunction with LandCorp, the DSC paid Baseline Research to do an '*Assessment of research requirements for the completion of heritage consultations and ethnographic survey of the proposed Pyrtton estate*'. Baseline Research advice was prepared by Mana Waite (PhD) and Stuart Fisher (BAHons).
- (4) Refer (1).
- (5) Not applicable.

KEENE'S PIGGERY

2917. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Given that the Ombudsman has found that the Shire of Gingin did not comply with the requirements of Part 6.4.3(b), Part 6.4.4 and Appendix 4 of its Town Planning Scheme No. 8 on 12 December 1993 when assessing the development application for the expansion of Keene's Piggery, what action will the Minister take to ensure that the Shire is held accountable for its actions?
- (2) Does the Minister acknowledge that the neighbouring property owners to the piggery have been denied natural justice in relation to the expansion of the piggery?
- (3) If not, why not?
- (4) Given that the Ombudsman's report has found that the Shire of Gingin did not comply with its local laws in that the present owners were not required to obtain a Schedule B as required by the Shire's Model Health Local Laws Series A - Part 4 "Offensive Trades", what action will the Minister be taking to ensure that the Shire is held accountable for its action?
- (5) Given that the Ombudsman has found that the absence of health licensing records to substantiate the Shire's past practices gives cause for concern, what action will the Minister be taking to ensure that health licencing records will be kept in future by the Shire?
- (6) What action will the Minister be taking to ensure that the actions of the Shire of Gingin in relation to the expansion of Keene's Piggery do not cause detriment of neighbouring property owners?

Mr OMODEI replied:

- (1) The Shire has received the Ombudsman's report and resolved at its meeting on 15 April 1999 to give effect to the report's recommendations, where these have not already been met. The Department will not pursue this matter any further given that the Council is taking the required action.

- (2)-(3) There were no findings on natural justice in the Ombudsman's report.
- (4) The Shire has been held to account through the findings of the Ombudsman. I consider that the response from the Shire is appropriate.
- (5) The Shire has accepted the recommendations of the Ombudsman's report. No further action is required.
- (6) I trust that the Shire's implementation of the Ombudsman's recommendations will avoid such regrettable occurrences in the future.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

STATE BUDGET, DEFICIT

807. Dr GALLOP to the Treasurer:

I refer to page 12 of federal budget paper No 3 released yesterday which states that Western Australia's 1998-99 mid-year review indicates a general government underlying budget deficit - cash basis - of 0.07 per cent of GSP in 1998-99 and that a further small deterioration is expected in 1999-2000.

Will the Treasurer now agree with the federal Treasurer, the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mike Nahan from the Institute of Public Affairs, Allan Wood from *The Australian* and the state Opposition and admit that his budget is in deficit?

Mr COURT replied:

I cannot believe how ignorant is the Leader of the Opposition. I have told him that it does not matter which measure is taken, this budget is in surplus.

Mr Ripper: Not according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' criteria.

Mr COURT: On the one hand, the Opposition is saying that the Federal Government has an operating surplus of \$5.4b and that is outrageous -

Dr Gallop: It is a general budget deficit.

Mr COURT: The Leader of the Opposition should listen to this because he is trying to be misleading. Members opposite seem to want to look at the budget in the way budgets used to be presented under the consolidated fund. Do they accept that the budget we have brought down is a balanced budget with a small surplus?

Like the federal budget, this budget was brought down under the Australian Accounting Standards and as such it has an operating surplus of \$171m. The point I made is that regardless of whether cash or accrual standards are used - I am sure members opposite understand - this budget has an operating surplus on recurrent expenditure.

Dr Gallop: I am referring to the budget. The Treasurer is changing his definitions because he was caught misinforming the Western Australian people just as he is caught out every day of the week.

Mr COURT: I sat in this House for 10 years -

Dr Gallop: Don't divert the subject. You misled the people and you are a disgrace as a Treasurer.

