



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
SECOND SESSION
1998

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 20 August 1998

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 20 August 1998

THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland) took the Chair at 10.00 am, and read prayers.

LANGFORD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Petition

Ms McHale presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 84 persons -

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

We, the undersigned wish to express our utmost disappointment and concern at the delay in the commencement of the Langford Redevelopment Project.

We call upon the Government to take heed of the community's needs and concerns and take immediate steps to ensure that no further delays are experienced and that work on this project is undertaken forthwith.

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 24.]

The SPEAKER: Order! How long will it take members to realise that Parliament has resumed? Under the standing orders it is fine for them to have conversations. However, when there are too many, I ask members having them to leave the Chamber.

ARMADALE-KELMSCOTT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Petition

Ms MacTiernan presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 1 355 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 of the South East Metropolitan area demand that the Government immediately abandons both its plans to sell the Armadale Kelmscott Memorial Hospital and to privatise the management of the Armadale Health Service. We demand the Government recognises these facilities belong to our community and that they have no mandate to sell them. We call on the Government to allocate the money necessary to redevelop our hospital as a publicly owned and operated centre providing for people and not for profit.

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 25.]

POLICE NUMBERS IN ROCKINGHAM

Petition

Mr Marlborough presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 94 persons -

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

We the undersigned respectfully request that the State Government increase the number of Police Officers based in the Rockingham area. The current level of police is inadequate to service the rapidly expanding population of the region.

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 26.]

MILK, POTATOES AND EGGS MARKETING

Petition

Dr Turnbull presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 180 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 on the Treasurer, Richard Court, and the Minister for Primary Industry, Monty House, to present to the Australian Competition and Consumer Council a united case for the retention of the legislative powers the orderly marketing of milk, potatoes and eggs in Western Australia.

We make this call on the grounds that the "public benefit" will be best served if

consumers can purchase good quality milk potatoes and eggs at stable prices

primary producers and their families can maintain a viable income

and so support the education, health services, employment and contract services of their country communities.

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 27.]

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PERTH'S AIR QUALITY

Statement by Minister for the Environment

MRS EDWARDES (Kingsley - Minister for the Environment) [10.10 am]: The Select Committee on Perth's Air Quality tabled its report in the Legislative Assembly on 21 May 1998. The select committee was established by the Government following the findings of the Perth photochemical and haze studies, as the first step in a four-year \$2.6m program to improve Perth's air quality via the development of an air quality management plan.

The select committee's tasks were to investigate and report on community attitudes and concerns in relation to Perth's air quality and to investigate ways in which urban air quality could be improved currently and in the future. In its report the committee made a total of 96 recommendations.

These recommendations were made under eight separate headings; general air quality management and monitoring, community education, health, community and transport planning, vehicle emission management, industry emission management and planning, smoke emission management - domestic sources and smoke emission management - hazard reduction and controlled burning.

The Department of Environmental Protection, as the lead agency with the responsibility for air quality management, was the recipient of the majority of the recommendations, 50 in total. The select committee, in accordance with Legislative Assembly Standing Order No 378 (c), directed the Ministers for the Environment, Health, Energy, Planning, Police, Local Government and the Minister representing the Minister for Transport to respond to the report within three months; that is, by 20 August 1998.

Since the tabling of the report the Government has been working to prepare its response. This has included compiling responses and comments from the agencies and ministers who were directed by the committee to respond. The select committee's report and recommendations have also been circulated to other government agencies and key external stakeholders for comment.

I advise the House that due to the extensive consultation processes that are being undertaken to provide a comprehensive "whole of government" response to the select committee's recommendations, the Government's response will now be tabled in September.

PEEL HEALTH CAMPUS

Statement by Minister for Health

MR DAY (Darling Range - Minister for Health) [10.12 am]: My colleague, the previous Minister for Health indicated to Parliament earlier this year that the Health Services Agreement for the Peel Health Campus would be tabled during this session of Parliament. I am happy to honour that commitment.

I take this opportunity of not only tabling the Peel Health Campus Services Agreement, but also informing the House of the status of the new hospital. As some members will be aware, the construction of the new building at the Peel Health Campus was completed some months ago. This has meant the hospital increased significantly in size from a 32-bed hospital into a 130-bed facility with 110 public beds and 20 private beds. The new campus includes -

- a 20-place day hospital for restorative/rehabilitation services;
- 24-hour emergency medicine service;
- expanded medical and surgical inpatient services across a range of specialities including obstetrics, gynaecology, general surgery and orthopaedics, and
- allied health and diagnostic services;
- day chemotherapy treatment;
- a renal dialysis satellite service;
- aged care services; and
- palliative care.

Licensing procedures for the new hospital have been completed, and the new Peel Health Campus was officially commissioned yesterday.

It should be pointed out that the previous Labor Government built the former 32-bed hospital just 10 years ago - in 1988. Hospitals should have a lifespan of up to 25 years, but in this case the State Government was left with the legacy of that bad planning.

This Government has shown its commitment to improving health services throughout Western Australia over the last five and a half years with the opening of the Joondalup Health Campus, the commissioning of the Peel Health Campus, and the soon to be commissioned Bunbury Health Campus. In addition, we are currently examining options for the Armadale-Kelmscott region.

From now on in the Mandurah region, there is an exciting timetable of activity at the hospital as the new services, which have not already commenced, begin to come into operation.

The contract, which I am tabling today, is a clear illustration of this Government's commitment to working with the private sector to ensure the best possible health services are delivered closer to where people live.

[See paper No 104.]

LEGISLATION COMMITTEES STANDING ORDER

Motion

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [10.15 am]: I move -

That the following Standing Orders be adopted -

LEGISLATION COMMITTEES

276A. At any time after the second reading and before the third reading stage the House may, on motion by the Leader of the House or a Member on his behalf, resolve that a Bill or a series of related Bills be referred to a legislation committee which may consist of between 5 and 11 members, excluding the person chairing the committee. Debate on that motion shall not exceed 20 minutes. The Leader of the Opposition or a member on his behalf shall nominate up to 5 non-Government members to serve on the committee and the Leader of the House or a member on his behalf shall nominate members, including the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, to complete the membership of the committee. The interests of independent members shall be taken into account by the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition when making nominations to the committee.

276B. Each committee member shall have a deliberative vote only. A committee member may nominate another member as a proxy for speaking and voting in the committee, but any such change shall not take effect until notified in writing to the Clerk to the Committee and the proxy shall be cancelled immediately upon the committee member resuming a seat at the committee. The Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition may each nominate another member of the House who may appoint a proxy by written notification to the Clerk to the Committee.

276C. Members of the House who are not members of the committee may participate in the proceedings of the committee, but shall not vote, move any motion, or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

276D. Meetings of a legislation committee shall be open to the public. A legislation committee shall consider the Bill in the way specified by Standing Orders 265 to 276, during which time the member or Minister with carriage of the Bill or a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary acting on behalf of the Minister shall be present. Any amendments that have been published on the Legislative Assembly Notice Paper, or if the House is not sitting have been given in writing to the Clerk to the Committee, shall be considered by the committee if those amendments are published prior to committee consideration of the clause of the Bill to which the amendments relate.

276E. Each legislation committee shall be chaired by the Chairman of Committees or Deputy Chairman of Committees and has power to sit during the sittings and adjournment of the House and to report from time to time.

276F. Unless a specific reporting time is determined by the House, a legislation committee shall finally report to the House no later than the first sitting day that occurs after 3 weeks following the appointment of the committee. The committee report shall be presented in the House by the Chairman of Committees or a Deputy Chairman of Committees.

276G. On presentation of the report, its adoption may be moved, or the Bill as reported may be committed to Committee of the Whole, or the report may be adopted and the Bill be committed to Committee of the Whole for consideration of certain parts or clauses only. If the report from the legislation committee is adopted unconditionally, the same procedure shall apply as if it were a report from the Committee of the Whole.

276H. If a quorum or division is called for in the Legislative Assembly while the legislation committee is sitting, the committee meeting shall be suspended until the quorum or division has concluded and members have had an opportunity to return to the committee.

276I. Voting in a division shall be taken by a show of hands of those committee members present when a question is put and tellers shall not be appointed.

276J. For matters not specified in these standing orders the Standing Orders relating to Select Committees shall be used so far as they can be applied.

with the addition of the following amendment -

276D. Advisers who are present at a Legislation 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.

The formation of legislation committees was a major recommendation contained in the second interim report of the Select Committee on Procedure which was tabled in this House in 1996. The proposal contained in this motion is that the previous legislation committee sessional order becomes a permanent part of the sessional orders. I move this amendment to the motion allowing advisers with the approval of the minister or parliamentary secretary to speak directly to members of the legislative committees which is in line with the current procedures of the Estimates Committees. I am sure members think that is practical and commonsense.

However, the Government has not agreed with the recommendations to give legislation committees wider powers as apply to select committees. We view that as unnecessary and as a duplication of the role of select committees, particularly if we accept the formation and more general policy or portfolio-related committees within this House. It should not be a role of a legislation committee to travel and hold inquiries and the like. It is the process of dealing with the Bill at the committee stage. Therefore, we have not entirely agreed with those recommendations.

I hope that more Bills can be dealt with in the legislative committee format. It was not used widely during the first half of the calendar year 1998, principally because of the time taken up in this House on the abortion issue. Earlier this year, consideration was given to using the legislation committee for the School Education Bill. A large and, in a sense, non-political Bill like that would lend itself, but the importance of education meant that a large number of members wished to participate in the debate. Therefore, it was debated in a Committee of the Whole.

We have used legislation committees with success. When the Censorship Bill was dealt with in this Parliament by a legislation committee, the process worked well. The feedback I received from members from both sides of the House was that that trial was a success. In re-establishing the legislation committees, we continue with the reforms

recommended by the Select Committee on Procedure by allowing advisers to speak directly in the committees as consistent with that which occurs in Estimates Committees. It allows that more informal environment to be even more so, and allows us to proceed and deal with committee stages.

Members, generally, support legislation committees. I sincerely hope that we will come to use them more in this Parliament.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [10.17 am]: I do not oppose legislation committees. I think they offer the promise for the quick passage of legislation through the Parliament and through this House, with the proper perusal and checking of the proposed Bills. However, my concern is the times which will be allocated to a legislation committee when looking at a Bill and how that time will fit into the sitting programs of the House.

One Bill that was referred to committee - a fairly complex piece of legislation relating to the control of land in this State - had most of its sittings while the Chamber was in session. Although I had a very specific interest in that legislation and wished to be involved, I did not have the opportunity to attend many of the meetings because matters came up for debate in the House which took precedence over the work of the committee. I hope that when we refer matters to committees it will be with a program in mind, so that the extent of sitting times of the legislation committees will not be when the House is sitting. Preliminary meetings and some procedural meetings of a legislation committee may take place when the House is sitting, but I hope that most of its work will be at a time when the House is not sitting. Members should bear in mind that with 57 members, taking out the number of ministers, with the remaining backbenchers on the government side and members on the opposition side, there is not always, with the various interests of members, a wide range of choices among members who would participate in a legislation committee for a given Bill. That would preclude those members from being involved in other matters that may be before the House.

I put that in as a rider to ensure that if legislation committees are to work successfully, we must take account of the time allocation and how the programming of their sitting times relates to those of the House.

Question put and passed.

TIME MANAGEMENT SESSIONAL ORDER

Motion

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [10.20 am]: I move -

That for the present session, unless otherwise ordered, the following order shall apply -

- (a) at any time during the sitting of the House or Committee, the Leader of the House or a minister acting on his behalf may move a motion without notice specifying or varying the specification of time to be allotted to, or for the completion of, any business or any stages or parts of that business, but a motion may be moved in Committee only in relation to the business then before that Committee. Debate on that motion shall not exceed 20 minutes and no member may speak to it for more than five minutes;
- (b) when the time allotted to any business under this order has expired, the person presiding shall put every question necessary to complete the business in accordance with the time allotted without permitting further debate or amendment, and shall in the case of a Bill in Committee also put to the vote any amendments to the Bill proposed by a minister or Parliamentary Secretary, if those amendments appear on the Notice Paper for that day;
- (c) if any other business is before the House or Committee when a time specified in accordance with paragraph (a) is reached, that other business shall be interrupted and set down as an Order of the Day for that day's sitting without a question put and the item of business subject to the time allocation shall be called upon; and
- (d) a closure under Standing Order 158 may not be moved on any question which is the subject of time allotted under this order.

The sessional order with respect to time management was first introduced into this House in late 1994. It is therefore not a new concept and it has applied in one form or another in almost all Parliaments in Australia. I appreciate that members may take philosophical and ideological positions on this issue whether we should have time management at all. The reality has been that over the past two years the Government has not used time management in a ruthless way.

Mr Brown: Is that an admission that you used it in a ruthless way previously?

Mr BARNETT: Yes, I think it was used in a reasonably ruthless way on a couple of occasions.

Mrs Roberts: By you?

Mr BARNETT: Yes, I concede that. However, I must add that it followed a number of quite extraordinary circumstances which members will recall.

More often than not Bills that are subject to time management and the weekly application of it are quite often removed before the end of a week. If in my judgment, the minister responsible for the Bill or the Leader of the Opposition have made a genuine attempt to progress the Bill, but it has been held up by a genuine issue, I have not exercised time management. Time management forces us to focus on the debate, to be more specific in our arguments and discussions, and it deters tedious repetition. It also provides us with a far more predictable program for the week. We are all reasonably aware of when legislation will be introduced, when it will be debated and what we will be seeking to achieve during the parliamentary week. It has allowed us to reduce significantly the number of very late night sittings. That has been a very important reform. I make it clear that when time management is applied, I will maintain the procedure of previous years; in other words, I will advise the Opposition and Independents in the preceding week of the intended weekly program, and, if we will be using time management, how it will apply. That will allow the Opposition or Independents to question its use or to suggest a change if they have a view on the legislation. I think I have demonstrated a willingness to amend the program in that way. It is part of what is necessary for this place to operate efficiently.

The Government has a very extensive legislative program, although probably too extensive. Nevertheless, it is there. Many of the Bills are not contentious in nature. They are part of the administration and machinery of government and it is necessary that they are progressed. I will ensure that ample time is allocated to debate important or contentious pieces of legislation. In the meantime, we must keep the machinery of government moving by also passing less important administrative Bills. We intend to reintroduce this sessional order and I assure members it will be used in a responsible and constructive way.

MRS ROBERTS (Midland) [10.23 am]: The time management sessional order is really just a euphemism for the guillotine; a guillotine first introduced by this Government in 1994. The Opposition's principal objections to the use of this guillotine are when it is used in a routine fashion or when it is used to guillotine legislation which deals with sensitive or complex issues. In using it routinely, it is a bit like the big stick approach - a bundle of legislation is listed on the Notice Paper at the beginning of the week and we are told to trust the Leader of the House and if sufficient progress is not made on certain Bills, he may withdraw them from the guillotine. In my view it is the big stick approach. He is saying to us, "Here is our list of things to do and if the Opposition wants to negotiate with us, we might not use the guillotine on some things." That is not the way to do business. Each week, we should be given a reasonable list of Bills that we can be expected to deal with in that week. Progress should be made on legislation without putting undue pressure on people to push it through this House. This House must be more than just a rubber stamp for the Executive. The Government's attitude is that because Cabinet has agreed on legislation, it is just a matter of getting this House to rubber stamp it in the shortest time possible. That is not what the Parliament is about and it is not what the people whom we represent want. Expressions of our views and concerns on any piece of legislation should not be curtailed. Further, when the guillotine is used on complex and sensitive issues and legislation is rushed through, bad legislation will result. Sometimes Bills that we have rushed through take longer to progress because faults that are found in the upper House must be dealt with by this House. I do not support this big stick approach, I do not support a guillotine being used routinely, and I certainly do not support a guillotine being used on legislation which involves complex or sensitive issues.

MR BROWN (Bassendean) [10.26 am]: I also oppose this proposal. I do so because we have seen a number of debates become extremely protracted because of the attitude taken by the minister at the table. It is fair to say that the Leader of the House, when he is the minister at the Table, genuinely tries to answer the questions that are put to him by opposition members or have his advisers provide him with advice on them. An opportunity, if one likes, is available to get to the nub of the issue reasonably expeditiously and at least get on the record when there is a point of disagreement between the Government and the Opposition. It is clear to anyone listening to the debate or reading *Hansard* afterwards exactly what the point of difference was between the Government and the Opposition. However, that is not the case with every minister. As we have seen, some ministers sit at the Table and treat the whole process with contempt. They would rather be somewhere else. They adopt the view that the Opposition does not have the right to question government legislation and they refuse to answer questions that are put to them about the legislation, about its principles, about its background, about its interpretation or whatever. It either means -

Mr Barnett: But you would agree that it is a two-way street and there are occasions on which Oppositions are well briefed and pointed in their questions and on other occasions they play tag-team, with one member after the other jumping up and repeating the same points. I accept your point, but it goes both ways.

Mr BROWN: It can happen sometimes. Some ministers are guilty of this offence and simply try to avoid reality by not having the courage to put in *Hansard* the real reasons for the legislation. To the extent that the minister seeks to obfuscate and prevaricate is the extent that members of the Opposition will go to to badger that minister in the committee stages to get him to at least have the courage of his convictions and put on the record exactly the purpose of the legislation and its implications.

After all, if a minister or the Government of the day is introducing legislation, as a bare minimum in the interests of accountability it should have the capacity and the intestinal fortitude to put on the record the reasons for it. The Government should also have the openness to indicate not only the positives but also some of the implications of the legislation which may impact negatively on the community. My concern is that time management, as the Government calls it, or the guillotine as we call it, enables the Leader of the House, in conjunction with the minister at the Table, to guillotine the debate when the minister is simply uncomfortable because the Opposition is pressing a matter the minister does not want on the record.

Mr Barnett: The so-called guillotine has always been in the standing orders. Time management is a vehicle for allocating the hours effectively or indicating to the Opposition what we intend to cover in the week so that it can determine how we use our time. You cannot say we are introducing the guillotine; it has been in the standing orders since day one.

Mr BROWN: It is a matter of how it is used.

Mr Barnett: Yes, so you should not say we are introducing the guillotine.

Mr BROWN: It is a fine point; nevertheless I take it.

The reality is that the purpose of Parliament is to provide an opportunity for debate on legislation that will affect all people in Western Australia. If we cannot debate it here where else can we debate it? This is where decisions are made. Surely people bringing forward legislation, whether it be government Bills or private members' Bills, should be able to explain to the House and others who question the legislation its basis, how it is drafted, whether it is drafted correctly, etc. If the proponents of the legislation cannot do that, they are either incompetent or do not want to admit to the public of Western Australia its true intent.

As the Leader of the House said, over the past 12 months or so the guillotine, or time management in its brutal form, has been considerably less used. That might be attributable to the fact that less controversial legislation has been introduced, particularly over the earlier part of this year and perhaps in the latter half of 1997, when we dealt with many, uncontroversial machinery Bills. However, it could also be attributable to the fact that the balance of power in another place has changed.

It is difficult for people seeking to "review" legislation if not one word of debate has been uttered in this House; that is, whole slabs of legislation have gone through -

Mr Barnett: That has not happened.

Mr BROWN: Of course it has happened.

Mr Barnett: Give me an example.

Mr BROWN: Debate on the Workplace Agreements Bill was cut off in committee.

Mr Barnett: No, sorry; I do not have the figures in front of me, but have a look at the hours of debate on that in this House. The guillotine has been used on occasions - not much in the past two years - only after extensive debate. I managed the program to ensure Bills were debated.

Mr BROWN: In terms of that legislation and others -

Mrs Roberts: A number of minor Bills were not debated in committee. They were guillotined at the end of last year.

Mr BROWN: That is right. Hardly any debate on them was held, particularly on the Workplace Agreements Bill, a whole slab of which was not debated in committee. Many clauses were just guillotined through.

Mr Barnett: From memory there were 30 to 40 hours of debate on it.

Mr BROWN: There was a lot of debate. It was highly controversial and will remain so. Many people who have spoken to me who have been disadvantaged by the legislation asked if I had spoken up on their behalf in the Parliament about it. I told them that I spoke up vociferously, but as members of Parliament we can be silenced and the Government elected not to allow us to speak our mind on all the clauses.

Mrs Roberts: You will recall the member for Cockburn interjects every time a Bill is guillotined without committee debate, saying, on a number of occasions "No, it has not been considered in committee." We can remember the interjections very easily because we hear him right behind us.

Mr BROWN: Yes. Certainly some ministers are prepared to deal with the issues and to debate matters frankly with us. During debate on the School Education Bill, in which I occasionally participated, the Leader of the House, as the Minister for Education, was prepared to deal with the issues very forthrightly. We were able to get into the *Hansard* the views of the Government and the Opposition and work through issues. If there was no agreement, at least our views were recorded. That is appropriate. However, as I said, it is not appropriate for lesser, more incompetent ministers to cover up their inadequacies by not responding to questions and probing. Whenever the Government seeks to impose time management or guillotines to overcome inadequacies in legislation the Opposition will oppose the application of the relevant standing orders.

The standing orders themselves in the blue book in relation to stifling debate do not mean a great deal. What does mean a great deal is when and how they are applied and whether they are applied inappropriately. In the past they have been wrongly applied, not for the benefit of the orderly running of the House but to maximise the Government's political position; it has not been for the best operations of the Parliament. Notwithstanding the passage of this proposal, I hope we will see a cautious and diligent application of any change.

Question put and passed.

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Withdrawal of Referral of Matters Raised by Members for Fremantle and Mitchell - Motion

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [10.37 am]: I move-

That the reference from the House to the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee on 25 June 1998, regarding matters raised by the members for Fremantle and Mitchell, be withdrawn from the committee.

Apparently it is agreed between the respective parties that this is not worth pursuing and peace has broken out on all fronts.

The SPEAKER: Order! Although the House referred that matter to the committee, the committee is yet to consider it.

Question put and passed.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1981

Final Report and Associated Papers

MR BAKER (Joondalup) [10.40 am]: I present for tabling the final report of the Select Committee into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, the minutes of meetings of the committee, submissions received by the committee, and transcripts of formal evidence and interstate meetings.

The SPEAKER: I think the member will need two or three attendants to collect those papers!

Mr BAKER: I move -

That the report be printed.

I thank the House for the opportunity on behalf of the members of the select committee to table the second and final report on the select committee's inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act and associated matters. I will make brief remarks in support of this motion.

This final report is titled "Finding the Right Balance" and primarily deals with the committee's second term of reference, which, among other things, required the select committee to undertake an audit in Western Australia of the provision of health, educational and community support facilities for illicit drug users, particularly heroin addicts. As the title indicates, the committee was very concerned to ensure that its recommendations were primarily focused on the need to convey the very strong message to the people of Western Australia, especially young people, that illicit drugs are illegal because they are harmful - they are not harmful because they are illegal. The other objective was to ensure that those who have experimented with illicit drugs, particularly heroin, and have subsequently become addicted, have their health needs appropriately dealt with to keep them alive and relatively healthy while their addictions are treated.

One of the most difficult and contentious tasks facing government in contemporary society is setting the balance between the need to ensure that a law and order policy is enforced which criminalises people who use, possess and

at times deal in illicit drugs, particularly heroin, and the need to keep heroin users, particularly young people, alive in the hope of ultimately coercing or inducing them to pursue any treatment with abstinence as its chief and ultimate objective.

It is a very interesting exercise to try to reconcile the licit and illicit drug policies of all Australian States and Territories in striking the balance to which I referred earlier. For example, the message to tobacco cigarette users from the Western Australian Government and all other Governments is very simple: All Governments simply say quit or stop consuming cigarettes. Governments utilise various anti-smoking messages in various mediums, forms and settings. However, the message Governments send to adults who consume alcohol on a regular basis is different; namely, drink and use safely, not stop or quit.

The message concerning illicit drugs is more involved. It is multi-faceted, and perhaps a hybrid of the two messages referred to earlier. The Government's message to young people, particularly older juveniles who have not yet consumed illicit drugs, is, in summary, to say no. However, the message goes beyond that and explains why people should not use and experiment. The initial message is to say no is because of the well-documented social and health harms associated with the consumption of illicit drugs.

As a Government, we say stop using to people who have used illicit drugs, particularly heroin, and are addicted physically or psychologically or both. However, if they cannot stop immediately as a result of the nature of their social circumstances and addiction, we say use safely. In furtherance of this message to heroin addicts, we offer free needles and syringes, the opiate substitute, methadone, at very low cost and provide some financial assistance to Dr George O'Neil - a new true altruist if there ever was one - who conducts a naltrexone treatment program for heroin addicts.

These three government-supported services send mixed message to users: First, they continue to support the heroin addiction for the primary purpose of excluding or negating the prospect of injecting heroin users contracting blood-borne viruses, which can subsequently be transmitted to non-users in the broader community. Second, they ostensibly substitute one addiction for another much easier to manage addiction - that is, to methadone. Third, they terminate the addiction through the administration of an opiate receptor blocker, followed by the ongoing administration of blockers coupled with strong emotional and community support mechanisms, usually in the form of the user's immediate family, friends or close associates.

It is accepted that these somewhat interrelated and apparently contradictory messages or policies are prima facie irreconcilable. However, to varying degrees, they are all aimed at improving the health of heroin users; providing them with a comparative measure of stability; protecting the broader community from the health harms associated with blood-borne viruses; and, as the ultimate goal, achieving and maintaining abstinence.

I turn now briefly to the findings and recommendations of the final report. I draw the attention of the House to recommendation 38, which endorses an earlier recommendation from the interim report and calls for the speedy introduction of what is commonly known as non-conviction based forfeiture legislation. Recommendation 38 re-endorses in even stronger terms the need for such legislation in this State. That legislation is primarily aimed at removing by means of a summary and expeditious methodology the profits, or deemed profits, arising from illicit drug dealing, particularly of those dealing in large commercial quantities. I understand that the Attorney General is in the final stages of preparing such a Bill, and I commend him for giving this Bill a high priority.

When enacted into law, this legislation will send an unambiguous message to people who traffic in illicit drugs that, in addition to the prospect of lengthy terms of imprisonment, further bolstered by truth-in-sentencing legislation currently being drafted, they will also lose everything they own or have acquired via drug dealing, or that for which they cannot properly account. That will be an important tool in the law-enforcement process and in bolstering the message to the community to steer away from illicit drugs, particularly heroin. I understand that Victoria has such legislation which is working well.

One feature of the select committee's inquiry into the provision of drug education by the WA Government was its strong endorsement of the WA Education Department's school-based drug education program. In that regard, the committee found it was unnecessary to make recommendations, but rather a simple yet strong finding - No 5 - supporting the program as follows -

The School Drug Education Project is a very sound and well researched program, which when implemented in its entirety will undoubtedly make a significant contribution in providing children and their families with the requisite skills, insights and attitudes to be able to make appropriate choices about using drugs. The Select Committee commends the Education Department of WA, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of WA for formulating and promoting the School Drugs Education Project.

All members would agree that appropriate - I emphasise that word - drug education is very important, particularly for tomorrow's risk-taking teenagers and younger adults. It is essential in helping to turn the tide on the consumption of illicit drugs in the community and reduce the devastating social consequences occasioned by addiction to illicit drugs, particularly heroin.

The select committee has also acknowledged disparity between the nature and extent of drug treatment facilities in metropolitan and some country and regional centres. Recommendation 14 makes the following strong comment on this point -

That the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office undertake a feasibility study into establishing a range of services targeted at injecting drug users and other groups of illicit drug abusers in the Goldfields, including the funding of a peer based outreach program, a needle and syringe exchange program and a residential detoxification and rehabilitation facility.

Rather than the committee taking a metropolitan focus, it was very much concerned with the provision of drug treatment services across a broad range of matters in non-metropolitan areas, particularly regional city centres.

