



# **Parliamentary Debates**

**(HANSARD)**

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT  
THIRD SESSION  
1999

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 22 September 1999

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**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Bloffwitch) took the Chair at 12 noon, and read prayers.

## **HIGH LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP, PANGEA RESOURCES PROPOSAL**

### *Petition*

Mr Kobelke presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 68 persons -

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

We, the undersigned residents of Western Australia are totally opposed to the Pangea proposal to locate a high level nuclear waste dump in Western Australia.

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 49.]

## **DESALINATED WATER FEASIBILITY STUDY**

### *Statement by Minister for Water Resources*

**DR HAMES** (Yokine - Minister for Water Resources) [12.06 pm]: At last night's launch of the Water Corporation's annual report I announced that the Government had approved a major feasibility study into the provision of desalinated water for Western Australia. The study will investigate providing desalinated water to the metropolitan area, regional centres and industry. The Water Corporation will carry out the study and is establishing a team at its Leederville headquarters for the purpose. The study will be headed by a leading authority in desalination technology, and I hope to announce the appointment early next month. The team will have a wide-ranging brief, including all desalination applications such as mechanical, thermal and reverse osmosis processes. There is little doubt that, if successful, this project will allow us to access water resources in Western Australia that have previously not been available for potable supplies or industrial use.

Desalination has been on the drawing board for some years but it was not considered a serious possibility, until recently, because of the cost. The price of desalinated water is dropping rapidly as technology improves. Present world best practice in the United States brings the cost of a kilolitre of desalinated water to about 77¢ Australian per kilolitre. Although this cost cannot be compared directly with that in Western Australia, it indicates an increasingly competitive market. If similar prices can be achieved in Western Australia, desalination is a real possibility. Piping water from the Kimberley costs almost \$4 a kilolitre.

During my recent trip with the Water Corporation to the Sultanate of Oman and Israel we studied desalination plants which are among the biggest in the world. That experience convinced us it was time to investigate providing desalinated water in Western Australia. The Water Corporation has grown to a point where it has already begun to use this technology in a minor way. For example, it is involved in a feasibility study with Western Power and Kwinana industry to provide potable water using seawater and power from the Kwinana power station. The Water Corporation has recently completed a plant for Ravensthorpe in the great southern that has dramatically improved water supply security for that community.

The study will investigate utilising desalination technology in a variety of ways. It will investigate producing potable water from various poor quality sources, such as the Ravensthorpe plant, for remote municipal applications. These methods will offer the potential to enhance water supplies to regional centres that have reached the limit of their natural resources of fresh water by harvesting saline or brackish resources.

For the resources sector the focus will be on ocean supplies that can be provided at a suitable quality for potable supplies and process applications. Desalination technology might also be applied to treated wastewater to make it suitable for industrial processing. I emphasise that desalination technology would add to the range of water supplies but not dominate them.

The major applications we see for the process is where there is a demand by industry for process water of high quality for communities and where energy is available from local power supplies. The cost of power is a vital factor and I have also asked that the study investigate the potential for using "green" power in producing desalinated water. This could include the use of biogas-driven generators taking their source of energy from landfill sites.

Secure water supply is the most pressing issue the Water Corporation faces and I believe desalination is highly appropriate for Western Australia's largely dry environment. I know Western Australians will follow the study with great interest and I wish the team every success.

## **PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS**

### *Statement by Minister for Services*

**MR BOARD** (Murdoch - Minister for Services) [12.10 pm]: I rise to inform the House of the progress made in the important area of procurement training. Over the past five months more than 380 public sector personnel have participated

in one of eight procurement and contracting professional development seminars. These professional development seminars are a part of a series on different topics which began in May and are scheduled to run until the end of November.

The seminars have been attended by representatives of over 50 government agencies as well as representatives from government trading enterprises, local government, technical and further education colleges and hospitals.

The first regional seminar, which will cover intellectual property in contracting, is scheduled for Bunbury on 4 November. The Department of Contract and Management Services commenced the procurement and contracting professional development seminars on 12 May this year. The seminars have come about as a response to the State Supply Commission's review in May, which recommended that a greater emphasis should be placed on the development of procurement education in the public sector. The main point of procurement education in the past has been on the lower, simple end of the competency spectrum. The State Supply Commission review suggested that there was a need to increase the procurement education effort at the higher or strategic end of the competency spectrum.

These seminars are one of the key strategies introduced by CAMS which are designed to meet the gap in procurement education. The seminars have covered a different topic relevant to procurement and contracting every four to six weeks since May. Some of the topics have included "Getting the Best Value From Consultants"; "GST Implementation in Government Contracting; and "Insurance and Contracting". The next planned topic in this series is on e-commerce.

These seminars have been in high demand and the feedback from those who have attended has been extremely positive. The demand has in fact been so great that there has been a need to schedule additional seminar sessions for each topic. These seminars provide an excellent opportunity for CAMS to work in partnership with relevant experts in the various fields covered, in government, in professional associations and in the private sector.

Most of these seminar partners have important messages to relay to public sector workers in the procurement field, but they are not in a position to coordinate such an event. As a result, agencies have been more than happy to work with CAMS. Some of the seminar partners have included the Department of Commerce and Trade, Treasury, RiskCover, the Crown Solicitor's Office, the Institute of Management Consultants, and Ernst and Young. CAMS has received positive feedback from all seminar partners, who have been extremely satisfied with the quality, professionalism and management of the seminars.

The Department of Contract and Management Services has whole-of-government responsibility for procurement education, which includes simple, complex and strategic level accredited programs. The seminars have been designed to reflect best practice in adult learning techniques.

These seminars are a demonstration of the Government's commitment to ensuring that public sector workers in the contracting field are well informed. Procurement and contracting has emerged as a very complex and dynamic area and it is important for government to lead the way in its education.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2) 1999**

*Declared Urgent*

**MRS EDWARDES** (Kingsley - Minister for Labour Relations) [12.14 pm]: In accordance with Standing Order 168(2), I move-

That the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 1999 be considered an urgent Bill.

Members will be aware that this legislation complements the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Bill 1997, which was dealt with by the House last night. The provisions were also previously considered by the upper House about two weeks ago. It would be nice if both could go together following the amendments which are to go back to the Legislative Council this evening.

**MR KOBELKE** (Nollamara) [12.15 pm]: The Opposition will support the motion to have the Bill declared urgent so that it can be considered without the full lapse of three weeks from the time it was first introduced. As cases come forward of Bills to be judged urgent within the new standing orders I suspect that we will see a range of interpretations or meanings placed on the word "urgent". The House will make judgments from time to time as to what is considered urgent. This Bill is urgent as it is convenient and proper that it be dealt with along with the other package of legislation which went through the House last night. It cannot be considered urgent in the sense that the matter is new or suddenly pressing. The Bill to return redemptions was drafted in 1995 and has been before the Parliament in various forms through 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999. In speaking to the Bill I will make some comment on that aspect.

The commencement section of the Bill is of uncommon form. It comes into operation immediately after the commencement of sections 14, 15 and 32 of the Workers' Compensation Rehabilitation Amendment Act 1997, which is part of the Bill that went through the House last night. It is a matter of good and proper management that this Bill should have passage through the Parliament at the same time. On that basis I accept that the Bill fits the requirements of standing orders to be considered urgent. On other occasions with other Bills sought to be declared urgent we may make a different judgment. It is appropriate that the Bill go through with the other Bill. It is all one legislative package. The Government had to bring it forward in two different pieces of legislation because of the requirements of standing orders in the other place and possibly here.

Question put and passed.

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 14 September.

**MR KOBELKE** (Nollamara) [12.17 pm]: This Bill is part of a total package and I will not attempt to address the whole range of issues involved with the Bills. The Government made major changes to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act in 1993 and the Opposition strenuously opposed the changes. They led to a reduction in the rights of injured workers and the level of benefits available to them. The changes included the removal, in large part, of the ability of insurance companies, with the agreement of injured workers, to settle a continuing claim by way of a lump sum redemption. The Opposition pointed out that there were major problems with that. The insurance companies and various sectors of industry made it very clear to the Government that they thought the Government was creating a problem by removing redemptions. We see now the proof that that advice was correct. The Government made a major mistake in not accepting the advice because this Bill is to return open redemptions. The then minister, now the Minister for Planning, did not listen to the advice. I do not think the motives of the minister at the time were other than totally honourable. He was keen to see rehabilitation play a major role in our workers compensation system. Rehabilitation is something we should support, but it is a very complex area and there is criticism that it is not working well at the current time.

People should be totally committed to ensuring that rehabilitation for injured workers is as effective and efficient as possible. If employees go back to work, it minimises the disruption to their lives and to their families. In addition, it is likely to reduce costs in the system if people return to work. There are good reasons to have an effective rehabilitation system. In 1993 the minister was fearful that redemptions were a way of getting the injured worker's case off the books and, in some cases, were likely to undermine the possibility of rehabilitation and fixing the problem for the worker. The minister was genuine in his motivation but he failed to listen to the sound advice that the amendment put in place would create problems, not provide the positive aspects he sought, and have the negative impact of increasing costs. Clearly, that has happened.

Although the whole focus of this Government has been on reducing or closing down common law claims, as one of the major cost centres in the problems with the escalation of workers compensation premiums, a review of the costs indicates that it is only one of the cost problems. The figures available to me allow comparisons to be made between 1992-93, the last year before the 1993 legislative changes, and 1997-98, the latest year for which the various costs have been presented in annual reports. I ask the minister in her response to indicate if she can table the costs for the 1998-99 financial year. I know they will be in preparation, if not finalised. If they are finalised, I would like them to be tabled so that up-to-date comparisons can be made. I am making this comparison from memory, so I am willing to be corrected if I am wrong. I understand that during the period 1993-94 to 1997-98, medical costs increased by 66 per cent. The total quantum in millions of dollars was smaller than the weekly payments and common law claims, but it was a large percentage increase in medical costs. The cost increase in weekly payments over that same period was more than 40 per cent, and the cost increase for common law claims was 44 per cent or 45 per cent. The cost of the system overall was running at an increase of more than 40 per cent. People who put all the blame on common law claims have not looked in an objective and dispassionate way at the figures available. The situation has changed over the past 12 months and some higher increases may be attributable to common law claims during that period.

At the end of the 1997-98 financial year, there was a large increase in both weekly payments and common law payments, and that was a major concern about the system. The point of the Bill before the House is that the two are intimately connected. In 1993 changes were made to the system and a restriction was placed on redemptions to the point that in large part they closed down. As a result, insurers sought a way of getting injured workers receiving weekly payments off their books. I am not suggesting there is anything improper in that; that is good cost management and for many injured workers it is the best outcome. However, it is necessary to be careful because it is not the best outcome in all cases. Leaving aside those qualifications, the insurers, quite rightly in many cases, sought another means of removing the weekly payments being made to a worker and settling the claim. As they could not do it through the lump sum redemptions, they looked to the second gateway of common law as a means of paying the redemption. That opened a floodgate of claims through the second gateway into common law, claims which were never intended to go through that second gateway. Therefore, the Government is right in saying that gateway was abused, but that happened only because the Government restricted the proper and appropriate method of redemptions, which are now reintroduced in this Bill.

The insurers, injured workers and their lawyers sought another means of addressing the problems confronting them, and that was to use the second gateway. In the early days when leave of the court was sought for a second gateway common law claim, a test was made to ensure it reached the threshold of the prescribed amount. In order to make a second gateway common law claim, people had to demonstrate a future financial loss which reached the threshold, which today is \$109 000. For whatever reasons, the courts changed the procedure, believing that proper process meant a judgment could not be made at that stage, and tests were no longer applied for leave to be granted. Therefore, once leave had been granted it was possible for people to reach an out of court settlement for an amount considerably below the threshold amount. The checks and balances in the system were simply pushed aside. Claims were settled out of court for amounts between \$30 000 and \$50 000, which should have been redemptions. As redemptions, they may have cost \$15 000 or \$20 000. It resulted in a cost escalation in order to get people out of the system, using common law instead of the old method of redemption. There was a close connection between the cost blow-outs in the weekly payments, because more and more people were stuck in the system, and the cost blow-out in common law claims because injured workers and insurance companies were using them for redemptions.