Mr COURT: I sat in this House for 10 years when there was budget dishonesty with members opposite trying to say that they had a balanced budget. They achieved a surplus in recurrent expenditure by borrowing money. In every budget -

Mr Ripper: Do you agree with us?

The SPEAKER: Order! I must stand because there are far too many interjections from all over the House. It is not necessary.

Mr COURT: Except for the first year, which I qualified, in every budget under the old consolidated fund system we have been able to fund our recurrent and capital works out of the surpluses - something that members opposite could only dream of. Even though we are now using accrual accounting across all agencies, we have an operating surplus. However, members opposite are still saying we have a deficit.

Dr Gallop: Were you born to tell fibs like this or did you just grow up into it? You are telling fibs about your budget.

Mr Kierath: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order, minister.

Mr COURT: Mr Speaker, there are three measures. The Leader of the Opposition is showing his ignorance. Even if he wants to use what he calls the general government sector figure, there is a current surplus of \$391m.

Dr Gallop: What is the budget figure, Premier?

Mr Ripper: What is the total surplus?

Mr COURT: It does not matter what figures one takes. It will be interesting now that we have a new set of standards -

Mr Ripper: Answer the question. What is the total surplus? On page 207 of the budget it is minus \$638.4m.

Mr COURT: If members opposite want to have a debate on debt, I remind the Leader of the Opposition, because he has a very short memory, that the previous Labor Government set this State so far into debt that we lost our AAA credit rating.

Dr Gallop: Here we are; get the violin out!

Mr COURT: In Labor's last years in government the State's net debt position blew out \$2.5b. We have reduced net debt by nearly \$4b.

Dr Gallop: You are desperate and not telling the truth.

Mr COURT: Therefore, there is one set of figures going up and one going down. If the Leader of the Opposition wants a debate on financial management of debt, we will do it any day of the week.

Dr Gallop: Absolutely; let's get into it.

Mr COURT: It is about time the Leader of the Opposition started telling it straight. He cannot go on radio and say that the federal budget has an operating surplus of \$5.4b -

Dr Gallop: Yes, I can, because I read the figures and you don't.

Mr COURT: The Opposition's budget was prepared under the Australian accounting standards. We prepare it under the same standards but that is not acceptable to the Opposition.

STATE BUDGET, CASH SURPLUS

808. Dr GALLOP to the Treasurer:

Is it the case that the Treasurer's financial strategy target to ensure that the consolidated fund and general government sectors run an underlying cash surplus will not be achieved this year or next year?

Mr COURT replied:

I have made it clear that in our consolidated fund we run an operating surplus under the accrual basis.

Dr Gallop: You are not achieving that target; it is in deficit.

Mr Ripper: It is minus \$638.4m.

Mr COURT: When do we have to sit down with the Opposition and give it a lesson on recurrent expenditure on capital? Pretty soon, I would have thought.

Dr Gallop interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! We want to progress question time. There has been far too much interjection and I think I am being far too tolerant.

RETIREMENT VILLAGES AND SENIORS, EDUCATION PROGRAMS

809. Mrs HOLMES to the Minister for Fair Trading:

The Government has made a commitment to conduct education programs for retirement village administrators, residents of the villages and seniors in general. As I have a large number of these establishments in the seat of Southern River, can the minister advise what the Government is doing to meet these commitments?

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Armadale will come to order.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Armadale has been cautioned.

Mr SHAVE replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for some notice of this question. It is true that the Ministry of Fair Trading has been diligent in this area. As is commonly highlighted, this State has an ageing population. This is reflected in the growth of retirement villages in Western Australia. In 1993-94 there were 210 villages. I am advised also that there are now more than 300 which represents an increase of about 40 per cent. As the percentage of our population aged more than 60 years is expected to increase from 14 per cent in 1996 to 22 per cent in 2021, the increasing demand for retirement village accommodation will continue. Consistent with these trends and the Government's five year plan on the ageing, the Ministry of Fair Trading has released a new booklet entitled *So you're thinking about moving into a Retirement Village*.