The select committee also identified the need for an inner community drug service team and more residential drug rehabilitation centres for young people in metropolitan and regional city centres. One of the highlights of the committee's investigation was its visit to Geraldton to inspect the community mobilisation for the prevention of alcohol related injuries project. As an organisational model utilising the public sector and private sector, the broader Geraldton community, COMPARI was unanimously recognised by the committee as deserving special mention in our report. We found it to be a highly innovative, well-linked and highly skilled group adopting a whole of community response to the problem of illicit and licit drugs in the Geraldton community.

Recommendation No 2 states that the COMPARI model is an excellent organisational framework for linking and coordinating the provision of drug treatment and counselling services and engaging community based organisations. The select committee commends in the highest possible terms all of those who have played a role in the establishment, expansion and continued operation of COMPARI in the mid-west health zone.

Recommendation 15 states that a COMPARI-style organisational model could be copied, because of the apparent deficiencies elsewhere in linkages between the key stakeholders in the drug service area. It recommends that a COMPARI-style organisational model be funded as a three-year project to mobilise the community in the goldfields to address the abuse of alcohol and other drugs and be evaluated through a partnership with a university-based consortium.

The select committee has made 125 recommendations in its reports, representing over 200 hours of informal and formal evidence hearings and meetings - not to mention intrastate and interstate investigative travel. This committee was given, perhaps, the unenviable task by this Parliament of inquiring into these two somewhat contentious and highly politicised terms of reference. Nonetheless, all members undertook all aspects of the committee's inquiries in a diligent manner. Despite many highly publicised disagreements, we have managed to deliver over 100 recommendations in a consensual manner.

I sincerely thank all members of the committee for their application to the difficult task we embarked upon and for their cooperation in preparing and tabling this second and final report.

I also thank the committee's clerk Nigel Lake for his thorough professionalism and efficiency in all matters relating to the committee's affairs, and also assistant research officer Sue Jones for her assistance to our select committee's research officer.

I wish to make special mention of the research officer to the committee, Mr Greg Swensen from the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office, for his thorough research skills and wide knowledge, and his tremendous assistance in researching and analysing several hundred research articles, drug reports, statistical data and for efficiently liaising with stakeholders in the law enforcement and drug treatment areas of illicit drugs both in Western Australia, interstate and also overseas. Greg Swensen is a valuable asset to the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office and a key player in implementing the Government's drug abuse strategy.

The committee looks forward to the adoption of all its recommendations through legislation and government policy initiatives. I look forward to working with the Government to ensure that we can combat the tide of illicit drugs in the community and hopefully protect not only the current generation but also future generations. I commend the report to the House.

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [10.57 am]: I am relieved that this report is finally available to the Parliament. It has been an extremely long process. I acknowledge the efforts of the committee's research officer, Greg Swensen, in preparing this report and commend Nigel Lake, the clerk to the committee, who had some unprecedented experiences

in the media as a result of his involvement with this committee. At all times he conducted himself with the utmost professionalism.

It is no secret in this Parliament that this has been a difficult committee. One of main reasons has been that the committee has had to work in the dark gleaning, as individual members of the committee, government policy by following the media and ministerial statements rather than having the courtesy shown to it by relevant government departments of being informed about the policy directions of those departments. The classic example must be the farcical announcement recently of the cannabis cautioning program.

In November last year I wrote a minority report recommending that the committee deal with the concept of cannabis and law reform. The deliberations of the committee suggested in the second part of the process that it would not do that. The committee had to be dragged kicking and screaming towards dealing with the cannabis issue in this report. There was a lot of debate in the committee about the recommendations that should be made. The minority members, the member for Fremantle and me, discounted the gateway theory, and were supported by large amounts of evidence. There was dispute in the committee about what type of recommendation should be made. Lo and behold, a few days before the report was tabled, the Commissioner of Police announced major law reform in this State.

I am totally refreshed that the Court Government is finally pulling its head out of the sand on this issue. However, five parliamentarians spent copious amounts of their time - in excess of 200 hours for each member - and we were not even given the courtesy as parliamentarians of knowing what the Government intended to do on the issue. That is a disgrace.

Mr Osborne: What about the local member?

Ms ANWYL: From that interjection I understand that the local member was not aware either; and he is the chairman of the Bunbury Drug Action Group, which speaks for itself.

If it were only the cannabis cautioning program that the committee was not made aware of, perhaps that would be excusable. However, it was not just that - there were much more serious issues of law reform; for example, how we as legislators are dealing with the difficult issue of drug trafficking. All members of this Parliament would agree that drug trafficking is the major menace with which we must come to terms. This issue involves the aspects of demand and supply. We must reduce not only the demand for illicit drugs, but also their supply.

The committee was not given the courtesy, with some of the recommendations that were made in the first report, of receiving advice from the Attorney General. That was notwithstanding the repeated efforts made to ascertain the Government's policy direction in this area. The report follows the November 1997 report and the committee still has not had the courtesy of receiving advice. Members must consider that when determining why this has been such a difficult committee.

Another reason it was difficult is that it was a political committee. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, it appeared that the chairman felt he had to minimise any possible damage to the Government that might come out of this report. I went into the committee hoping that solutions could be found. I will advert to a couple of the matters in which some real inroads have been made - that is, with youth and in regional areas of this State. The long tradition of this Parliament is that select committees depoliticise the issue that is under consideration. Unfortunately, that did not happen in this case to the chagrin of many committee members. I blame the Government for that, because it kept the committee in the dark and did not adequately resource the inquiries.

The other matter I wish to address is the lack of a coherent drug policy in the Court Government. In the face of unprecedented evidence of the amount of illicit drug use in our community, Western Australia does not have a coherent drug policy. The Western Australian Drug Strategy Office is doing its best to maintain a line that was created with the 1995 drug inquiry. Evidence was given to the committee that according to people in the drug and alcohol field, that inquiry was basically about telling the Premier what he wanted to hear on this issue. That is evidenced by the Premier's recent announcement of a cannabis cautioning program. That program is an extremely watered-down version of what is occurring in every other State with the exception of Queensland.

With regard to the lack of a coherent policy, we have heard from the chairman of the committee, who seems to have a preoccupation with messages. The committee spent a lot of time discussing messages. I agree that messages are extremely important, but it is also necessary to have a rational and cogent policy direction when dealing with this difficult issue.

The conservative Federal and State Governments have expressed extreme unease about the concept of harm minimisation. That concept makes a lot of conservatives squirm. They cannot accept that we can send out a message to stop drug use and at the same time make sure that people who do use drugs do so safely and with the minimum of harm. We also seem to forget that the reasons that people use illegal drugs are complex, and that we must focus

a great deal of attention on prevention. Time prevents me from expanding on the importance of prevention; suffice it to say that the news I have is not all bad. Some important recommendations are contained in this report, and I urge the Court Government and especially the minister, who I note has left the Chamber, to look seriously at this issue and see how we can improve the preventive services in this State.

I am proud that the committee has endorsed a number of recommendations specifically targeted at services for young people and treatment options, particularly in regional areas. I make no apology for the fact that the goldfields features in the report. The reason is that the goldfields has 3.8 times the state average of intravenous drug use, if needle and syringe statistics are used as an indicator, and it is evident that the rate of intravenous drug use is creating havoc in the communities which I represent. It remains to be seen what will be done by the Government to implement the recommendations of this report.

The Alcohol and Drug Authority has effectively been gutted. It is now vital that the Government address these issues and demonstrate some faith in those clinicians who have experience in the alcohol and drug field and who remain in the State so that they are prepared to remain in this field, because the committee took evidence of a mass exodus of experienced clinicians from this area.

It is now time to turn the tide and for the Court Government to demonstrate that it is prepared to commit resources, throw away its ideological hangups, and ensure that cogent and coherent strategies are in place not only to reduce the demand for illicit drugs in this State but also to tackle the hard issue of legislative reform to reduce the amount of drug trafficking that clearly is occurring.

MRS HODSON-THOMAS (Carine) [11.03 am]: I am pleased that all members of the committee endorse the recommendations of this report. When the interim report was tabled in November, I raised concerns about taking a soft approach to cannabis use, particularly when dealing with adolescents. I still have those concerns. However, I recognise and acknowledge that the trial cautioning system for first-time offenders, which was announced this week by the Minister for Family and Children's Services in her capacity as the minister responsible for the drug strategy, will link them to mandatory educational intervention.

While I understand that the cautioning system will not formally include juveniles, I trust that those young offenders will also be linked to the same educational intervention and will be armed with information about the physical and mental harms of cannabis use, as well as the legal harm; namely, the impact of a criminal record on their future lives. It is fair to say that the data presented within the final report indicates that cannabis use is prevalent among adolescents and that one in three Australians over the age of 14 has tried cannabis. I am still not convinced that a soft approach by way of a cautioning system will ultimately result in a reduction in the prevalence of use, but I will keep an open mind and await the results of the trial.

It is imperative that we continue to promote messages about the serious harms associated with the use of illicit drugs. Those messages must begin at an early age and continue throughout the child's school life. We must ensure that young people are not enticed or seduced by illicit drugs. The amount of literature we have all read, and the evidence we have all heard, on the harmful effects of illicit drugs is endless. It is vital that a strong school drug education program be provided; and it will be.

The committee heard a great deal of evidence about the methadone maintenance program. While I acknowledge that the objective of this treatment program is to provide stability in the lives of heroin addicts, it became quite clear from informal discussions with methadone-maintenance patients that many still continue to use heroin, their preferred recreational drug. It is essential to provide a number of treatment programs, and while I support the use of naltrexone in treating heroin addicts, clearly my long-term preferred position on treatment programs for opiate-dependent users is abstinence.

Abstinence is the only effective treatment model for any addiction. Alcoholics cannot stabilise their lives by drinking safe and prescribed amounts of alcohol. The only effective cure is to abstain from use of that drug. How we achieve that is a dilemma, and it is and always will be dependent solely on the person with the addiction to make the decision to abstain from continued use. Many people face a long road to recovery, and all efforts need to be put in place to provide support for the people who suffer from this unfortunate disease.

The report contains many positive recommendations, and I trust that other members in this place will take the time to read it. I express my gratitude to Greg Swensen, the committee's research officer, and Nigel Lake, for their unwavering commitment, dedication and resolve during the life of this committee.

Question put and passed.

[See paper Nos 98-102.]

CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL*Second Reading*

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Education) [11.09 am]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Curtin University of Technology, with over 6 000 overseas students, has by far the largest enrolment of international students of any university in Western Australia. It has been at the forefront of the export of education nationally for some years and has a number of twinning arrangements with international partners in western Malaysia, where international students undertake part of their course in Malaysia and part at Curtin University's Bentley campus.

The university has expressed the desire to establish a branch of the university in Miri in Sarawak, East Malaysia. This will require an amendment to the Curtin University of Technology Act 1996.

The Curtin University of Technology Act currently empowers the university to establish branches of the university but limits those branches to such places "in the state as the council (of the university), with the approval of the minister, thinks fit". In this respect the Curtin Act is quite different from those of other universities in Western Australia, which places Curtin at a distinct disadvantage. The simple removal of the words "in the state" will open up the possibility for the university to establish an offshore campus.

While, as a general rule, international students undertake at least some of their courses through attendance at a university campus in Perth, there is a growing trend towards more offshore delivery - partly due to policy changes in countries such as Malaysia and Singapore which signal a move for more education to be delivered in the home country.

The university needs to establish a business arrangement with other parties in Malaysia to operate a campus in Sarawak, as a branch of the university, under the name of Curtin University of Technology. In order to do this, the Act needs to be amended to provide for the university to carry out its functions and exercise its powers, including the power to enter into business arrangements, both within and outside Western Australia.

Further, the university's statute-making powers will be broadened to include statutes for -

- (i) the affiliation with another educational institution, subject to the consent of the governing body of that educational institution; and
- (ii) the establishment and conduct of external teaching and educational facilities within or outside the State.

The establishment of a branch of the university will still require the approval of the minister. All statutes must be approved by the Governor, published and tabled in Parliament.

The State Government encourages the export of education from Western Australia. International education benefits the State enormously, injecting more than \$420m into the economy each year, as well as generating revenue for the education providers.

Passage of this legislation will facilitate Curtin University's plans to become the first Australian university to establish a campus in East Malaysia. Teaching could commence in 1999 with English language bridging and intensive English courses, foundation courses in commerce and engineering, the Bachelor of Commerce with majors in accounting, economics, finance and marketing, and the first year of the Bachelor of Engineering. Other academic programs will follow. This will enhance the university's presence in the region and add to its international profile. It will also provide opportunities for Australian students and academic staff to study and teach abroad. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Ms Warnock.

POLICE AMENDMENT BILL*Second Reading*

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Police) [11.13 am]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The increasing incidence of damage by graffiti is causing great concern to the community. Indeed, some members of the community, particularly the elderly, find this offence intimidating. Until now police have been powerless to prevent graffiti offences prior to their occurring.

The provisions of this Bill will for the first time empower the police to take direct action to prevent graffiti damage from taking place. The Bill creates an offence of being in possession of graffiti implements in suspicious circumstances, without proof to the contrary, and provides police with appropriate powers of search, seizure and disposal of graffiti implements. The new powers proposed by this Bill will give police the ability to stop, detain and search persons located in suspicious circumstances and take appropriate action against them. Furthermore, graffiti implements found in their possession, without lawful excuse, may be seized so as to prevent any continuation of their unlawful use. As a safeguard, the Bill also allows police to retain items seized from young offenders who have been cautioned. Those items will then be available for return to a responsible adult after 48 hours. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

LAPSED BILLS - RESTORATION TO NOTICE PAPER

Council's Message - Consideration

Message from the Council now considered requesting that consideration of the following Bills be resumed -

1. Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill.
2. Acts Repeal and Amendment (Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration) Bill.
3. Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No 1).

On motion by Mr Barnett (Leader of the House), resolved -

That as requested by the Council in Message No 1 this House resume consideration of the Bills enumerated therein at the stage each had reached in the previous session.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion, as Amended

Resumed from 19 August.

MR BLOFFWITCH (Geraldton) [11.15 am]: Some very interesting things have happened in my electorate in the past three or four months. The major disappointment to the people of Geraldton was the postponement of the An Feng iron and steel project. Much weight was put on this project and many people in businesses that are not faring as well as they should be thought this would be the panacea of life and would give them an injection to turn their businesses around.

It appears that An Feng in Taiwan has done well, although Taiwan has not been hit as badly financially as the rest of Asia. The currency in Taiwan has probably stood the test better than all the other Asian currencies, except for Japan. However, that is not much good if all the markets are collapsing. We export a lot of steel to Thailand, Indonesia and Korea. Their currencies have virtually halved or quartered and they are now paying four or five times as much for steel than before devaluation. This has meant that many projects are totally unviable and I have seen the slump that has occurred within the Asian circuit. As a result of that, we have seen a downturn in steel production from Geraldton that would field that supply. Consequently, there has been a delay in full production of probably 12 months, at least until the market in the Asian circuit recovers.

The establishment of a deepwater port at Geraldton will be the catalyst to a better lifestyle for the people of the mid-west. The opportunities that it will open up for that sector are nothing short of fantastic. Currently, the only deepwater port is at Esperance. It is a two-and-a-half day sail from Geraldton to Esperance. Most of our markets are in the Asian or European markets. Consequently, the steel must leave Esperance and be transported by sea up the west coast, and two-and-a-half days after the ships pick up their cargo they sail past Geraldton. The financial advantage of loading at Geraldton is about \$1 500 to \$2 000 for each day a ship is at sea, making a saving of \$10 000 in not having to sail to Esperance and return to Geraldton; the port is much closer to the market.

Members can see why I get excited when I think about the opportunities available if we can go ahead with this port. Of course, the Government has said, wisely, that until an industry of some substantial size is established there it will not commit to underwriting the establishment of a port. These are encouraging signs. It is proposed that a huge gas pipeline will come down to Oakajee and then go 100 kilometres inland to the vanadium mine.

However, that will give them the opportunity to produce energy at a very reasonable cost. The problem is that the current low price of fuel oil - it is selling for \$13 or \$14 a barrel, cheaper than it has been for many years - means the comparison between oil and gas is not as good as it was when we were paying \$22 or \$25 a barrel. With that in mind,

in the short term there will be an advantage in using gas. In the long term, the price of oil will rise on the international market and we will see some very competitive conditions. Enormous opportunities will be available.

If the steel mill is established at Geraldton, we will experience some spinoffs. The proposal was to use saltwater in the cooling process and that would produce 500 000 tonnes of salt a week. The water coming in is super heated and the residual salt is stored. Three companies are interested in marketing that salt. As members know, RGC operates in that part of the world and produces the fine metals used for specialist steel making. That company sees enormous opportunities in using some of the steel to manufacture very fine products utilising these additives.

I am very confident that, while there has been a hiccup, this project will go ahead. There is no doubt it will enhance Geraldton and increase the population. It will give the building industries and so on a boost, which they would enjoy at the moment. We will all have to be a little patient and more positive about what will happen.

Geraldton still has problems with law and order. In the past 12 months we have taken some giant strides to try to overcome those problems. I congratulate the people involved in Neighbourhood Watch in Geraldton - close to 6 000 are involved and 12 months ago there would not have been 50. Why has that changed? The Police Service has taken a very active role in establishing local committees. Rangeway is an old Housing Commission development, so the crime rate is high. Every month the local committee publishes statistics supplied by the police showing how many burglaries, bag snatches, assaults and so on have been committed and how many people have been apprehended. The bulletin also reports that a burglary was committed in a particular street at a particular time and asks for any potentially helpful information. Did anyone notice anything? Many people have been apprehended as a result. All of a sudden people remember having seen three young kids in the area and they know where they live. That information is passed to the police, who go to the offenders' homes and find the stolen goods. The apprehension rate has been greatly enhanced as a result of this community effort.

I honestly believe that if we as a society said that for two months we would not have any RBTs or speed traps, but instead would have all the policemen walking the streets, and if we were to ask the public to help us in this fight against crime by people behaving themselves on the roads, 98 per cent would respect that and what the community, the Government and the Opposition were trying to do. That is the sort of approach we must take. It has been successful in Geraldton.

That does not mean that the three young kids who break into a bottle shop and throw a flagon at an attendant and nearly kill him will stop doing those things. They will still happen, and it is our job to deal with that. When things like that happen, talking time is over; we must get tough on people like that. When they are taking liberties with other people's safety, I do not want to read that they got a 12-year sentence and served two years and 10 months before being paroled. It is ridiculous that we have a system which produces those results. Is it any wonder the public throws up its hands in despair?

We must have truth in sentencing. I do not believe that serving only 50 per cent of a sentence is appropriate. Offenders should spend two-thirds of their sentence - nine of the 12 years - in gaol, and if they are very well behaved they might be paroled. Being given nine years off a 12-year sentence is crazy. The system has gone mad and it needs an overhaul. I believe the Government will do that.

It would not be in character if I did not say something about corporal punishment. People who go into a defenceless 85-year-old's home and bash him senseless so he cannot see should be given five or 10 lashes of the birch. They should be told that if they do it again there will be more. If we get tough, our society will be a safer place. Some people say that that is barbaric. How much more barbaric is the bashing of old people? How much more barbaric is it to terrify people in their homes? Old people now live behind bars because we are not doing our job to provide them with security and protection. That is exactly what we must do.

I am sorry that we must resort to physical abuse, but I do not know whether anything other than physical abuse will be a deterrent to some people. Unless we start showing a little strength in these matters, the situation will not get better - it will get worse. Elderly people are very vulnerable. If we allow that to happen, the community will believe that we are not protecting these people.

We should legislate that it is a capital crime for someone to break into the houses of these elderly people, invade their sanctity and to harm them. We must get tough on that type of thing and we must send a message to the community that if people do those sorts of things, they should expect to be put away for a long time and to have very sore backs when they go to gaol. Unless we send that message to the community, the situation will get worse, not better, because senior citizens are very easy targets. I am hopeful that within the next couple of months something like that will happen. I will certainly be pushing for it. Members of the public are pushing for that. They want to be secure.

I will spend two minutes in telling members a little story about New York that I have told before. I was there about two weeks ago. New York used to be the absolute cesspit of the United States. People told me that they would not

walk on the streets after 7.00 pm because they feared they would be mugged, and there were drug pushers everywhere. It was an absolute scandal. Five years ago, the mayor said that the people would no longer put up with it. He said that no tolerance would be shown to anybody breaking the law and that anyone found selling drugs would be put in gaol. We could do that here. However, the authorities in New York handled things a little differently. They took away people's civil liberties. They said that if people were charged with any of the prescribed offences, they could be held in gaol for 12 days. Those offences included minor offences such as jaywalking. If people were apprehended for jaywalking, they could be kept in gaol for 12 days.

Mr Johnson: What about people who spat on the pavement?

Mr BLOFFWITCH: It was the same thing for people who did that. The gaols were filled and another gaol had to be built; however, the drug dealers - the pushers - who owned the streets around Broadway disappeared. They moved away - so much so that when I went back to New York two weeks ago, I could walk down the streets at midnight and feel absolutely secure, and there were another half a million people doing the same. Many of the people with whom I spoke were not from New York. They told me that they could not believe how much the city had changed. They said that they had been to New York five years previously and would not leave their hotels. However, on this occasion not only did they leave their hotels; they were also wandering the streets and walking through the parks, and were enjoying life.

We must get our police to do a similar thing. They should forget about concentrating on traffic fines and booze buses. We must concentrate on those who really upset society, including those who break into houses, those who snatch bags and those who assault old people. We must get tough with them and show them that we are dinkum. If we do, Perth will be a safer place. It will be the place that we used to live in. If people transgress, they must feel the full weight of the system. At the moment the system is a joke. It allows offenders who are on parole and who steal a car to be allowed out on bail because the police are not advised that they are out on parole. What sort of a system is that?

In the last budget I was pleased to see a substantial amount of money being allocated to improving communications within the Police Force. That is essential because its communications should be top of the line. It must be able to access the court system. Of course, the police must have a desire to do that. The minister must motivate them and get them to be enthusiastic about their jobs. I believe their job is to catch criminals, not to catch me exceeding the speed limit by five miles an hour. The sooner they concentrate on doing that, the sooner Western Australia will be a safer place.

MS WARNOCK (Perth) [11.35 am]: I share the deep concerns of the member for Geraldton about the increase in violent crime in our community. I remind him that that is why many pensioners and senior citizens will be marching on Parliament at lunch time today.

Mr Bloffwitch: I don't blame them at all.

Ms WARNOCK: I understand their concerns and their fears about being attacked in their homes.

I take this opportunity as the shadow Minister for Women's Interests to talk about a mini-report card on Western Australian women in 1998, including their employment, health, safety, opportunities for advancement - if I have time - and freedom from the threat of violence. A document which refers to women and their economic independence states -

The facts that WA women are the worst paid on the Australian mainland, with an average income of only 64% of men's, and that women comprise approximately 2/3 of Western Australians living in poverty, are deplorable, considering that WA males are amongst the highest paid in the nation.

Governments in Australia need to acknowledge that fragmenting full-time permanent jobs into numerous part-time and casual positions IS NOT JOB CREATION. Jobs most at risk in this area are those which are traditionally classified as "women's work", e.g., office/clerical. It is also apparent that the issue of workplace agreements, with its negative impact upon women's working lives, needs to be urgently reviewed.

When life is a day-to-day struggle to put food on the table and pay the bills, "actively planning for financial security in retirement" is probably not even on the list of priorities.

It goes on to state -

The cost of further study, enrolment fees, required books and equipment, childcare, travel expenses - and in some cases Austudy requirements, places educational and/or training opportunities out of reach. The government assistance which was available in the past no longer exists - an issue which requires urgent attention.

This document has not been written by the sort of people whom one might imagine would have written it; for example, it was not written by the The Resistance group - those young socialists reviled by One Nation supporters and other conservatives in the country. This appeared in the latest newsletter of the National Council of Women of WA (Inc), an esteemed, venerable and largely conservative group of women. I will return to some of their concerns a little later.

I turn to the issue of the employment prospects of women in 1998. Since 1993 women's average weekly wages in this State have dropped more than 10 per cent below the Australian average. Principally, that is because of the operation of the Workplace Agreement Act and its emphasis on individual contracts. Since the effective gutting of collective bargaining and the third force - the unions - bargaining has become inherently unequal.

Some male workers in some industries have undoubtedly done all right under this new system, at least in terms of the size of their wage packets, if not necessarily their terms and conditions of employment. However, many women have been subjected to the vagaries of the short-term casual job market, in which they have little bargaining power. That is one problem that obviously caused this differential in the wages.

In this State the minimum wage that a worker can receive is \$40 per week below the amount that workers on the lowest award receive, and the previous minister supported that. In this situation the most vulnerable people are women because of their well-known lack of bargaining power. Women have reduced access to work because of high unemployment, although casual work is increasing and many women are engaged in it. It is well-known that, because of their low wages and the increased cost of child care for which, alas, we can blame the federal coalition Government, many women are stuck in the notorious poverty trap about which we always hear. These women want to work to assist their families, but because of the child care costs, they might as well stay at home.

I have a raft of newspaper stories collected over a period of time which relay the information about the problems women experience in trying to raise their wages, about the poverty trap in which they are caught due to the cost of child care, and about the anger of various groups of women who find that, 20 years after the equal pay cases, some bosses are simply not always prepared to pay them the level of wages they should receive for the work they do. These newspaper stories outline the women's continuing low wages in the 1990s, more than 20 years after the equal pay cases were dealt with in the 1970s.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Holmes): If members wish to have conversations in this Chamber I point out that the Parliament is sitting and a member is on her feet, and ask that they kindly do so outside.

Ms WARNOCK: Many of these newspaper stories point out that a number of women in this State are the lowest paid workers. Federal coalition policies which cut back on child care subsidies are making it even harder for them and their families to make ends meet, which is of great concern to members on this side of the House.

Deregulation has not been good for women. I do not address this issue from my point of view only, but indicate that a number of journalists have written about this issue recently and, indeed, the conservative National Council of Women of Australia has referred to it. Despite the fact that many new jobs for women have been created, women receive the lowest wages. It is true that, for example, in the service industries many new jobs have been created and women have been appointed to them. However, they are still among the lowest paid workers in that area.

Incidentally, one of the newspaper stories which I read recently in preparation for my speech relays a rather entertaining story about this matter. This story was published in *The Australian* in July and involved a protest on this subject by women in the 1970s, which was when the movement for equal pay recommenced having begun at the beginning of the century. I will quote this pungent excerpt from the newspaper story. It is about a woman who was involved in the equal pay cases in the 1970s and how she took part in a demonstration at that time. Zelda D'Aprano is a very well-known woman who is 70 years of age and is still involved in various demonstrations. The extract reads -

In 1970, she took part in an "equality ride" where women passengers on a Melbourne tram refused to pay more than 75 per cent of the adult fare on the basis that women were paid only 75 per cent of male wages.

May I suggest that tactic to young feminists. It was a rather pungent and entertaining demonstration, but obviously it did not work because women are still behind in terms of the wages they receive when compared to those of men.

I turn now to another issue that has been addressed already by my colleague on the other side of the House. I refer to safety and security, which is an issue that greatly concerns us all. The National Council of Women has also commented on this issue which concerns all Western Australians. There is no question that we are all equally concerned about safety and security, bearing in mind that the State has very sadly become notorious for its high rate of violent crime against the person. The situation has certainly changed since I and others, indeed many much younger than me, were young. It is a recent phenomenon which we all regret, and we support the people who are

coming to demonstrate outside the Parliament today because they too are concerned about the increase in violent crime.

The National Council of Women wants security at all bus stations to be upgraded. It says that Westrail security at Perth station and on trains at night is good. However, this is not the case at suburban train-bus transfer stations. This matter needs urgent attention to enable women to use public transport at night in safety. All members probably well know, because many of us have pensioners and older people living in our electorates, that elderly people at most of the pensioner centres whom members regularly visit indicate that they will not go out after 6.00 pm. They virtually close their doors at about 5.00 pm because they are too frightened to go out in the evening. The National Council of Women has asked that we take serious action in the near future to improve safety at night at the suburban public transport stations. I certainly agree with that.