There are two continuing negative impacts from this change to the system that were not intended. First, the quantum of payments made through a common law claim is judged substantially higher than those made under the old system of redemption. That certainly caused a cost blow-out. In addition, there were all the legal costs and the system opened up an

expectation that people would go to common law for many smaller injuries. The return of redemptions provided for in this Bill does not mean there is much chance of the system operating as it did prior to 1993, and that people will seek a redemption in order to settle their claims. They know now that there is a wide open door and ready means of gaining an equal or, more likely, higher amount through a common law claim. The return of redemptions will not restore the system to its balanced state in 1993. People may argue that there were problems with the system then, but it did not have the same cost pressures and concerns about premiums that are evident today.

The principal provision contained in this Bill, of restoring the potential for lump sum redemptions to be freely and openly available, will not overcome the problem. The Bill dealt with yesterday looked at a range of improved benefits in some areas but primarily restricted access to common law. Injured workers have a clear restriction on access to common law and will be left in the statutory system. The redemptions provided for in this Bill will be a crucial part of the overall system to enable people to gain some justice by way of a lump sum payment, and will allow insurers to make an offer to enable people to move from the statutory system and to finalise their case.

It has been a gross mismanagement of the system for the Government to leave this matter for this long. The Government realised in 1995 that the removal of redemptions could not continue and that some form of redemption must be reintroduced, and it drafted the Bill which we now know as the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Bill 1997. That Bill contained a number of provisions to tidy up and improve the Act, and it contained three or four negative aspects with which we took issue, but it returned redemptions to the workers compensation system and on the whole was a positive move. In 1996 - I am not sure about 1995, because we never debated this matter - the Labor Opposition declared its support for that Bill. In 1997, when those same measures were put together in a slightly different way in a Bill with a new number, we again supported the passage of that Bill. Therefore, in 1996, 1997 and 1998, the Labor Party supported the return of redemptions and the general package of the Bill in which that was contained, and it was the Government that failed to put the Bill through the Parliament. We did not delay the Bill. The Government could have put the Bill through the Parliament had it wished, but year after year it left it to the last week or two of the parliamentary session and either ran out of time or tried other moves which caused the matter to become bogged down.

This matter has been totally mismanaged. One can only guess why it has been mismanaged. My hunch is that the former Minister for Labour Relations found it too difficult to admit that he got it wrong in 1993 and on that basis did not give the Bill the priority it required. There may also have been other internal reasons in the Government to explain why the minister could not get the Bill up, such as the fact that he had a lot of other controversial legislation to get through the Parliament, but one cannot see why the Bill was not pushed through. We are now in 1999, four years later, finally doing what should have been done in 1995 or 1996 at the latest; and had it been done then, I believe we would not have the cost blow-outs that we have today. That is not to say that there is not a range of other problems in the workers compensation system, but the removal of redemptions was the catalyst that caused those other problems to escalate. Had redemptions been retained in the system, the increase in common law costs through the second gateway would have occurred a lot more slowly. The removal of redemptions was the trigger that created an avalanche of costs in a number of areas. The Government recognised that by the fact that it drafted the Bill in 1995. However, it left it until 1998 and 1999 to make any real push to get the legislation through, which hopefully will occur today.

The 1997 Bill was brought in on the last sitting day of the autumn session of 1998. The Government sought to close down common law and the second gateway by an addendum to the 1997 Bill. That was something that members on this side could not accept. I do not believe that the argument that common law should be taken out of the system is viable. The fact that some States have taken it out has led to a range of other problems, which I will not go into now. There is very good reason to retain common law as an integral part of our workers compensation system, and even the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is now of the view that common law should be part of the system, although we have different views about how big a role it should play, and I know it does not like the second gateway.

The matter was then referred to a select committee in the other place, which handed down a report, which I will not try to summarise, which supported what I said earlier; namely, that it was not just common law that was driving the costs but also weekly payments and medical expenses. The Government, when it realised that it would not get those additional changes through the other place, sat on the matter until November-December last year, when it tried to make some further amendments to the Bill to again try to reduce access to common law. Even at that stage, the Opposition continued to say we supported the Bill, as we have for three years, and that we would support its general thrust to tighten up common law. However, we sought to amend the Bill so that it would be more workable and not as harsh in certain areas. Therefore, even at that stage we did not reject the Government's attempt to restrict access to common law; we just disagreed about the mechanism and how tight it should be. However, in late 1998, the Government walked away from a Bill which would return redemptions to the system. We called on the Government late last year to put the Bill through so that we would have redemptions, which are now before us in this Bill, and to tighten up the procedures in a new Bill that would follow. It is now September 1999, almost 12 months later, and the Government is finally about to put through a Bill which returns lump sum redemptions to the system. In that time, business has been hit severely by a large escalation in premium costs. Last year, the average increase in workers compensation premiums was 13.6 per cent, and this year it is 35 per cent. That is unacceptable, not only because it has lifted those premiums to a much higher level, but also because an increase of that magnitude was not expected by many businesses and enterprises and they had not budgeted for it. That is clearly bad management on the part of this Government. The move to return redemptions was in a Bill in this House in 1995, and it is only now, four years later, that we are finally about to fix this part of the system. Redemptions are a crucial part of the system, but they must be taken in the context of the whole package; and that is why I have made some reference to the whole package.

The new provision for the availability of lump sum redemptions is made on the basis that the worker has permanent total or partial incapacity, which will exclude workers whose incapacity is not permanent. I am not saying we should move the other way, but that is clearly a criterion, and if we include workers who do not have a permanent incapacity, it may open up the potential for abuse in that workers may be enticed into a lump sum redemption at too early a stage. In some cases where the worker's situation has stabilised and he is likely to get better, but where the period for which he will remain on weekly payments may be extensive, it may be of advantage to both parties to allow a redemption. However, as I read it, that would be excluded if it was not a permanent incapacity. I ask the minister to comment on that. I am not adopting a position which contradicts what is in the Bill, but it is a boundary issue, and there will always be cases on one or the other side of the boundary which should get in depending on where one sets the boundary.

The second boundary issue is that the injured worker must have been on weekly payments for not less than six months. Again, I am not saying it should be less, because there is good reason for not allowing redemptions too early. However, on the other hand, the minister may wish to say in which cases workers will be dealt with harshly by having to wait for six months and in which cases the interests of injured workers will be protected by ensuring that they do have to wait for six months.

Another requirement is that there be agreement between the worker and the employer. Then there will be a role for the director to ensure the agreement means something, that not just one party is saying there is agreement when there is not. There is a need for it to be registered, which requires regulations and a proper process to be laid down. As I said in the debate last night, here, as in many places, we see the use of regulations for the director to have a great deal of power. In many instances, that is the most efficient way to do things; however, it opens up problems when there is a huge area of regulation with power given to one officer. One cannot always rely on the fact that a competent and experienced officer will always hold the position, as is the case at present. There are dangers in legislation which involves too many regulatory powers in important areas, particularly if there are limited or no review processes for some of the decisions made under the regulations.

Mrs Edwardes: So that there is no confusion, is the member aware that the director is Mr Ross Monger?

Mr KOBELKE: I may have slipped up when I was talking by confusing the chief executive officer at WorkCover Western Australia and the director for this purpose of the Act.

I will canvass another matter relating to these powers. The agreement then is registered by the director so that a redemption is made. Can the minister comment on this important legal technical point: Is the injured worker who has taken a redemption normally expected to be excluded from launching a common law action? The election processes in the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Bill 1997, which we dealt with last night, will most probably fix that issue. I know insurers have been concerned that legally the taking up of redemptions did not preclude further action, such as common law claims.

Mrs Edwardes: It depends on whether it is in the agreement.

Mr KOBELKE: Even if it is, there is a suggestion that legal loopholes can sometimes be found. I am asking the minister whether it is her understanding that, given the way redemptions will be issued under the provisions in this Bill, it is expected that the taking up of a lump sum redemption will in all cases exclude access to common law; or in some cases whether that will still be left open. For the purposes of clarity, what is the minister's view of the intent of the legislation and how it is likely to be put into effect and utilised by injured workers and the insurers.

Those are the main questions I would ask were we to go into the consideration in detail stage; however, as we do not wish to delay the business of the House and having given notice to the minister of those matters, I hope she will be able to respond to them fully in her reply to the second reading debate. We will support the Bill, as we have since 1996, so that redemptions are available as an important part of the workers compensation and rehabilitation system.

**MS ANWYL** (Kalgoorlie) [12.43 pm]: It has been well traversed in the Parliament how overdue the legislation is, so I look forward to the minister's explanation of the precise nature of that delay. It is my understanding that the Bill must be presented in this form because of some rule relating to the other House. I am certainly not an expert about what goes on at that end of the Parliament; I have enough difficulty with the processes at this end of the place. I would be obliged if the minister would clarify the reason for the separate piece of legislation and the practical problems that might create, if any; perhaps there is none. I will touch on the long overdue need for redemption legislation and the reason that provision was taken out. I would have liked the Minister for Planning, the member for Riverton, to be here to participate in this debate. We have been debating workers compensation for some time, and I do not think he has made a contribution, notwithstanding, as I understand it, that he was the architect of the removal of the redemption provisions from the workers compensation legislation. If I had done that, I would have had the courage to get up in the Parliament and participate in a debate such as this and explain why it was necessary to remove this provision from the workers compensation legislation. Although some of the other jurisdictions may have removed common law absolutely, they have never thought about removing redemption provisions. I suspect that part of the reason the former Minister for Labour Relations chose to remove redemptions was that he did not think workers should get any form of lump sum at all. He was all about removing workers' rights to common law.

As I said in this place yesterday, in 1993 a very significant number of workers had their right removed to pursue common law compensation for injuries where their employer had been negligent. Not content with that, further legislation has gone through this place which, in my view, is an absolute disgrace. The Government is still not in a position to give any form of assurance to those business owners, who have been hardest hit by increases in workers compensation premiums, that those premiums will fall. I understand the mechanics of the way in which the rates are fixed and that the minister, personally, is

not in a position to direct the Premium Rates Committee on those rates. However, I will not accept that the Insurance Council of Australia Ltd - its representatives were here last night during the debate, but are not here today because this is not the tough end of debate we are dealing with, rather it is just a straightforward matter which, as the member for Nollamara said, should have gone through the Parliament years ago - cannot give that assurance. I will go further than that: It should never have been abolished by this Government, as it was in 1993. I am yet to hear any contrition from any member on the other side about the ridiculous decision to abolish the redemption provisions.

We do not know that premiums will fall, or they will not rise at the next opportunity or when the quarterly review takes place. We may see them rise next year. I will bet my bottom dollar that whenever there is to be a rise, the Government will be blaming somebody else for that - the Opposition, the judges, the workers compensation authority, WorkCover Western Australia, or some other party; it will not look to itself. Although I am very disappointed that the former Minister for Labour Relations cannot find time to participate in this debate and explain why he knocked off the redemption provisions in 1993, I am a little puzzled that he was not here yesterday rubbing his hands with glee when there was a further huge erosion of workers' rights in this State. Perhaps he is in his room rubbing his hands in glee as he listens to this debate.

Six years ago, in 1993, the redemption provisions were removed. The minister commented that she has her foot on the garden hose and will be looking at further reviews. One aspect that should be considered is an extension of redemption provisions. Insurers and solicitors who act for defendant insurers regard it as much more cost effective to settle claims quickly; everybody knows that. One of the reasons that we are in this mess of escalating costs of common law claims is the ineptness of insurers in handling claims. I have heard of many examples - I am sure the minister has too - from people who have worked as legal practitioners and clerks for insurance companies who say that very inexperienced clerks deal with massive numbers of claims, some of which are hopeless and of a low quantum, some of which have a capacity to be very large indeed. Any insurer worth his salt knows that the quicker a claim is settled the less the quantum of that claim. That is partly the rationale for forcing people to elect the pursuit of common law damages actions within a period of six months, which is an extraordinarily short period of time, particularly for people who reside or work in remote areas.

To develop the argument of minimising the risk exposure of insurers, it makes good sense to broaden out redemptions. An injured worker may be happy to settle a claim for a particular amount. For example, recently a woman approached me in an effort to resolve her claim because she needed to buy another motor vehicle for her husband and five children. That is the type of thing that occurs in the real world; people have pressing financial prerogatives. Often, as a solicitor, I would not advise a worker to settle his or her claim short. However, that occurs in the real world and is what people want to do. They need large sums of cash for various reasons and are prepared to settle their claims short. I would have thought it was in the interests of the lobby group - the insurance industry - which this Government is working so hard to protect to allow that to occur. I understand, in the concept of permanent total or permanent partial incapacity, that "permanent" is very much something that is desired by the insurance industry. However, anyone who has dealt with workers compensation claims can give examples of workers who have been on weekly payments for a significant period of time, perhaps more than a year, yet their general practitioners or specialists - whether they be the insurers' specialists, the "hired guns" that insurers tend to use, the treating specialist, or a plaintiff's specialist - are not prepared to certify the injury as permanent. However, the injured person continues to obtain monthly certificates of incapacity and continues to receive weekly payments. It can be in the best interests of the insurer, certainly from a financial point of view, and also perhaps in some cases the worker, for a provision allowing these settlements to occur.