Mr Brown: Was it produced for the minister?

Mr SHAVE: It is appropriate for the member for Armadale, I would have thought!

The booklet examines accommodation options and provides a useful checklist to help people compare the features of the villages. It sets out clearly the information required to be provided by the administering body of a retirement village to residents and prospective residents.

Mr Brown: Have you read it?

Mr SHAVE: Of course. The booklet is being distributed to libraries, local councils, the Council on the Ageing and retirement villages throughout the State. Copies can be obtained from the Ministry of Fair Trading. Another useful publication on fair trading issues specifically tailored to meet the needs of older people is an information kit to be released in June. The ministry is working closely with the Office of Seniors Interests in developing the kit. In addition, a comprehensive review of the Western Australian retirement villages legislation will be completed later this year. A reference group has been established and began meeting in January 1999. The group is drafting a discussion paper for public comment to be released in July. Issues to be considered include access to refund entitlements, selling rights and inconsistencies between the commonwealth and state legislation covering retirement villages. These initiatives will help ensure the community makes an informed decision about its future.

FEDERAL FUNDING

810. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's constant reference to cuts in federal funding to Western Australia, in particular his statement in March that the \$90m cut in federal funding to Western Australia represented \$50 less for every citizen in the State. How can the Premier, with any credibility, now congratulate the Federal Government for delivering a \$5.2b general government cash surplus when it has been funded partly by the same cuts he loudly condemned only two months ago?

Mr COURT replied:

The Leader of the Opposition is a bit of a worry. We have the frightening prospect of a Leader of the Opposition who still has trouble coming to grips with what is the recurrent part of a budget and what is the capital works part of a budget. If he cannot cross that fundamental hurdle, he has a problem.

Dr Gallop: I have crossed that one.

Mr COURT: He should tell the public he has crossed it. I will reinforce the matter again for the Leader of the Opposition so he understands it: On the consolidated funds, except for the first year, we have funded all of the recurrent expenditure and the capital works program out of surpluses. Does the Leader of the Opposition understand that?

Dr Gallop: Deficit.

Mr COURT: We must tell the truth in this business.

Dr Gallop: This is your paper. It is called the Treasury of Western Australia deficit. You are below the line.

Mr COURT: Is that the consolidated fund?

Dr Gallop: No. We are talking about -

Mr COURT: We are talking about something else.

Dr Gallop: No, Premier, do not try that little trick!

Mr COURT: The Leader of the Opposition can try shouting me down.

Dr Gallop: Do you know why we have part of that deficit? Because of John Howard's surplus. Start telling the truth!

Mr COURT: The Leader of the Opposition can shout me down, but I will repeat the point: For six years we have funded all of the recurrent expenditure and the capital works program out of surpluses. This is in the consolidated fund. When his party was in government, the Leader of the Opposition could only dream about that. We are now saying that we run an operating surplus right across government, including all of the government trading enterprises. Before the Leader of the Opposition makes a fool of himself, he should have a lesson in what is an operating surplus, what is recurrent expenditure and what is capital expenditure. In relation to the budget, I will show the Leader of the Opposition a graph. The amount of money which the States receive from the Federal Government is a critical issue.

Dr Gallop: Why didn't you talk about it last night? Because you are John Howard's ventriloquist dummy! You don't defend the interests of this State.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! I generally allow flexibility with respect to interjections, particularly for the person who asked the question. We now have far too many people wanting to get into the act. Members can get into the act very easily; they should stand up, I will give them the nod and they can ask their questions. We have had enough interjecting. The Premier should bring his question to a close.