Another woman I spoke to on this issue who attended a transport department workshop recently was annoyed to see only one woman on the transport panel. This did not necessarily occur for the usual reasons, but it was simply her view that many older women rely on public transport to move around the area, and if anybody was an expert on the subject, an older woman would be. That is why she thought that older women should have more say on matters such as public transport and the concerns that most people have about security on public transport.

We are all delighted with the new buses in the city. We are delighted with the quality of the trains that were provided by the previous Government, but none of us wants to ride on those buses and trains if we do not feel secure. This woman said that suburban buses were frightful to use for both older people and younger women with prams. She longs for the time when decent buses, such as those wonderful CAT buses which are used in the centre of town, are provided, and women can feel safe at suburban stations at night. That is certainly an issue that I emphasise because it is of great concern to many of us.

Safety at home is a huge problem and my colleague on the other side of the Chamber has alluded to this already. People have suggested to me at several meetings recently that we should introduce a subsidy - similar to the subsidy for car immobilisers, which has been a success - for safety screens and other security devices in homes, because these days older people do not feel safe without them. One cannot blame them for that bearing in mind the sheer number of home invasions that have become a regular feature of the news in this State. The repeated and frequent incidence of old people being attacked blatantly in their own homes, often in broad daylight - of course it is even more frightening at night - is causing women to live in fear; and it is no wonder.

Clearly the community is demanding a better effort from the Government and parliamentarians in general. I am aware of this because, being on a policing committee, I attend many meetings about drugs, crime prevention, home security, and violence against older people. Alas, the Government has been found wanting. The comments by the Minister for Police yesterday suggest that the Government is aware it has been found wanting, and the group of people who will be coming to Parliament today will demand some action on this subject very soon. Incidentally, the city safe community policing committee to which I belong has just started a series of inner suburban meetings. Its first meeting was held last week in Beaufort Street, Highgate. About 30 people turned up, on a cold night, and indicated that their major concerns related to, not surprisingly, home safety, car theft and drugs.

Of course, I imagine that situation will be repeated in the electorates of most people in this Chamber. They all felt that the Government should be doing more. We might have different views about how to approach these matters, but we all agree that we need to act on those major concerns.

Under pressure of time, I turn in this report card on women in Western Australia to the large and important area of health. I indicate concerns of many people in the women's health centres about the apparent lack of commitment to those centres outlined in the Government's latest and very comprehensive document about health called "Health 2020". In taking a good look through the document, I could not see much about women's health centres either. Numerous others have drawn my attention to this neglect.

I now quote a government document about these centres and what they are supposed to do from the Women's Information Service, the government women's policy development office. It reads -

Western Australia has a network of women health services available in Perth and rural and remote areas. Within this network there are thirteen Women's Health Centres and six Sexual Assault Referral Services.

It then describes the work carried out. They provide a range of services like individual counselling, therapeutic support programs, medical services, health information, and referral and promotion services to women of all ages. They were established in support of a national women's health policy. They deal with many issues, focusing on reproductive health and sexuality, the health of ageing women, women's mental and emotional health, violence against women, occupational health and safety, the health needs of women as carers and the health effects on women of sexual stereotyping.

Women's health centres are concerned because they have seen no mention in the interesting document of the future of health in Western Australia. Women's health centres were set up in the late 1970s and early 1980s because women's health was not receiving the attention it deserved. I was involved at that time and, frankly, it was felt that some general practitioners did not much understand or sympathise with women's health needs. I am glad that that has largely changed. However, the need for women's health centres has not. They offer a great deal more than just gynaecological services, as I listed a moment ago.

Long queues continue with constant demands made of all the centres to which I spoke in preparation for this speech. That indicates the strong need for the centres, albeit that the attitude of many GPs has changed since those earlier days. To people who say, "Why not have men's health centres?", I am pleased to indicate that people concerned about this lack of emphasis have decided to set up similar bodies. Good luck to them. If they did not feel that their health needs were looked after, it was up to them - as we did in the past - to do something about the matter. I am pleased to see more emphasis placed on men's health these days. Most women's health centres are concerned that their funding increases have not covered increases in demand for their services. Cutting back on service delivery will be an unfortunate result of insufficient funding. For example, it would be regrettable if necessary services, such as cervical cancer screening for migrants or Aboriginal women who do not feel comfortable going elsewhere, were cut back.

I relay to the House the views of one group of women who provide care for hundreds of women a year. I refer to their concern about the "Health: 2020" document to which I referred. They state -

... within the document *Health 2020: A Discussion Paper* there appears to be no deliberation about issues directly related to the activities of Women's Health Centres. More importantly, strategies identified in this document, which encouraged more community based health activities, and how they will impact on the capabilities of these centres, is not addressed.

They then quote other matters. The concern is that the document contains no guarantee that the need for these centres is understood, and that funding will continue. One centre told me that women's mental services are a particular problem. Where do women in crisis go? Hospitals provide little in the way of counselling, and many women cannot afford private care. One can always obtain private care for mental health if one has lots of money. Inadequate services are available for women with postnatal depression, for example. At one centre, as a result of the social isolation of the area, and as many people in the area are on low incomes, there is a five-week waiting list to see a counsellor. Anyone who has suffered from serious depression, let alone postnatal depression, knows how dreadful it can be. To live with that condition for a long period in isolation is very bad news indeed.

It is a good idea to shift services out into the community. No-one disagrees with that good idea, which has been pursued in health for some time. This was done to stop people going into institutions. However, we must provide sufficient social services if we decide to move people into the community. If we shut the institutions and toss people out on their own without services, it is a bad situation.

The women's refuges story is the same. Demand and the range of services expected from refuges has increased. Although funding has increased, it has not been commensurate with increased demand. I remember the days before funding - we are in a better position these days. Nevertheless, several refuges refer to the lack of resources for outreach work. If women are, say, victims of domestic violence and cannot go home, they must eventually be moved out of the refuge, which is crisis accommodation, into mid-term accommodation. This usually involves Homeswest. Refuge workers, barely able to cover the work conducted in the refuges, say they have tremendous trouble finding time to follow up women at the next stage of accommodation; namely, when they have moved on from the refuge. There is a considerable waiting list for Homeswest accommodation. All members know from work in their electorates about the long waiting list. There is a bottleneck. It is difficult to get people out of crisis accommodation and into the next stage. Also, people who are supposed to provide the outreach service after the domestic trauma say they do not have the necessary workers.

Several workers said that they were sailing close to the wind in funding for this 24-hour work. These refuges operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and need to be constantly staffed. They find it difficult to stretch staff over that time. For example, I remember vividly when working in a refuge that aggressive drunks turn up at the doorstep, or staff must leave at night to provide urgent assistance to a former resident or to take someone to hospital. I remember taking children to Princess Margaret Hospital for Children in the middle of the night on one occasion. Night staff are concerned about the safety of the people at the refuge while they are away. That is stretching resources thinly.

It is a problem when refuges are understaffed in a crisis situation. Another problem is when a drug addict resident cannot get in the queue for treatment. We are familiar with that matter. Also, little in the way of cheap lodging is available for women in certain circumstances. I am pleased that a lot of such accommodation is available for men in my electorate. Medium-term accommodation for women is needed.

There is an enormous unmet demand in this area with queues for housing, counselling and drug treatment. Some pharmacists, to whom I spoke this week, have 100 people on their waiting lists for methadone treatment. That is a very serious problem. A major concern is that refuges have an average staff-client ratio of 1:6. They often find that unreasonable and cannot do their work because the demands of this sort of work are very stressful and are increasing. A ratio of 1:6 is not adequate and an increase in staff numbers is essential to enable refuges to meet the needs and create sufficient safety and security. That is what these places are all about, and unfortunately they are necessary even though we all wish that was not the case. At the moment the refuges are simply not able to provide the safety and security that is required.

I turn briefly to another women's health issue which is a follow-up to the recent abortion debate in this Parliament. I wrote to the new Minister for Health recently, asking him a number of questions. I do not believe he has had a chance to reply to my letter as it was not long ago that I wrote to him. In congratulating him on his demanding new portfolio, I reminded him that we - the previous minister, and I and other members of the House - had discussed certain matters after the abortion debate was over. We discussed the importance of education about contraception and that the counselling pamphlets on abortion and carrying a pregnancy to term be improved. We said that they needed to be developed and circulated to doctors and clinics. We talked about devising a method of certifying that an abortion had taken place for record-keeping and research purposes. We also talked about the committee of appropriate medical representatives appointed by the minister to deal with that unfortunate situation when abortions had to be considered after 20 weeks

Mr Prince: All of which is in hand.

Ms WARNOCK: That is what I was asking the Minister for Police's colleague in this letter. I wanted to draw attention to the fact that I had done that. I believe these are extremely important health issues.

Mr Prince: The committee is in hand regarding the notification format and the education material is being done right now.

Ms WARNOCK: I thank the former Minister for Health. I am pleased to hear that. I will abandon other matters which I intended to talk about because I wish to move an amendment to the Address-in-Reply.

Amendment to Motion, as Amended

Ms WARNOCK: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion, as amended -

but we regret to advise Your Excellency that the crisis in the State's public hospitals continues unabated with unacceptably low levels of accountability being shown by the Minister for Health who has failed to report to the Parliament in respect of the following important matters:

- (a) the amount of additional commonwealth Medicare funding to be allocated to the waiting list reduction strategy this year and proposed for future years;
- (b) details of proposed expenditure on the elective surgery waiting list reduction strategy, particularly -
 - (i) capital works
 - (ii) ward re-openings
 - (iii) greater utilisation of existing facilities
 - (iv) additional services;
- (c) details of all targets or standards to be met by hospitals in reducing waiting times and waiting lists in consideration of the additional funding;
- (d) the end of 1997-98 financial year turnout in respect of each health service compared with budget;
- (e) the end of 1997-98 financial year turnout in respect of each hospital which operated at a deficit for the year compared with budget;
- (f) the deficit hospitals and other health services will be required to carry into the 1998-99 financial year and the implications this will have for health services;
- (g) financial allocations offered to each hospital and health service for 1998-99 compared with the previous year;

- (h) details of which health services or hospitals did not agree with their allocation and the dates and terms on which they subsequently accepted; and
- (i) which hospitals or health services have not yet signed their memorandum of agreement in relation to funding.

MR MCGINTY (Fremantle) [12.04 pm]: I second the amendment to the Address-in-Reply moved by my colleague the member for Perth. I do so because the Minister for Health has a duty to report to Parliament on certain outstanding matters of public interest, some of which have been outstanding for some time. This morning the minister tabled a copy of the contract on the Peel Health Campus, having told us only last week that it would be tabled some time before Christmas. I thought it appropriate in the week that the Peel Health Campus was commissioned that we know the terms under which the State has incurred the liability for it. I am pleased that the minister has now done that.

A number of matters remain on which the minister should report to this Parliament. Those matters fit into three categories which are outlined in the amendment to the Address-in-Reply which is currently before the House. The nine points mentioned by the member for Perth cover three issues: Firstly, the waiting lists for elective surgery. Secondly, the financial turnout for last financial year which ended on 30 June. No information on the budgetary allocations to our hospitals has been presented to this Parliament since the end of the financial year. We were able to extract from the former Minister for Health certain information prior to the end of the financial year. However, no information has been forthcoming since. Therefore, the second issue is last year's budget performance. Thirdly, the 1998-99 financial allocations for our government health service. Points 1 to 3 relate to waiting lists; points 4 to 6 relate to last year's budgetary performance; and points 7 to 9 relate to the current year's budgetary performance.

I will spend a little time addressing each of those matters. Two weeks ago, amid much fanfare, the Premier and the Minister for Health announced that they had signed the five-year Medicare Agreement with the Commonwealth which was to provide, so they said, an extra \$125m over its life. That amount was a mere fraction of what the Government had said was necessary to run our public hospitals. The former Minister for Health, Kevin Prince, reported to this Parliament on a number of occasions that the minimum amount the Government of this State would settle for was an extra \$500m funding for Western Australian hospitals under the Medicare Agreement - \$100m a year for each year of the proposed five-year agreement. This is a politically motivated settlement for only 20 per cent of that amount. The Government settled for an extra \$25m a year for each of the five years of the Medicare Agreement.

I am interested in the minister's observation because the newspapers reported a figure of \$35m a year for extra funding. I must be missing something because \$125m over five years - divide 125 by 5 - comes out at \$25m. Perhaps the minister can explain where I have gone wrong in my mental arithmetic.

Mr Day: The average amount is \$25m a year. The total is approximately \$125m, but in the first year it is \$35m. Therefore, the amount per year in the following four years is less than \$25m - it ranges from \$21m up to about \$24m.

Mr MCGINTY: I thank the minister for that information. I did not understand the press release. The minister's explanation certainly makes sense.

We are talking about an average of \$25m a year over five years. The press release that was put out by the Premier and the Minister for Health on 7 August stated that every cent of that \$125m would be allocated to reducing waiting lists in Western Australian hospitals. The press release went on to say that every person currently waiting for a hip or knee replacement or cataract removal would be treated in the next 12 months. It is incumbent upon the minister to give details, beyond a broad statement in a press release, of how that will be achieved.

It is not simply a matter of putting more money into buying more operations in hospitals; it is a matter of what capital works will be performed to increase throughput or capacity to be able to undertake more operations in our government hospitals, what wards will be re-opened, and what facilities will be extended to a greater degree of utilisation. For example, the former Minister for Health was responsible for shutting a medical ward at the Osborne Park hospital as part of a transfer of funds out of the government hospital system to pay for the newly privatised Joondalup Health Campus. A 36-bed ward at the Osborne Park hospital, which could have been used for treating people on the waiting list, lay idle, with all the capital overheads associated with nothing happening there, and operating theatres were underutilised because it did not have the bed capacity to go with it.

I would appreciate hearing from the minister about what facilities will be utilised to a greater extent than they have been utilised in the past, and, most important, what additional services will emerge in the government hospital system to meet the Government's commitment and to be the subject of the expenditure of that \$35m and an ongoing amount averaging out at \$25m over the next few years.

Members should be aware that waiting lists have grown exponentially over the past 18 to 20 months. At the previous

election, 12 000 people were waiting for surgery at teaching hospitals in the metropolitan area. Now, 17 000 people wait for surgery in those same hospitals. That does not count people waiting for surgery in the eight non-teaching hospitals in the metropolitan area or people waiting for surgery in major country and regional hospitals. Twelve months ago, at Royal Perth Hospital 4 200 people were waiting for surgery; today there are 5 600. In July 1997, 4 800 people were waiting for surgery at Fremantle Hospital; today there are 6 200. At Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital there were 3 000 people waiting for surgery; there are now 3 300. At King Edward Memorial Hospital, 265 people were waiting for surgery; there are now 324. At Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, 1 088 children were on the waiting list for surgery; the figure has now grown to 1 252 today. It was no surprise yesterday that there was a rally by mothers with their children in prams protesting that, in one case, a woman was upset because her child had to wait 19 months for an ear operation so that the child could hear and get on with the usual development and preparation for school.

The increase in the number of people waiting for surgery is one of the Government's great failings. At the time of the announcement of the extra \$35m going into elective surgery waiting lists in Western Australia, I wished the Government well but I pointed out that people would be justified in being a little cynical about it because they had heard it all before. A little less than two years ago the Government made two promises in respect of elective surgery waiting lists. The first promise was that they would halve the waiting lists. At that time, the number of people on waiting lists totalled about 12 000. We expected the number to go down to about 6 000 by now, but it has gone up to 17 000. That is a clear, unfulfilled election promise about which I hope the new allocation of moneys will do something.

The second promise was that everyone would be treated within the relevant time for their conditions. The matter that causes most concern is when people have a life-threatening condition or a condition which is put into category 1 - surgery needed urgently - that surgery must be performed within one month. The most recent figures available show that at Royal Perth Hospital, half the people waiting for urgent, life-saving surgery are not treated within one month, which is the recognised time limit for their condition. That is an appalling figure - 48 per cent of people diagnosed as having an urgent condition at Royal Perth Hospital are not treated within the appropriate time for their condition! I hope that that matter receives attention. People in category 1 should be put up in lights as top priority cases and be dealt with within the appropriate time for their condition.

I would appreciate the minister telling us what he will do in spending that \$35m because there is great public interest in knowing that. We do not want that money to be absorbed into hospital operating budgets and to disappear. Frankly, that is what happened when the Government previously had a waiting list reduction strategy. It totalled \$15m a year over two years, the year before the election and the year after the election. In the first year, \$15m was allocated. A certain amount of that went into upgrading operating theatres and providing facilities to increase throughput. In the second year, no capital works whatsoever were done; the money was simply absorbed into hospital operating budgets and the waiting lists started to take off during that year.

It is important also for the minister to explain not that he is simply putting \$35m this year and \$25m on average over the next five years into a waiting list reduction strategy, but what he will expect back from the hospitals, because we have been receiving mixed messages on the issue. Only a month ago, Dr Neale Fong, speaking on behalf of the former Minister for Health, said that waiting lists were not a matter of money - he could have knocked me over with a feather; it was an incredible statement to make - but now the Government is throwing in a lot of money to deal with the waiting list problem! He sought to transfer blame to the hospitals. He said that he would send a "please explain" to the hospitals to find out why their waiting lists had blown out by so much. Everyone knows there is not enough money to do the work required.

Everyone knows that hospitals save money by not doing things; it is as simple as that. If they do not perform operations, they save money; if they perform operations, they spend money. There is no magic about it; that is how the system works. At least now the money has been put in. However, I would like to be told what targets the minister is now setting. Targets were set before the previous election. We have had some indication that ophthalmology and orthopaedics will be targeted. I hope that the minister will accept also that category 1 patients must be targeted as a matter of top priority to make sure that they receive their surgical treatment within 30 days, but it would be improper simply to throw a large amount of money at hospitals and not require them to be accountable or to meet standards in return. I want to hear from the minister what he expects to happen to waiting lists over the life of the additional funding. I wish him well in that endeavour.

Apart from category 1 patients, the other matter that should be targeted is the significant growth in the number of children waiting for surgery. At Princess Margaret Hospital for Children today, 1 252 children are waiting for surgery. That is unacceptable because of the impact that it will have on the development of many of those children and on their educational, social and physical development. The waiting list for children should not involve those sorts of numbers.

The remainder of the amendment relates to the budgetary performance of the Health Department. The Opposition wants to know what the end of financial year turnout was in respect of each health service compared with the budgetary allocation. We know, because the previous Minister for Health told us, that Fremantle Hospital ran up a deficit of \$12.8m; Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women ran up a combined deficit of \$4.2m; Royal Perth Hospital ran up a deficit of \$21m; and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital ran up a deficit of \$13.5m. In addition, Osborne Park Hospital ran up a deficit of \$1.7m; the Perth Dental Hospital, \$400 000; and the PathCentre, \$1.3m. That adds up in the metropolitan area alone to a deficit of \$55m. Those were the projections in April for the end of the year turnout. Around the State, Esperance Hospital has blown its budget by some \$300 000. There was no mention of that in the figures the former Minister for Health gave us. A week before the end of the financial year Geraldton Hospital had an emergency injection of \$1m after it had blown its budget. It is incumbent on the minister to give a detailed report to the House on those hospitals and how they have travelled financially. We want to know for the past financial year what the deficit was for every hospital that operated at a deficit.

Point 6 of the amendment is that if the five metropolitan hospitals operated at a deficit of some \$55m in the past financial year, will they be required to carry that forward and meet their deficits, in the case of Royal Perth Hospital, for instance, of \$20.955m? Will the hospital have to pay those bills out of its allocation for this financial year? The Government has been equivocating on this for some time. In my opinion it has no option but to bring down a mini-budget in Health and inject an additional amount of money to wipe off the deficit from those previous years, so that each of the hospitals starts with a clean slate. There is not enough money in the allocations in this year's budget to hospitals for that to occur. I want to hear from the minister whether the hospitals will be required to carry that item forward on their books or whether it will be written off by means of a special injection of funds into the hospital system.

We know that a number of hospitals have rejected the minister's offer of funding for the coming financial year. We want to know which hospitals they are and which hospitals initially disagreed but have now indicated agreement with the offer that the minister has made to them. We want to know the details of how that has come about. We do not think it is acceptable, in the face of what is obviously a budget blowout, that silence is sufficient. The Premier frequently trumpets the need for transparency in financial matters. Here is the minister's opportunity to produce the figures for better or worse and put them into the public domain, so that people at least know how they are going. I am getting sick and tired of talking to senior hospital operators who say that they cannot cope this year because the Government has not picked up the deficit they ran up last year and has simply not provided them with enough money to operate as well as pick up that deficit. A measure of certainty needs to be brought into this.

The former Minister for Health gave a promise in this House that on 30 June, the last day of the past financial year, every hospital in this State would know its budgetary allocation for the coming year, so it could operate with a measure of certainty. He trumpeted that and I applauded it at the time. I thought that for the first time hospitals would know how much money they had to spend and that therefore they would have 365 days of a financial year knowing what money they had to spend instead of finding out their budgetary allocations, as used to be the case, in the second half of the financial year. That is no way to expect the chief executive officer to properly manage a hospital. This minister's predecessor gave that solemn promise to the Parliament. Unfortunately, 30 June has come and gone without that promise being fulfilled. The reason is that some hospitals have refused to accept the offer that was made. The minister needs to take us into his confidence and tell us what money has been allocated, which hospitals are still not agreeing and which hospitals have had their allocations increased above the offer originally made. I will be very appreciative to receive that information.

MR NICHOLLS (Mandurah) [12.25 pm]: Health is one of the most important issues facing our community; there is no doubt about that. It is important that we separate the political process of point scoring or developing our own agendas from the general needs of the community. Dare I say it, on many occasions members of Parliament in their zest to establish their own political profiles or agendas forget that the majority of people in our community simply want services provided without the necessary agendas attached. They would like to be provided with information without the unnecessary connotations which sometimes come with the information.

Today I will largely focus on the Mandurah community and its health services, in particular the new Mandurah Hospital, to which the previous speaker made reference. The minister today tabled the agreement for which the Opposition has been calling for some time. The new Mandurah Hospital is a facility that has taken a long time to come to fruition. In fact, as a new member in 1989, I received a number of complaints and concerns from the community because the then Labor Government had promoted the new Mandurah Hospital being opened. I may stand corrected but my memory tells me at this stage about 18 beds were available for a community of approximately 30 000 people. It did not take too many weeks to find inadequacies in the ability to care for the people of Mandurah. The community's expectations were that a hospital would be provided but the Government of the day had provided little more than a C class hospital which did not at that stage have the ability to handle accidents and emergencies

in an appropriate way. It has taken too long to provide the people of Mandurah with a hospital that can and will cater for their general needs.

I will refer to an area about which I have some concerns. Although I am very pleased about the new hospital and I am impressed with the building and facilities provided, one area I will highlight in this debate and bring to the minister's attention is mental health. Unless members of the community have some association or contact with or intimate understanding, because of training, of mental health, they tend to have a phobia about it. As a result mental health needs are not necessarily being promoted as well as they should. Mental health is not an infectious disease which means that a person in need of mental health services should be quarantined, sent away, ostracised or put out of sight. I have been extremely pleased to see the changes in attitudes towards the provision of mental health services over the past five or six years and people are now openly talking about mental health services in a productive and positive way.

Nevertheless, the Peel region remains, unfortunately, the region with the second highest suicide rate in Western Australia. There is no doubt in my mind that suicide in the Peel region is a major problem. In my view it is equal to any other health problems and the law and order problem which is uppermost in everybody's mind at the moment. The difficulty is that unless appropriate services are provided to respond to the needs of people who are engaged in self-harming behaviour or considering suicide, there will be no change in the high rate of suicide. Subsequently, a number of people will take their own lives, through various means, who otherwise could have been helped to remain as productive members of society.

I will refer to some comments in today's local Mandurah newspaper. The Chairman of the Youth Suicide Advisory Committee, Dr Hugh Cook, is reported as saying there is a strong need for medical teams to deal with mental health crises. He was referring to the need in the Mandurah area. The same article states -

But the 24-hour emergency psychiatric response team promised for the Peel region appears unlikely in the near future due to a lack of funds.

I have not had the opportunity to verify whether that is correct. However, if there is a lack of funds for that service, I implore the Minister for Health to reconsider any options at his disposal to ensure the psychiatric services are provided. Currently one full-time psychiatrist and some dedicated people are working in the mental health unit.

An incident last week highlighted the shortfall in facilities to deal with emergencies or crises. A young person threatened to harm himself and, when the police arrived to deal with the situation they sought the help of an expert from the mental health unit. Unfortunately, I understand no such person was available. No doubt there are reasons for that and, on the other side of the argument, I recognise that it is not always possible to instantly provide resources. However, this area is so important that it should be closely considered. I will continue to take up the issue with the new Minister for Health but, through this debate, I implore him and his department to actively pursue some solutions so that young people in the Peel region, in particular, are able to access services that will play an integral role in preventing them from taking their own lives.

The other issue I highlight with regard to mental health is that although the new hospital will have a facility in which the mental health team will be accommodated, I understand no beds will be provided for mental health patients who need treatment in a confined setting or who are unable to be treated in a normal ward. Although that issue can be addressed in the future, again, I highlight in this debate the need for consideration to be given to providing those beds or a suitable facility. If it cannot be provided, a clear message should be given to the community indicating how those services can be accessed by people in the Peel region to reduce the number of suicides or incidents of self-harm.

I am impressed by the overall health services to be provided, not only by the new hospital but also the services to be provided to the community compared to what it had in the past. I have already mentioned that in 1989 the supposed first Mandurah hospital was opened, but it was little more than a nursing post with 18 beds. The community in the Peel region, and particularly Mandurah, is growing rapidly and there is no doubt that it needs a modern, fully-equipped hospital. Members on both sides of the House will continue to debate this issue and I am sure members opposite will continue to pursue the provision of further services and health issues in the Peel region, simply because of the large number of elderly people living in that area. Their needs, not the least of which are hip and knee joint replacements, are a major issue in the Peel region, particularly the Mandurah area. I hope that in the near future joint replacement operations will be carried out at the Mandurah hospital so that people do not need to travel to Perth for those operations, which involves cost and time to their families and friends who visit and support them. Also a large number of young families live in the region, and the number is increasing, and children are high users generally of health services. Therefore, the Mandurah hospital and the Peel Health Campus are likely to come under increasing pressure as the population continues to rise. As the housing market and general economy improve, no doubt population increases will be at the level they were in the 1980s.

I acknowledge that the Government cannot provide everything, and people understand that. However, it is important to continue to debate the priority services. I urge the Opposition to raise those constructive issues and to support the needs they identify. It is not an issue in which the Government has all the wisdom and the Opposition has none. It is a question of what is best for the community. Under that guise, members must weigh up where the resources are being spent, while recognising that the source of funds is not bottomless and that not everything can be provided to everyone.

Mr McGinty: The other area where the hospital is not doing what it should is in relation to women and children.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is the member talking about general services for women and children?

Mr McGinty: I am talking about complicated cases in women's health and paediatric services. Cases are sent to Rockingham or to one of the metropolitan hospitals.

Mr NICHOLLS: I share the member's concern that if that is not well managed, people will not get the services they require. There may also be strains on families who do not have the transport to attend or take advantage of those services. We must ensure there is coordination of the services. As the local member, I would like the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children to be replicated in Mandurah with the best medical facilities available. I am sure all members would like such facilities in their electorates, but the reality is that the resources are not available. I share the member's view that the Government must make sure that no gaps are created in the system whereby people cannot access the services they need.

The member for Fremantle mentioned budget blow-outs. Having been a minister, I know it is a grave concern. However, in the health area I would be extremely concerned if the Minister for Health said that the money had all been used and hospitals must stop providing services, no matter who is in need. However, hospitals and health systems cannot be run without accountability. Somewhere in the middle an accountable process must be provided and a solution must be found, so that services can continue to be provided even if the demand is unexpected or has not been budgeted for.