In the old days, pre-1993, solicitors regularly negotiated settlements whereby workers compensation payments would cease, the person would receive a loading of \$5 000 to \$10 000 and a small amount for legal costs and would then be off the books. We could take this situation a great deal further and consider further redemptions. It is an absolute disgrace that we have had to wait six years for redemptions to be reintroduced into this place. It is an absolute disgrace that the member of Parliament who was the architect of these changes has not even bothered to participate in this debate. I look forward to hearing the minister's reasons for the delay.

**MRS EDWARDES** (Kingsley - Minister for Labour Relations) [12.54 pm]: I thank members opposite for their support and comments. I will respond to a couple of points raised about the reason why redemptions have not been reintroduced before this date. The amendments which were introduced in 1997-98 were not as broad as the proposal in the current Bill. We have been able to better deal with broadening out the issue of redemptions because we have removed the second gateway. This will enable redemptions to be used in a much better way. The provisions in this Bill will enable redemptions of the residual effect of disabilities, whether permanent partial or permanent total disabilities; in other words, a redemption of the residual disability itself, which disability must therefore be permanent.

In response to the comment about the disadvantage to workers of the six-month provision, that provision does not come into play as we are talking about redemption of the residual disability, therefore the timing does not make much difference. If a worker, for example, became a quadriplegic, and it was well known within a few weeks after the accident occurred that there was little likelihood of a change to that prognosis, that worker could redeem before six months. However, the six-months provision at least allows time to go by to enable proper assessments and the like to occur. That is probably the only time that a worker would want to redeem at a much earlier stage - when it is obvious that the worker has a permanent and total disability.

For the House's clarification, the reason for the separation of the legislation was primarily the standing orders. Because we were amending the amendment that had come from the other place and were dealing only with one clause relating to the second gateway, and therefore common law, we were unable to bring into the Parliament an amendment to clause 32, as it was at that time, for redemptions. We needed to either separate out that clause and have it dealt with as a discrete Bill or undertake a longer process in the other place in order to have the matters dealt with together. It was decided that it was

better to do it in a much simpler way, to be honest, open and up-front about it, to state that it went together as a package, and to pull out the redemption provision so that it could be dealt with quickly and neatly. It is now simpler for us to identify it.

The member for Nollamara identified the previous intention of the Government by pointing to the restriction on redemptions which was primarily to enable people to concentrate more on rehabilitation so that they would not look upon an injury as a pot of gold. It was a genuine attempt by the former Minister for Labour Relations to ensure that injured workers' needs would be met. As we have discussed, the second gateway was being used in a way to get to redemption because insurance companies want to redeem common law claims. Although redemptions were available under the conciliation and review system, the insurance companies did want redemptions of the common law aspect too and used the second gateway to enable that to happen.

The member for Kalgoorlie is correct; we must have strong management by the insurance companies, particularly with the reintroduction of a broadening of the redemption clause. If there is no strong management of those claims, it can be easy for insurance companies to just make a commercial decision. It might be a good commercial decision for them, but it might not be a good commercial decision for the employer. Again this is why the emphasis is now on the employer and the employee as the key stakeholders in the whole of this debate and it takes the lawyers and the insurance companies out of the debate.

The member for Nollamara raised a question about redeeming common law and that was dealt with in part by the amendments to the other Bill which we moved last night, and comes down to section 67, so the common law aspect is redeemed. We believe that cuts out the legal loophole, if there were a potential legal loophole. It gives a level of certainty for the insurance companies, when they are redeeming, that they cover both the statutory benefits as well as the common law. As the member identified, it is clearly an agreement between the employer and the employee. The role of the director is for registration. The director no longer has to look at the adequacy of the amount because it is an agreement.

In addressing all those issues, I have covered the members' points. The figures are on their way. They have not arrived as yet, otherwise I would have tabled them. As soon as they arrive, I will give members copies.

Mr Kobelke: I seek further clarification on the interplay between the redemptions which will be available under this Bill and the issue of rehabilitation. The 1997 Bill which sought to return redemptions did so on a more limited basis. This is a fairly wide open access to redemption. Part of that limited access was to do with ensuring that rehabilitation had been attempted or was judged to be of no value. The minister made a comment a few minutes ago that there had to be an interrelation - that was not her term - between the two. Can she make a comment on that because I am concerned that, although we support the full return of redemptions, we do not wish to see it opening up other abuses which will push an injured worker out of the system with redemptions when, in some instances, a program of rehabilitation would be clearly in the best interests of the injured worker and probably in the best interests of the system as a whole.

Mrs EDWARDES: The injury management program, which we launched in May, finesses that better than when the rehabilitation provisions were included in the first lot of amendments in 1993. Rehabilitation commences at week four. Although there is redemption at six months, rehabilitation has been brought forward and a plan has been made for the injured worker's life, as well as for the employer's life. The member would recall that under the injury management program, the employer, the employee and the employee's doctor are the three key stakeholders; they determine the rehabilitation provider. With some of the major, and very good, rehabilitation providers who had close associations with some of the insurance companies and the like, we are now seeing in certain areas a reduction of those key rehabilitation providers accessing the work. Some of the other smaller rehabilitation providers are now getting a share of the market because the employer and the employee are deciding who will be the rehabilitation provider. One of the Pearson recommendations was to assess how that injury management plan was working at six months, and we will do that. I have already asked, and have been asking since May, for regular weekly or fortnightly updates on what is happening, because there may be a potential blow-out in time if it is not correctly managed. Although I am looking at it from a cost effectiveness perspective, the member is also looking at it to ensure the rehabilitation aspect is being provided for the injured worker. We will continue to monitor that and we will do the 12-month review as recommended in the Pearson report.

Mr Kobelke: The other element of that aspect - the Pearson review - was to put in place the base level study so that when you look at it two years later, you can adequately assess the outcomes. Is that already in place?

Mrs EDWARDES: Some work is being done on that. I do not know whether it has been finalised, because that is the aspect of the rehabilitation providers being appointed, licensed and constantly assessed. Some are not happy with that, but some are very comfortable with it because they are good rehabilitation providers. Others must come up to that standard. I have said to the rehabilitation provider association that some providers are experienced and have been in the industry for a long time. They must take a much stronger leadership role in bringing some of the newer providers in the arena up to their standard. I have heard of some examples, and I am sure the member has also, where the rehabilitation provider did not do the right thing. The injury management plan should change that, but we also must be conscious of continuing to monitor it.

I will return to the other aspect in terms of the member's link between rehabilitation and redemption. Redemption must be an agreement between the employer and the employee and cannot be enforced upon the worker. That is another key aspect of this amendment. I thank members opposite for their support and commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time, proceeded through remaining stages without debate, and passed.



**GAS CORPORATION (BUSINESS DISPOSAL) BILL 1999***Consideration in Detail*

Resumed from 16 September.

Debate was adjourned after clause 5 had been agreed to.

**Clause 6: Minister may order disposal -**

Mr PENDAL: I move -

Page 5, after line 18 - To insert the following -

(6) Any order made under this section is subject to section 27A.

Advice that I was given a week or two ago is that members may discuss the full burden of the amendment proposed by the insertion of proposed section 27A in the context of clause 6. I do not know what the opposite of consequential is, but it is, one could say, pre-consequential. If there is an adequate debate on proposed section 27A under clause 6, there will be no need for repetition when we reach clause 27 and proposed section 27A.

I return to the remarks I made last Thursday. I am aware of the attitude of the Minister for Energy, whose original stance was that we were dealing with a Bill to dispose of AlintaGas. With the support of the Government, the House then agreed, for the purposes of the consideration in detail stage, to a broadening of the scope of the Bill to allow the House to discuss at least the part disbursement of whatever proceeds will come the State's way as a result of the sale. It is the contention of members of Parliament and many people in the wider community that it would be good, sound, sensible and productive in the long term to spend up to \$250m in the fight against salinity. However, I am also aware that the attitude of the Minister for Energy is that there should be preferment in the disposal of major government assets for the reduction of state debt. In many ways that is a commendable objective. However, it is also true - this is borne out by Treasury documents - that state debt levels are now at their lowest point historically. That is not my observation but Treasury's. In the next half an hour or hour I will address the question of state debt and discuss how, if state debt is not paid off, windfalls of this kind can be best and most productively used.

The member for Southern River entered the debate on Thursday by pointing out to members that it was far more important to ensure that the proceeds of the sale of AlintaGas go towards the creation of the Perth-Rockingham-Mandurah rail link. Many people argue - I am among them - that that rail link will contribute to a better environment because it will decrease people's reliance on private motor cars. However, if one held those two issues, one in each hand, and asked for the best advice possible on the most important ecological issue to address, as important as the rail link is, there is no doubt that a clear winner in the stakes of repairing a broken environment is the state of our land, and salinity would win hands down.

Dr CONSTABLE: I am interested in the remarks of the member for South Perth on the sale of AlintaGas, and I want to hear more from him.

Mr PENDAL: The evidence of what I say in this regard is plentiful. A number of members want to put that evidence before the House today so that it is clearly demonstrated that this key part of our State's infrastructure should be given a chance to remedy itself. To remind members, I said on Thursday that a generation ago in the *Western Australian Yearbook*, a government publication, the word "salinity" was not in our lexicon; it simply did not appear. We have had warnings about the state of land degradation - warnings that have been more frequent since the 1940s. However, "salinity" did not appear as an entry in the yearbook.

Let me demonstrate how serious the problem has become even since 1993. The Government has been inclined to say for three or four years that salinity is under control. I will demonstrate how it is not. I refer to an annual report on combatting salinity by Dr R. Bell and C. Clarke, to which I will return in a moment. I have a LandSearch WA Internet document headed "Satellite technology used on salt problem". In the second paragraph, dealing with the magnitude of the salinity problem in 1993, it states -

A survey of farmers conducted in 1993 reported that more than 500,000 hectares, or 3.1 per cent, of the land cleared for farming in Western Australia was saline.

I ask members to keep that figure in mind. In 1993 we had a report that 500 000 hectares of land were saline. Today, six years later, it is no longer 500 000 hectares; it is 1.8 million hectares. It is no longer affecting 3.1 per cent of arable land, as it was then when the Government changed; today it is affecting 10 per cent. That is the rate at which this cancer of the land, as it has been called, has taken its toll.

In 1996 the Government announced its long-awaited salinity action plan. Why it waited for three years I will never know. The Government was elected on a clear mandate of attacking the crisis of salinity in particular and land degradation in general. I rebut the notion that was introduced into the debate by the member for Southern River as late as last Thursday when she said that she understood it was a problem for the farmers of Western Australia. That is wrong. It is not only a problem for the whole of Western Australia, but also it is now regarded as one of the most serious attacks, if not the most serious attack, on our infrastructure in Australia. I said at a forum some months ago that the picture could be put like this: We are now confronted with the reality of 10 per cent of our arable land having been lost, and the best experts tell us that we are looking down the barrel of losing 30 per cent of our arable agricultural land in Western Australia in your lifetime and mine - perhaps more so yours, Madam Acting Speaker (Mrs Hodson-Thomas). However, that problem is exacerbating at

a serious and rapid rate. Six years ago it was 3.1 per cent of our arable land. Today it is 10 per cent and the fears are it will go to 30 per cent.

Dr CONSTABLE: I draw the House's attention to an interjection the Minister for Energy made last week when the Leader of the Opposition was making his contribution to the second reading debate. The Minister for Energy stated -

I have a responsibility to try to argue for the merit of the sale in its own right, but there is a public issue about what happens to the proceeds.

I believe the member for South Perth is making a strong case for what should happen to the proceeds of any sale, and since the minister has recognised that this is a public issue which needs debating, I would like to hear more from the member for South Perth.

Mr PENDAL: I thank the member for Churchlands and the House for that facility. If the matter is to blow out to something of that proportion - that is, up to 30 to 35 per cent of our arable land - at what point do we get the sort of emergency action the problem demands? I repeat: The salinity action plan announced in 1996 is not doing the job. I do not think the people involved are being given the wherewithal; they are certainly underspending or are being subject to under allocation by at least \$33m a year. Three years ago when the Premier launched the plan, he said this was a \$3b rehabilitation program over 30 years, meaning that we needed to begin spending \$100m a year. What are we spending three years down the track? It is interesting because the figure only came to light when the member for Southern River entered the debate. She used the figure of \$67m a year. That includes all of the federal funding, which is not much of that total, but \$67m is going towards a problem that we and the Premier know deserves \$100m a year.