Mr COURT: There is a very clear lesson in last night's budget. The Federal Government has access to all of the major growth revenues. It has growth revenues in excess of 6 per cent in this budget. What the Leader of the Opposition does not

seem to understand is that that includes the consumption taxes, presently called the wholesale sales taxes, which are hopefully about to become a goods and services tax. It includes income tax, company tax and some customs duties. The Federal Government has access to all these major growth revenues and it receives a flow of funds when the economy grows. We can have a strong growing economy, as we have had in this State, but we do not have revenue growth. We do not have that revenue growth because of the way the Grants Commission works; we receive an increase in royalties and 75 per cent of those funds are taken off us as part of the distribution arrangements. Under the goods and services tax package the States will have access to one of the major growth revenues. Even the Labor States of New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania have signed a document stating that they support these arrangements because in five years' time we will begin to have access to some of those growth revenues. If the Leader of the Opposition cannot see longer term than his next press statement, he has a major problem.

Dr Gallop: I am talking about the nation.

Several members interjected.

Dr Gallop: That is what the GST is, a rip-off of the working people of this country. That is why they don't want it and why they are telling members of our party in Canberra to vote against it, and they will vote against it.

Mr COURT: The Australian people have had their opportunity to vote on this matter.

Dr Gallop: And they voted against it.

Mr COURT: The Leader of the Opposition cannot understand recurrent expenditure and who won the last election.

NATIVE TITLE, IMPACT ON MINERAL EXPLORATION

811. Mr BLOFFWITCH to the Premier:

Is the Premier aware of comments made today by the President of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia in which he blamed the unworkable native title system for the dramatic fall in mineral exploration in Western Australia over the past year?

Mr COURT replied:

I am aware of those comments; they were reported on the ABC news. Basically the president said that the main difficulties in exploration in this State have been caused by the way so much land has been sterilised and that that is stifling the exploration activity. We now have 12 000 mineral title applications caught in an unworkable situation.

Mr Ripper: Pass the Bill as amended and get on with it.

Mr COURT: The state provisions legislation?

Mr Ripper: Yes, as amended by us.

Mr COURT: Is the member for Belmont saying that the Opposition will not accept the concept of consultation on leasehold land? Yes or no?

Mr Ripper: We have supported the concept of consultation.

Mr COURT: No. This is very important. As members know there is a right to negotiate on leasehold land. Does the Opposition support the changes the Government has included in the legislation to enable a consultation process under the 10-point plan?

Mr Ripper: We support consultation procedures on leasehold land but you will not accept our definition of how those procedures should be constituted.

Mr COURT: The member for Belmont is saying that the Government does not support those consultation procedures.

Dr Gallop: Last time you did this the result was 7:0 in the High Court because you don't know what native title is, Premier. As long as that continues, we are not going to have solutions. That is why - you are ignorant. You are ignorant on this issue and always have been. You know nothing about it. You are absolutely hopeless. The verdict was 7:0; it was a waste of money. Get on with it, talk to people, show them respect - get on with it!

Mr COURT: We have just witnessed the first annual state Labor Party conference for four years. Members would have thought that one of the most crucial issues facing our State is native title, but it was brushed under the carpet. Does the Leader of the Opposition know that 40 per cent of all exploration activity undertaken by our mining companies is now being done offshore? What concerns me is that the Labor Party has again said today that it will not support legislation that will allow for a workable consultation process.

Mr Ripper: We will support it if you support our amendments. Will you support our amendments?

Mr COURT: The Labor Party has confirmed today that it will not support the implementation of the consultation provided for in the amendments moved and supported by the Federal Parliament.

The problems raised today by the President of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy relate only to the mining industry. Members opposite are not taking into account the problems we are experiencing in many other industries. It is about time they faced up to their responsibilities. They have the numbers.

Dr Gallop: You beat up hatred; you have been doing it all your political career. It is a disgrace! Solve the problem instead of beating up hatred in our country towns and communities. You are a disgrace as a leader in this State! You do not deserve to be Premier!

Mr COURT: I cannot believe that the Leader of the Opposition cannot control himself.

Dr Gallop: The result was 7:0 in the High Court. That is how good you are on legal issues.