However, at the same time, we do not have a system that consumes dollars without any care or worry and expect the people of Western Australia to continue to pick up the bill, no matter what. The real issue, if I can pick up the tenor of the comments of the member for Fremantle, is that we must ensure that we are getting the best possible value for dollar that we are putting into the health service. We also must weigh up where changes are being made. Will the people of Western Australia benefit from those changes and see better services provided or are we simply funding black holes in which we are pouring money without knowing whether it will make a difference? I assume the member for Fremantle shares my view that while we may debate those priorities and the better allocation of resources, the issue always should be whether we are getting value for the resources that we are putting in. Is the money allocated to the people of Western Australia, whether it be through the Medicare grant or raised from direct or indirect taxes on tobacco or whatever, being used to the best of our ability to ensure the people of Western Australia get the best return? If it is not, the health costs will continue to blow out and the people of Western Australia will continue to miss out on those opportunities. I suggest to the member for Fremantle, who no doubt aspires to be the Minister for Health at some time in the future, and to other members who aspire to be in that position, that they will be in an unenviable situation if clear priorities and strategies are not in place when they attempt to balance the health needs in the future, and to meet those needs.

I appreciate that my comments could be interpreted as signifying support for the amendment. I agree that certain issues in the health area must be discussed. These concerns will continue to be raised, and they should be. We must always question where and how we will spend the health dollar and establish the priorities and also help shape community expectations. However, I cannot support an amendment the first paragraph of which reads that this House regrets to advise His Excellency that the crisis in the State's public health hospitals continues unabated with an unacceptably low level of accountability being shown by the minister. The minister is genuinely trying to address the issues. The problems are not continuing unabated. No doubt people have different opinions about how the problems should be addressed, but I do not believe anybody in Western Australia can say that this Government has not tried to address the health needs of the community.

Mr McGinty: If the minister provides the information that is listed in the amendment I shall withdraw the amendment, but I do not think he will.

Mr NICHOLLS: If the member for Fremantle were the minister, even with the best intent, I doubt that he could provide that information. Let us get real. This amendment is designed to put pressure on the new minister; I accept that.

Mr McGinty: To be accountable.

Mr NICHOLLS: Perhaps. I have just spent 20 minutes outlining the issues and the differing views about the health priorities. I do not believe anybody realistically believes that this Government or the minister is simply turning away from the needs of health or is allowing the issue to continue unabated at unacceptably low levels of accountability. The minister is endeavouring to be not only accountable, but also seen to be actively pursuing the issues. While we may sometimes disagree with the issues, policies or priorities, I do not believe that we as a House could accept this amendment at face value. The statements that the Government is not interested and the minister does not care or does not want to be accountable are not true. I do not believe anybody in Western Australia, irrespective of their political persuasion or personal agenda, could say straight-faced to the community, "That is what really has happened."

DR TURNBULL (Collie) [12.45 pm]: I do not support the amendment. I shall discuss the issue of the commonwealth Medicare funding for waiting list reduction and the strategies that are proposed to deal with it. These strategies currently are being worked out by the minister and the Health Department. I do not agree that there is not a level of accountability about how and where that money will be spent. In the short time that I have, I shall speak on the issue of the waiting lists and how the waiting lists for elective surgery will be dealt with, and how country waiting lists can be addressed.

We know that a number of expenses are incurred in surgery, particularly elective surgery. The first issue which must be addressed is whether all the people who are on the waiting list for elective surgery actually need that surgery. The second important issue is whether they need the attention of a specialist to perform that elective surgery. My assessment of some of the people on the waiting lists - this is reinforced by my previous experience of the sorts of patients who are on the waiting lists - is that they do not need the attention of the specialist surgeons in the tertiary hospitals. Specialist surgeons in tertiary hospitals are one of the enormous expenses in our medical system. I put this case to the minister and I want him to consider it: In deciding how this money is to be spent he should consider using surgeons who do not cost as much for their procedures; this would assist in the reduction of the waiting lists. Such surgeons practice in country areas; we have one in Collie. They are called general practitioner surgeons. Our surgeon has all the qualifications required of a specialist surgeon in a tertiary hospital, but his circumstances have resulted in his being a surgeon in a country town. The community of Collie has extremely good major and minor surgery facilities. It has enrolled nurses and general nurses who can support reasonable levels of surgery, and it has the surgeon who can carry out that surgery. The cost of these patients attending the Collie hospital would most likely be quite a bit less than that at a tertiary hospital. I know that the minister and the department are negotiating with the tertiary hospitals in order to get the lowest possible rate for these procedures to be done at tertiary hospitals.

It could be very good to introduce a degree of competition by adopting prices such as those to be submitted by the Collie District Hospital. If the tertiary hospitals reduced the cost to the level that Collie is submitting, it would help to stretch those dollars further and enable more procedures to be done. As Collie District Hospital can participate in the surgery needed to reduce the elective surgery waiting list, we can play a very important role in ensuring that the State achieves the best returns from the money allocated to reduce elective surgery waiting lists.

A regional health plan was developed for the south west by consultants. When that consultancy report was released, many of us were very disappointed with its level of presentation, level of detail and lack of consideration for areas outside Bunbury. Fortunately, it has been accepted that the consultancy was not adequate, and the matter is being revisited. I trust that services which can be supplied in the south west outside Bunbury will now be given a very realistic assessment. I refer to places like Busselton, Manjimup and Collie. We can provide good levels of service in the subregional areas, which is another accountable way to spend the health dollar in the most efficient manner to deliver services as close as possible to people's home towns.

I turn now to nurses in country hospitals. I was pleased with the final arrangements from the Industrial Relations Commission's decision for salary improvements and conditions for metropolitan nurses. I know that the Australian Nursing Federation did not want the matter determined by the Industrial Relations Commission. However, the result was a win-win situation. Nurses did not need to trade-off some of their conditions for the salary increases. Fortunately, the Industrial Relations Commission's metropolitan nurses decision will flow to the workplace and salary agreements for nurses in country hospitals. It is very important that nurses in country areas continue to have access to their rostered days off.

Two distinctly different groups of nurses work in country areas: Those nurses who are married with homes in the country town and are an integral part of the community, and career nurses - namely, recent graduates or those who want frequent change and come to a town, work for a while and then move on. Both groups of nurses need the facility of a rostered day off. Some nurses in country towns use their rostered day off to integrate with their families by attending a special performance at a school in which their children are involved, or a parents' day. Other nurses in country towns accumulate their rostered days off and add them to their holiday leave, particularly when their husband's holidays do not correspond with school holidays. Those rostered days off are important as they allow nurses in country communities to fulfil their roles as nurses and mothers. Nurses who work in country communities

as part of their career path also need rostered days off so that they can travel to Perth and integrate with another circle of friends. Rostered days off are very important in keeping them happy and working in the country. Therefore, I am very pleased that the Industrial Relations Commission has resolved the issue of rostered days off in favour of the nurses. The Health Department, in requiring nurses to trade off those days, was not looking at the whole picture of how to encourage nurses to work in country areas.

I turn now to the increase in the number of public patients and the decrease in the number of private patients. Every person in Australia has the right, under the Medicare Agreement, to enter a public hospital as a public patient. That has led to a double whammy where the number of privately insured people has dropped from 50 per cent to 34 per cent of the population, and an increasing number of privately insured people are electing to enter public hospitals as public patients.

The reason is that these people do not want to incur a gap payment for their treatment in hospital. Many country hospital boards and doctors have now entered into voluntary agreements where the doctors who service country hospitals do not charge their patients fees in excess of what they will receive back from their private insurance fund. Unfortunately, many patients in country areas either do not realise that this is the case, or do not trust that this will be the case. To give an example, Boddington has a very high percentage of people who are privately insured. That is good, but the problem is that although many of those people are privately insured, when they go to hospital, particularly a hospital in Perth, they end up with quite a large bill.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on next page.]

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

[Questions without notice taken.]

The SPEAKER: I indicate to the ministers who appear to be very eager to jump to their feet before they are given the call that I deliberately slow down the call because the message must get downstairs to the operators of the television cameras so that they can focus on members.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

Council's Messages

Message from the Council received and read acquainting the Assembly that it concurs with the appointment of the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission subject to the Assembly amending its Standing Order No 415A by deleting all words after the words "effluxion of time".

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it has appointed Hon Derrick Tomlinson, Hon Murray Montgomery, Hon John Cowdell and Hon Nick Griffiths as members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission but that their appointment have effect contingent upon the Assembly amending Standing Order No 415A as requested by the Council.

Standing Orders Suspension

On motion by Mr Barnett (Leader of the House), resolved with an absolute majority -

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to deal with Legislative Council messages 2 and 3 jointly forthwith.

Question put and passed.

Appointment of Members

On motion by Mr Barnett (Leader of the House), resolved -

1. That the Assembly appoints the member for Avon, the member for Churchlands, the member for Cockburn and the member for Geraldton as members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission, and that the Council be acquainted accordingly.
2. That the following message be sent to the Council -

The Assembly acquaints the Council that Assembly Standing Order No 415A on the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission continue notwithstanding any prorogation which would otherwise terminate the committee, but it does not enable the committee to meet during a period of prorogation, and accordingly no amendment of the standing order is necessary.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Amendment to Motion, as Amended

Resumed from earlier stage.

DR TURNBULL (Collie) [2.42 pm]: Before the luncheon suspension I referred to the benefits to Boddington Hospital's budget from the understanding that if private patients opt to go to Boddington Hospital, they will not receive an account at the end of the stay to meet the difference between the cost of treatment and the amount provided by the health insurance fund. As I explained prior to the break, an arrangement was made between the health boards of various country hospitals and the doctors servicing the hospitals for doctors not to charge any more to private patients than the fee paid by the health insurance funds. This has been of great benefit to the Boddington Hospital. All country hospitals should consider that proposition.

I do not know how it would affect the metropolitan hospitals, but it is an area which the metropolitan hospitals should investigate; that is, agreements should be made with doctors servicing the hospitals that they will not penalise private patients coming into the public hospital by sending them an account far above the return to be received from the health insurance fund. It is reasonable. Most doctors have adequate incomes. In fact, they have an income sufficient to meet requirements and to maintain their status in our society.

This business of charging patients, who happen to have private insurance higher fees in public hospitals is counterproductive. It penalises the rest of the community. It is reasonable that the money from people who pay their private insurance premiums should be directed to the hospitals at which treatment is received, whether it be a private or public hospital.

I have raised this issue with the various people involved. I urge the minister to investigate ways in which we can inform privately insured patients that when they enter a public hospital with such an agreement, they will not receive a bill above the amount to be returned from the private insurance fund. The proposition should apply to not only general practitioners, but also surgical procedures.

A global policy put to the Federal Government is that private insurance companies should enter such agreements with doctors. Many doctors resist these agreements. If it were done on a hospital-by-hospital basis, dealing with the board and management of hospitals, doctors would not feel forced into a situation they cannot tolerate, and so they may be more cooperative in dealing with individual hospitals.

MR BROWN (Bassendean) [2.47 pm]: One way to measure quality of life is the access we all have to health services and support services when required. It is pointless telling people in pain and in need of care that the economic indicators are fine, the exchanges rates are great, company profits are up, employment trends are moving in the right direction, etcetera. People in constant pain live with pain day after day, hour after hour and minute after minute. The only relief they find is if someone comes to their aid and provides the services required, medical or otherwise.

The extent to which the State fails to provide the essential services is the extent to which it neglects its citizens and their welfare. The Leader of the Opposition has often referred to the need to measure progress by means other than economic indicators. Indices show whether the State or economy is working well. However, we need an index which shows whether our society is progressing and whether the services we expect from government are being provided.

I now read to the House a letter I received from a constituent, who is unable to obtain services from the home and community care program as a result of a lack of funding. When a member of Parliament receives such a letter, it highlights a significant failure by government to provide genuinely and urgently needed funds. I will not refer to the writer's name; the letter reads -

Dear Mr Brown

I am writing to express my concern about the inability of the Home and Community Care Program to meet the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities in Western Australia.

My husband is terminally ill and I have been caring for him at home despite my being a Double Amputee confined to a wheelchair.

I recently developed what is medically referred to as a "golfing elbow" in my right hand and being right handed this severely restricts my use of that hand, especially for tasks such as vacuuming and sweeping. Two weeks ago I sought 2 hours per week of home help assistance, to assist me with the vacuuming and sweeping of my house, through the Silver Chain sister who attends to my husband.

Two days later indicating Silver Chain Supervisor came home to assess the situation and on 7th August, I received a letter that I have been placed on their "waiting list" for home help.

On 10th August, I rang the Bayswater Shire HACC co-ordinator and was advised over the phone without any assessment being made of my situation, that they could not assist me as they were out of funds and the only way they could overcome this would be to request Silver Chain to take someone else off their waiting list.

I then asked her to provide me the policy on funding priorities and was advised that this information would be made available as I requested in writing . . .

I followed up these matters with Deborah Costello with the HDWA, who confirmed the advice provided by the Bayswater HAAC co-ordinator.

For funds to dry out so early in the financial year, if this is indeed the case, is unconscionable to say the least. How can the government possibly hope to achieve its policy objective of enabling the elderly to stay at home rather than in a nursing home, when people in my circumstances cannot even access 2 hours per week of home help.

I would appreciate your early advice on what steps you intend to take to ensure that people in my circumstances are not placed on waiting list for home help assistance.

It is a sad reflection on our society today that a lady who is happy to care for her terminally ill husband at home, because it is obviously a marriage of some duration, and who is thereby relieving the State of any burden, finds when she suffers from an impairment and is unable to carry out certain tasks in her home that she cannot receive the assistance that she requires. It is appalling that in a society which is putting increasing pressure on families to look after their sick and keep them out of hospital, and to look after their seniors and keep them out of hostels and nursing homes, that this lady who has been coping both emotionally and physically with all of the additional effort that is required to look after her husband cannot receive two hours of assistance per week when she is in need. The cost of that home help at about \$25 per hour is \$50 a week. I cannot believe that our system has sunk so low and is so bankrupt that people such as this lady need to plead to their local member of Parliament for that assistance.

I raise this matter today deliberately, because both the current Minister for Health and the former Minister for Health are in the Chamber. I raised a matter a few days ago with regard to dental treatment, and I am pleased to say that someone from the minister's office has contacted my office to check the details of that matter. I will not go over that matter again today, not because I do not consider it important, and not because I do not want it attended to, but because I believe that the response that I will receive in the foreseeable future will attend to that matter. However, this matter came to my notice only yesterday, and I find it so appalling that I have taken the opportunity to raise it here. I was shocked to receive a letter like that.

Mr Prince: As the former Minister for Health, I will make a general comment about HAAC funding. HAAC is a 60:40 commonwealth-state exercise and has been since its inception in the mid-1980s. I have said on a number of occasions, and I will continue to say, that it has a Byzantine committee system and appears to be incapable of change. It should be changed so that its funding is far more responsive to people's needs than to its administration. It currently responds on a historic basis rather than a needs basis. I have tried to achieve that change in the past two and half years. However, we need the commonwealth authorities to do that as well, and that has proved to be difficult.

Mr BROWN: I thank the minister for that explanation, and if that requires me to write also to the federal Minister for Health, with whom I have exchanged various pieces of correspondence, I will take up the matter with him, because this situation must be rectified. Now that the minister has heard my concerns, I hope he will show the same degree of diligence that he showed the other day when I raised concerns in this place and will follow up the matter. I will certainly fax through the details, with the name of the person, to the minister's office in the hope that the matter will be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

MR DAY (Darling Range - Minister for Health) [2.56 pm]: The House is considering an amendment to the Address-in-Reply moved by the Opposition on a range of significant issues in the Health portfolio. The motion contains nine points. The first point is the amount of additional commonwealth Medicare funding that will be allocated to the waiting list reduction strategy this year and which is proposed in future years. The Premier made it very clear in his announcement last Friday week that all of the additional funding that will be provided to Western

Australia as a result of the discussions between the Premier and the Prime Minister will be used to increase the amount of elective surgery that is performed on public patients in Western Australia. The total amount of funding is approximately \$125m over five years, of which \$35m has been allocated for 1998-99, and the remainder, which comprises about \$22.5m per year, has been allocated for the following four years.

There is a tendency in the Parliament, in the media and in the health professions to talk about the need to reduce waiting lists. The essential point is that we reduce the amount of time that people need to wait for elective surgery and we increase the number of procedures that are performed. The actual number of people on waiting lists is not the primary issue. It is theoretically possible to have 20 000 people on waiting lists, but if they need to wait for only three weeks for a particular procedure that is not urgent, that is not a major issue. On the other hand, if 10 people are on waiting lists for three or four years, that is a major issue and warrants serious attention. I know that many more people than that number have been waiting for three or four years for joint replacement surgery, for example. That matter is of significant concern to the Government and has been taken seriously at all levels within government, from the Premier down. We are working extremely hard to reduce the time that people need to wait for elective surgery, particularly when their condition causes a significant amount of pain or suffering, or seriously impairs their quality of life.

The manner in which we will achieve that increase in elective surgery is the subject of great discussion and consideration at the moment. I cannot be definitive in all respects about how we will achieve the increase, but a range of strategies is being considered. To that extent, I have set up a task force which I chair and which has on it several people who are senior in the medical profession, senior health administrators, senior people in the nursing profession and so on who will be able to make a very considered contribution to an appropriate strategy or range of strategies so that we can increase the amount of elective surgery that is performed and therefore reduce the waiting times.

People on that task force include Dr Bryant Stokes, the Chief Medical Officer of the Health Department, Dr Peter Bath, Mr Peter Campos, Dr Rosanna Capolingua-Host the State President of the Australian Medical Association, Professor Ian Constable, Dr Neale Fong, Dr Gareth Goodier, Professor Lou Landau, Dr Denzil McCotter, Dr Alan Nicoll, Mr Glyn Palmer, Dr Michael O'Halloran, Associate Professor Alan Skirving, Ms Di Twigg and, as Executive Officer, Mr Bernard Colgan, who is the Acting Executive Officer of the Central Waitlist Bureau.

As I have said, that group is currently considering by whatever reasonable way we can increasing the amount of elective surgery that is performed, including considering methods of reducing waiting times generally. It involves examining and recommending strategies for improving the efficiency of hospital operating rooms and surgical bed utilisation, including the impact of emergency cases. It includes also identifying underutilised theatre capacity, particularly in metropolitan non-teaching hospitals. It involves examining the use of day surgery in the metropolitan area, bearing in mind that the use of day surgery is a more productive means of undertaking elective surgery where it can be used, as it enables funds to go further and brings about better health outcomes. It also involves the possibility of examining the use of private facilities for selected public cases. That is not an easy issue. The Australian Medical Association has strong views on it and I have said that our primary aim is to take up whatever spare capacity there is within the public system. If we need to look at other options in addition to using the public system more than we are currently, we should do so. The group will also investigate ways to improve access to waiting lists while maintaining professional protocols and patient confidentiality. It will also consider any other relevant issues that arise during the group's considerations.

As I have said, it is not possible to be totally prescriptive at this stage. However, the matters that are being examined include the fact that at Fremantle and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospitals there is the possibility of increasing the number of sessions at which orthopaedic surgery - joint replacements in particular - is performed from one or two to three sessions. My advice is that that can be done in a short time. Certainly, there are work force implications not only from the point of view of the medical profession but also from the point of view of nursing staff and so on. Additional nursing staff might need to be recruited. It will probably take a few weeks to crank up the system but I am giving great personal attention to that matter, as is the task force.

Royal Perth Hospital will soon provide advice on how it can increase its capacity. A ward there was closed but it can be re-opened, given that there is a guarantee of a sustained increase in funding over the next five years. We are considering also the possible use of Swan Districts Hospital for joint replacement surgery. There might need to be some minor changes to the operating theatres to bring that about. There are also other implications, in particular that we will need additional medical staff, anaesthetists and so on at Swan Districts Hospital. Those are the issues that the group is examining at the moment. The focus of the task force is to consider not only short-term measures but also medium-term and long-term measures to gain a sustained increase in the amount of elective surgery performed on public patients in Western Australia.

As for details of the targets to be met by a hospital in reducing waiting times and waiting lists in consideration of the additional funding, we have given a commitment that all public patients who were waiting either for joint replacement

surgery or cataract removal as at 7 August will be treated within the next 12 months. It will take significant effort to bring that about, but we are extremely keen to make sure that no stone is left unturned to ensure that that commitment is met. As I have said, it is not just a matter of clearing all those patients; we want a sustained increase so that those who go on to the waiting list in 11 or 12 months are not kept waiting for three years as well. We want to reduce the waiting time across the board.

More general targets and standards which are established for hospitals require that no category 1 patients - that is, the most urgent patients - wait more than 30 days; fewer than 10 per cent of category 2 patients to wait more than 90 days; and fewer than 10 per cent of category 3 patients wait more than 12 months. Category 3 is the least urgent category. I cannot say that in every case those targets are met at the moment, but that is certainly the Government's goal. Those standards are set out in the memorandums of understanding that are established between the Health Services Board and the specific health services in the metropolitan area and throughout the State for that matter. Those are the goals that we are working towards.

The member for Collie and others have asked about additional funding being used in rural areas to increase the amount of elective surgery. We will consider that. Clearly, joint replacements will not be done in Collie, for example, but if we can reduce the waiting time for some other categories of surgery by doing them closer to where people live in rural areas, we must aim for that.

I said that, in themselves, waiting lists do not really tell the full story. Nevertheless, given that some people focus on the number of people on waiting lists, for what it is worth I advise the House that there was a pleasing change in the number of people on the waiting lists for elective surgery at metropolitan teaching hospitals at the end of July 1998. In particular, there was a decrease of 257 cases between June and July, down to a total of 16 741. That is very much a step in the right direction. It is a bit like crime statistics in the Police portfolio, as the new Minister for Police will find. When I left the Police portfolio, I thought that I was able to leave behind some of the emphasis on statistics which can tell only part of a story, but I find in the Health portfolio that statistics have the same significance. Nevertheless, there is a very pleasing decrease in numbers from the end of June to the end of July.

Mr McGinty: There was an increase of 3 000 in the first three months of this year.

Mr DAY: Yes. As I have said, we agree that too many people have to wait too long, but at least it is pleasing that the number is reducing.

The number of people on the waiting lists is not as many as a number of people have indicated. In addition, the number of cases admitted to teaching hospitals for elective surgery increased from 1 660 patients in June to 2 226 in July. For the first time since September 1997 more patients were cleared from the list than were added. That is a pleasing outcome.

Mr Carpenter: They died!

Mr Prince interjected.

Mr DAY: Absolutely. In addition, the number of patients who had been waiting for periods longer than their surgeons deemed clinically desirable decreased in categories 1 and 2. In category 1 there was a decrease from 226 cases in June 1998 to 169 cases in July. The number of long-wait patients in category 2 dropped from 506 cases to 442 cases. That is very much a step in the right direction. On the other side of the coin, there was an increase in the number of category 3 cases who are long-wait cases and are the least urgent of all cases.

As far as the other points raised in the motion by the Opposition are concerned, information has been sought of the 1997-98 financial year out-turn of particular health services and hospitals. The information I have been provided with indicates that all health services stayed within their funding allocation with the exception of the Geraldton Health Service, which was given an advance of \$1m. I do not think I will go through the outcomes for the particular health services. I will not read all of the numbers but I will seek leave for them to be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr McGinty: You might like to clarify what you said a moment ago. I do not think that any of the metropolitan health services stayed within budget.

Mr DAY: As far as the Metropolitan Health Service Board is concerned, the total out-turn for last financial year was \$966.3809m. Some supplementary funding was provided during the year. If that is taken into account, the outcome was that it came within the allocation that it was given.

Mr McGinty: I do not think you are right on that. The information given by your predecessor was that after that supplementary funding was provided, the metropolitan teaching hospitals blew their budget by \$55m. I have the relevant document here, if you want it.

Mr DAY: As I said, some supplementary funding was provided to the Metropolitan Health Service Board. Some internal adjustments were also made in the board itself and also in the Health Department to fund that financial situation. If we take into account all the supplementary funding, the advice I am given is that it came within its allocation, albeit that additional funding was provided during the year to enable that to occur.

Mr McGinty: Additional funding was provided at the end of the year, if my memory serves me correctly. Was any additional funding provided in the last month or two of the past financial year?

Mr DAY: I was not the minister at the time. Perhaps I might refer to the former minister.

Mr Prince: From memory, \$29.8m was provided in November 1997.

Mr McGinty: Could I suggest that information needs to be provided on that? If there were a very dramatic turnaround in the dying days of the financial year, that information was not given.

Mr DAY: As far as the other general points raised in the motion by the Opposition are concerned, information is being sought about funding allocations and offers to individual health services across the State for the 1998-99 financial year. Matters are being negotiated at the moment and have not been finalised. It is not appropriate therefore to provide the information on individual health services at this stage. As I have said, in many cases those negotiations have not been finalised. They need to be concluded. It is premature to be providing detailed information at this stage. Certainly following the completion of the process I would not see any difficulty in making the information public. All those processes need to be worked through and discussed with individual health services, whether it be the Metropolitan Health Service Board or country health service boards throughout the State.

That covers most of the points that are covered in the motion moved by the Opposition. Certainly some issues need to be faced up to and dealt with in the Government to ensure that adequate funding is provided. One of the most important points is that there is additional funding as a result of the agreement between the State and the Commonwealth. All of that funding will be used to increase the amount of elective surgery, where we recognise people have been waiting far too long, particularly people waiting for joint replacements who have been waiting up to three or four years. We are working extremely hard on ensuring that they get the treatment they need. It will take a significant amount of cooperation in the health sector between the Government, the medical and nursing professions, health services and hospitals and so on. With commonsense and goodwill we can meet the targets that are being set and provide an outcome for the public of Western Australia, which is far more satisfactory than the situation which has developed over the past couple of years or so, largely outside the control of the State. It is very clear that there is ever increasing pressure on our public health system. The reasons for that are well known. We have an ageing population and an ever-decreasing number of people are covered by private health insurance. Therefore the ever-increasing pressure on our public health service and the increasing number of patients puts increasing pressure on the amount of funding available. There is additionally the use of more expensive drugs, advances in technology and all those matters which are producing very significant changes for our health system, not only in our State but also throughout Australia. Those problems need to be worked through. It will not be easy but I look forward to working through them in an effective manner, so that we can get a better outcome for the people of Western Australia. I oppose the motion.

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [3.17 pm]: I have listened with great interest to the minister's response to the points raised by the member for Fremantle. I, like anybody else who listened with a non-prejudiced mind, was not greatly reassured. We have heard an exposition that sounded as though we are at the very beginning of a problem that we knew nothing about and that we are starting from day one. We must find out the nature of the problem, where it exists, who is doing what to whom, and then go about addressing it. This crisis has been going on in the state hospital system for a very long time. One would have thought that the information the Opposition seeks would be readily available, and I am sure it is. The Government should have had some sort of plan or strategy and should have been operating on that strategy well before now. I like the member for Darling Range, but I almost cringed when he said that the Government was setting up a task force. Anybody who has had anything to do with politics knows that a task force is a way of delaying an operation. People do not have to do anything about it, time goes by, and patients on the waiting list might die. The State does not need task forces. The Government needs to treat this matter for what it is - a crisis that dramatically affects people's lives and not something that the Government can dilly-dally around with by setting up another task force, taking a few more months to find out what it might do and then finding out that it does not have the money to do it.

Mr Prince: You could not be more wrong.

Mr CARPENTER: The \$35m that the minister said he would be putting straight into the effort to reduce waiting lists is a drop in the ocean.

Mr Prince: Do you remember the mental health task force, which was a brilliant exercise?

Mr CARPENTER: The previous minister, who through his performance has been moved on, said that we needed a hell of a lot more money than \$35m. That money represents a 20 per cent component of the extra amount available from the Commonwealth. If that is expended in the first year, we can only expect the problems to be worse in the out-years from next year. The \$35m will not make a significant dent in the problem. If members look at the figures which are readily provided by the Health Department, to the credit of the Government, about the length of time and the waiting lists, and they look at the graph of the figures being plotted over the past couple of years, they will see what I mean by a crisis.