I put this comment to the members of the House, including the Minister for Energy: If we were looking down the barrel of losing one-third of our industrial capacity at Kwinana, a state of emergency would be declared. The Premier would fly to Canberra, and we would probably have state addresses on the ABC. There would be emergency Cabinet meetings and all sorts of serious action would be taken to confront the problem. Let me ask a rhetorical question: What would happen if we were confronted by a loss of 30 per cent of our port capacity? What would happen if through some serious problem that had arisen in the maritime field we were on the verge of losing one-third of our port power in Western Australia? States of emergency would be declared, special Premiers conferences would be held, and ministers and Premiers would be flying back and forward. However, none of that is occurring when we are confronted with losing one-third of our rural landscape's infrastructure, the land that produces so much of this State's wealth.

Are we overstating it? I will read something said by David Williamson who has recently retired after a lifetime spent researching and observing the awful rise of salinity across the Western Australian landscape. He stated -

The recommendations for managing dryland salinisation, and preventing an increase to 30% in the area of salinised agricultural land, are not achieving their goal within the south-west of Western Australia.

I did not say that; it was not said by someone trying to get on a band wagon. It was said by one of the best scientists in the field. He said the recommendations are not achieving their goal in the south west. Mr Williamson went on to say -

Land managers have warned that their observations confirm their fear that the problem is out of control.

About 10 years ago, I recall the then Opposition doing a lot of work on dieback spread into national parks. We unearthed reports from scientists who were given to using most unscientific terms out of their sense of frustration at what was happening. On that occasion they used the words that "it was a catastrophe in the making". That was the only way the scientists could bring forward to society the seriousness of the problem and it is now being repeated. A decade later, people like David Williamson are saying the practices are not working and the problem is out of control. Hopefully, in the next few minutes I will be able to show how it is out of the control and how the Government is not addressing that problem.

Dr CONSTABLE: I would like the opportunity to hear some more remarks from the member for South Perth.

Mr PENDAL: I thank the member for Churchlands for that. It is important to get some continuity to paint what I know is a desperately gloomy picture. Unless that is understood within the government ranks, the solutions will simply not be applied.

I will close this opening gambit - because I know other members want to speak - by saying that the Government must stop treating this catastrophe as though it is some garden variety, common as muck environmental problem. It is not; it is something far more important. A real sense of urgency is needed at the cabinet level to deal with this problem. A retired government engineer, Angus Belford, put it to me and other members, including government members who sat in on the briefing, that a minister should be appointed with sole responsibility for coordinating the attack on salinity in Western Australia. With respect, the current ministerial arrangements have been unable to achieve that. Second, we should legislate in this place to bring about a statutory agency which will be empowered to do the will of the Parliament and the Government and to report back. It will probably need some fairly draconian powers. Mr Belford explained the solution as essentially being one of draining the agricultural area; draining the land on the western side of the Meckering line into the ocean and the land on the eastern side into a series of specially constructed ponds and pre-existing salt lakes. However, he points out - as others do - that we cannot do that in the present circumstances. There are the perennial fights between the local authorities about drainage matters once one crosses shire borders. With the utmost of respect to local authorities, they must be overridden. However, that will not happen under the current arrangements. Three, four and possibly five government agencies are all trying to tackle salinity from their own vantage point. No amount of tree planting by itself will solve the problem. It is too big for that; it is out of control, although the tree planting is important. That massive drainage system, possibly, would be part of the expenditure of up to \$800m. That is the way to go. Very little of that has been considered.

The Cabinet does not act with any sense of urgency that we are faced with a national disaster. It is difficult to overstate the serious nature of the problem and the figures within the Government's own publications are there for everyone to see. The Department of Commerce and Trade produced a draft document recently about regional economies in Western Australia which all but ignored the problems that we are confronted with because of salinity. That report enumerated important things to be done to fix the rural economy; salinity did not warrant a mention. That demonstrates that the Government is not on top of the salinity problem.

Mr BARNETT: This legislation is about the sale of AlintaGas. The amendment moved by the member for South Perth relates to how the proceeds of the sale should be used, and he has mounted a case for the proceeds to be used to address the salinity issue within Western Australia. I am prepared to listen to the debate. However, I do not believe that it is appropriate in such a Bill to include elements that determine how the proceeds of the sale will be used. I accept that salinity is a legitimate public issue. Ultimately, though, it is for the Executive Government to decide how the proceeds of the sale should be used and to explain and justify that to the public.

Mr Ripper: And get the budget through Parliament.

Mr BARNETT: Yes, and that is appropriate. The first call on the proceeds is the retirement of the debt of AlintaGas. Some part of it should be used to retire general consolidated debt and some part on other projects. No direct nexus exists between the sale of AlintaGas and use of the proceeds, although it is a legitimate issue of public debate. I spent 45 minutes responding in detail to issues that were raised during the second reading debate and on the issue of what should be done with the proceeds from the sale of AlintaGas and the reason that the Government was proceeding with its privatisation. I repeatedly made it clear throughout that debate that there were two different elements, and the sale of AlintaGas stood on its merit. Sound reasons exist for selling AlintaGas and the sale is justified in terms of market development, financial returns and the like. How those proceeds are used is a separate issue. I felt somewhat dismayed when I read a story in *The West Australian* on Friday with the headline "Gas sale 'not' public business", which states -

The State Government does not have to justify the sale of AlintaGas to the public, according to Energy Minister Colin Barnett.

That article was an absolute fabrication. Anyone in the press gallery who had listened to my 45-minute address could not reach that conclusion. They are separate issues. I am prepared to hear the views of members in this House on how the proceeds should be used; that is a legitimate public issue. However, the Government will not agree to amendments to the Bill to do that, but it will take note of points raised by members.

Dr EDWARDS: The Opposition opposes the sale of AlintaGas, strongly and clearly. The logic flowing from that is that we oppose this clause. Having said that, I support the claims of the member for South Perth about salinity. If this debate proceeds for one hour, arable land in the agricultural region that is the size of a football field will have been lost to salt. If that area of land is lost while we have a brief debate about salinity, we are facing a huge problem. The wheatbelt has 2 million hectares of salt-affected land, and despite everything that we are doing that area will double during the next generation and will double again before it stabilises. Salinity is the number one environmental problem facing this State. It is a huge problem; it is extremely serious. The figures that I will quote are not mine; they have been collected by scientists. Like the figures cited by the member for South Perth they are recent figures that underline how serious this situation is. Scientists now say that 30 per cent of arable land is at risk. What about our future food supply? What will happen in farming communities that rely on this land for their income? That will all be lost. Despite the work that is going on, the situation is much more serious than we realise, and the measures being taken are not sufficient to address the problem that is emerging. Farming communities and country towns will be lost.

In addition, we will see more flooding. It can be said, simplistically, that the ground water is now rising to such an extent and the ground is so saturated that heavy rain will result in flooding like that which we saw in the 1960s. The Government has not recognised that and has made little preparation for it. The Moora floods bear that out.

In addition, infrastructure is affected. I will take up some points that the member for South Perth made. If we had a repeat of the Meckering earthquake, the State Emergency Service, disaster relief organisations and the Premier in a helicopter would be in that area immediately. However, a disaster of that magnitude is occurring in country towns in the wheatbelt right now. Some of the hotels in the wheatbelt pump out their cellars daily. Towns are directly affected by the rising watertable. Footings and the lower courses of brickwork are affected by salt. Those buildings are at risk, and may be unstable. Roads are at risk. In some parts of the countryside one can see where the clearing of a few trees and the resultant rise in the watertable has damaged roads. It is a real problem. Salinity is a chronic problem; it is not an acute disaster like a sudden emergency. It is a chronic problem that we are ignoring. We are not on top of the problem.

From the environmental point of view, 850 plant species are at risk of extinction due to salinity. That is a huge number. When I was advised of that number I asked that it be checked. It is correct. What actions have been taken?

In 1996 the Premier launched the salinity action plan. As the member for South Perth said, the Premier promised \$3b over 30 years, which is \$100m a year. We were told that that \$100m a year would be made up by one-third from the Government, one-third from the private sector and one-third from the Federal Government. The Federal Government has failed dismally. It made a promise that it has not kept. The National Heritage Trust is in place, but it is not getting the money to where it is needed. The trust has a short lifespan. What happens when the National Heritage Trust no longer exists? What happens to the people who are doing the work and the programs that are initiated? It will all fall over. Does anyone know what the State Government puts in? I do not, and I am sure that the member for South Perth does not, yet every year we go over the budget with a fine toothcomb, and we ask questions. If the Government has expended \$67m one would expect a lot of

infrastructure. However, the money is not getting to where the problem is. When I add up the state government expenditure each year it is well under the promised \$30m. The explanation I received was that the program would be stepped up over five years and then wound up, but at the end of five years the State Government would have spent up to \$30m a year. A lot of money is being spent on tree planting, and that is great. However, the problem is not being tackled in the way that it deserves.

Mr RIPPER: The situation we are in with this amendment moved by the member for South Perth indicates the need for some change to our standing orders. When the Procedure and Privileges Committee reviews the trial of the new standing orders, perhaps consideration should be given to allowing, by leave of the House, longer speeches on major amendments, to avoid the situation in which, when members need more than five minutes to outline their views on an amendment, someone must get up to provide them with another opportunity to speak. In the meantime, rising to my feet is the only way in which I can allow the member for Maylands to continue her argument.

Dr EDWARDS: The launch of the salinity action plan was a good move because it showed the Government recognised a problem existed. However, the plan has failed. We are not seeing all of the measures that we were promised. Indeed, the message from scientists, farmers and the community is that the situation is much worse than even those involved in the salinity action plan predicted three years ago. The plan is now being rejigged but it is still not out, and we are still not really clear what it will contain. What is most unclear is where funding will come from to tackle the problem of salinity. The National Heritage Trust is rapidly running out of time - not that it was much good anyway. We need the Government to tell us from where it will get the money with which to tackle salinity.

Let me refer to some of the things that have been done. Some \$16m has been put into focus catchments, and 33 salaries have been provided for catchment hydrologists. All of that is not much help. We need people out there indicating how to truly tackle the problem in a sustainable way for the long term. A great failing of the Government is that only one salary is involved in saline agricultural systems. We need to change tack. We need to recognise it is a huge problem, one much worse than we first thought. We must introduce measures now which will show us how we should live and work with salinity, and we should make the hard decisions. We need to look at salt land pastures to see how we can capture the fresh water on the land and use salty soil. Avenues and opportunities exist, but to date the Government has ignored them. Agriculture Western Australia has allocated only one salary to enable an officer to look at that issue. The Deputy Premier has said he will argue with the Commonwealth to try to divert revenue from the goods and services tax into salinity. I do not care where the money comes from, but we need it soon.

I will give an example which underlines the seriousness of the problem. A couple of weeks ago in Esperance I was taken to some areas affected by salinity. I was greatly concerned that, in some of the areas I visited, half the trees that had been planted by people in good faith in the belief that they were using science appropriately, were dead. They were dead because, although they held the ground water, the roots reached the level to which the salt had risen, so the salt was killing the trees. My fear is that nobody has recognised how grave the problem is. Science is only now showing us the true situation. Many of the measures which have been adopted to date will fail and in other areas we will see the problem I witnessed where half the trees were dead. The risk is that farmers will say they have been involved in catchment groups and land care districts, they have put in a lot of money and they have applied for National Heritage Trust grants but still they have failed. The risk is they will walk away. The Government is not providing any leadership on this issue, and it needs to do so. The provision of money is one of the critical issues that must be addressed to help us to live with salinity.

I will make two observations, the first of which relates to clearing. How can we say we are serious about tackling the problem of salinity when we still allow land to be cleared? The Government needs a land clearing strategy that is consistent with its strategy on salinity. However, that strategy must have equity for the people who are being told that because of the seriousness of the salinity situation they can no longer clear their land. The second observation is to do with drainage. It is obvious we will have to go down the drainage route. The biggest difficulty with drainage is the social problem. How do we deal with this issue in communities? How do we get people to talk to each other? How do we do the work so that we do not cause any harm? We need to tackle the issue rather than sweep it under the carpet.