Mr COURT: What a spectacle! We have appealed the Federal Court decision on the Miriuwung-Gajerrong case. Does the Opposition agree with that? Members opposite have supported that action previously.

Dr Gallop: Who said we supported it?

Mr COURT: Members opposite stated at the time that the Government should appeal the decision. Now they are saying that the Government is wasting money on legal action. They cannot have it both ways.

Dr Gallop: Yes we can.

PERTH-MANDURAH RAILWAY LINE, FUNDING

812. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Premier:

How much of the estimated \$940m required to build the Perth-Mandurah railway line has the Government allocated in its 1999-2000 budget?

Mr COURT replied:

The first projects to be dealt with are the section of line from Kenwick through Jandakot and the line running down the centre of the freeway, which will require new tunnels to be built at each end. The work at the Kenwick end has already commenced. As the member knows, the Government wants to fast track the whole project, and it has the ability to fund the \$1b required with the successful sale of AlintaGas. The budget contains a number of components relating to both road and rail to ensure the commencement of that work. I cannot provide the specific figure, but I will find it for the member.

PERTH-MANDURAH RAILWAY LINE, FUNDING

813. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Premier:

Is it not true that only \$4m or 0.4 per cent of the estimated construction cost has been allocated for this coming year and that at this rate it will take 234 years to complete the project? That is the white-hot pace of rail construction in this State.

Mr COURT replied:

The reasons we had WA Inc are now starting to become clearer.

Ms MacTiernan: Because we built a railway line?

Mr COURT: As I said, I do not have the figures at hand. The work on the freeway - the tunnel in and the easement down the centre - will cost about \$40m. We must shift the road because a former Labor Government was not prepared to put a railway easement down the middle of the freeway; it took the easy way out. As I said, I am quite prepared to provide all of the costings and the staging of those costings. In fact, I think they have been made public already.

REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT, KARRI RESERVES

814. Mr OSBORNE to the Minister for the Environment:

The minister will recall that yesterday she promised to bring details of karri reserves under the Regional Forest Agreement back to this Parliament. Is she now in a position to provide the House with this information?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

Yesterday the member for Maylands asked a question with respect to karri reserves. She then went onto the airwaves and said that our karri forests would actually be reduced by 400 hectares. I could not work out exactly where her figures were coming from. Probably the Opposition's lack of understanding of budget figures is replicated in its lack of understanding of the RFA figures. I can reassure the member for Maylands that there is not less old-growth karri forest being reserved; there is more being reserved. I remind the member that apples should be compared with apples. It makes comparisons so much easier. The Opposition should not compare comprehensive, adequate and representative reserves with all reserves, which is what it was doing, because it does not work. Under the RFA, the area of karri forest types for the CAR reserve system is 42 135 hectares; under the forest management plan, it was 39 175 hectares; under approach "A" of the public consultation paper, the low was 40 798 hectares and the high was 41 285 hectares. The Opposition was also comparing with the benchmark, not the "A" approach. Therefore, the member for Maylands has a few problems with her comparative figures.

Dr Edwards: We are looking at your own figures at the back of the RFA which the Government signed.

Mrs EDWARDES: No, the member was comparing CAR reserves with all reserves; that is where she went wrong. The Labor Party came out with its policy on the weekend. Part of its policy is to meet existing contracts to 2003, and to stop logging in all old-growth forests from 2003. What is the Opposition's reserve design? What blocks will it reserve? What will the Opposition's reserve design be? Does it have a reserve design?

Dr Gallop: There will not be any old-growth logging; I tell you that now.

Mrs EDWARDES: That is interesting, because in order to meet all existing contracts to 2003, 5 000 hectares of old-growth karri will need to be logged. Under the Opposition's policy, which old-growth karri blocks will be logged to meet all existing contracts to 2003?

Dr Edwards: So you will not apply the RFA until then? You are tearing up the RFA already, are you?