There has been a huge increase in the waiting lists in Western Australian hospitals. Even the theoretical notion that some people might wait for less time, even though there are thousands more on the waiting list, is no comfort because in all probability for the greater number of those people it is not the reality. Twelve months ago the member for Fremantle and I stood in this Parliament and complained about the waiting lists, which were then about 12 000. We said that that was a crisis because they had gone up from 10 000 the year before, when the Government had promised to halve them to 5 000. Rather than going from 10 000, which was seen at the 1996 election as being a huge problem, to 5 000, as was the Government's stated aim, by the middle of 1997 the figure had risen to 12 000. Here we are 12 months later and 17 000 people are on the waiting lists.

The Government is saying that it will set up a task force. What was the previous minister doing about it, other than unsuccessfully - I do not know how diligently - trying to get more money out of Canberra? What have we been doing in the past couple of years so that now in the middle of 1998 we fall back on the old "Let's set up a task force" line for a matter that was perceived to be in crisis in the middle of 1996? It is hopeless. The amount of \$125m is not enough. The minister will find this out, although I am sure that he senses it already. It is not enough and next year we will have a similar huge problem and the Government will be putting in trickles of money to try to address it. It should be treated as a matter of great urgency that the State Government must address, perhaps over and above all others, aside from the law and order matter that is exercising everybody's mind.

Some of the detailed information that was sought surely should not be all that difficult to provide. In fact, I understand the previous minister did promise to provide us with the amount of the deficit to hospitals and other health services we will be required to carry in the 1998-99 financial year and the implications this will have for health services; and also the information about which hospitals are not accepting the offer for this financial year which we are already a couple of months into. Why can the Parliament of Western Australia not have that information? What is so sensitive about it? These are public hospitals. We are the representatives of the people who are hoping, beyond all hope, that the public hospital system will be pulled into some sort of good order. Why can we not have that information? Why can we not be told why the hospitals are not accepting the offers?

Mr Day: Because the matter is not finalised.

Mr CARPENTER: Which hospitals have not accepted the offer?

Mr Day: There is not the information to provide. I do know the specific hospitals but the issues have not been finalised.

Mr CARPENTER: We appreciate that the minister has only just taken over the portfolio, but it is not difficult information to obtain. The minister can just telephone somebody to find out which hospitals have not accepted the offer and then take the next step and ask what is the problem. If we find out which hospitals have not accepted the offer, we might then find out what is the problem to which they are objecting and take a couple of steps to overcome that. I fear that the steps being taken are not serious enough to make a sustained impact on the waiting lists in Western Australian hospitals. I realise I committed to speaking for only a few minutes in this debate, but I want to bring a case to the minister's attention. These sorts of people probably walk into the office of every member of Parliament. When that happens I feel helpless for these people. They may have been waiting for two or up to three years and are battling to walk more than a few steps because they are in a lot of pain and they cannot be treated in a public hospital. What will they say when I tell them that the minister has told me that a task force has been set up to look into this matter? They will not accept it as being a sufficient response to their problems.

Mr Day: That is not the full story at all. By setting up a task force we will get people working together so we can get a much greater through-put within the system so people like those can be treated. To achieve that, people must be cooperating. This is the only way I think we can get them to do it. Setting up a committee for the sake of it is not what is happening.

Mr McGinty: We are two months into the financial year and you did not tell us where one cent was going to be spent. That was the purpose of our giving notice, so that you knew it was coming up.

Mr Day: I can tell you the information in general terms: It will be spent in hospitals including Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Fremantle Hospital, Swan District Hospital, Royal Perth Hospital and maybe Joondalup Health Campus

and maybe others. That is where it will be spent and in the first instance. It will be spent specifically on undertaking joint replacements for those who need them, and also for cataract removals.

Mr McGinty: Yet again, not one detail.

Mr Day: I have said that we are working through that. I have just given the names of the hospitals.

Mr McGinty: Have you allocated any money yet of that \$35m?

Mr Day: The funds are sitting there as soon as they can start using them.

Dr Hames: Sounds good to me.

Mr CARPENTER: I hear what the minister says. I am sure the Minister for Housing is tongue in cheek when he interjects. This did not occur yesterday. We did not suddenly have 17 000 people hanging around public hospitals, waiting to be treated.

Mr Day: It was only two weeks ago that we got an extra \$35m.

Mr CARPENTER: Surely somebody somewhere in the Health Department has done the work required to identify what needs to be done and where it needs to be done, and what amount of money must be expended on it. Surely that was the basis for the minister's approach to the Commonwealth for extra funding. Surely all this work has been done and it is only a matter of now saying, "We have \$35m from the Commonwealth. We recognise we should be putting in a lot more but for one reason or another, because we need to pay off state debt or something else, we are not putting in that amount of money. We have \$35m; we know where the money should be spent because we spent the past five years talking about it; let's do it now."

Mr Day: There are significant workplace implications, for example, in being able to increase the capacity. We cannot simply do that overnight by clicking our fingers. I am putting a great deal of pressure on making sure that happens. If you or the member for Fremantle would like a briefing on some of these issues involved, I am very happy to provide it.

Mr McGinty: How about giving us one on the financial aspects.

Mr CARPENTER: We have a scenario in real life where about 17 000 people are waiting to be treated in public hospitals and cannot get treated for one reason or another. This has been building up a head of steam for years. It has taken off in the past 12 months from 12 000 people to 17 000 people, an increase of more than 40 per cent, while it seems virtually nothing has been done. We have sought by these amendments for the minister to hold up to us a template of the activities that are going on in the state hospitals, the financial situation of all the hospitals and where it is expected that the money will be put - in precise detail - to address the problem we have known about for a long time. We have failed to be given that information today, and that is very disappointing.

Point of Order

Mr DAY: In my earlier comments I said that I might seek leave to incorporate some material into *Hansard*. I know I am out of order in seeking that at this stage, but I wonder whether that can be done.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the minister was on his feet, he did say that he was considering either tabling the information or seeking leave to have it incorporated in *Hansard*. I do not think he had finalised what he wanted to do; therefore, I did not react and declare the paper tabled. The minister seeks leave to incorporate a table of figures in *Hansard*. My observations are that it is within the normal guidelines.

[The material in appendix A was incorporated by leave of the House.]

[See page 684.]

The SPEAKER: Order! I just hope that we have not set a precedent by giving the minister a second call in a debate.

Debate Resumed

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (17)

Ms Anwyl
Mr Brown
Mr Carpenter
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop

Mr Grill
Mr Kobelke
Ms MacTiernan
Mr Marlborough

Mr McGinty
Ms McHale
Mr Riebeling
Mr Ripper

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

Noes (28)

Mr Ainsworth
Mr Baker
Mr Barnett
Mr Barron-Sullivan
Mr Bloffwitch
Mr Board
Mr Bradshaw

Dr Constable
Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames
Mrs Holmes
Mr Johnson
Mr Kierath

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

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

Pairs

Mr Graham
Mr McGowan

Mr Court
Mr Cowan

Question thus negatived.

Debate (on motion, as amended) Resumed

MR NICHOLLS (Mandurah) [3.32 pm]: In this Address-in-Reply speech I will concentrate first on the topical issue of law and order and then on the issue that appeared on the front page of *The West Australian* about teenage children who leave home and who are living with adults in a relationship - something that is causing a lot of parents and the members of our community some concern.

There is no doubt that law and order is the major issue within the community. There is also no doubt many people in the community can offer solutions. They believe, whether they be harsher penalties, stocks or corporal punishment, that the whole range of punishments has been canvassed. However, very little discussion has occurred on the reasons for high offending rates in our community and even less discussion has occurred about what we should do about them.

It seems to me that one of the areas causing great concern to many people is that the police have endless resources for policing on the roads to apprehend people doing a few kilometres over the speed limit; yet when somebody calls about a burglary he waits for several hours for the police to turn up. This is not a fault that lies at the feet of the average patrolman in the Police Service, who is trying to do his best. The job of the average police officer is probably the worst job in the State. They are required to put their lives on the line daily, as we saw when a police officer tragically lost his life recently and another was seriously injured.

As a community we seem to expect that of our police officers without any regard for the dangers they face. We are usually quick to criticise and condemn them should they step outside the guidelines of community expectation. However, when we talk about allocation of resources, we are talking about their management within the Police Service. Recently, I raised with the previous Minister for Police the notion that the messages we were sending to our community were that when drivers exceeded the speed limit by a couple of kilometres the police used every resource at their means to catch them.

If someone burgles homes, steals cars, attacks the elderly, snatches bags or defaces property the chances of his being caught are reasonably small. As a result, the general feeling in the community is that the aims of the Police Service are dominated by the need to raise revenue from traffic offences while there is general reluctance to focus on catching people who break into homes and steal cars. I stress that I do not intend to undermine the Police Service or attack its officers because this is not being pursued as a general attitude within the Police Service. It amounts to the messages and directions the police are receiving and the allocation of resources.

The number of Multanova cameras is to be doubled. Even though I do not like Multanovas, if we want to raise revenue from the traffic offences, we should be upfront with the community about that rather than mucking around putting speed cameras on straight areas of the freeway where people are less likely to have accidents. We keep telling people that Multanovas are about saving lives, when they are about raising revenue.

If we were serious about saving lives we would be putting Multanovas where people are killing or hurting themselves, which are the critical points on our roads around the State. In June, I think, *The West Australian* ran an article about the 20 places at which most accidents occur in this State and the most frequent 20 places at which Multanovas were placed. My recollection is that only one location corresponded with a Multanova and an accident. It does not take too much to work out that whoever is directing people to place Multanovas -

Mr Thomas: That is because the danger spots are the intersections.

Mr NICHOLLS: Speed is the killer and people are speeding through intersections. I drive up and down the Kwinana Freeway regularly, and Multanovas are often located at areas near traffic lights, because the speed limit changes from 100 kmh to 80 kmh. Many people do not slow down, so we collect some more revenue.

Mr Carpenter: Do something about it! You are in government.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is important that all members are able to raise their concerns that the Government is not communicating the real reasons for Multanovas. If it is about speeding, let us deal with the issue of speeding. If the Government wants to stop people from speeding, it should legislate to fit devices to motor vehicles that will stop people from exceeding 110 kmh. That would be absurd. If speeding is the biggest issue in this State that requires the allocation of police resources we should look at it. If it is the Government's decision to use Multanovas as a way of controlling motorists' behaviour, that is fine, and it should allocate the revenue raised to the police so that they have the resources to deal with issues which are of concern to the community - primarily, burglary, car theft, assault, bag snatching and vandalism.

Mr Carpenter interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is not a matter of stopping them, but of making sure that when somebody telephones the police station and says to the police - or wherever his call is diverted when he rings the police - "Someone is in my house and I think I am about to be hurt," or "Someone is on my property with the intent to burgle my property," that a policeman is there as soon as possible.

I could be mistaken and may have been misled by all of the information I have received about the response times. It may be that the people who have contacted me are exaggerating when they say that it has taken a number of hours, and it may have taken only half an hour for the police to respond. If I put myself in the position of a middle-aged lady who may be alone and hears somebody rattling around in the backyard, so she rings the police but then waits for 20 minutes or an hour for them to turn up, I agree that would be a horrific experience. However, if she drove her car between Mandurah and Rockingham there is a good chance she will find a traffic patrolman busily ensuring that she does not drive over the speed limit.

If we are serious about speed limits, we should review them. We can travel on the freeway at 100 kmh. I drive home from Parliament regularly at about 11.30 pm and it is not unusual to see more police officers per square kilometre between South Street and Thomas Street than there are cars on the road. Motorcycle officers and police cars travel up and down the road at 11.30 pm. Dual carriageways are probably safer than most country roads, where we allow people to drive at 110 kmh. However, police officers are travelling up and down the freeways to make sure motorists do not exceed 100 kmh and hurt themselves. In reality drivers could travel safely on freeways in excess of 120 kmh and even up to 130 kmh as long as the traffic conditions are okay - that is, it is not raining or peak hour - as safely as they could travel at 110 kmh on a country road with a strip of bitumen and gravel on the side of the road. If we were serious about speed we would not put police on roads to catch people when they can travel safely at a higher speed than that which has been nominated; we would look at the speeds at which people are travelling and ask whether it is safe to travel at those speeds and we should lift the limits. I cannot see why we could not lift the speed limit on freeways to 120 kmh, if not 130 kmh. It is a similar situation with the roads in the north and even in the east of our State. It is absurd to sit on a straight road at 110 kmh when it is perfectly safe to drive faster.

Recently, while travelling to Monkey Mia through your electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker, I was overwhelmed by the number of police officers on that road. It was as if we had a personal escort to ensure we did not exceed the speed limit. I would be interested to know, if those officers had not been allocated the duty of driving up and down the tarmac, how many of those officers could have been in the Deputy Speaker's electorate of Geraldton, or in other electorates on that strip, helping with the problems of vandalism, breaking and entering, and car theft. As the member for Eyre said, some of the roads are as good as landing strips. However, we continue with the obsession of catching people who drive motor vehicles a few kilometres over the limit, whereas someone who breaks into another's house has a good chance of getting away with it.

If we are serious about deaths and injuries on roads we should be targeting young people before they reach 17 years of age and teaching them how to drive properly. I know that efforts are being made in that direction. I know that the Road Safety Council is looking at driving simulators and fully accredited and professional driving lessons. However, at the moment, those facilities are not available to most students in our community. Most students, like my young daughter who recently obtained her licence, do not drive before they get into the car with the instructor. They have five or six lessons and as long as they are capable of driving around the block and can pass the written test they get a licence.

Mr Osborne: Does your daughter speed like you?

Mr NICHOLLS: No, she is a responsible driver. If we were dinkum about teaching people to drive on the roads and

about cutting the road toll we would invest in public education and awareness programs, we would not be concentrating on punitive measures to catch somebody who is going a few kilometres over the speed limit and we would review the speed limits in areas where it is obvious the traffic can travel at a faster rate than what is posted. That is simply a revenue raising exercise.

When the previous Minister for Transport wanted to raise the speed limit on the freeway, I can recall the concern that this would cause accidents. I travel on the freeway at 100 kmh, and maybe more on some occasions, and I have not seen any difference. The mind set in the Police Service or some other bureaucracy appears to be to keep the speed limits down and to generate revenue from that because that fits its agenda. The people of this State are fed up. I do not have people knocking on the door of my electorate office asking me to slow the traffic or to ensure that drivers adhere to the speed limit. I cannot remember the last time somebody contacted my office and wanted me to do something about the situation on the roads, where people are exceeding the speed limit. I cannot remember ever being contacted on an issue like that.

Mr Osborne: Road trauma costs us \$1b a year.

Mr NICHOLLS: How much do alcohol, tobacco, breast cancer, suicide, robberies, and home invasion cost the State? The reality is that we are here to govern the State for the people of this State. We are not listening to the people of this State when we allocate resources to police on the roads. We should be listening to the people and allocating resources to the priorities that people in our communities want us to tackle. It is not a case of simply wanting more police or of not enough resources or it simply cannot be done. It is a predetermined agenda of concentrating on roads because that is the easiest thing to do. The Police Commissioner might not like to hear my comments about our taking the easy option. The police stand up in media conferences and tell the community how they will hit us hard, and how they will belt us behind the ear if we dare be uncooperative, disrespectful drivers exceeding the speed limit. However, people can be disrespectful, totally unlawful members of the community and break into somebody's house and beat them up, and the chances of their being caught or of the police arriving before they leave is about zero. That is not because the officers do not want to be there but because too many resources are allocated to running up and down the roads trying to catch people speeding.

I have said enough to guarantee that I will not receive too many Christmas cards from senior police officers but it is the message they need to hear. They may feel in their hearts that this is the right thing to do and the new and former Ministers for Police may agree. Grant Dorrington as the person in charge of the Road Safety Council adamantly believes it is right - I have spoken to him. However, it is up to this Parliament and us as representatives of the community, to send the message to those people that while they think the roads are important, the people of Western Australia believe that issues such as burglary and car theft are more important. We should not stop policing the roads. I am not advocating that we do not see another policeman on the roads but that the priorities should be changed a bit. We should emphasise the priorities of burglary, car theft, attacks on the elderly and vandalism; the few odd things that seem to crop up every few hours in our community. I will leave my comments there because I am sure the Police Service will assess with interest my comments and reject them. Hopefully, some people will reflect on the allocation of resources on roads, and we may see a change whereby the emphasis will be applied to the areas in our community where the majority of the public wants it.

I now turn my attention to the issue of minors, of juveniles running away from home and living with adults. I refer to the article in yesterday's *The West Australian*. To summarise, according to *The West Australian* a 14 year old girl left home, refused to return and, if one believes the reports in *The West Australian*, was placed with, or allowed to stay with, a person who was an approved carer. I am not sure whether that is correct; I have not been able to check the facts. Apparently, she was allowed to live with an approved carer and was able to maintain a relationship with a 21-year-old man. It is worrying that we, as a community, would condone a situation in which a 14-year-old was allowed to leave her home and be sanctioned to live with somebody else who then allowed her to maintain a relationship with an adult.

I refer to that case because it is not the first time such an issue has been brought to my attention. People have raised the issue with me in my electorate. Unfortunately, the normal response has been that there is nothing the police or Family and Children's Services can do; nobody can do anything. I understand the rights bestowed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child on children in Western Australia and Australia. I understand the limitations of powers to force a person to do things they do not wish to do but there are clear laws about adults who maintain sexual relationships with minors under the age of 16 years. Yet, from what I gather - again this on the information provided to me in a general sense - the police and Family and Children's Services believe there is nothing they can do. I doubt that because I understand that under the Child Welfare Act, Family and Children's Services has clear powers to take a child into care and protection if it believes that child is in moral, physical or mental danger. The police also have those powers. It is quite clear in the Criminal Code. Section 321A "Child under 16: Sexual relationship with" states -

- (1) For the purposes of this section a person has a sexual relationship with a child under the age of 16 years if that person, on 3 or more occasions each of which is on a different day, does an act in relation to the child which would constitute a prescribed offence.

It is not a case, as I understood it previously, of the police having to literally catch the two people procreating, or having sexual intercourse, to prove that an offence has occurred. An offence has been committed if there is a sexual relationship between an adult and a child under 16 years. Most people would know it is an offence for an adult to have sexual intercourse with, or carnal knowledge of, a person under the age of 16 years. When a person is given the responsibility by Family and Children's Services to care for a child deemed to be unable to return to her family - who could have looked after her and provided guidance and protection - and then allows that young person under the age of 16 years to have a sexual relationship - or have a relationship that is alleged to be sexual - with a 21-year-old person, that is aiding and abetting an offence and that person should also be held accountable.

I am not sure whether the member for Eyre can guide me in this matter or whether my logic would stand up legally but it seems that this is the way the law works. If a person is given the responsibility of caring for a child and they allow another adult to commit an offence on that child, then they are equally guilty of the offence. If that is the case, and given what I read in *The West Australian* it appears that the admission has been clearly made, I want to know why stronger measures and actions have not been taken, first, to remove the child from that situation and, second, to press charges against those two people. Is it all too hard? Are we, as a society, prepared to condone an adult who has a relationship with a child - especially a child under the protection of a government department - being given immunity simply because it is all too hard?

The solution is to use the existing laws and take action against the people who are offending, those adults who are having sexual relationships with girls or boys under the age of 16 years. If the current laws do not allow prosecutions because of the difficulty of getting a conviction, then we need to accelerate our legislative program. Instead of dealing with people who carry pens in their pockets and want to draw on buildings - which I agree is a real problem - as a Parliament we should be dealing with this greater problem and changing the law to ensure that adults who prey on children are charged. I do not regard the situation of a 21-year-old man having a relationship with a 14-year-old girl as being a case of mutual consent.

In most cases, a 14-year-old girl is not mature enough to make such a decision. However, it is even worse if that girl is placed under the direction of a department charged with protecting her and the officers concerned wash their hands of the case because it is all too hard, until the media exposes it and then there is action.

As I said, parents in my electorate contact me and say there is nothing they can do. They go to the police and Family and Children's Services, who tell them that there is nothing they can do. Who is protecting these children from their own decisions and from the adults who appear to be exploiting them?

It is a difficult situation, I agree. However, as a community, if we are genuine about wanting to protect children and stopping child maltreatment and exploitation, instead of mouthing the rhetoric and pretending that this is all about the rights of children, we should do something now to modify the law to ensure that the adults or carers who allow this to happen and condone it are prosecuted, or we should change the structure of the care regime for these children. It is not acceptable simply to turn our faces away and to say that it is all too hard, but that is the way it is.

In many cases these young people have been assisted in leaving home by government departments or by agencies funded by the Government. That is not wrong; there are cases in which young people need that support. However, I do not believe that that extends to the point at which we condone or facilitate the exploitation of those young people by adults who, as I read it, are breaking the law but who seem to have total absolution from any accountability or responsibility for their actions. If this involved an allegation about a school teacher interfering with a 14-year-old student, we as a community would want that teacher tarred and feathered. However, because this child is in the community and in a relationship with an adult, we turn away and pretend nothing has happened. It is not good enough.

DR TURNBULL (Collie) [4.04 pm]: I will make some remarks relating to my electorate in this Address-in-Reply debate. First, I will raise the issue of the rate equivalents of Western Power utilities in the Shire of Collie. This has been a very contentious issue in the shire since SECWA was corporatised and began operating as Western Power. As a corporatised body, Western Power must pay rate and tax equivalents. In 1997, it paid equivalents of \$49.3m for income tax, \$9.1m for sales tax and \$700 000 for rates. In Western Australia, all those payments go to the Treasury rather than to the bodies that would levy those taxes if Western Power were a private company.

Income tax is levied by the Federal Government and that money goes to the Treasury. There is an arrangement between Treasury and the Federal Government in relation to the Council of Australian Governments agreement and the implementation of the national competition policy. That is how Western Power became a corporatised body.

It is also logical that the sales tax revenue go to Treasury. That is reasonable because it must reimburse Western Power for its community service obligations. In 1997 that amounted to \$30.6m. However, there is no logical reason for a Western Power facility's rate equivalents to go to the Treasury rather than to the local government authority.

In reply to questions from the Shire of Collie and from me as the local member, the Minister for Energy explained that power generated at Muja and the new Collie power station will be for the benefit of all Western Australians, so the rate equivalent should go to Treasury. That is not logical, because the rates struck by a local government body are a contribution towards the cost of the services used by the company and for utilities that the shire has provided; for example, the roads. Vehicles used by employees and trucks and so on servicing the power generation use these roads. If it were logical that the electricity generated by these companies is for the use of all Western Australians and the rates should go to a central body such as the Treasury, any private manufacturing company could use that same argument. It is correct and a basic principle that the rates paid by a corporation or a company which manufactures a product to be distributed throughout Western Australia should be paid to the local authority.

The President of the Shire of Collie has been a long-term campaigner for this transfer of rates to the shire rather than to the Treasury. She again addressed this issue in the *Collie Mail* of Thursday, 13 August. She spoke strongly, particularly in relation to Collie, and pointed out that most of the major industrial activities being conducted in and around Collie are covered by state agreement Acts. As a consequence of this their rates are levied on the unimproved value.

The shire is also in a timber and water production area and 80 per cent of the region is covered by water catchment, forest and mining leases and is therefore unrateable. The major industrial companies pay rates only on the unimproved value of their properties and the Muja power station and the new Collie power station will pay their rate equivalents to the Treasury. That leaves a very small rate base to service the 9 000 people living in Collie.

That low rate base is somewhat balanced by government grants. However, if the rate equivalents paid by the Muja power station and in future by the Collie power station came to the shire, that would be regarded as direct rates and the Grants Commission allocations would be balanced in another way.

The principle that the rate equivalent should go to the local government is very important. The National Party conference in Hyden recently accepted a motion that corporatised government bodies should pay the rates to the local government rather than paying the rate equivalent to Treasury.

I move now to another issue facing electors in my electorate; that is, the review of the statutory marketing legislation for milk and potatoes. These reviews have been instituted in order to conform to the requirements of national competition policy. Again, we are talking about national competition policy. Just as rate equivalents exist in relation to the national competition policy and corporatisation of the power generation facilities, likewise we are having reviews of the statutory marketing legislation as a requirement of the Council of Australian Governments agreements on the national competition policy.

The issue I focus on today is the proof of "the public benefit". The national competition policy legislation recognises that a certain degree of anti-competitive legislation can exist for the public benefit, but it is difficult to prove "the public benefit". I feel, as do the dairy farmers and potato marketers, that "the public benefit" should be interpreted widely and considered from the view of consumers, producers and the community embraced by those producers.

One can see the public benefit to the consumers of milk and potatoes. Consumers receive a high quality product of a variety of potatoes which are available all year round at a stable and reasonable price. The ability to produce potatoes fluctuates. In certain seasons masses of them can be produced, and in other seasons it is difficult. Therefore, prices and volumes can fluctuate widely. It is difficult to grow potatoes in winter in this State and in Victoria. The price of potatoes would go up quite markedly in winter in that orderly marketing.

Through the legislation, the orderly marketing system ensures that the consumer gets a good product in reasonable volumes and at a reasonable price all year round. It is particularly important for milk; and fresh milk for consumers is still a very high priority. Ultra high temperature milk has only a 15 per cent share of the market. When consumer preference testing is analysed on UHT milk, most consumers would rather pay a few cents more to have fresh milk than UHT milk. Therefore, these two pieces of legislation satisfy the public interests of consumers.

The legislation also satisfies the requirements of the producers. Legislation limits their number; however, the producers that are in the market are able to have a reasonable standard of income to maintain a reasonable living standard so that it flows back into the community. Local, regional and country communities also benefit. The benefits to the communities are keeping families in the community; small businesses, which farmers are, can afford to hire contractors to produce goods needed in their business; and to maintain the viability of the local country community.

Some may ask what will happen if the artificial levels of payment to farmers and producers are removed under the national competition policy. It is said that only a few farmers will be left, their operations will become bigger and the price per unit of milk will reduce and, therefore, the price of the product will reduce. That, Mr Deputy Speaker, as you know very well, is poppycock. You would most likely call it something worse than that, because a price reduction just does not happen.

The classic example of this was the enormous push for the deregulation of the egg market in New South Wales. Part of that push was by a number of egg producers who thought they could make more money out of their eggs if they were not constrained by restrictive anti-competitive policy legislation. They forced the abandonment of the orderly marketing system for eggs in New South Wales. What happened? The price returned to the egg producers reduced dramatically and the price to the consumers increased dramatically. The very people who forced the destruction of the legislation of orderly marketing for eggs in New South Wales were the people who eventually went under because, although their production increased, their return per unit reduced. Where was the benefit? The benefit was to the middle man - the wholesalers and retailers. We know those who are the major wholesalers and retailers. The bulk of the wholesale and retail activity in our country in primary industry products sold to housewives and families in Australia on the domestic market is through the major supermarket chains.

Therefore, on the issue of the public benefit for milk and potatoes, we must consider the fact that if the orderly marketing system were disbanded in the interests of adhering to the requirements of the national competition policy, the price to the housewife and the family most likely would increase when it is difficult to produce milk in summer and potatoes in winter. The price to the producers would reduce and the people to benefit would be the processors, wholesalers and retailers. It most likely would be the retailers who would make the extra money in the case of potatoes.

I feel very strongly that the Minister for Primary Industry and the Premier - as the ministers principally responsible for implementing the requirements of the COAG agreement and the National Competition Council - must consider presenting a very strong case for a public benefit in the retention of legislation which ensures an orderly marketing system for milk and potatoes in our State. Some people say that many producers do not agree with that. There are renegade producers who want to trade in a free market, particularly among potato growers. There have been cases of producers giving away potatoes to highlight what they feel are inequities in this system. I assure the Parliament that only a small percentage of people want to destroy the orderly marketing system for potatoes and the dairy industry.