The Labor Party does not support this Bill. The member for Belmont will argue that energy conservation and environmental issues would be better served by having AlintaGas in public ownership. Having said that, salinity is the No 1 environmental problem. It is also an extremely serious economic problem. The Government has failed to tackle this matter. It needs to tell us its plan and from where it will get the money to deal with this issue.

Mr BRIDGE: We have a marvellous opportunity for the minister to show commanding leadership.

Mr Barnett: Not that vision thing again!

Mr BRIDGE: No, not that vision, because I do not share that vision with many people. There are not too many of us around.

By taking on board the wish of this Parliament, the minister gives us the opportunity to make a determination on the disbursement of about \$1b. That is what the argument is all about. In the context of this sale, ordinarily it would be, as the minister described earlier, an executive course of action. All we are saying is that will be basically what takes place in the end. However, in the course of the consideration of that disbursement, we want this Parliament to express a view that clearly commits approximately \$250m to deal with salinity. Not only is it a very fair proposition, but also it epitomises graphically what the voters in the bush seek from this Parliament. Since the Queensland election a year or so ago, the people of the bush have sent a very clear signal to the Parliaments of Australia. The signal is that the Governments' centralised executive processes are hurting people badly in the bush and they have had a gutful. An example of that message can be seen in the

recent Victorian election, where those in the bush dealt severely with a Government that seemed to be entrenched. They had been subjected to the most horrific, short-term, ideologically-driven policies ever confronted by the people of the bush. They voted in the way they did because they felt the Government had not adopted a caring attitude to them and they believed the centralised system of government had neglected them.

The member for South Perth requests that we agree that a proportion of the funds be set aside specifically for the fight against salinity. That would be an important decision for Parliament to make. It provides an opportunity for us to display to the public at large that we are not disenfranchised as advocates of people from the bush. Believe me, in the general run of things, we are effectively disenfranchised by the centralised system that operates now in Australia and that is driven by the Council of Australian Governments. The COAG system has taken the power of attorney out of the hands of politicians. This is our chance to show, in one instance at least, that rule will not prevail upon us.

Apart from the wonderful figures which have been put forward by the speakers before me, which provide a graphic illustration of the reason for this proposal, there is a very sound political reason that this proposition is critical. I have a map which I will hand to the minister, and if he looks at it before he responds to the points raised today, he will see the landscape of Western Australia illustrated and, tragically, the lack of good land in this State. The minister will see from that the enormous fight before us in dealing with salinity. We are coming from a very difficult position to remedy this devastating situation. We start off with a land base that in itself will make the solution difficult. Any contribution this Parliament can make, irrespective of what the executive arm of Government decides, is worthy. In that context, this proposal is valid and genuine, and it is one we should very gladly embrace because it highlights our responsibilities and obligations with regard to this problem.

Mr GRAHAM: I am always enthralled when I hear people speaking about the need to put down centralists and I would like to hear more.

Mr BRIDGE: My criticism of the centralised system should echo in the ears of all. It has been horrific in the bush. The parliamentary processes of Australia are unstable. We can no longer predict voting trends because people have had enough, not necessarily because of our inability to function at this level of the parliamentary process but because of the entrenched ideologies that are driving policies and their impact on the people of Australia. Any attack I make on the centralised system is well founded. I will attack it 24 hours a day and 10 days a week - if there were 10 days in a week.

Mr Graham: There will be in the new metric week.

Mr BRIDGE: The minister opened the door for this in his very brief remarks about the necessity for the deployment of these funds to a range of activities to be taken on board. That is a very sound point of view. However, he should go one step further - he should say this will be an agreed outcome. The map illustrates that the fight is enormous. We need a commitment from this Parliament about one of the most serious problems confronting Western Australia. Having that commitment attached to the sale of an important utility such as AlintaGas would be a very wise and sensible way to proceed. For that reason I plead with the minister to accept the amendment and to agree freely to the need for it to be enshrined in this process. I urge him to ensure that it is not left to the executive process to decide the disbursement of this large sum of money. Let us impose conditions on how a proportion of those funds is spent.

I am sure the minister will agree to a strategy that deals with salinity. Apart from the lack of water in this State, we face no greater challenge. Water and land go together and without the two we have no country, no land and no living. This is a good cause. It is one of my two highest priorities, and I would like the minister to see it in that context.

Dr CONSTABLE: I will begin my brief remarks by thanking the minister for agreeing to the motion last week to extend the scope of this legislation to allow this amendment to be put to the Chamber. In doing so, he lived up to his interjection that the way the proceeds from any sale of AlintaGas are spent is a matter of public interest and an issue for public debate. In allowing this amendment to be moved, he recognises that salinity is a major issue in the community and one that needs urgent attention. I am sorry he could not take that further and declare that he supports spending some of the proceeds of the sale on this issue because of its great urgency to the future of this State.

We know that about \$1b will be realised from that sale and, of course, that is a great deal of money. It should be spent on issues of great importance to the State, and everyone will agree that salinity is one such issue. How this money is spent is a matter for public debate, and appropriately it is being debated today.

Salinity is recognised by all sectors of the community, and I will provide some examples. Mr Tom Hatton of the CSIRO's land and water division was quoted in *The West Australian* on 28 August as saying -

Western Australia, one of the worst-affected States, has 1.8 million hectares of salt-affected land and this is increasing at a rate equal to one football field every hour.

As we speak another football field has been created. On 16 February this year, another article in *The West Australian* told us that 26 towns in Western Australia are seriously affected by salinity. That matter was raised by the member for Maylands. On 17 February this year, Mr Alex Campbell, the chairman of the Salinity Council was quoted in *The West Australian* as follows -

We have to reduce the three million hectares of land that is predicted to go salty and keep it to a minimum because the salinity has a flow-on effect.

He meant it has a flow-on effect to the economy. On 20 August, the Deputy Premier was quoted in an article in *The West Australian* recognising the need for an injection of funds to fight salinity. I could go on with other examples, but time is

limited. Those examples illustrate the fact that there is widespread recognition of salinity as an issue and as an area in which large amounts of money need to be spent.

Let us make no mistake, this is a very serious and urgent issue. Without an immediate financial boost, we are doomed to more and more agricultural land and towns in the State succumbing to salinity. If we do not act now, we will never catch up with the destruction already wrought. All stakeholders recognise the problems - scientists, farmers, engineers and politicians. The research has been done and there has been much talk. It is now time for action.

Mr PENDAL: I would like this matter to be dealt with before 2.00 pm.

Mr Ripper: That is not possible.

Mr PENDAL: I return to remarks made earlier about the perceived adequacy of what the Government has been doing to this point. Some people would say that to seek to set aside \$250m from the AlintaGas sale price is somewhat arbitrary. Who knows, it may even be a most unscientific figure. One of the figures upon which our work has been based and the figure used by the convenor of the Salinity Forum, Mr Pat Cunneen, has been over \$800m. Therefore, \$250m, which at first blush sounds a lot of money, is in fact merely a starting point. Sometime ago, estimates were made about the impact of the problem on annual lost agricultural production. The figure that is frequently used is approximately \$450m annually. However, that figure takes into account only lost agricultural production. I refer to the report I mentioned earlier by Dr Bell and Mr Clarke, the first sentence of which reads -

Salinity is a major issue in the Australian landscape and is causing an estimated \$1-2 billion annual cost in degraded agricultural and water resources in Western Australia alone.

In other words, Dr Bell and Mr Clarke have upgraded a figure to say that we cannot take into account only lost agricultural production. They take into account the annual costs in "degraded agricultural and water resources in Western Australia alone" of somewhere between \$1b and \$2b dollars. If that does not demonstrate the magnitude of the problem, nothing will. Against that, the request that the State immediately set aside \$250m is modest by any expectation.

#### [Questions without notice taken.]

Mr PENDAL: I will pick up where I left off in an attempt to draw to the attention of the Government and the Chamber my belief, and the belief of many other people, that the matter has not been given the priority it deserves. For example, in November 1996, after three years in office, the Minister for Primary Industry launched in Albany the Primary Industries and Fisheries policy for the then upcoming state election. As members would expect, the document explained the Government's sense of pride in its achievements. Similarly, the document intended to set out the Government's objectives for the coming four years. It was a 16-page policy document of perhaps 1 500 or 1 600 words, yet, the matter of salinity attracted no more than two paragraphs which is again indicative of the way in which the Government has treated the matter.

Finally, the Government's response, following the Premier's commitment to the \$3b program in the budget of 1997-98, was to offer another \$8.75m a year for four years; that is, an extra \$35m. That was in the same budget that allocated \$36m to the Subiaco redevelopment fund. There is therefore no sense of proportion, no sense of priority and no sense of urgency. I believe the Government must address that.

Dr CONSTABLE: The amendment proposed by the member for South Perth has at least done one very important thing; that is, it has alerted us to the need to tackle head-on the very urgent issue of salinity. Salinity is a current problem of mammoth proportions and we know it will be a future problem. Unless we start tackling it now with a large injection of funds, it will be catastrophic - a word that has been used already a number of times today. It is an awful environmental problem. It has been recognised by the major stakeholders and the major players in the community as the worst environmental problem that we will have to face. We have been told some extraordinary facts about this problem. In our children's lifetime, up to 35 per cent of agricultural land will be affected by salinity, which is a huge proportion of the land on which we rely to provide income to the State from agriculture; currently that is about \$4.5b a year. That can only be adversely affected if we do nothing about salinity.

We have all recognised what has already been done and we have all recognised the problem. However, what has been done so far is not enough to keep up with the problem, let alone to arrest it and truly do something about it. It is recognised that the salinity action plan is doomed to failure unless there is an immediate and large injection of funds to try to solve the problem. With all the will and with all the rhetoric in the world we cannot even keep up with the creep of salinity unless the funds are made available; the funds needed are very large indeed. The \$250m proposed by the member for South Perth is not all that would be needed; that would just begin to have a major shot at trying to do something about the issue. The time is ripe for the next step to be taken by the Government of providing an injection of funds. I believe the proceeds from the sale of AlintaGas could be put towards this issue.

Mr Bridge: It is an opportunity for a demonstration of leadership.

Dr CONSTABLE: Absolutely, and we need a bit more of that these days. We have seen the leadership talked about by the member for Kimberley from this Government. It has shown that it is prepared to commit funds to solving important problems in the community. A good example of that is the \$800m committed to be spent over a number of years on the deep sewerage project in the metropolitan area.

Mr Pendal: Another very good program.

Dr CONSTABLE: Indeed, and it is an issue with which few people would argue, although I have some worried constituents currently paying their share for this to be done. However, I have not heard anyone say they do not want it to happen; only that they are concerned about whether they can find the funds for it. The Government has done the right thing with that issue by committing funds to it. It could show that kind of leadership talked about by the member for Kimberley in the area of salinity also. It has a fantastic opportunity with the sale of AlintaGas to do that. Clearly, there is a strong link between the economy and the problem of salinity. In fact, it is an obvious link when we consider that something like \$455m per year is lost to the State and to farmers because of the salinity problem. That amount will keep increasing at a very fast rate if we do not do something about it.

In 1992, 433 000 hectares of land were affected by salinity; that has increased at a massive rate to 1.8 million ha in 1999. The problem is galloping away from us and we are not doing nearly enough to even look at the problem. This is not a problem for the private sector but is a problem that requires leadership from the WA Government. It is a crisis that we face and one in which I hope, with the member for South Perth having raised it in this way, the Government will take the lead and start doing something properly about it.

Mr RIPPER: The members for South Perth, Churchlands, Kimberley and, most particularly, my colleague the member for Maylands have all spoken eloquently about the problem of salinity in Western Australia. They have demonstrated to the House that this is a problem of massive proportions and with serious implications for the future of this State. Nevertheless, we on the opposition side of this Parliament oppose the privatisation of AlintaGas. We do not want proceeds from the sale of AlintaGas because we do not think AlintaGas should be sold. We will not be taken down the track of making decisions about the allocation of the proceeds from a sale which we do not think should occur. Yes, salinity is a major problem. Yes, this Government has failed to make the necessary investment in dealing with that problem. Yes, the Government has not lived up to the promises made by the Premier before the last state election. Yes, the Government has not lived up to the promises made by the member for South Perth when he was a member of the Liberal Party and when he was the Liberal Party's environmental spokesperson. Those issues, however, do not justify this House making a decision to deal with the proceeds of the AlintaGas sale, which we think should not occur. There should be no privatisation of AlintaGas and no linkage of that privatisation to any other policy. We stand firm on that with regard to any attractive proposal or superficially attractive proposal that might be put to the House or to the public to try to persuade the House or the public to accept a wrong policy and one which is unpopular. Of course funds will still flow from AlintaGas if it is retained in public ownership. There will be a flow of funds year after year from dividends to the State and from company tax and other tax equivalent payments to the State. From time to time, State Governments, to which those funds are available, will be able to make decisions about the environmental and other priorities to which those funds should be allocated.