Mrs EDWARDES: No, I am referring to the Opposition's policy. Which old-growth karri blocks comprising 5 000 hectares will be logged in order to meet existing contracts? The Opposition does not have a reserve design. All it is doing is coming out with a short-term policy. It cannot add up the figures.

Mr Court: What will the yields be?

Mrs EDWARDES: If the Opposition does not have a reserve design, it will not have yields. It does not have any understanding at all of the RFA process.

MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES, FIRE LEVY LEGISLATION STATEMENT

815. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Emergency Services:

Why was the minister not honest in this place this morning when he made a brief ministerial statement to explain his failure to introduce the fire levy legislation? Why did his statement not include any mention of the fact that his coalition colleagues rejected his draft Bill a week ago, and why did he not admit that his laziness in not bringing legislation forward sooner is the real reason he does not have the time to redraft the Bill before 1 July?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Insurance Council of Australia Ltd has been seeking to change the funding basis for at least the past 12 years, and probably longer. The Government has been trying to bring that forward. It has involved spending a lot of time with a number of local government authorities - the 34 that are directly affected, of course, by the permanent fire service boundaries and the provision of fire and rescue services - and the Western Australian Municipal Association. WAMA has been very useful, but it has been necessary to go to all of those local government authorities, some of which have been more accepting of this idea than others, and some of which have been actively resisting it. It has taken a long time - I am talking about the time in which I have been the minister responsible - to reach agreement not only on doing this through the local government rating system, but also on how it should be done, the way in which it should be shown on the rate notice, and so on. It has been interesting to me to receive submissions from bush fire brigades and from the volunteers who are part of the fire and rescue service as opposed to the permanent service areas, and the State Emergency Service, which all raised with me the question: If we can do this for the permanent fire and rescue people, why can we not have some form of emergency service levy which covers the bush fire brigades and the State Emergency Service? That is a fair question, particularly when we consider the Shire of Swan and places like Rockingham, and others, in which only part of the local government area is covered by a permanent brigade and most of the area is covered by volunteers, all of whom fight the same fires. South Australia is bringing in an emergency service levy to cover career permanent firefighters, volunteer firefighters, bush firefighters and the State Emergency Service.

The drafting of the legislation has taken longer than had been contemplated. In the meantime, we have run into the State budget. We sit here this week in the budget debate, we then sit in the estimates debate in detail, and we have the third reading. We would then need to bring the legislation into this place and pass it. It would then go to the other place, which has neither the standing orders nor the ability to deal with things in a hurry unless it chooses. The Australian Democrats have shown that they want to be able to consider legislation in detail and in depth and over time. I made the judgment that we cannot guarantee to either the Insurance Council of Australia or the local authorities that we can have this in place by 1 July. The local authorities, WAMA and the Insurance Council needed to be told, and I told them today, that I cannot guarantee it by 1 July, so it will not proceed now. They have done a lot of work, nonetheless, which they will need to redo. That is regretted, and I apologise for that.

One of the things that interests me greatly about politics is that as soon as we have a rational debate among members of the coalition, members of the Opposition promptly say "Out of control! Lack of discipline!" What members opposite fail to understand, and what their annual conference that is held once every four years on the weekend shows, is that they do not have debates. They are answerable to people on the end of a mobile phone in London, or to people behind closed doors. All they do is follow blindly their factional leaders. We are able to have discussion and debate about principle, policy and intended legislation. That is healthy democracy, not the blind intellectual corruption that is the Labor Party.

Mr McGOWAN: Mr Speaker -

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockingham should relax, because question time is over. On occasions past I have mentioned the highs of question time. On those days we get an average of 16-plus questions. I have also talked about the lows, and today with supplementaries we had only nine questions. The reason is that there was far too much interjecting and members were asking many questions across the Table while members were interjecting, and the ministers were answering them, and we do not record those as formal questions. If members were to do a bit less interjecting, they would get up more questions.