A submission was presented to the review into the dairy industry by a group organised by Tony Ferraro. Anyone in that group who contributed to the production of that submission, which focused on public benefits, had to make a financial contribution towards the cost of the submission. In Western Australia 80 per cent of the dairy farmers made a contribution to that submission. That is a fairly good indication. Almost all members in the dairy industry in Western Australia belong to the Farmers Federation. A high proportion belong to the Western Australian Farmers Federation. This is an indication of how strongly committed these farmers are to maintaining the benefits they derive from the operation of that legislation. They admit there are benefits for them, but their full argument is that when they have a reasonable income and can produce a premium product, the consumers are happy, the farmers have a reasonable standard of living and the community as a whole benefits.

I make a strong plea to the Premier and the Minister for Primary Industry that consideration be given in this review to the question of public benefit. If some of the submissions to the inquiry do not place as much emphasis on the public benefit as they could, the minister and the Premier must recognise how those submissions are produced. They are produced by local farmers using their own resources, and they do not have as many resources as a bureaucracy or some other groups might have. If there is a need for the Primary Industry portfolio or the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet to assist in developing this case for public benefit, I call on them to do so. How do a small group of people, such as dairy farmers or potato growers, prepare a case which measures all the benefits to be derived from their activities and their reasonably vibrant farming pursuits? The benefits support the local communities. That is the very important issue that must be understood.

I have represented the major dairying areas for only two years, but when I meet the dairy farmers and attend their meetings I am impressed by the number of young men and women present. At the farms young men and women are working in association with their families. In other farming pursuits in my area, such as orcharding, horticulture, wheat, cereals, wool and cattle, not many young people are involved. The important point I want to get through to the Parliament, and I would like the Premier and the minister to focus on this, is that in the dairy industry young people are having some success and hope to continue in that industry. Western Australia absolutely must have young people working in its primary industries. It is a tragedy to see the lack of young people in many country towns. The reason for that lack is that the margins in the primary industries are so small, that they cannot support two generations of one family at the same time. The dairy industry is different; it is vibrant. Women are operating in that industry,

as well as men, and they are all doing well. They are earning an adequate income to support their families and the next generation. That is the most important public benefit component that must be focused upon.

Everyone in my area agrees that change must happen. There are different ways of marketing and entering into relationships with milk processors. Cooperative arrangements between the people who supply the various milk processors are very healthy. In Western Australia, fortunately, there are two major milk processors and other smaller processors. The manufactured milk industry, which is not legislated for and is not in an orderly marketing system, is growing slowly and developing magnificent milk products, such as yoghurts, flavoured milks, ice creams and cheeses. That is developing steadily and everybody in the industry recognises that it must continue.

I was very pleased with the response from the Minister for Primary Industry to my question last week about the timetable for the national competition policy review. At the last meeting of the Agriculture ministers at a state and federal level they agreed to seek an extension of three years from the Federal Government. This would extend to five years the time by which certain types of policies must be addressed. Of course, the dairy producers in Western Australia are aware that the Victorian dairy industry has the biggest influence on what happens in Australia. If the Victorian industry decides to deregulate at any time, it will have massive repercussions in Western Australia. It is anticipated that when the national marketing assistance scheme ceases on 1 July 2000, Victoria may deregulate its industry.

Dairy farmers in Western Australia are a small group and have a very high degree of cohesion. All of them are very aware of changes that must happen in their industry. I have great faith and confidence in their leaders. From the discussions I have with them and the meetings I attend, I am sure the leaders will be able to sort out a way to go forward into the future and to take hold of the challenges of new markets. They do not need government-directed action at this time which will remove the legislation which helps to support the orderly marketing system. I feel that I have said enough for today. I commend the two major leaders of the major group of dairy farmers, Ray Blackburn and Danny Harris, and other forward thinkers such as Neville Haddon at Busselton, who are researching new ways to market milk in Western Australia. They are focusing on a benefit for the consumer and for the producer. Ultimately I trust that the dairy industry in Western Australia will remain vibrant and all those young people whom I see on the farms and at the meetings who are trying to make their future in dairying will have their confidence rewarded. They will be able to go forward and become very strong contributors to primary industry and the economy of Western Australia.

MR THOMAS (Cockburn) [4.32 pm]: I wish to use the opportunity of the Address-in-Reply debate to make some observations about the Energy portfolio, for which I have responsibility in the Opposition. I am very pleased that the Minister for Energy is in the Chamber to listen to my speech and that he is so attentive in following my every word, because I have no doubt that he will learn a lot from the experience.

I have been saddened by the manner in which the debate has gone this afternoon because the Opposition had planned to move an amendment, on which my colleague the member for Eyre was very eager to speak, related to an energy matter affecting his electorate - in fact the whole State. We must raise that matter when the Parliament resumes after the break. The member for Collie was so fast in getting to her feet that she beat the member for Eyre and because he must catch a plane, he has missed out on his opportunity to speak. The member for Collie's gain is the member for Eyre's loss but we shall make up for it on another occasion.

The matter that he wished to raise, and about which I will move an amendment and shall now briefly allude to, is the question of the joint venture announced yesterday between Australia Gas and Light Co and Western Power to build what is becoming known as the mid west gas pipeline. The Minister for Energy made a short ministerial statement in which he stated that a joint venture had been formed between Western Power and AGL. AGL of course has one of the longest and best established pipelines in Australia. It is about to construct a line to Mt Magnet which later will be extended to Cue and Meekatharra, to enable gas to be reticulated through the mid west region. That is fantastic and we are very pleased to know that will occur.

However, a number of matters are curious about this, because it turns out that the minister's statement indicated that the Government will subsidise Western Power by \$1.4m a year, which is the interest rate on \$20m, for up to 20 years for this project. We are somewhat concerned to have Parliament exercise its rights to scrutinise the Executive and in particular to scrutinise the operations of Western Power. We want to look very closely at this project. We think it may be necessary to use the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee to do that. Although we would normally like to be able to ask the minister questions in the House and get answers to those questions and use that as the basis to look at this arrangement, we are not confident that we shall get answers if we ask questions. One of the reasons that we feel that we might not get answers relates to an answer given by the minister to a question asked by the member for Nollamara some time ago. The member for Nollamara put some questions on notice to the minister on 19 May about joint ventures that Western Power has entered into. It is very interesting and very instructive to look at the degree of accountability which this minister expects of the utilities which fall within the

ambit of his portfolio and to look at the answer given to this question. Unfortunately the Parliament was prorogued before the minister was able to provide an answer to the Parliament, but he was good enough to answer the question in a letter to the member on 6 August. The question has not been answered in a parliamentary sense and does not appear as part of the public record in *Hansard* because it was not answered as it properly should be. I think it is instructive for the House and anyone who wants to follow these proceedings to know the cavalier way in which the minister treats the Parliament and how he allows Western Power to treat the Parliament. As a result of his attitude there is a substantial lack of accountability. My colleague asked -

- (1) How many joint ventures or alliances have been entered into by Western Power with companies or other non-government entities?

That is a reasonable question to ask of a minister. He went on to ask -

- (2) In the case of each such joint venture or alliance -
 - (a) who are the private companies or interests involved;
 - (b) what is the purpose of the joint venture or alliance;
 - (c) what was the date at which the joint venture or alliance was entered into by Western Power;
 - (d) why was the particular partner or partners chosen in each joint venture or alliance;
 - (e) what was the method of advertising or calling for expressions of interest prior to selecting the particular company or organisation as the most appropriate with whom to set up a joint venture or alliance;
 - (f) what was the date of any such advertising or calls for expressions of interest; and
 - (g) what is the structure of the joint venture or alliance arrangement including the number of Directors and the number appointed by Western Power?

That is a fairly straightforward set of questions. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you will be shocked as I was when I read the minister's answer to that straightforward and reasonable question asked of him by a member of this House. The answer was -

Western Power is involved in many joint ventures and alliances with private companies and non-government entities. Providing the details to answer this question would be a very lengthy and time consuming process.

As a Government Trading Enterprise, Western Power is required to act in a commercially prudent manner, as any commercial business would. Participating in joint venture arrangements forms part of commercial business dealings.

That is a very cavalier way to treat Parliament. The member asked how many joint ventures or alliances had been entered into by Western Power, and the answer was many. That is tantamount to refusing to answer the question. We must recognise that although Western Power is a government trading enterprise, and it acts commercially and, as the minister said, autonomously, it is created by an Act of Parliament for which the minister has responsibility. Ultimately, the State is exposed by the commercial decisions it makes. If it loses money, ultimately the State pays as it stands behind Western Power. Therefore, we have a legitimate interest in those commercial activities. To answer the question "How many joint ventures has Western Power entered into?" with "many", is a cavalier way to treat Parliament.

The latest joint venture which the minister has been good enough to tell us about is with AGL Pipelines (WA) Pty Ltd to build a gas pipeline in the mid west. We were told in a short ministerial statement that a pipeline will be built in a 50:50 joint venture. This will require a subsidy from Western Power of \$1.4m a year for possibly 20 years. The State is significantly exposed. It is certainly a cost of \$14m over 10 years, and potentially \$28m. Therefore, we are entitled to ask questions about the arrangement and satisfy ourselves that it is commercially prudent. Ultimately, I would have liked to move an amendment to have the matter investigated by the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee if we were unable to obtain answers from the minister in the normal way. Is the minister able to answer some questions on the matter? How firm is the commitment to extend the pipeline from Cue to Meekatharra? We were told in the short ministerial statement, which does not allow opposition reply, that the line will be extended from Mt Magnet to Cue and Meekatharra at stage two. Under the joint venture arrangement between AGL and Western Power, how firm is the commitment to extend the pipeline to Cue and Meekatharra?

Mr Barnett: Government support for the project is on the basis of the pipeline being extended, but it may be a mix

of pipeline and transmission line. That is the agreement. It will be a two-stage project and contracts are currently being let and tenders are going out for stage one. I expect stage two to follow straight on.

Mr THOMAS: When will that happen?

Mr Barnett: We have not set a date. In principle, it will follow when stage one is finished.

Mr THOMAS: Will it build a pipeline straight away to Meekatharra -

Mr Barnett: Within a year or so, yes.

Mr THOMAS: Is that in the contractual arrangement?

Mr Barnett: I did not say that. We do not have a contractual arrangement with the existing one. We have made funding available to Western Power on the basis of the pipeline's extension to those townships.

Mr THOMAS: What will be the cost of the extension to Cue and Meekatharra?

Mr Barnett: I do not have it with me. It can be apportioned. It is a smaller pipe and less distance.

Mr THOMAS: Will the Government pay the subsidy straight away prior to the pipeline extension?

Mr Barnett: We will pay it when Western Power raises the finance.

Mr THOMAS: Presumably, a substantial portion of Western Power's market for the project will be in Cue and Meekatharra. How can the subsidy be justified prior to the pipeline reaching those towns?

Mr Barnett: It will go to Mt Magnet first.

Mr THOMAS: Will the Government pay a subsidy while it is only at Mt Magnet?

Mr Barnett: Stage one is the main part of the project; that is, to get gas into Mt Magnet.

Mr THOMAS: Is that the main part of the project for Western Power or AGL?

Mr Barnett: It is the main part of the combined project. The first leg is the most expensive part.

Mr THOMAS: I thank the minister for answering the questions. On what basis will access to the pipeline be shared by the joint venture partners?

Mr Barnett: It is a 50:50 joint venture between the two parties. They will be the foundation operators and users of the pipeline. Access to third parties will be under the national access code.

Mr THOMAS: Will they each have 50 per cent of capacity, or will the joint venture have the entire capacity?

Mr Barnett: At the moment, they are the only users and there is spare capacity in the pipe.

Mr THOMAS: I appreciate the minister's answering of the questions. It is a shame that my colleague the member for Eyre is not here as he too has a substantial interest in this project. His interest relates to the fact that as a result of the way the pricing tariff arrangement on the goldfields pipeline is structured, the market has been distorted. Gas has been taken from the Dampier-Bunbury pipeline out to the project near Mt Magnet. However, that project is located much closer to the goldfields pipeline than the Dampier-Bunbury pipeline.

Mr Barnett: So what?

Mr THOMAS: One would normally expect that gas would be taken from the goldfields pipeline before it was taken from the Dampier-Bunbury pipeline because of the shorter route. The arrangement the Government has allowed with the goldfields pipeline has meant that the market is distorted. That is unfortunate. We have been trying to get out of such distorted markets which have hung over the energy sector in this State for many years. The silly pricing that was based on whether a project was considered to be a coal or oil substitute, distorted the market in a way that was economically inefficient for the State.

Mr Barnett: That is sheer nonsense: There was no distortion. There were three reasons for it. One is the different transmission costs. One of the principal reasons for that is that one is a major trunk line carrying up to 500 terajoules a day, and the other has a capacity of 80TJ. I know I would hook into the main trunk line, and that is the commercial decision.

Mr THOMAS: The proponents of the goldfields gas pipeline are able to charge prices way beyond what they should charge. The Government boasts that it is producing cheap energy for the goldfields, but this is shown to be false as gas in the eastern goldfields is among the most expensive in the world. People selling gas from the pipeline into the

eastern goldfields can charge this price as a substitute for diesel. It is not hard to provide a product which is cheaper than diesel, which is an expensive fuel. The charge for gas is a little lower than that charged for diesel, and this makes it attractive. However, it is nowhere near as low as it should be. It is similar to the situation of earlier times when, in order to initiate the domestic phase of the North West Shelf, arrangements were entered into by which a project considered to be an oil substitute could charge a higher amount than one considered to be a coal substitute. However, they were selling the same product, had the same transmission costs and, in many cases, were at the same location. That was very much a distorted market and one which bedevilled the State for a number of years. I think everyone is pleased that those days are behind us. However, for as long as we have a distorted pricing arrangement for the goldfields pipeline, we will continue to have a distorted market and one which is not for the good of the State. We will debate that matter in the weeks to come when we debate the legislation for -

Mr Barnett: Do you support the mid west pipeline?

Mr THOMAS: Of course I do.

Mr Barnett: Do you support the Government's support of the pipeline?

Mr THOMAS: I want to know a lot more about it.

Mr Barnett: There is no more to tell you. It is all in my ministerial statement.

Mr THOMAS: That demonstrates the cavalier attitude that this minister takes to the Parliament. This minister will potentially give away \$28m, and his total rationale for that is found on two A4 sheets of paper. I am sure the minister would not invest that amount of his own money without being given a lot more detail. We will demand of the Government that it provide the basis for that expenditure. To answer the minister's question, I welcome the extension of gas to the mid west, and to wherever else it is possible to send it.

Mr Barnett: The loan that Western Power will take is \$20m. That is what we support. Even under the worst possible scenario that we can imagine - and it is impossible for this to happen - the State will contribute \$20m. We will not ever contribute \$28m over 20 years; we will simply take over the loan. I guess that within five years at the outside, and more likely within two years, we will be relieved of that obligation.

Mr THOMAS: I hope the minister is right.

Mr Barnett: One theory is that we will never have to pay it.

Mr THOMAS: I want to satisfy myself that that will be prudent for the State; and in order to do that, the minister will need to provide a bit more detail than he has so far.

Mr Barnett: There is nothing more to provide. Ask a question, and I will answer it to the best of my knowledge, which is all the knowledge that I have about this matter.

Mr THOMAS: It worries me sometimes that the minister's knowledge is not all that it should be.

Mr Barnett: Let us play a game: Ask me a question, and see whether I can answer it.

Mr THOMAS: I will ask a question that my colleague the member for Nollamara asked the minister a few weeks ago and will see whether he can answer it; and if the minister cannot answer it now, how about taking it on notice to see whether he can answer it? How many joint ventures or alliances have been entered into by Western Power with companies or other non-government entities?

Mr Barnett: Are you serious? I thought we were talking about the mid west pipeline.

Mr THOMAS: The minister said that if I asked him a question, he would answer it.

Mr Barnett: I do not know how many -

Mr THOMAS: Will the Minister find out?

Mr Barnett: I imagine it was dozens, all over the place. Western power is probably the second largest organisation in this State after Wesfarmers. It is a very large and sophisticated commercial undertaking.

Mr THOMAS: I know that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Barron-Sullivan) Order! I know that the minister has indicated that he is happy to answer questions from the member for Cockburn, but I remind the member that this is not a question and answer forum at this stage.

Mr THOMAS: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker; I am aware of that. When I alluded earlier to the fact that this

question from my colleague had not been answered, the minister said that Western Power is involved in many joint ventures.

Mr Barnett: Yes - all over the place.

Mr THOMAS: That is not answering the question at all. That is denying the Parliament access to information to which it is entitled. However, that is the minister's usual form, so we should not be surprised.

I will leave the question of accountability and Western Power for the moment and make a suggestion to which I hope the minister will respond positively by being prepared to persuade Western Power to take it up. I refer to the installation of safety control switches in domestic homes in Western Australia. A laudable campaign has been run of late by the Office of Energy to encourage people to install those safety control switches. Those switches are a form of circuit breaker, among other things, and can reduce the likelihood of a fatality from an electrical accident by 80 or 90 per cent.

It has been compulsory since 1992 to install those switches in new homes. However, the figures that I have been given from the Office of Energy suggest that 500 000 homes in Western Australia do not have safety control switches installed, despite the fact that the Office of Energy engages in considerable advertising to encourage people to install those switches. The Office of Energy has informed me that it costs between \$150 and \$200 to install such a device in a home. It is often the case that when people see advertising that suggests that they should install a safety device, being human they do not want to spend the money until it is perhaps too late - an accident has occurred, or something else has occurred to draw their attention to the fact that they are exposed to the danger of electrocution.

I suggest that the installation of these devices be compulsory, because on average four people die per year in Perth as a result of electrical accidents, which are substantially preventable by the installation of these safety control devices.

Mr Barnett: The campaign that we launched two months ago was very successful, in which the State Government offered to contribute \$50 for each of the first 1 000 people who installed those devices. That offer was taken up within three or four weeks.

Mr THOMAS: I supported that campaign. However, I want the minister to go one step further and introduce a scheme where people can have those devices installed and pay for them on their Western Power accounts over a two year period. I have calculated that that will cost people about \$1.60 per week over two years. I suspect that members of the public would have a greater propensity to install those devices if it could be done as painlessly as that.

This matter was first drawn to my attention by a person who came into my office and said that he wanted to install one of these devices but did not have the necessary \$150 or \$200, and he resented the fact that Western Power was spending millions of dollars on corporate self aggrandisement and on advertising campaigns when that money could be better spent on subsidising the installation of safety control devices. I said that I agreed, and I do. It would cost the Government only \$50 000 to subsidise by \$50 the first 1 000 people who installed such devices. That is tokenism, and is a joke, because while it will be good for those people, what about the 500 000 homes in Perth where those switches are not installed and children, and adults, are in danger of being electrocuted? An amount of \$50 000 is just a fraction of the \$1.4m that the Government spends on advertising and on corporate self aggrandisement. It is just tokenism.

Will the minister consider a scheme to allow people to install these devices with Western Power's assistance? They could pay for them in their electricity accounts over a period of perhaps two years. Even the relatively poor might be able to make payments of \$1.60 over that period, and that payment could include interest. If such a scheme were available, the number of people prepared to install these devices would be much greater. We are spending a lot of money on the infill sewerage program because it seemed to be desirable for the future of the city, for the environment and for our quality of life. Given that the technology for these services is available off the shelf, no home in Western Australia should be without such a device. I believe that the WorkSafe regulations require them to be installed in places of employment. Is the minister prepared to consider such a proposal?

Mr Barnett: I will consider any idea.

Mr THOMAS: I am pleased about that and I hope the minister will take it up. Four electrocution deaths a year is too many. Whatever can be done, should be done.

Amendment to Motion, as Amended

Mr THOMAS: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion, as amended -

but the House regrets to inform Your Excellency that the Government has determined to continue with the highly questionable deproclamation of section 61A of the Real Estate and Business Agents Act and has caved in to the pressure of the real estate industry to preserve letting fees against the wishes of both tenant and landlord advocacy groups and against the advice of its own consultants.

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [5.02 pm]: I second the amendment. We have an extraordinary situation with letting fees and the Government's shenanigans in this area. It is unfortunately typical of the way in which during its five and a half years in office this Government has dealt with issues concerning the real estate industry.

I will take members through this slowly because some might not be aware of the issues. First, a tenant letting fee is an amount that can be charged under sections 27 and 86 of the residential tenancies legislation. It allows a real estate agent to charge a tenant a fee of up to one week's rent. That fee is then deducted from the fees paid by the owner of the property to the real estate agent. This practice has been in place in Western Australia for many years, and only in Western Australia - no other State permits the charging of such fees in respect of residential tenants. I understand that they are not levied in the commercial market.

One of the major problems with these letting fees is that they create an ambiguity about for whom the agent is acting. Real estate agents are employed as property managers by the landlord. However, the fee is not paid by the tenant to the landlord and then to the real estate agent: It is paid directly to the real estate agent by the tenant. It sets up a very real conflict of interest or a divided loyalty. On the one hand, the real estate agent is engaged by the landlord to look after and advance his or her interests. However, at the same time, we have an arrangement whereby the tenant is paying the agent for his or her services.

Grave concerns have been raised about this fee for some time and submissions have been made to the Government. On 7 December 1995, the Parliament passed the Real Estate Legislation Amendment Bill, which prohibited real estate agents charging a letting fee. After a great deal of industry consultation, it was decided to abolish the letting fee. That legislation was proclaimed to take effect on 1 January 1997. Surprisingly, on 23 August 1996, in a secret move, the provision was deproclaimed. Legislation which had been passed by both Houses of Parliament and which had been proclaimed and had the force of law was suddenly deproclaimed by the Government without any consultation with the major stakeholders in the area. Of course, they are the landlords and the tenants.

Both the landlords and tenants are united in their view that we should not have these letting fees. However, the Government has made this highly controversial decision and it is of grave concern. To what extent is the executive arm of Government now free to deproclaim any piece of legislation validly passed in this place? The Government might argue that the legislation had not come into effect, therefore it could deproclaim it. However, eminent legal opinions have suggested that, in principle, nothing in the fact that the legislation had not come into effect makes it any different from any other piece of legislation. Arguably it is unconstitutional for the executive arm of Government to determine that because it is no longer interested in a piece of legislation or no longer supports it, but it knows that it would not be successful in having it passed by the two Houses of Parliament, it will simply deproclaim it. The Government has never given a satisfactory account of itself in this regard. In fact, this legislation is unconstitutional and should be challenged. Indeed, it would be challenged by the tenant group if it had the resources to take the appropriate case to the Supreme Court.

The minister at the time, Hon Cheryl Edwardes, sought to hose down the understandable flack generated by this highly unorthodox proclamation. She announced that the Government would not consult the two groups normally genuinely interested in this area - that is, the landlords and tenants - but would get the economics department of Murdoch University to do an independent economic impact assessment. That assessment was duly completed, but it was not made generally available to the public. The first we heard about completion was when the Minister for Lands produced a letter he wrote to the various interest groups dated 3 August 1998. That was fairly prompt for the minister; the response came only 10 months after the report had been published. That must be something of a speed record for him. Having contemplated the report, the minister advised the various interest groups that he had decided not to reproclaim the legislation but, rather, would let the deproclamation stand. He undertook to introduce legislation to repeal the deproclaimed legislation. In other words, he came out in favour of retaining letting fees. In his letter, the minister refers to the report which suggested -

... disadvantaged tenants might experience improvement in the affordability of rental housing and there may be slight benefits to real estate agents. However, the report did not find significant benefits to market participants, -

Whoever they are. The minister goes on -

should tenant letting fees be abolished. Since there is a lack of consensus surrounding the issues, I am reluctant to abolish tenant letting fees. I am also advised that in practice, if abolition was to proceed, there are likely to be administrative impacts on the real estate industry for no real gain.

He goes on to say -

I am aware my decision to repeal the legislation will not please everybody, -

That is an understatement. He goes on -

but I am sure that, on balance, it will produce the best outcome for all market participants.

What a curious finding.

I read some of the extracts from the independent economic impact assessment report. At page XV it said -

More particularly, the major findings with regard to the proposed change to prohibit agents from charging tenants letting fees are as follows.

Consideration of the fee-for-service issue and of the nature of the services supplied by agencies support the view that letting fees should be charged only to property owners, leaving the market to allocate a portion of these costs to tenants via market rents and in accordance with the dictates of supply and demand.

The financial impact of the change will be largely neutral, except in that agents gain and owners lose from small increases in management fees and some low income tenants gain in terms of lower total rental outlays.

Both efficiency and equity in the market will be improved due to:

improved access to private rental accommodation, especially for low income tenants;

greater equity due to the improvement in private rental affordability for some low income tenants;

removal of an artificial impediment to tenant mobility.

That is a clear statement that tenants, particularly low income tenants, will benefit. It suggested also that in some instances real estate agents may be financially advantaged. The report indicates there may be some loss to property owners. However, when consulted, property owners are right behind the abolition of these fees.

Property owners have written to the Minister for Fair Trading. The most representative group, the Landlords Advisory Service, has written to the minister and made it clear that it wants the fees abolished because it does not want the conflict of interest that it perceives exists with the agent receiving a fee from the tenant and the landlord. The Landlords Advisory Service has some 3 000 members. We might hear the "Hendy Cowan defence" today from the Minister for Fair Trading; that is, that this group is not representative. In fact, it is the largest landlord body within Australia. It is probably the most representative organisation in this field.

I am interested to know if the minister has discounted the input of that sector of the market. I would like the minister to tell us from whom he is getting his advice, if it is from landlords. There is absolutely no doubt that the Tenants Advice Service has written detailed submissions to the minister supporting the findings of the report and arguing very strongly that those findings should be adopted and the letting fees abolished. Also, the peak housing policy group Shelter WA, has some 300 organisational members involved in the provision of housing to non-property owners, and it likewise strongly supports the abolition of letting fees.

Let us look at the picture we have here. We are talking about the tenancy legislation and about arrangements between landlords and tenants. The landlords say they do not want the letting fees; the tenants say they do not want the letting fees; and the minister says that there is no consensus out there so let us have an independent economic impact statement. The economic impact statement says tenants will be better off and in some instances real estate agents will be better off without letting fees. However, the minister is still able to say that there is no consensus out there. On balance, he says that it is in the interests of all market participants that we do not abolish real estate letting fees.

No explanation has been given for the extraordinary conclusion that failing to abolish real estate letting fees will produce the best outcome for all market participants. Those representing tenants say that it will not; those representing landlords say that it will not; the independent consultant who has done an economic impact statement says that letting fees should be abolished. Yet, what we have here is a statement from the minister running counter to all the evidence that the fees should be abolished. What does the minister come up with? The only group out there which supports the minister is made up of guess who? It is made up of members of the real estate industry of Western Australia. They support him in full, yet the minister has the cheek -

Mr Shave: I am pleased about that. That is a very representative group.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is a very representative group of real estate agents. It is certainly one group for which the minister must have regard.

Mr Shave: What does the member for Armadale think about the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia? Does she think it is a representative group?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I think it is reasonably representative. It is a legitimate stakeholder and has a view to put. It has a right to put its view and to be listened to. However, it is extraordinary that its interest has been allowed to overwhelm the interests of the tenants and the landlords and the advice of the independent consultant. If those views are stacked up against each other, basically we are talking about arrangements between landlords and tenants. What landlords and tenants want suddenly is not important. In this game the most important aspect is not the interests of the real estate agents but rather how the market might be best adjusted.

As the report says, both efficiency and equity in the market would be improved if we abolished the fees. What we have here is the tail wagging the dog. We are dealing with the private rental market. One would think the people that the minister would listen to when dealing with the private rental market would be landlords and tenants; and, believe it or not, they are at one on this issue. Landlords and tenants are saying they do not want letting fees; then all of a sudden we have the real estate agents, who are bit players in this game, coming around the rear saying they want them. The minister then says that he will take their view and ignore the major players in this industry - the landlords and tenants - and the advice contained in the economic impact statement given to him by the consultants which his Government commissioned and which we paid for. The minister says he will ignore all those people and the only people he will listen to are the bit players in this game; that is, the real estate agents.