I will raise another consideration in connection with this debate: Salinity is a very important environmental consideration in this State, but it is not the only environmental issue confronting it. Another major environmental issue that will have significant implications for this State's economy is limiting greenhouse gas emissions. One of the best ways to limit greenhouse gas emissions is to promote energy conservation; in other words, to promote less use of energy. One of our environmental objectives should be to conserve energy and use it efficiently. Utilities driven by a profit motive have problems when it comes to energy conservation. A utility driven solely by a profit motive has a commercial interest in selling more energy. A utility's commercial interest can be said to be in conflict with the environmental objective of reducing energy usage and consequently sales, revenues and perhaps profits. The tension between the profit and environmental objectives of a privately-owned utility does not apply to the same extent when the entity is in the public sector. When the entity is in the public sector, the Government, if it wishes, can make energy conservation part of the mandate of that utility. The Government, if it wishes, can issue directions to the utility about how it should promote energy conservation. The Government, in effect, can impose a community service obligation on the utility if it is in public ownership. That cannot be done if AlintaGas is privatised.

Mr BARNETT: I find those last comments curious. Energy conservation is very important. We have a responsibility to achieve in that area. However, if we take the example of fossil fuels alone and compare coal with gas, in broad terms, gas produces about half the greenhouse emissions compared with those produced by coal. Gas is a competitive energy in the market compared with electricity. The majority of our electricity in this State is produced from coal-based generation. To the extent that AlintaGas is privatised and a new private owner is more aggressive in selling and promoting the use of gas, one would expect that gas would increase its market share of the wider energy industry probably at the expense of electricity and therefore partially at the expense of coal generation. The argument of the member opposite is absolutely perverse. A more aggressive marketing of gas, if it does anything for greenhouse emissions, will, as a matter of course, reduce emissions below what they would have been otherwise. The member's argument is illogical.

I will return to the substance of the amendment moved by the member for South Perth.

Mr Ripper: You might do both - reduce overall energy use and also seek to replace coal-generated energy.

Mr BARNETT: I think the member will find the substitution effect is far stronger. Coming back to the point raised, as I said previously, the sale of AlintaGas stands on its own merits in terms of its impact on the energy industry and its direct financial benefits to the community. Again I make the point that if AlintaGas is privatised, what will be lost? AlintaGas will still be there - a publicly-listed Western Australian company which runs a gas distribution and retail business and which serves the people of this State. However, the proceeds will be available to government. They are two separate decisions. It is not necessary to use the arguments about the sale proceeds to mount a case for the privatisation of AlintaGas. As I said, it stands on its own merits for all the reasons I went through the other night.

Once AlintaGas is privatised - if that is the outcome - the proceeds will need to be dispersed. I do not believe that we should hypothecate how the proceeds should be used in legislation, just as I would argue that one should not hypothecate the use of tax receipts in tax legislation. However, how those proceeds should be used is certainly a legitimate and important public issue. The member for South Perth had made a case for the proceeds to be used in attempts to reduce salinity. Others have argued that proceeds should be used for public transport. I might equally suggest that the proceeds should be used in part in areas of infrastructure in the energy industry, such as gas pipeline extensions into the south west.

Mr Bridge: And water.

Mr BARNETT: The member for Kimberley could make an argument about water. There is a whole range of valid uses for it which to some extent makes my point for me. When AlintaGas is privatised, AlintaGas will still be there. The customer will see little or no change. Small business customers, arguably, will receive price cuts effectively in real terms of about 50 per cent over seven or eight years, so they will be better off. The proceeds can be used, whether it be on water, salinity, energy, public transport or the retirement of debt. Overall, the community will benefit substantially. It will be advantaged by the direct benefits that occur financially and within the energy industry. Again, the Government will have the substantial benefit of being able to use the proceeds for the public benefit. I am sure that if AlintaGas is privatised, and is done so successfully, the issues suggested today will be considered by government.

Mr RIPPER: Shortly there will be a vote on the amendment moved by the member for South Perth. In view of the arguments that have been put today, we might see the unusual spectacle of government and opposition members voting together and independent members voting the other way. If members of the Government and the Opposition find themselves voting together against this amendment, they will be doing so for very different reasons. The Opposition will be voting against this amendment, as I have said, because it does not support the privatisation of AlintaGas. It does not support the idea that there should be proceeds from the privatisation of AlintaGas, and it does not propose to add any credibility to that proposition by suggesting how the proceeds might be allocated.

The Government will vote against the amendment moved by the member for South Perth because it has different ideas about how it will use the money. There is no doubt that this Government faces a budget crisis. The budget is in deficit on a cash basis, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics guidelines for calculating these matters in the general government sector, to the tune of about \$640m. That is this financial year. It is likely that the Government will confront a similar deficit when it prepares next year's budget. All the economic indicators point to a difficult budgetary situation for this State Government. It seems as though business investment will continue to be flat until perhaps the end of the next calendar year. The housing industry at the moment is growing strongly. That growth, however, is as a result of demand being sucked forward because of the impending implementation of the goods and services tax. Therefore, about this time next year, once the goods and services tax is in place, we can expect that the housing industry will enter a flat period.

Some of the sources of state government revenue and economic growth in this State will be under threat when the Government is preparing a budget for the next financial year. It is a difficult problem for the Government, because the budget it will prepare for the next financial year is the pre-election budget. This is the budget whereby the Government will want to convince the people of Western Australia that it has at last delivered a social dividend, which it has not managed to do so far, despite the Premier's promise, and it is the budget whereby the State Government will want to soften up the electorate for the forthcoming election. On the basis of current trends, the Government will find it difficult to do that. What is the answer? The answer is a big sale; that is, to sell something big, get the money in, and then the electorate can be bought off in the run-up to the next election. The reason the Government will vote against the amendment moved by the member for South Perth is that it has other ideas about what it will do with the proceeds of the sale of AlintaGas. It has a serious budgetary problem and a serious electoral problem, and the sale of AlintaGas is the quick fix that will enable the Government to get out of that political and financial hole. What a pity it will be at the expense of the long-term interests of the Western Australian community.

Mr PENDAL: It is probably appropriate that the matter go to a vote. I express thanks to the minister for having agreed initially with the motion that was moved at the end of the second reading debate. However, had the Government not agreed to that, there was the provision for, I think, a three and a quarter hour debate on that matter alone. Nonetheless, as the Leader of the House, the minister had to make a decision, and it has been worthwhile, if for no other reason than to allow members to express views on an important issue.

I make a final plea. We are now confronted with a historic opportunity - perhaps not as a result of this vote because I am a realist and I know which way the vote will go - because once the sale occurs, if it does occur, the \$1b, as the minister rightly said, can be spent in as many ways as there are members in this House. The minister also acknowledged that whether it was used to pay off state debt, construct a southern suburbs railway or tackle that which I want to see tackled - that is, the salinity problem - the public will be the winner in those three areas. There can be absolutely no doubt that history will not thank any of us as these debates are looked back on, if they ever are, in 25 or 50 years if we shirk our duty by suggesting that we have no interest in the areas in which the proceeds should be spent.

Finally, I point out that the minister said that it is not appropriate for the Parliament to do this sort of thing. The reality is that when the money is ultimately spent, whether it be on a railway or on salinity, it is the Parliament which will decide. What the minister is saying, perhaps unconsciously, is that it is not appropriate that the suggestion of how money should be spent is initiated within the Parliament. I take a different view.

Mr Bridge: So do I.



Mr PENDAL: I am pleased to hear the member say that. There are people who want the Parliament to assert itself so that decisions are made across the board, representing a wider community than that represented by just executive government. However, for all of that, we have had the opportunity to put a counter argument to the minister. As a bottom line, I for one am grateful that he said it will be considered alongside other priorities. I can do no more than say to members that the priority and the urgency exist. We are dealing with something that will get worse before it gets better. We have the opportunity today with our votes to help it get better. I commend the amendment to members.

Mr WIESE: I will not delay the House on this issue. I am not aware of what has been said because I only just walked back into the House, having been paired until three o'clock. I will not support the amendment moved by the member for South Perth. On the face of it, it is attractive for someone who has been strongly involved in the farming industry for a long time and whose family has been involved in the farming industry for over 100 years to say that we should slap in a big piece of money and that will solve all the problems. The reality is that that will not solve all the problems.

Dr Constable: We did not say that.

Mr WIESE: I understand that. However, it will not solve all the problems by any means. The problem with this, similar to some of the Telstra funding, for instance, is that it is a one-off effort to provide assistance. That is terrific, and the farming community and all those people involved in land care and conservation work are appreciative of that one-off assistance that is being given. The long, ongoing difficulties and problems faced by the farming industry, which have basically occurred because of the clearing of our farming country for over 100 years, will take 100 years to turn around. Therefore, although, on the face of it, what is being proposed is attractive, what we need is a long-term, ongoing commitment to assist those people in the country to do the work that needs to be done.

Some of the comments that have been made in this debate are correct. We do not know what the answers are to many of the problems. We do not know whether drainage will assist. Many of us have a strong belief that that is an essential part of the answer which up until now has been totally neglected and which has been more or less prohibited by Agriculture Western Australia. Many of us do not believe that has been the correct approach. A large amount of work should be done to try to find the answers. If it turns out that drainage is the answer, or is a major contributor to the answer - we may find eventually that it is - the expense that will be involved, when one considers the problems in this State, will be absolutely enormous.

The sum of \$250m now will not address a problem that we probably need to address over the next 50 or so years. The proposition promoted at the National Party conference by our leader, the member for Merredin, which included some sort of statewide environmental or land care levy is possibly something that we need to look at. While we as a farming community are getting some of the benefit, the whole State has had the benefit of what the farming community has been contributing to the wealth of this State over the past 100 or more years. We are talking about a need for ongoing assistance, year in, year out, to address the problems and find solutions, and at this stage we do not know what those solutions are. It is a community issue and at present some very good community work is being done and there is community involvement in what is happening. We need to assist in that way to address the problems. This is an ongoing issue and the solution must be renewable and done each year. However, at present, most of the available moneys must be matched by the farming community. In the present economic climate, many farmers who want to do landcare work and who should be doing work in this area are not in a financial position to match the government funding. That issue has not been addressed in this debate. While I support the idea and the concept, I do not believe this is the answer. A long-term commitment by Governments of all persuasions is needed to solve this problem.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (3)			
Mr Bridge	Mr Pendal	Dr Constable <i>(Teller)</i>	
Noes (39)			
Mr Baker	Dr Edwards	Mr Masters	Mr Ripper
Mr Barnett	Dr Gallop	Mr McGinty	Mr Shave
Mr Barron-Sullivan	Mr Graham	Mr McGowan	Mr Sweetman
Mr Board	Mr Grill	Ms McHale	Mr Thomas
Mr Bradshaw	Dr Hames	Mr Minson	Mr Trenorden
Mr Brown	Mr Johnson	Mr Nicholls	Dr Turnbull
Mr Carpenter	Mr Kierath	Mr Osborne	Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Cowan	Mr Kobelke	Mrs Parker	Mr Wiese
Mr Day	Ms MacTiernan	Mr Prince	Mr Cunningham <i>(Teller)</i>
Mrs Edwardes	Mr Marshall	Mr Riebeling	

#### **Amendment thus negatived.**

Mr Barnett: You must agree that that vote was a ringing endorsement of the privatisation of AlintaGas.

Mr RIPPER: The minister may regret his provocative remarks. Clause 6 of the Bill, which the member for South Perth has failed to amend is the clause which allows the minister to make an order for the disposal of the AlintaGas business. It is phrased in an interesting way. It states -

The Minister may make an order for the disposal referred to in section 5(1).

The Bill does not require the minister to make an order; it does not require the sale of AlintaGas. I wonder whether the minister has looked at the results of the Victorian state election held last Saturday. If he has, I wonder whether those results have cast any doubt into his mind about whether he should make an order for the disposal of the AlintaGas business. Is the Government absolutely firm in its intention to privatise AlintaGas or is there the faintest possibility that the minister may get this Bill through the Parliament and then decide that, all things considered, the politics are not favourable and perhaps the Government will not make the order for the disposal?

Mr BARNETT: That scenario is open to the Government but it is not one that has any probability of occurring. A more likely scenario which could occur is that when we go out for the tender process for the cornerstone investor, the bids do not realise expectations. In that case, the minister would not order the disposal of the business. It leaves the discretion with the seller; the seller being the Government.

Mr RIPPER: The second part of this clause allows the minister to deal with incidental and supplementary matters in his order. What are those matters, and how broad is the power that the minister is asking us to give him?

Mr BARNETT: They would relate to the order to dispose, as is clear in the drafting; and may relate to the timing of the disposal or the percentage of the asset. For example, the Government has made it clear that no more than 49 per cent and no less than 40 per cent may be sold to the cornerstone investor, so it will be somewhere in between. It may be a negotiated outcome. For example, on 31 December, 44 per cent will be sold. That is the sort of detail that will be supplementary to the order that is given for disposal.

Mr RIPPER: Certain conditions are incorporated in the legislation about the constitution of the corporate vehicle which will be used for the sale of AlintaGas. Will there be any other conditions of sale, such as investment in maintenance, that are not in the legislation and will those conditions of sale be embodied in the ministerial order or in any other way? An allegation which is made against privatised utilities is that the privatised entities are prepared to run at a higher level of risk than the public sector entities which they replace. An allegation that is often made in connection with privatisation is that the new privatised entities reduce investment in maintenance in order to build up short-term profits. The consequence of this can be more failures in the system than there would have been under the previous public sector operation. Some commentators have suggested that Governments will pay more attention to these issues following the various disasters that have occurred with utilities. I have previously referred to an article in the *Business Review Weekly* of 5 October 1998 which quoted Mr Ian Smith, a Melbourne-based privatisation strategist with Gavin Anderson and Kortlang, who says -

... state governments will require companies that tender to commit more funds to maintenance and upgrading so that crises such as Victoria's gas shut-down, Auckland's power blackouts and Sydney Water's difficulties will be avoided.

Is it likely to be the case that the order for disposal will include some of the requirements which Mr Ian Smith has suggested will be applied by State Governments with regard to future privatisations?

Mr BARNETT: The sorts of additional matters that would be included would primarily relate to licence matters in the retailing and distribution of gas, and electricity licences. Presumably regulations would be put in place about connection, which is a real example, and an obligation to connect customers. That is the sort of detail that will be included in the licence that does not appear in the Bill. There may also be aspects that would come out of negotiation with the cornerstone investor. Issues may be raised during the sale process by buyers. The gas sales steering committee has included all of the detail that it could think of, but there will be a significant amount of detail attached to the licences themselves.

Mr RIPPER: Will these distribution licences be issued under another piece of legislation?

Mr BARNETT: They will be issued under the Energy Coordination Act but will be sold as part of the sale. The buyer of AlintaGas will also buy its licence to distribute and retail electricity. We have made it clear the buyer will also be buying an electricity licence at the same time. Probably greater detail will be added into those licences as part of the sale process, and there will be an element of negotiation about the detail. I do not think they will be profound matters but they will be detailed.

Mr THOMAS: Was it a slip of the tongue when the minister said the buyer would buy an electricity licence? Did he mean a distribution licence?

Mr Barnett: No, it was not. When I announced the sale I made it clear that the buyer for AlintaGas would also have the option to buy an electricity licence. It may not take it up.

Mr THOMAS: I thought the minister meant it would also buy the distribution licences as well as the infrastructure?

Mr Barnett: There will be a licence to operate as a gas retailer, as a gas distributor and, presumably, as an electricity retailer.

Mr THOMAS: That is what I thought the minister meant to say. My colleague, the member for Belmont, raised an issue when he asked whether matters might be contained in the orders of disposal which would go to the maintenance of the distribution system. The minister said that would not be the case. Will there be a provision to ensure that the person who buys this business, including the infrastructure, will have some sort of obligation to maintain it? My colleague drew attention to the fact that there might not be the same incentive for a private owner to maintain the system as a public utility might have. A publicly-owned utility is owned by the people and ultimately responsible ministers will be held to account by the people if that utility does not deliver as reliably and as safely as the public would expect it to; whereas a privately-owned business has primarily a commercial incentive and could lose business. In some cases that cost may not be as great as the cost of maintaining it to as high a level as possible. This is not purely theoretical. A practical example of that occurred in this State.

When the State Energy Commission of Western Australia took over the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co Ltd in the 1980s it found that the infrastructure that it had acquired was not maintained to the same standards as the State Energy Commission had applied to its gas reticulation network and it had to spend a substantial amount of money to upgrade it to what it considered to be an acceptable standard of maintenance for that infrastructure, both in terms of safety and reliability of supplies to the customers. In considering this legislation and the Government's proposal to sell this publicly-owned utility to the private sector, one would hope that the minister has put in, either in this Bill or elsewhere, an obligation on the new purchaser of that business to maintain that infrastructure in a way that complies with standards of safety and reliability. The public has a clear interest in that, and I do not think we can rely on the market as the sole mechanism to ensure the purchaser does that. Is there provision in this legislation, given the minister told my colleague there will not be any items in the order for disposal that will deal with this, to ensure the system is maintained to adequate standards to ensure public safety and reliability of supply for the new owner?

Mr BARNETT: The safety and technical performance and, therefore, by implication, the maintenance of the system will be covered under the gas supply regulations that are currently in draft form. They operate under the Gas Standards Act and would apply to AlintaGas whether in public or private ownership, so that will be put in place through that mechanism.

Mr RIPPER: As I have said, this is one of the clauses which enables the minister to implement the sale of AlintaGas. It is one of the key clauses of the Bill. To underline its opposition to the privatisation of AlintaGas, the Opposition proposes to vote in particular against this clause and to divide on the vote for all of the reasons which I could outline again but which have been very well canvassed in the debate so far.

Clause put and a division taken with the following result -

#### Ayes (25)

Mr Baker	Mr Cowan	Mr Marshall	Mr Shave
Mr Barnett	Mrs Edwardes	Mr Masters	Mr Trenorden
Mr Barron-Sullivan	Dr Hames	Mr Minson	Dr Turnbull
Mr Bloffwitch	Mrs Hodson-Thomas	Mr Nicholls	Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Board	Mr Johnson	Mr Pandal	Mr Wiese
Mr Bradshaw	Mr Kierath	Mr Prince	Mr Osborne ( <i>Teller</i> )
Dr Constable			

#### Noes (15)

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

#### Pairs

Mr Court	Mrs Roberts
Mr House	Ms Anwyl
Mrs Holmes	Ms Warnock

**Clause thus passed.**

#### **Clause 7: Minister may give directions to corporation -**

Mr RIPPER: The clause empowers the minister to give directions to the corporation in connection with the disposal of the AlintaGas business. It refers to assigning specified assets, liabilities or undertakings to the corporate vehicle that will be put in place for the purposes of the sale of the business. It allows the minister to dispose of other specified assets, liabilities or undertakings, either generally or to a specified person. This raises in my mind the suggestion that the business is not being sold as a whole and that certain liabilities or assets might find their way to either the State Government in the case of liabilities or private sector entities in the case of assets. Will the minister indicate whether everything that is currently connected with AlintaGas be sold in the privatisation or whether some assets, liabilities and undertakings will be disposed of or allocated in other ways? Naturally, I am particularly interested in what state agencies will be left with following the disposal. I am also particularly interested in the question of whether any remaining risks will be left with the State following the privatisation of AlintaGas. Will the State be required to make any guarantees or offer any indemnities? Will the State be required to continue its responsibility for any liabilities following the disposal of the AlintaGas business?

Mr BARNETT: The reason for clause 7 is that the AlintaGas board, as it is, does not have the power to sell AlintaGas. This clause enables the minister to give a direction to the board to sell. It protects the directors' position legally. That is important. It also allows the minister to give a direction to the board to restructure AlintaGas for the purpose of the sale. That will involve having the AlintaGas board form a subsidiary company, presumably to be called AlintaGas Limited, which will have beneath it effectively two further subsidiaries of the distribution and retail businesses. AlintaGas will sell the AlintaGas Limited subsidiary. The AlintaGas corporation will remain as a shell. There will be elements of winding up and dealing with other extraneous details that may exist for a period. For example, in the case of the sale of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline, an amount of money was held in reserve to deal with any claims or liabilities which might have arisen post-sale. A similar procedure will be carried out in this case. Some of the sale proceeds would be retained, perhaps by the AlintaGas corporation or perhaps directly in Treasury, to deal with any claims that might continue. There may be

unfinished matters, claims or whatever else is involved in the conduct of the normal day-to-day business. Some claim might arise from a customer post-sale in which the current AlintaGas corporation might be liable. That would be a normal, prudent process. I imagine that some shell of AlintaGas would remain in government hands for perhaps two to three months after the sale has concluded. So AlintaGas corporation will remain and AlintaGas Limited, the subsidiary, will be formed together with two subsidiary components for distribution and retail. That whole entity will be sold. However, the board does not have the ability to do that. This clause empowers and makes clear that the minister is directing the board to do it. That relieves the board members of any responsibilities they may have for the decision under corporate law and the responsibilities of directors.

Mr RIPPER: Why would the business not be sold complete with all of its historical liabilities? For what reason would AlintaGas Limited not retain responsibility for some ongoing liabilities? I would have thought if one were selling the business, one would sell it with everything, including its past and ongoing liabilities.

Mr BARNETT: Part of the exhaustive process of the sale is to decide what is sold and what is retained. Various ongoing issues must be dealt with; for example, AlintaGas as it is currently carries some of the ongoing warranties related to the sale of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline. It is not reasonable to on-sell those obligations; those issues are the remnants of the pipeline sale. A contaminated site in Albany recently mentioned in Parliament is a real issue. From memory, it was a gasification plant that at one stage was owned by local government, at one stage by private interests and at one stage by the State Energy Commission of Western Australia. Who is ultimately responsible for the contamination is yet to be determined. However, if there is a responsibility or any liability, that will be retained and dealt with by government. It cannot hand over an issue that goes back 80 years to someone buying a distribution and retail business; it would not be proper to do that. Those odd issues can be left behind for government to address.

Mr THOMAS: What about a workers compensation claim that might arise after the sale? If a worker makes a claim for an injury that occurred prior to the sale, but the claim is lodged after the sale, what will happen?

Mr BARNETT: That is an example of what could happen. If there were a workplace injury and a claim was lodged, that would normally be concluded prior to the sale or dealt with by government after the sale. That is why a portion of the proceeds will be retained. There may be litigation or dispute about purchase and sales agreements for gas, materials and so on. The Government anticipates that it will take about three months to tidy up those issues. If they are ongoing, they may be transferred to some entity within government to conclude. Once AlintaGas Limited is sold, the Government will want to wrap up quickly any remaining components of AlintaGas. It would be preferable to move them to some other government agency to address.

Mr RIPPER: In my opening remarks on this clause I asked the minister whether the State Government would be left with any guarantees, warranties or indemnity obligations following the sale.

Mr Barnett: I mentioned some relating to the pipeline.

Mr RIPPER: Is that the full extent of the obligations with which the Government may be left? How much of the proceeds will need to be set aside to cover those ongoing obligations?

Mr BARNETT: The issues I am aware of relate to the pipeline sale. Members opposite are probably aware that some of the contracts and arrangements relating to the pipeline are extraordinarily complicated, particularly the gas supply contracts to Alcoa. For that reason, a large amount of money was retained to deal with any ongoing issues. The gas sales steering committee is currently looking at how much should be retained from the sale of AlintaGas Ltd. That amount will be held by Treasury. AlintaGas held the money from the pipeline sale for a period, but it is now held in a fund by Treasury, which is appropriate.

Mr Ripper: Are we talking about millions or tens of millions of dollars?

Mr BARNETT: I will not be specific, because that could be a signal to anyone wishing to make a claim. The amount retained from the pipeline sale was well in excess of \$10m.

Mr RIPPER: Subclause (3) provides that a direction under subsection (1) may require the corporation to act in accordance with the instructions of a committee of persons appointed by the minister and given responsibility for the conduct of the disposal and related matters. Who will be in charge of this process? What will be the relationship of the board of AlintaGas to this committee of persons? What direct involvement will the minister have in regulating this process?

Mr BARNETT: The committee of persons is the steering committee. Obviously as part of the sale, particularly once the cornerstone investor has been identified, there will be a change in the composition of the board. For a period, the board will comprise a group of current directors appointed by the Government and additional directors brought in by the cornerstone investor. Then it will go through a full cycle and ultimately directors will be elected at an annual general meeting according to the rules for a publicly-listed company. It will be a complicated system of gradually moving people and changing the structure from a government-owned utility to a fully publicly-listed company.