That is an extraordinary decision, and the letter from the minister is a farce. Why did he not say he had decided to ignore what the landlords and tenants want, ignore the economic impact statement and listen only to REIWA? That would at least be an honest analysis of what has happened. I hope that at some point the players in this game will be able to raise sufficient funds to test the constitutionality of this appalling decision by the Government to de-proclaim validly passed and proclaimed legislation. Until then, we must wait until there is a change in Government to get some decent action within these sorts of areas. I have no difficulty with REIWA and the real estate industry having their say, but they are comparatively minor players in this game compared with the tenants and the landlords. The Government's consultant's advice is that the action being endorsed today is distorting the market.

MR SHAVE (Alfred Cove - Minister for Fair Trading) [5.21 pm]: It is very easy for the member for Armadale to place any connotation she likes on the independent assessment. As usual, she has picked out the good parts that support her argument but has not elaborated on some of the downsides in the report. The report of the independent economic impact has found that should tenants' letting fees be abolished, there will be no significant benefits to the participants involved.

Ms MacTiernan: Which page? I quoted page numbers. Perhaps the minister has the wrong report.

Mr SHAVE: Be nice. It is nearly six o'clock.

Ms MacTiernan: The minister does not have the report. Has he actually read it?

Mr SHAVE: Yes, I have read the report. The member should go to page 124, where, under "Conclusions and Recommendations", she will find the following statement -

Our conclusions as to the effects of the proposed changes to letting fee arrangements do not match with either of these two main positions.

That refers to the real estate agents' views and the tenants' views. It continues -

Our main conclusions are as follows.

Tenant Letting Fees. Analysis of the impact of the proposed changes to the liability rules governing letting fees indicates that, if removed, the tenant letting fee will be directly passed on into weekly rents. In the medium to long term, we do not expect any major impact on the number of properties let nor on employment in the real estate business industry.

Further, it states in connection with re-letting fees -

However, there are potentially adverse distributional impacts as we anticipate -

Ms MacTiernan: We are not talking about re-letting fees.

Mr SHAVE: The member was talking about one, and I am talking about both. I am now making my comments on the impact statement and the assessments made in that statement.

Ms MacTiernan: The issue is not about re-letting fees. We do not disagree with you on that.

Mr SHAVE: When this legislation was first introduced, a decision was made to abolish letting fees and to introduce re-letting fees. The member conveniently wants to deal with one side and not the other, because in her opinion it is not relevant. However, it is relevant because at the time the Government decided that if it implemented one, it would implement the other. The member for Armadale wants to put that to one side, even though at the time there was an agreement to introduce these re-letting fees. She wants to forget about that, and talk only about letting fees. That is not fair. I will not go so far as to say it is dishonest, but it is certainly misleading. I return to the comments in the report about re-letting fees -

However, there are potentially adverse distributional impacts as we anticipate some market resistance to the introduction of these fees. As a result, owner-investors will have to absorb some of the re-letting fee and tenants will experience some increase in their out-of-pocket housing expenses.

Under the same conclusions at page 125 it states -

We argue that a rise in private sector rents is a likely outcome of the proposed changes to letting fee arrangements.

Ms MacTiernan: We agree.

Mr SHAVE: Surprise, surprise. The member for Armadale has conceded that if the letting fees are abolished, it will lead to an increase in rents.

Ms MacTiernan: A small increase.

Mr SHAVE: How will the member for Armadale determine that small increase? How will she, sitting in this Parliament, determine that increase?

Ms MacTiernan: Your economic analysis said it is right but at the same time it would improve affordability for low-income earners because they could get a higher rate of rental subsidy. They cannot get a rental subsidy for the letting fee, but if it is amortised over a year it can be reimbursed via the rental subsidy.

Mr Johnson: I do not think it works that way.

Mr SHAVE: No, it does not. I now turn to page 126 -

Ms MacTiernan: Are you doing this for the tenants?

Mr SHAVE: Absolutely. Had the member not worked that out? I am the people's friend.

Ms MacTiernan: Do you still have Mr Hughes as your adviser?

Mr SHAVE: Yes, and he has done a very good job. I now turn to page 126 and refer to subsection (3) which states -

Introduction of re-letting fees is a political judgment.

The member for Armadale said we should take this document lock, stock and barrel and accept everything in the document. However, I cannot do that because I must make a political judgment.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr SHAVE: It is all part of it. That was the deal sold to all the participants at the time the proposed abolition of letting fees would take place.

Ms MacTiernan: Do you accept that tenants and landlords do not want this letting fee?

Mr SHAVE: I do not accept that all landlords are in favour of the abolition of letting fees. If I cared to, I could obtain letters from some people and could ask some landlords to send letters to the member for Armadale saying they are comfortable with the existing arrangements. Furthermore, the member for Armadale knows that only too well. It continues -

A decision to introduce re-letting fees must weigh the advantages of the efficiency gains from the introduction of such a fee against the potentially adverse distributional consequences to low income renters.

This impact assessment is not as cut and dried as the member for Armadale would like people to believe. I will advise the Parliament of the consequences of the introduction of re-letting fees.

Ms MacTiernan: We are not arguing about the introduction of re-letting fees.

Mr SHAVE: I know, but the member for Armadale knows very well that the decision on the fees was made on two

issues: First, the abolition of letting fees and, secondly, the introduction of re-letting fees. A weekly rental of \$146, which I suggest is a normal rent, could result in a re-letting fee of \$323 being charged. Mr Acting Speaker, I hope you heard that figure because I know you are very interested in it. What is one week's rent? The member for Armadale would know; it is \$146. The member for Armadale might care to consider in her one-sided assessment of the decision I have made that if these re-letting fees are introduced and proclaimed, and if letting fees are abolished, it may be that over a 12-month period a tenant who is paying rent of \$146 a week will be considerably disadvantaged. On a six-month tenancy, the re-letting fee that can be charged is \$162; still more than the fee that is charged as a letting fee. The member for Armadale fails to comprehend the economic reality of the marketplace. If she thinks that re-letting fees will be introduced and letting fees will be abolished and that the tenant will be not be affected, she is sadly wrong.

Ms MacTiernan: I am not arguing that. We never argued for the introduction of re-letting fees.

Mr SHAVE: This economic impact statement states that in its view the potential exists for increases in rent.

Ms MacTiernan: In re-letting fees, I agree with you.

Mr SHAVE: No, the abolition of the letting fee. Let us have a look at what has happened in the real estate industry since 1996. Does the member know what was the vacancy rate in Perth in 1996?

Ms MacTiernan: I am waiting for you to tell me.

Mr SHAVE: It was 4.4 per cent. In 1997 it was 3.6 per cent. In 1998 it was 2.9 per cent. Fewer and fewer tenancies are available in the real estate industry. What will happen when one abolishes the letting fee and says to the people in the industry, "You will absorb that cost"? No, they will not absorb that cost. They will say, "Why should I? The industry has a demand for tenancies, and I shall charge that to the tenant." In my view, no advantage exists in the abolition of letting fees other than the short-term gain to the tenant which provides them with the capacity not to have to find that money in the first week. However, it is a bit like buying a car; one goes to see the car dealer and he says, "You do not have to put too much in up-front", but people pay a lot more as they go along.

Ms MacTiernan: People need somewhere to live. I do not think you understand the difficulty people on the dole have raising that sort of money.

Mr SHAVE: I am pleased that the member raised that factor because I am very concerned about rents rising. It concerns me that in a very tight market, it is easy for landlords to impose a hike on rents. If one put this extra pressure on the landlord in addition to the government charges that he is paying and so forth, he might say, "I shall not charge \$146 a week. They have decided that I must absorb this extra cost, so the rent is up \$5."

Mr Johnson: If they had to do that, the real estate industry would have to shed some of their staff. They could not afford to absorb the cost.

Ms MacTiernan: There would be no loss in real estate jobs.

Mr SHAVE: That is not the advice that I have received and from the letters I have received. Instead of the tenant paying rent of \$146, he is paying \$151; or if one takes it over a yearly period, an additional \$260. Theoretically he saved himself \$146 at the start, but has he really saved himself \$146? No, he has not. He is a loser all round because very often when one is renting a property, one needs to be able to go to someone and get some advice, and when one has a problem with the property, if they have a good relationship with the leasing agent and the leasing agent is comfortable with the situation, they can go to the leasing agent and say to him, "This is my problem; will you deal with the landlord?" Some people do not like dealing with the landlord. As soon as one takes away the small incentive that that real estate agent has to make a small amount of money each year out of rentals, the real estate agents will say, "It is not worth it to me, I shall give it away and you can deal direct."

Ms MacTiernan: You are arguing nonsense. On one hand you are saying they will increase rents and therefore the agents who operate on a percentage will get increased monthly payments. Then on the other hand you are saying there will not be enough money for them. One cannot argue both ways.

Mr SHAVE: The member can deduce it any way she likes, but I make this statement -

Ms MacTiernan: We are all out of step but our Johnny - the tenants' advice service shelter and the independent economic report do not know what they are talking about.

Mr SHAVE: I do not think in practical terms that SHELDA or the other groups involved realise that if they abolish these letting fees, they will be doing the tenants a disservice; that is my argument.

The other argument put to me which would not concern the member for Armadale very much is that a lot of these small real estate firms are employing people in their areas. I received a letter from Ray White in Karratha or

Geraldton or one of the country towns thanking me for the decision we made and stating, "Fortunately as a result of the decision that you have made, we have not had to sack one of our workers. If you had gone ahead and done this, we would have had to stand this person down and put them out of a job." That is quite comforting to me. Having looked at all of the issues, the member for Armadale talks about having consideration for REIWA, but the truth of the matter is that she does not like real estate agents.

Ms MacTiernan: No, I do not have any objection to real estate agents. I do not like the fact that the tail can wag the dog. They are comparatively small players when one considers tenants and landlords, yet their position prevails over that of the tenants and landlords. I think that is inappropriate.

Mr SHAVE: If we go back through *Hansard* over the past 12 months, I bet I can find comments made by this member that wealthy real estate agents are making profits and the Government is beholden to the real estate agents. The member goes to the REIWA functions, but when she comes in here, she gives them a kicking every time. Read *Hansard*. Does the member think the real estate agents do not read those wonderful statements she makes? I send them every statement! I research it religiously.

Ms MacTiernan: I am criticising you for being so weak and acting in such a sectional manner.

Mr SHAVE: The recommendation that the department has made to me on this matter is very sound. I suggest the member for Armadale go away and get a few vacancy charts on tenancies and the availability of rental properties around Perth, do a proper analysis and take a balanced view of the issue. I am very comfortable that she will then come to the same conclusion as I have: The recommendation of the department to me is sensible and sound.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (16)

Mr Brown
Mr Carpenter
Dr Constable
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop

Mr Kobelke
Ms MacTiernan
Mr Marlborough

Ms McHale
Mr Pandal
Mr Riebeling
Mr Ripper
Mrs Roberts

Mr Thomas
Ms Warnock
Mr Cunningham (*Teller*)

Noes (23)

Mr Baker
Mr Barnett
Mr Bloffwitch
Mr Board
Mr Bradshaw
Mr Court

Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames
Mrs Holmes
Mr Johnson
Mr MacLean

Mr Marshall
Mr Masters
Mr Minson
Mr Nicholls
Mrs Parker
Mr Shave

Mr Sweetman
Mr Tubby
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Osborne (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr Graham
Ms Anwyl
Mr McGowan
Mr Grill
Mr McGinty

Mr Omodei
Mr Cowan
Mr Prince
Mr Kierath
Mr House

Amendment thus negatived.

Debate (on motion, as amended) Resumed

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Marlborough.

LAPSED BILLS

Restoration to Notice Paper - Council's Message

Message from the Council received and read acquainting the Assembly that it had agreed to its request that consideration be resumed by the Council on the following Bills at the same stage they had reached in the previous session -

1. Commercial Tenancy (Retail Shops) Agreements Amendment Bill.
2. Energy Coordination Amendment Bill.

3. School Education Bill.
4. Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Bill.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

Council's Message

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it did not insist on its requested amendment to Assembly Standing Order No 415A and further resolving that its order appointing members of the Council to the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission had effect.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

On motion by Mr Barnett (Leader of the House), resolved -

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 8 September at 2.00 pm.

House adjourned at 5.44 pm

APPENDIX A**1997-98 Budget Outturn****(1) COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICES**

Avon	9,090,000
Bunbury	22,476,200
Central Great Southern	7,260,500
Central Wheatbelt	5,497,400
East Pilbara	21,461,600
Eastern Wheatbelt	8,232,300
Gascoyne	13,300,200
Geraldton	18,849,500
Harvey/Yarloop	2,907,900
Kimberley	40,388,500
Lower Great Southern	24,076,900
Midwest	5,485,200
Murchison	2,683,800
Northern Goldfields	30,280,400
Peel	12,707,500
South East Coastal	8,241,800
Upper Great Southern	13,550,300
Vasse Leeuwin	10,498,900
Warren Blackwood	9,484,800
Wellington	6,638,200
West Pilbara	13,247,700
Western	5,488,900

Total	291,848,500
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(2) METROPOLITAN HEALTH SERVICE BOARD

Total	966,380,900
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APPENDIX A**METROPOLITAN HEALTH SERVICE BOARD
1997/98 BUDGET OUTTURN**

	Final 1997/98
TEACHING HOSPITALS	
Fremantle	135,636,100
King Edward & Princess Margaret	138,740,900
Royal Perth	261,191,200
Sir Charles Gairdner	181,762,400
Teaching Hospital Reconfiguration	
Total Teaching Hospitals	717,330,600
Health Services	
Armadale	26,764,200
Bentley	36,078,200
Kalamunda	8,463,800
North Metropolitan	44,248,300
Rockingham	20,089,400
Swan	32,910,200
Health Services Provisional Grant	
Total Health Services	168,554,100
Total General Health Services	885,884,600
Special Services	
Dental	32,576,700
Graylands	47,919,500
Total Special Services	80,496,200
Total Metropolitan Health Services Board	966,380,900

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to questions are as supplied by the relevant Minister's office.

ART GALLERY OF WA AND PERTH THEATRE TRUST

10. Ms McHALE to the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts:

I refer to the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No 3) 1998 and note the payment to the Art Gallery of Western Australia and Perth Theatre Trust and ask:-

- (a) what is the \$220 000 allocated to the Art Gallery to be used for;
- (b) what is the \$568 000 allocated to the Perth Theatre Trust to be used for; and
- (c) what was the extraordinary and unforeseen nature of these payments referred to in (a) and (b) above?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

The Minister for the Arts has provided the following reply:

- (a) The \$220,000 allocated to the Art Gallery of Western Australia was used to fund additional expenditure in 1996/97 associated with debt servicing, staff recruitment and restructuring costs.
- (b) The \$568,000 allocated to the Perth Theatre Trust is to be used for -
 - Making up a Revenue shortfall.
 - Replacement of items of Equipment.

- (c) Art Gallery of Western Australia: The costs associated with debt servicing, staff recruitment and restructuring were additional to normal Gallery operational projections at the time the budget was framed.

Perth Theatre Trust: The extraordinary and unforeseen nature of these payments referred to in (b) above are -

Making up a Revenue shortfall. His Majesty's Theatre was hired by various promoters for a period of 26 weeks compared to an anticipated 40 weeks budgeted for.

Replacement of Items of Equipment. The replacement of various items of equipment which had become critical to continuing operations.

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES, MIDLAND OFFICE

12. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Family and Children's Services:

- (1) In the -

- (a) 1994-95 financial year;
- (b) 1995-96 financial year; and
- (c) 1996-97 financial year,

how much was spent improving or upgrading the Midland office of the Department of Family and Children's Services?

- (2) How much has been -

- (a) spent; and
- (b) allocated,

in the 1997-98 financial year to upgrade and/or improve the Midland office of the Department of Family and Children's Services?

- (3) Does the Department of Family and Children's Services have a lease with the owners of the Midland office?
- (4) If so, when does the lease expire?
- (5) When was the lease last renewed?
- (6) What is the annual lease payment today?

(7) What has been the rental under the lease for the office in each financial year for the last four financial years?

Mrs PARKER replied:

- (1) (a) Maintenance Works Only.
(b) \$ 3,500
(c) \$ 70,656
- (2) (a) \$702,021
(b) \$750,000
- (3) No. "Memorandum of Understanding" is currently being negotiated with the Owner (Government Property Office).
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Not applicable. Prior to 1 July 1996 leases did not exist for government owned buildings occupied by the department.
- (6) \$130,869
- (7) Payment of rental for the premises from 1 July 1996 is as follows:

1996/97	\$ 83,316
1997/98	\$106,923

RAE ROAD-SEABROOKE AVENUE, ROCKINGHAM

Crosswalk Attendant

25. Mr McGOWAN to the Minister for Police:

- (1) Will the Government be installing crosswalk attendants at the intersection of Rae Road and Seabrooke Avenue, Rockingham?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) Will the Government be installing a type A or type B crossing at this intersection?
- (4) Why has the Government decided on that type of crossing?
- (5) When will the crossing be installed and be operational?
- (6) Does the Government recognise the need of this particular area?
- (7) If it is not staffed, why not?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1) A Traffic Warden has been approved for this location.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Type "A".
- (4) The Crossing at this location did not meet the usual School Crossing and Road Safety Committee Warrant Criteria for a Type "A" Crossing. A Traffic Warden has been approved, however, due to the high traffic flow at this location.
- (5) A further review of this intersection to determine the best location for a Children's Crossing is being undertaken by Main Roads WA and the Western Australia Police Service (WAPS) School Crossing Section, with input from the City of Rockingham and the local School Community. It is expected that the Crossing will be installed and operational by the beginning of the fourth term 1998.
- (6) Yes. The Government has approved the installation of a Type "A" Crossing at this intersection.
- (7) Approval has been given for the appointment of a Traffic Warden at this location, however the current location is unsuitable for operation by a single warden. The review referred to above (item 5) has determined that the Crossing should be relocated 40m to the West of Seabrooke Avenue to enable a single Traffic Warden to operate the facility.

STATE FINANCE

Taxes and Charges

58. Dr GALLOP to the Minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

In relation to all the portfolio areas for which the Minister has responsibility -

- (a) what fees and charges have been increased in the context of the 1998/99 Budget and the announcements made immediately prior to the Budget;
- (b) what is the rate of increase for each of these in dollar and percentage terms;
- (c) what is the estimated total additional revenue each of these increases is expected to raise;
- (d) are there any other increases in fees and charges proposed for the financial year 1998/99; and
- (e) if so, what are the details of these other increases?

Mr COWAN replied:

The Minister for Racing and Gaming has provided the following response:

- (a) Nil.
- (b)-(c) Not applicable.
- (d) Nil.
- (e) Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

Personalised Number Plates

68. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Family and Children's Services; Seniors; Women's Interests:

- (1) Have any of the Government agencies or departments within the Minister's portfolio responsibilities purchased personalised number plates for any of the motor vehicles within their car or truck fleets?
- (2) If yes, how many personalised plates have been purchased in each of the past three years and at what cost?

Mrs PARKER replied:

- (1) Family and Children's Services: No.
Office of Seniors Interests: No.
Women's Policy Development Office: No.

WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office: No.
- (2) Family and Children's Services: Not applicable.
Office of Seniors Interests: Not applicable.
Women's Policy Development Office: Not applicable.
WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office: Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

Personalised Number Plates

70. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Police; Emergency Services:

- (1) Have any of the Government agencies or departments within the Minister's portfolio responsibilities purchased personalised number plates for any of the motor vehicles within their car or truck fleets?
- (2) If yes, how many personalised plates have been purchased in each of the past three years and at what cost?

Mr PRINCE replied:

WA Police Service

- (1) Yes.

- (2) The WA Police Service has purchased two custom made plates in the last three years (July 1996) at a cost of \$295 per set (\$590 in total), namely:

1ROADSHO	Custom Made Semi Trailer
2ROADSHO	Volvo Prime Mover

FESA

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.

HELMET OFFENCES

71. Mr MARLBOROUGH to the Minister for Police:

- (1) For each week from 1 January 1998 to 7 May 1998, what was the number of charges that have been laid for the offence of "Helmet not meeting Australian Standards (nil sticker)"?
- (2) In what location was each offence committed?

Mr PRINCE replied:

Unfortunately we are unable to give a weekly number of charges, as our records are received on a monthly basis. The following figures refer only to Traffic Infringements.

- (1) There is no charge specifically for helmet not meeting Australian Standards. The offence comes under either regulation 1307(2)(a) Road Traffic Code for bicycles and regulation 1607(1)(a) Road Traffic code for Motorcycles.

Bicycle Monthly total:	January 1998	-	566
	February 1998	-	545
	March 1998	-	526
	April 1998	-	402
	May 1998	-	473
Motorcycle Monthly total	January 1998	-	26
	February 1998	-	17
	March 1998	-	14
	April 1998	-	10
	May 1998	-	13

- (2) The offences are broken down into 3 categories:

Bicycles:	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Accidents	1	2	0	1	1
Metropolitan Areas	283	309	324	223	301
Country Areas	282	234	202	178	171
Motorcycles:	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Accidents	0	0	0	0	0
Metropolitan Areas	16	12	8	4	7
Country Areas	10	5	6	6	6

MILLENNIUM BUG

149. Ms McHALE to the Minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

- (1) Is the "Millennium Bug" computer problem an issue for any of the departments or agencies under the Minister's control?
- (2) If so, when will those departments or agencies have installed and tested all Year 2000 corrections?
- (3) What have been the total funds expended to date to correct the "Bug"?
- (4) What is the total cost estimated to be to install all corrective measures?
- (5) Do those departments or agencies intend to engage external resources to manage the process?

Mr COWAN replied:

The Minister for Racing and Gaming has provided the following response:

Office of Racing, Gaming and Liquor
Burswood Park Board
Totalisator Agency Board
W A Greyhound Racing Association

- (1) Yes.
- (2) On-going through to year 2000.
- (3) \$281,000
- (4) \$520,000
- (5) Yes.

Lotteries Commission

- (1) This is not an issue for the Lotteries Commission as it is well under control.
- (2) All the Lotteries Commission's year 2000 corrections will be installed by the end of 1998, the Gaming environment will be tested by the end of 1998 and all other systems will be tested by March 1999.
- (3) The year 2000 issue is integrated into the Lotteries Commission's overall IT plans and strategies to upgrade all its technology and systems. Implementation has now been in progress for 2 and a half years. There has been no special or additional funding required for year 2000 issues and all work has been completed by internal staff.
- (4) The costs are mostly associated with staff time to test and upgrade systems. This is estimated to be in the order of \$200,000 to cover the specific year 2000 work over the life of the project.
- (5) No.

SPEEDING OFFENCES

179. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Police:

What is the average time frame between the date of the offence of speeding detected by multanovas and the issue of an infringement notice?

Mr PRINCE replied:

Currently 3 to 5 days.

FIREARMS LICENCES

214. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Police:

- (1) How many firearms licences are currently issued?
- (2) How many were issued last year to account for the \$2.3 million in licence fees revenue?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1) Number of persons holding firearm licences: 93,875*
Number of firearms licensed: 207,761*

*These figures are current to July 9, 1998. Accurate, year-to-date figures are unable to be obtained as there is presently a backlog of applications to be processed by the Firearms Branch.

- (2) The \$2.3m actually related to Firearm Licence Renewals and Noting Fees as opposed licences issued. Therefore, the Western Australia Police Service cannot provide the information as requested.

FORESTS AND FORESTRY

Jarrah and Karri, Sustainable Yield

231. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that in the Department of Conservation and Land Management's (CALM) submission to the Meagher Committee in 1993, published as an appendix to the Meagher Committee report, CALM stated that "the long term sustainable yield of jarrah sawlogs is approximately 300 000 m3 per year"?

- (2) Is the Minister aware that the average level of jarrah sawlog cut over the five years since the Meagher Committee published its report is 450 000 m3 per year?
- (3) What is the impact of this overcutting of the jarrah saw log resource?
- (4) Is the Minister aware that according to the 1981 report *Conservation of the Karri Forest*, the maximum volume (of karri saw logs) that can be sustained (over the period 1976-2076) while satisfying the initial rotation objective is 100 000 m3 per annum, made up of the clearfellings and thinnings?
- (5) Is the Minister aware that the average level of karri sawlog cut over the last five years is about 200 000 m3, and that almost all of this is from clearfelling of old growth forest, not thinnings?
- (6) Is the Minister concerned about this greater than 100 per cent overcutting of the karri sawlog resource?
- (7) What does the Minister intend to do about this ongoing overcutting of Western Australia's native forest sawlog resources?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) CALM's submission to the Meagher Committee stated the Department had developed a scheduling model which assumed current log utilisation standards to predict a long term sustainable jarrah sawlog yield of approximately 300 000 m3 per year. However the submission also indicated that the annual total bole volume increment for jarrah was 1 360 000 m3 and that a harvest level of 450 000 m3 to 550 000 m3 of jarrah sawlogs would have an insignificant effect on the long term sustainable yield of logs. This predicted growth rate was based on a complete new inventory of the jarrah forest which took three years to complete and utilised world best practice techniques. The overriding principle is that the total tree bole volume felled (not individual log products the specification which may change over time) does not exceed the sustainable bole volume increment of the forest. Harvested quantities or yield levels under the Forest Management Plan is controlled on a total bole volume basis so that the annual quantity harvested does not exceed the sustainable annual growth.

CALM is not harvesting a volume greater than the levels set under the Forest Management Plan and therefore is not harvesting at levels greater than the sustainable growth of the forest. Confusion may arise when moving from total annual growth of the forest to what that means in terms of sawlog production. This is variable depending on the size class distribution of the trees in the forest and the specifications of logs that are suitable for processing at a given time.

The quantity of sawlogs available is therefore a proportion of the total annual growth of the forest. This proportion will vary in time depending on the quality and tree size of forest areas being harvested and on technical advances in wood processing and changes in marketing of wood products into value added products.

- (2) The Ministerial determination on the 16 August 1993 set an allowable harvest of 490 000 m3 per year of first and second grade sawlogs during the period 1 January 1994 to 31 December 2003. The CALM Annual Reports specify each financial year the quantity of logs harvested for each commercial species. The average level of jarrah first and second grade sawlog harvested for the calendar years 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997 is 430 019 m3.
- (3) The jarrah forest is not being overcut as the Meagher Committee report concluded that an annual harvest level of jarrah first and second grade sawlogs of 490 000 m3 during the 10 year period can be accommodated without irrevocably altering the long term sustainable yield of the forest. Harvesting within this level would not significantly affect the long term sustainable sawlog yield, particularly if improved utilisation, such as an increased proportion of the total bole volume being utilised as sawlog and major increases in the proportion of sawlogs being converted into value-added products, were to occur.
- (4) Yield projections are prepared based on the available resource inventory data, assumed silvicultural practices, the status of growth projection and scheduling systems, log specifications and harvesting and processing technologies. It is best practice to ensure that yield projections are periodically revised as any of these factors alter. Each of these factors have altered significantly in the 20 years since the estimate of 100 000 m3 was prepared. On the basis of such data the sustainable yield of first grade karri sawlog is approximately 214 000 m3 per annum.
- (5) The actual average annual level of karri first grade sawlog harvested over the 4 calendar years 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997 is 169 919 m3. The total annual sawlog harvest is sourced from a number of stand types, so that only a portion of the annual harvest has been from "old growth forest" per se: sawlogs are obtained

from the thinning of older regrowth stands, the harvesting of stands previously selectively cut-over and previously unlogged stands. As "old growth" forest comprises those previously unlogged stands which are in a mature or senescent growth phase, only a portion of previously unlogged stands were harvested over the last five years. The relative contribution of each stand type to the annual harvest will continue to alter over time as regrowth stands mature.

- (6) See (4) and (5) above.
- (7) The issue of the allowable harvest was previously discussed in the Meagher report and the accompanying Ministerial statement of 5 August 1993. [See paper No 105.]

CALM will continue to manage sawlog supply to ensure the long term viability of the timber industry. CALM's 1987 Timber strategy has significantly changed the timber industry from production of green structural timber to dried high value product for furniture and architectural feature uses. Because of this change there is an increased demand for smaller sized logs and greater utilisation of all sawlogs. CALM will be accommodating these changes into future timber contracts.

FIREARMS LICENCES

303. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:

- (1) Does the Police Service have a policy of "Standing Orders" to stop the build up of private arsenals in the metropolitan area?
- (2) If so, what are those "Standing Orders"?
- (3) If not, are people in the metropolitan area generally limited to one of each type of firearm and by what means?
- (4) What right do applicants for gun licences have to review the reasons by which they have been refused a gun licence?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1) Licensed firearms owners are not restricted by the Firearms Act 1973, nor the Firearms Regulations 1974, to the number of firearms they may own or possess. As the Western Australia Police Service is governed by this legislation, there is no policy or 'Standing Orders' in regard to the issue. Nevertheless, as general practice, police intelligence is always on the alert to discover any information which might suggest that 'unlawful' arsenals are being collected. If any discovery of such is made, whether in the metropolitan area or elsewhere in the State, the appropriate action will be taken to dismantle this and the people concerned will be charged accordingly.

A 'firearms collectors licence' allows a person to collect firearms and, once again, there is no restriction on the number of firearms allowed in a collection. However, for a firearm to form part of a genuine collection, it must have 'significant commemorative, historical, thematic, heirloom, or sentimental value'. Additionally, when a firearm forms part of a collection, that firearm has a 'restriction' placed upon it, that it cannot be fired under any circumstances.

- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) No. Neither the Firearms Act 1973, nor the Firearms Regulations 1974, restrict the number, or the type, of firearms a person could own or possess. However, the Act demands that if a person cannot show a genuine reason to possess or own a certain firearm, then that person will not be granted a licence for it. This has the effect of controlling the number, and the type, of firearms a person could own or possess.
- (4) If an applicant is refused a firearm licence, under Section 22 of the Firearms Act 1973, they may appeal that decision at a 'Firearms Appeal Tribunal' or before a court of Petty Sessions.

FIREARMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

327. Ms ANWYL to the Minister for Police:

In reference to the Firearms Advisory Committee -

- (a) will the Minister provide details of the names and addresses and qualifications of those people recently appointed to the Firearms Advisory Committee;
- (b) will the Minister advise whether any of those members belong to the Coalition for Gun Control;

- (c) will the Minister advise what criteria were used to decide the appointments; and
- (d) will the Minister advise which Government officers were responsible for making the decision?

Mr PRINCE replied:

(a)

MEMBERS

Name	Address	Qualifications
Mrs Rose Moroz	Metropolitan Area	Bachelor of Arts; Associate in Speech and Drama; Diploma of Education; Teachers Higher Certificate; Learning Assistance Teachers Certificate; Principal Manager Course.
Mr Graeme King	Koorda	-
Mr Doug Barnes	Metropolitan Area	-
Ms Noni Walker	Metropolitan Area	Bachelor of Science; Postgraduate Diploma in Nutrition and Dietetics; Master of Public Health
Dr Graham Jacobs	Esperance	MBBS; DRCOG; FRACGP
Mrs Lesley Goudie	Metropolitan Area	Diploma of Teaching; Graduate Diploma of Reading

(b) Yes. Ms Noni Walker who is President of the WA branch of the Coalition for Gun Control.

(c) One appointee under each of the following classifications was chosen:

a firearm dealer;
a firearm user;
a community member;
a primary producer;
a health professional;
a member of the police service representing the Commissioner; and
an independent chairperson.

These classifications were the only criteria used in the process of selecting members to the Firearms Advisory Committee.

(d) Hon John Day, MLA, then Minister for Police, was responsible for recommending the appointees, which were subsequently endorsed by Cabinet. No Government officers were involved in making the decision.

NATIONAL DAIRIES WA LIMITED

434. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Family and Children's Services; Seniors; Women's Interests:

- (1) Has any department or agency under the Minister's control have shares in National Dairies WA Limited?
- (2) How many shares does the department or agency own?
- (3) What is the purpose of the share ownership?

Mrs PARKER replied:

- (1) Family and Children's Services: No.
Office of Seniors Interests: No.

Women's Policy Development Office: No.
WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office: No.
- (2) Family and Children's Services: Nil.
Office of Seniors Interests: Nil.
Women's Policy Development Office: Nil.
WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office: Nil.
- (3) Family and Children's Services: Not applicable.
Office of Seniors Interests: Not applicable.
Women's Policy Development Office: Not applicable.
WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office: Not applicable.

NATIONAL DAIRIES WA LIMITED

440. Mr BROWN to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance:

- (1) Has any department or agency under the Minister's control have shares in National Dairies WA Limited?
- (2) How many shares does the department or agency own?
- (3) What is the purpose of the share ownership?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for Finance has provided the following response:

- (1)-(3) None of the departments or agencies under the Minister's control have shares in National Dairies WA Limited.

NATIONAL DAIRIES WA LIMITED

442. Mr BROWN to the Minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

- (1) Has any department or agency under the Minister's control have shares in National Dairies WA Limited?
- (2) How many shares does the department or agency own?
- (3) What is the purpose of the share ownership?

Mr COWAN replied:

The Minister for Racing and Gaming has provided the following reply:

- (1)-(3) None of the agencies under the Minister's control have shares in National Dairies WA Limited.

NATIONAL DAIRIES WA LIMITED

444. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Police; Emergency Services:

- (1) Has any department or agency under the Minister's control have shares in National Dairies WA Limited?
- (2) How many shares does the department or agency own?
- (3) What is the purpose of the share ownership?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1) No.
- (2)-(3) Not applicable.

SUBIACO REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Land for Public Housing

585. Mr CARPENTER to the Minister for Planning:

- (1) Has any of the land controlled by the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority been made available for public or community housing?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) If so, will any of this be used for housing for people with a disability?
- (4) If not, why not?
- (5) If so, how much?
- (6) Has the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority undertaken any consultation with groups representing people with disabilities about the Subiaco redevelopment to ascertain their needs?
- (7) If not, why not?

- (8) If so -
- (a) with what groups; and
 - (b) when?
- (9) What action has been taken to address their concerns?
- Mr KIERATH replied:
- (1) No.
- (2)-(4) All land is sold in the open market and public and community housing providers can purchase land if they so desire.
- (5) Not applicable.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) Not applicable.
- (8) (a) Disability Services Commission.
Homeswest.
Parents of Children with Disabilities.
WA Blue Sky Inc.
City of Subiaco.
Subiaco Independent Housing Group.
Federation of Housing Collectives Inc.
Perth Inner City Housing Association (Inc).
- (b) Number of unspecified dates during 1994-95 to 1998-99.
- (9) Authority will use its planning powers to create a number of small lots with appropriate development guidelines when the site presently occupied by BOC Gases Australia Ltd is developed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

WESTRAIL

Sale of Freight Business

71. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

On 30 July, the Premier's new Minister for Transport announced in a press statement that State Cabinet had approved the sale of the freight business of Westrail. The press statement also stated that Westrail's freight business would be disposed of as a vertically integrated operation. However, last night the Deputy Premier claimed that Cabinet had not made any decision to sell any part of Westrail, by saying that the Government did not say it would sell it; it has not said it will do anything more than examine all aspects associated with a sale. Can the Premier tell the House exactly what Cabinet decided and, in particular, whether the Minister for Transport was wrong to announce that Cabinet had approved the sale of Westrail's freight business?

Mr COURT replied:

I have told the House on many occasions that our practice in relation to asset sales has been to signal that we propose to sell a particular asset and then we go through an extensive process in the lead-up to making a decision on whether or not it will be sold. Two major assets that were sold, BankWest and the gas pipeline, are two examples of that. Westrail is exactly the same. Cabinet has given the minister permission to proceed with a process that could lead to the sale of Westrail. Now that process -

Dr Gallop: Come on! What about a bit of clarity on the issue?

Mr COURT: Opposition members asked for an indication of what is to be sold.

Dr Gallop: You misled the Parliament.

Mr COURT: No. A number of decisions relating to the sale of assets such as Westrail and AlintaGas have to be made. All those sales are complex. They all cover issues of what is sold, whether we sell land or rail and whether we provide certain access rights.

Dr Gallop: Have you made a decision to sell Westrail?

Mr COURT: Let me finish the answer. What will go out will come back to Cabinet for final approval.

Mr Kobelke: Has any decision been made?

Mr COURT: Hang on! Will the member let me finish answering the question? We have already said that it is the Government's preferred position that if -

Dr Gallop: No, that is not what you have already said. You have already said that you have made a decision to sell it. Is your minister wrong?

Mr COURT: May I explain to the Leader of the Opposition the process if it is to be sold? First of all -

Dr Gallop: No. The decision has been made. The Commissioner of Railways has written to the staff saying that, following a decision by State Cabinet, the Government will sell Westrail's freight business. Is he telling lies, Premier?

Mr COURT: Will the Leader of the Opposition allow me to finish an explanation? What will come back to Cabinet is the process to be recommended on what will go out for expressions of interest on the sale. It will all be run by an independent group, as we have done with previous sales. We will then look at the proposals that come in in relation to a sale, and the final decision on a sale, whether or not it will be accepted, will be made by the Cabinet. Therefore, if members want to be technical about it, a decision is not made until a recommendation on whether it is to be sold comes back to Cabinet. We would not sell any government asset if there was no suitable benefit in the sale for the State. Perhaps we have made these matters look a bit too simple in the past. However, I assure members that the process of deciding to sell any major asset, whether it be a gas pipeline, a freight system or whatever, is complex.

Dr Gallop: You are covering up a lie, that is what you are doing.

Mr COURT: Not at all. To the contrary, we have told members that the Government wants to sell Westrail, but it will not be sold until a recommendation on whether it should be sold comes back to Cabinet. If members think that we can make a decision to sell something without going through a formal process, they are living in cloud cuckoo-land.

WESTRAIL

Sale of Freight Business

72. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

Will the record of the cabinet decision on this matter be tabled in Parliament?

Mr COURT replied:

There is no need for any record, because -

Dr Gallop: Yes, there is, because your credibility is on the line, along with that of your Deputy Premier. Table the cabinet decision and let us see who is lying to the Parliament.

Mr COURT: That is the Leader of the Opposition who is so opposed to privatisation.

Dr Gallop: Your credibility is on the line, Premier. You have said things in the Parliament that must be checked by the facts. Table that document.

Mr COURT: Perhaps we will go through it again before the blood pressure goes up. Yes, the Government is keen to sell Westrail's freight business. Yes, we will go through a formal process and the final decision will be made by Cabinet when a recommendation comes to Cabinet.

ROAD SAFETY ROADSHOW

73. Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN to the Minister for Police:

Will the minister give details of the Police Service's involvement in the road safety roadshow which is scheduled to visit schools in the south west?

Mr PRINCE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I have a schedule of the various places that the roadshow will visit from now until Christmas. The schedule is quite lengthy so perhaps I will provide it to the member if he wants it. The roadshow is an initiative that was launched by the Premier in August 1996. Its aim is to promote the message of road safety and to improve the attitudes and behaviour of people, particularly school children and especially in country areas. Community members and school children in the metropolitan area will not miss out, because they have the opportunity to experience similar road safety messages through the road safe exhibition in the Scitech Discovery Centre. If members have not seen the exhibition, I urge them to do so because it is excellent.

The Police Service runs the roadshow in the country. Two police officers from the road safety section are assigned to it at any one time. They rotate fortnightly, so it is not the same two officers all the time. Police officers are essential to get across messages of road safety because they have the experience and skills to tell people about not only the road traffic code but also safe driving practices and so on. Funding for this comes from the road trauma trust fund administered by the Office of Road Safety. It is supported by the Road Safety Council and is an excellent initiative.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX*State School Fees***74. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Education:**

Does the Minister now concede that state school fees, which he has made clear in his School Education Bill are not tuition fees, will be subjected to the goods and services tax should it be introduced by a federal coalition Government?

Mr BARNETT replied:

Under the new School Education Bill, there is no fee for tuition in government schools, and there is a distinction. There is, however, a charge for materials and services consumed by the individual child.

Mr Ripper: Subject to the GST?

Mr BARNETT: The proposal of the Government is that that be a mandatory-cum-compulsory charge. That has yet to be decided. The member asked a good and relevant question. I have raised the issue with the federal Minister for Schools. It is my view that the GST should not apply to charges.

Mr Ripper: Should not? That is the Minister's view? What is the reality?

Mr BARNETT: It should not apply to charges. My understanding is that the federal Minister for Schools shares that view. That matter will be clarified and we expect a response on that. The member opposite is showing great glee.

Dr Gallop: I think the Minister is wrong.

Mr BARNETT: The point is that the Federal Government has brought out a tax reform package which includes a GST.

Dr Gallop: I have read what it says and the Minister is wrong.

Mr BARNETT: The member for Belmont, to his credit, raised an issue which has been clarified now, as many other issues will be. However, at the end of the day, he will find that it will be clearly delineated in the legislation when it comes forward that it will not apply to such charges. At the moment it must be resolved. The member raised a good point. As far as I am concerned it should not apply but that will be made clear in the final legislation.

XEROX INTERNATIONAL TRIATHLON SERIES**75. Mr BAKER to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Sport and Recreation:**

I have recently tabled a petition in this House calling for the Government's support to host three stages of the 1999 Xerox International Triathlon Series in Perth and more particularly in the City of Joondalup. What is the nature and extent of any government assistance that can be provided to assist in staging this important international sporting event in Western Australia?

Mr MARSHALL replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

The Minister for Sport and Recreation has responded in the following way:

The extent of this Government's financial assistance depends on whether the event satisfies the criteria established by comprehensive analysis of the requirements of the Western Australian Tourism Commission. The criteria include economic impact of the event to the State; the nature and extent of media coverage of the event, both nationally and internationally, particularly to the State's international tourism priority markets; event frequency; the level of private sector investment; and the suitable positioning of the event within the tourism industry calendar.

Overall, the event must increase the tourism status of the State and meet the tourism objectives of the Western Australian Tourism Commission.

Even if the criteria are met, the support for the event will also depend on the amount of financial resources available and the grading of the event compared with other events which are also vying for funding from the State Government.

Mr Brown: That is a lot clearer now.

Mr MARSHALL: I read that slowly so that the member could understand it.

FOREST REGULATIONS

76. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the excessive and provocative forest regulation published this week in the *Government Gazette* and ask -

- (1) Does this not indicate that the Government is expecting a huge community backlash when the Regional Forest Agreement is signed?
- (2) Rather than inciting conflict with these draconian new laws, why does the minister not start addressing the community's concerns about the RFA process?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(2) I am pleased to be able to report to the House that about 30 000 submissions were received during the consultation period in response to the RFA. It was a commitment of time and effort by those people and we should thank them for having done so. There is never a good time to introduce regulations. These regulations have nothing to do with the RFA process which has been ongoing for quite a period. This action was taken at a time when there was no protest. It was intended to fill in a gap highlighted over the past 18 months when protests have occurred.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Revenue Collections and Disbursements

77. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

The New South Wales Government has concluded that the State of New South Wales will raise 36 per cent of all revenue collected by a goods and services tax but will get back from the Commonwealth only 31 per cent of the total GST revenue collected.

Can the Premier guarantee that the GST revenue Western Australia receives will not be less than the revenue collected from a GST in this State?

Mr COURT replied:

There is no way one can provide that guarantee in a State that is growing strongly.

Mr Ripper: We lose the power to tax and some of the revenue from tax.

Mr COURT: Do members opposite want an answer or not?

Mr Ripper: The Premier's trouble is that he hardly ever gives one.

Mr COURT: It has been accepted in our federation that the stronger States support the weaker States. In the history of Western Australia we have at some stages been receiving support and now we have moved into a position of strong economic growth with a strong performing economy. We are now in a position where we are receiving less revenues back - this is under the system supported by the Opposition - than were actually paid to Canberra. In excess of \$1b a year that is paid.

Mr Brown: It has been cut in the last two Budgets.

Mr COURT: Under the new arrangements a distribution will be made by the Grants Commission. I suggest that if

members look at the New South Wales figure, they will note that the percentages quoted are very little different from what they are currently.

Mr Kobelke: On what basis does the Premier say that?

Mr COURT: Because they are already a major contributor and have been for years; they supported us. That is the basis.

I wish to make another comment in relation to the GST because members opposite have been running this argument that the Labor Party is caring and compassionate for low and middle income earners. I can recall the scare campaign of 1993 which was run in relation to the Fightback package.

Mrs Roberts: Did people not have a right to be scared by that package?

Mr COURT: I will tell members what happened. The coalition was defeated, the Labor Party came back into Government, and the first thing it did was put up sales tax. It put up sales tax twice. The increases the Labor Government imposed raised \$1.5b a year. When the Labor Party promises to do things it runs a scare campaign on taxation and when it is re-elected the first thing it does is increase wholesale sales tax; in fact, it increased it twice. That proves that the Opposition cannot be trusted on these matters. Mr Speaker, what is new?

Mr Ripper: "Never ever" is what the Prime Minister said.

Mr COURT: What about the tax cuts we were going to get, and the sales tax increases that were imposed? The Leader of the Opposition supports a GST, now he does not. The Opposition is all over the shop.

SCHOOL COMPUTERS

78. Mrs van de KLASHORST to the Minister for Education:

The two secondary and 14 primary government schools in my electorate are asking how and when the \$100m funds announced by the Government from the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline will be distributed into our schools?

Mr BARNETT replied:

The timing of this question is most appropriate. The Government is in the process, through the Education Department, of conducting within the next few days an audit of computing equipment in schools to ascertain the exact numbers, their age and their suitability for the curriculum use to which they are put. On the basis of that, the funding will proceed. I reassure all schools that those schools which have built up their computing equipment, through parents and citizens associations over the years, will in no way be penalised.

The basis of the funding is that \$80m will go to government schools, and \$20m will go to non-government schools. Two-thirds of the \$80m to government schools will be allocated on a strictly per capita basis. One-third will be allocated on a needs basis, which will reflect socioeconomic conditions, isolation - all those types of factors. I will take a moment to explain what it means for a typical school, and give some examples which apply to the electorates of every member of this House. The 26 000 computers to be supplied to government schools over four years means that for each computer the school will receive a grant of \$2 000. That is the per capita component. The cost of a suitable computer is about \$1 700, although in a tender process that cost may be reduced to \$1 500. Schools will have available some surplus funds for technical support and professional development. All schools will receive additional funding, on the same basis, for professional development, cabling through the schools, technical back-up and maintenance. That will vary on a needs basis between an additional \$400 a year for each computer and \$1 900 for schools in isolated or low socioeconomic areas.

A metropolitan primary school with 350 students will receive funding of \$79 000, over four years that will purchase 28 computers and there will be \$23 000 in additional support funding for technology use and professional development. A metropolitan senior high school with 1 300 students will receive \$490 000. That will purchase 201 computers for that school, and there will be \$88 000 for additional back-up funding. A district high school with 700 students will receive \$195 000. That will purchase 72 computers and \$51 000 will be available as additional funding for technical support.

It is an extraordinarily large program. Schools will start to get computers and the funding from the beginning of the 1999 school year. If schools make inquiries, they should be told not to fudge the audit forms. Nothing is to be gained from that. All school will be allocated funds on a per capita basis. The Education Department wants to establish the current status. The minimum allocation will be to ensure that one computer will be available for every five secondary school students, and one computer for every 10 primary school students. In reality many schools will be well ahead of that ratio.

SCHOOL COMPUTERS

79. Mrs van de KLASHORST to the Minister for Education:

Is any money allowed in the additional funds allocated for training, for networking, cabling and online costs to other schools?

Mr BARNETT replied:

The schools will have a fair level of discretion about the use of these funds, so long as they meet the minimum ratio requirements. They must meet those minimum requirements and then use the money for technology. It cannot be used to reticulate the oval or restock the library, for instance. It must be used for professional development, networking the school, satellite dishes, software, professional training, maintenance backup and so on.

TEACHER REGISTRATION

80. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the minister's commitment in June to commission a discussion paper on teacher registration, and ask -

- (1) What action has the minister taken to initiate the paper?
- (2) Who will prepare the discussion paper?
- (3) When will it be available for public response?

Mr BARNETT replied:

- (1)-(3) I made a commitment during debate on the School Education Bill to commission a discussion paper on teacher registration. A person has not yet been appointed, and I imagine it will be a tender process in which proposals will be sought. I do not think it will be a long exercise, and I hope a discussion paper will be prepared by the end of this year or, if not, at the beginning of next year at the latest.

TOXIC PIT, BELLEVUE

81. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the minister's claim about the toxic pit in Bellevue that the wall will be constructed using in-ground techniques with minimal disturbance of the soil, and that it is not planned that contaminated material will be excavated or removed from the site, and ask -

- (1) Is excavation using a crane and shovel minimal disturbance?
- (2) Is it safe for a family to continue to live at Lot 49 Henkin Street, with a storage bunker for excavated material situated near their back fence?
- (3) Why has work begun on site with no safety measures in place?
- (4) Will the minister assure residents that the proposed public meeting will be held in Bellevue and that residents will not be restricted in the questions they can ask?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(4) The Government is always very conscious of the need to make sure there is full public consultation and involvement in these matters, particularly when dealing with contamination on sites close to residences.

Mrs Roberts: It has fallen down in Bellevue at the moment.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will investigate the issues raised. Obviously the first two questions are too technical for me to answer, but I will get back to the member this afternoon about some of those issues.

HOMESWEST HOUSING, MANDURAH

82. Mr MARSHALL to the Minister for Housing:

Homeswest has played an important role in providing accommodation for the increasing population in Mandurah. What future housing construction is anticipated for the city of Mandurah and what criteria are used in the allocation of that housing?

Dr HAMES replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The members for Dawesville and Mandurah write to me frequently about Homeswest issues in that region. Homeswest has committed to a building program for 1998-99 of \$1.5m, consisting of the following: Seven units for seniors accommodation; four family units - two of which are mobility units; one unit of family accommodation for Aboriginal applicants; four units of accommodation for the Milligan Foundation which deals with people with disabilities under the community housing program; and two units for the Calvary youth services under the crisis accommodation program. In addition, a further three units of accommodation under the Milligan Foundation have been carried forward. That is the basic plan for those areas.

As the member is aware, through the developments being undertaken that affect the Peninsula Caravan Park, the Government is involved in the committee looking at the possibility of providing additional units to cope with what may be the reasonably urgent needs of people in the caravan park who wish to move into Homeswest accommodation. In the budget reviews, the Government will consider making a special allocation to assist those people in the caravan park.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT BUDGET SHORTFALL

83. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the Premier's insistence, repeated in answer to opposition questions, that the Education Department meet productivity dividends of \$19m for 1997-98 and \$27m for this financial year, and ask -

- (1) By how much was the Education Department in deficit at 30 June 1998?
- (2) What is now the current estimated shortfall in the Education Department's 1998-99 budget?
- (3) How will these shortfalls be funded?

Mr BARNETT replied:

- (1) My recollection is that the deficit for 1997-98 was \$22m.
- (2)-(3) With regard to the projected deficit for this year, I cannot answer that from memory. There is no doubt that the Government has introduced some substantial programs in education in the past two years, not the least of which are the kindergarten programs for four-year-old and five-year-old children. The Government has been very flexible in that and has accommodated new construction activity. The Education budget ran into deficit last year and probably will this year.

Following the last election, the Government has effectively instituted all its election commitments in education. I do not anticipate any rapid growth. We will refine and work within that. This year and last year the budget was tight.

Mr Ripper: Not tight, in deficit.

Mr BARNETT: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition demonstrates a lack of understanding of public finance.

The Opposition talks about the budget being in deficit. It talks about an activity that is 100 per cent Government funded. It is not as though schools are not operating, teachers are not working or bills have not been paid. We have spent more in that financial year than the budget originally dictated. It is not a deficit nor is it a loss. It means that the Government has spent \$20m more on education than it said it would.

PLANNING

*Review of Strategy***84. Mrs HOLMES to the Minister for Planning:**

Can the minister inform this House whether Western Australia's state planning strategy has been the subject of an independent review? If so, what are the results of that review or critical assessment?

Mr KIERATH replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

The state planning strategy which was released in September last year - and I think I made copies available to all

members of this House - was assessed by the national Royal Australian Planning Institute which comprises a judging panel of three former presidents. On 7 July this year, it was awarded the national occasional special award for excellence at the conference in Brisbane. The State's planning strategy was recognised for its innovation and vision and it shows that this State can lead the nation. We have a document that blueprints a vision for development, recreation, work and similar activities in Western Australia for the next 20 years. It is a document of which we can be extremely proud.

Dr Gallop: I am told your favourite video is *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Mr KIERATH: When the Leader of the Opposition was in government, he had an acute lack of vision. We will ensure while we are in government that we have a vision so that we know where we and the people of this State are going. We certainly hope that we will not be lead by people such as the Leader of the Opposition.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

85. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Education:

I refer to claims on radio by government backbenchers that the minister has agreed to freeze moves to amalgamate high schools in Bunbury.

- (1) Do the minister's changes to his local area planning scheme provide for consideration of the marginality of the electorates in which the schools recommended for closure are located?
- (2) If not, what special circumstances have given Bunbury Senior High School and not Kewdale Senior High School a reprieve and will the minister extend those special circumstances to Kewdale?

Mr BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for what is quite an extraordinary question.

- (1)-(2) The decision with respect to Kewdale Senior High School and other schools has been announced and is being implemented. That decision was made and endorsed by Cabinet. A number of detailed issues arise that are being dealt with. There has been much controversy and debate within the community about the three schools. The local members for Mitchell and Bunbury have expressed their concerns to me, and the situation is not dissimilar to the acrimony that arose in the western suburbs in the south east corridor. I am very keen that such a situation is not repeated. I have also made the point to the members that Bunbury Senior High School, Newton Moore Senior High School and Australind High School are good schools with strong community support. The local area planning process will continue. I have not ruled out anything and I have said to the members and I say -

Mr Ripper: They are wrong, are they?

Mr BARNETT: No, the member is wrong. I have said that the process will continue. It will not be rushed, but there may be very substantial advantages. For example, I have said we should not rule out the possibility that we may end up with the development of a senior college in conjunction with the College of TAFE and university campus. The reality is that the Government has just committed \$88m to provide additional capital works as a result of the local area planning process. That means changes will not occur in Bunbury and other areas until 2001-2003. We shall continue the process, but we should not close off the options. Nothing will happen quickly in that or the other area. Members opposite may laugh; however, they do not recognise that we can only spend \$88m over two years. I do not have another \$90m to spend, but I assure you, Mr Speaker, that once we have spent this \$88m, we shall do the same elsewhere and modernise secondary education throughout the State.

BUSSELTON PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE

86. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Education:

The new primary school in East Busselton is now open and functioning well, leaving the old site in central Busselton to be disposed of.

- (1) Could the minister advise the likely timing of the disposal of the land and buildings at the old school site, and whether the Education Department proposes to use any of the now abandoned buildings?
- (2) If the buildings are not wanted, could they be made available for relocation and use by community groups and, if so, under what conditions?

Mr BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(2) The new primary school is now operational and the transition of the students and development of that site has proved to be very smooth and effective. The old Busselton Primary School site which is in central Busselton comprised three separate pieces of land with road separation which is clearly no longer suitable for primary school students as Busselton grows. The sale of that site is being handled by the Department of Land Administration on behalf of the Education Department. I am advised that DOLA is currently awaiting approval of a rezoning application for the site and it expects the sale to be completed by the end of this year. I am also told that all of the permanent improvements on the site will be part of the sale. If it is rezoned, it will be sold as is. The facilities at the school which were relocatable have already been moved and the transportable classrooms are now at the new east Busselton site. The Education Department is currently investigating the possible relocation of the covered assembly facility.
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