**Clause put and passed.**

**Clause 8 put and passed.**

**Clause 9: General powers -**

Mr THOMAS: This clause details the powers of the minister. Those powers are essentially to enter into an agreement on behalf of the State for the disposal of the corporation. Once again we have a clause detailing the fundamental purpose of

the Bill as disposing of a publicly-owned utility. That is exposed here in its general nature. I will use this opportunity to raise a question that I raised on a number of occasions during the second reading debate and again during the consideration in detail stage last week. I want to know whether the Government feels it has a mandate and is properly able to continue on this course. I did not intend to raise this issue again because the point has been well made.

Mr Ripper: Indeed it has.

Mr THOMAS: The events of the weekend have illustrated the point I was seeking to make. Of course, I refer to the election in Victoria. That State experienced what is generally assumed, by the commentators at least, as a reaction against a Government that has been hell-bent on privatisation. The public is sick of privatisation and resents it. There is also a perception that Governments are ignoring the needs of regional areas.

Mr Barnett: I do not think the sale of AlintaGas is a big issue outside the metropolitan area.

Mr THOMAS: I was about to say I intend to concentrate on the first of those issues. The Victorian electorate has reacted against privatisation, but I will not debate that issue now.

Governments can feel that because they have a majority they have a right to do whatever they wish whether or not they have an explicit mandate from the people to carry out certain policies. It would appear from the change in voting pattern in Victoria that public opinion has dramatically changed. Whether that is a good or a bad thing depends on one's political point of view and whether one is in Victoria.

The minister is saying that his party was elected to govern with a very substantial majority and that that gives him licence to do what he wishes. The point I was seeking to make last week on a number of occasions and the point I am seeking to make now is that he does not have a mandate to sell AlintaGas. There was no mention of that sale prior to the last election. Any citizen working out how to vote would look at the policies of the coalition parties and the Labor Party -

Mr Barnett: Do you think John Howard has a mandate to send troops into Timor?

Mr THOMAS: That is very interesting; it raises a fundamental point of democratic theory according to which major steps should not be undertaken by a Government unless it has a mandate to do so. On the other hand, Governments are responsible and trusted to govern. If circumstances were not envisaged during the election, a Government could obviously act. I guess ultimately it would be judged by the people on whether it had acted properly. One would not have expected the British Government to call an election in 1939 to get a mandate to declare war when Germany invaded Poland.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Did you say the Labor Party raised the privatisation of Alinta at the last election, but the coalition still won the election?

Mr THOMAS: Yes.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: That means it had some sort of mandate.

Mr THOMAS: Far from it. The member is trying to turn the situation around to say there can be a negative mandate. People who were concerned about the privatisation of utilities will know that the Labor Party was opposed to the privatisation of AlintaGas, but the Government did not say it intended to dispose of that asset. If we were debating a situation such as that which is occurring in Timor or perhaps the invasion of Poland in 1939, or any other unanticipated major event, the Government could act on it. However, this situation could have been envisaged and the Government does not have a mandate.

As has occurred in Victoria, public opinion can change and the parties who do not respect it may well be punished.

Mr BARNETT: The member has made the same comments as he made repeatedly during the second reading debate, and they are not pertinent to this clause. I have explained the Government's view. During the last election we did not make a policy commitment to do anything with AlintaGas other than to sell the Dampier-Bunbury natural gas pipeline. On the successful conclusion of that and subsequent decisions to accelerate the deregulation timetable, in the second half of last year the Government decided to proceed with the full privatisation of AlintaGas' distribution and retail business.

However, there was nothing secretive or untoward about it. The decision was made last year only after the sale of the Dampier-Bunbury gas pipeline. It should not be forgotten that in implementing this privatisation we are bringing legislation before the Parliament, as we need to do, in an open and public way. We might well compare that with the actions of the Labor Party whose members dare to preach to us about accountability and public disclosure when it squandered hundreds of millions of dollars and sold various state assets without going through any parliamentary process. No legislation was passed and no public announcements were made. It became involved in real estate deals including the Petrochemical Industry Company Ltd deal without not only parliamentary accountability but also public accountability. There is a sharp distinction. If members opposite wish to have a debate about accountability, during the next election campaign we will happily rerun the 1980s and WA Inc.

Mr Ripper: Twelve years later?

Mr BARNETT: Yes. Some of the people who were involved, including the member for Cockburn, are sitting in this Parliament today and we will remind them of that.

Mr THOMAS: The minister probably did not go to Sunday school when he was a kid.

Mr Barnett: I did. I would appreciate your leaving my personal life out of this debate. Whatever I might have done as a child has nothing to do with you.

Mr THOMAS: When I went to Sunday School I was taught that two wrongs do not make a right. If the Labor Government in the 1980s did all sorts of terrible things that would not make it all right for this Government to do all sorts of terrible things. That is a fundamental point of elementary theology. It was certainly taught to us when I was at Sunday School. Perhaps the minister has forgotten the lesson.

The minister says that this action is in some sense accountable or ethical because he is bringing it to the Parliament.

*Point of Order*

Mr BARNETT: We are dealing with clause 9 covering the general powers of the minister. The member for Cockburn is not debating the clause.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Baker): Following a substantial rewrite of standing orders, relevance to the clause must be heeded. I, therefore, ask that the member for Cockburn speak to the clause.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr THOMAS: This clause empowers the minister to effectively sell the corporation.

Mr Barnett: Clause 6 which has been passed did that.

Mr THOMAS: Clause 9 reads -

- (1) The Minister -
  - (a) may do, in the State or elsewhere, anything necessary or convenient for the purposes of this Act;
  - (b) may enter into an agreement on behalf of the State for, or in relation to, the disposal by the corporation or a subsidiary of anything referred to in section 5(1).

That is clearly a central part of the minister's powers to dispose of the corporation and that is what we are debating.

Although the minister queried relevance, in the first instance the point I was seeking to make was raised by the minister, not me. He said that the Government was being accountable because he has brought the matter before Parliament; whereas other Governments have apparently disposed of assets without bringing the matters before Parliament. The point I will make as often as I am able is that the members of Parliament he is seeking to have approve this wretched legislation were not elected with a mandate to dispose of AlintaGas.

To say that they have achieved a proper level of accountability by having a Bill passed by the Parliament flies in the face of elementary democratic theory because none of the members of Parliament in this House was elected on a policy of selling AlintaGas. People who were opposed to its sale would have voted Labor if they were inclined for other reasons to do that. If they favoured the Liberal Party for other reasons, they could safely vote for the Liberal Party because it did not disclose that it intended to sell AlintaGas prior to the election. Not one of the 57 members of this House has a mandate in any sense to support this clause or this Bill. The minister cannot claim a proper level of accountability simply by bringing this legislation into the Parliament, because the Government's majority is unrelated to the policy that underlies this Bill.

Will the minister respond to the comments made by the Deputy Premier in the wake of the Victorian election? He seemed to think there was some similarity between what occurred in Victoria and in this State with the sale of AlintaGas and Westrail. As I recall, the Deputy Premier commented - I read the newspaper reports; I did not hear them directly or by electronic media - that it was important that the Government explain more clearly the policies of the Government regarding privatising Westrail and AlintaGas.

Is it planned to undertake any special action to explain to the public the benefits that will accrue to the people of Western Australia with the disposal of AlintaGas?

Mr Ripper: Don't encourage him to spend taxpayers' money.

Mr THOMAS: Does the minister agree with the Deputy Premier that there is a need to explain the issue to the people of Western Australia? The people to whom I have spoken do not support the privatisation of AlintaGas even when it seemed for a while that would assist with the construction of a railway in some parts of my electorate.

Clause put and a division taken with the following result -

*Ayes (23)*

Mr Barnett  
Mr Barron-Sullivan  
Mr Bloffwitch  
Mr Board  
Mr Bradshaw  
Dr Constable

Mr Cowan  
Mr Day  
Mrs Edwardes  
Dr Hames  
Mrs Hodson-Thomas  
Mr Johnson

Mr Kierath  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Minson  
Mr Prince  
Mr Sweetman  
Mr Trenorden

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

## Noes (14)

Ms Anwyl  
Dr Edwards  
Dr Gallop  
Mr Graham

Mr Grill  
Mr Kobelke  
Ms MacTiernan  
Mr Marlborough

Mr McGowan  
Ms McHale  
Mr Riebeling

Mr Ripper  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Cunningham (*Teller*)

## Pairs

Mr Court  
Mr House  
Mrs Parker  
Mrs Holmes  
Mr Masters

Mrs Roberts  
Mr Carpenter  
Mr Brown  
Mr McGinty  
Ms Warnock

**Clause thus passed.**

Debate adjourned until a later stage, on motion by Mr Barnett (Minister for Energy).

**SCHOOL EDUCATION BILL***Council's Message*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that the Council did not insist on its amendments Nos 1 to 4, 13, 18, 19, 23 to 25, 27 to 31, 38, 42, to 49, 79, 81, 82, 84, 85, 87 to 92, 98, 100 and 102 made in the School Education Bill to which the Assembly had disagreed; that it had agreed to the substituted new amendments made by the Assembly to the Council's amendments Nos 9, 10, 12, 15, 20, 33 to 35, 39, 40, 41, 52, 56, 58, 59, 75, 86, 95 to 97, 101, 103 and 104; and had agreed to the Assembly substituted new amendments to the Council amendments Nos 65 to 74 and 99, subject to further amendments, in which further amendments the Council desires the concurrence of the Assembly.

**INCIDENCE OF POSTNATAL DEPRESSION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA***Motion*

**MS McHALE** (Thornlie) [4.06 pm]: I move -

That this House notes the high incidence of postnatal depression in Western Australia, currently at approximately one in five women, and recognises the long-term adverse effect postnatal depression may have on children, and calls upon the Government to increase funding immediately to community organisations which provide services to women suffering with postnatal depression.

This is an important motion which links to several issues in our community. I begin by highlighting the prevalence of postnatal depression. We can underestimate the nature and extent of the problem and, therefore, disregard or not fully understand the consequences of not providing adequate community resources for women and men who are experiencing postnatal depression or trauma. I repeat from the motion that the incidence of women experiencing postnatal depression is one in five; therefore, about 20 per cent of births in this State lead to postnatal depression, which is around 5 000 women suffering postnatal depression at some stage or another. Twenty per cent of all women who give birth is an extremely high figure. This matter should be a concern to all policy makers, not only those in the health field, but also those in Family and Children's Services. In fact, postnatal depression can impact on a range of government policies and programs, including education and ultimately justice, a matter to which I shall refer briefly later.

It is important to know what we are talking about with postnatal depression. For instance, I am not talking about the baby blues, which can effect many women during the first week after the birth of a child. Something like 80 per cent of mothers experience baby blues. That is understandable as the time following a birth is usually one of enormous change to the mother physiologically and psychologically, and also to her family network. Although baby blues is considered a type of postnatal mood disorder, I will not focus on that in this presentation today. However, it is worth recognising that it is one of the disorders which can occur.

Postnatal depression and its onset tends to be more gradual than baby blues, and can persist for many months. In fact, it can develop into a second bout of depression following a subsequent pregnancy, and postnatal depression can extend for years for some women. The effect of that on the whole family network is quite extraordinary. It is generally accepted that postnatal depression can affect between 10 and 20 per cent of child-bearing women. Mild to moderate postnatal depression often goes undetected, or unrecognised by the women themselves. The stereotype of birth and parenthood is about joy and happiness and great times - of which there is no doubt - however, the reality can be vastly different. It is known from the literature that women are unwilling to recognise that they are experiencing postnatal depression. They may be ashamed if they are not coping and many women conceal their difficulties. That is a problem for community health practitioners and others who care for the newborn baby and his or her mother.

Postnatal depression is a serious problem. It disrupts the lives of women and their partners. It can have an effect on the baby, other children, the partner and other relationships. If postnatal depression is undetected, the costs to the community are quite significant, both in the health of the woman and the infant and in the longer term. Therefore, the Opposition is calling on the Government to reflect on the funding levels it has provided; to commit increased funding, particularly to community-based organisations; and to ensure that existing services for women with young children are not eroded but

strengthened. In the northern suburbs, particularly in the City of Stirling and beyond, child health clinics are under threat of closure.

It is important that postnatal depression be identified and diagnosed, and that services be provided for women as soon as it is detected. If postnatal depression is not diagnosed and is left unchecked, there are a number of consequences. It is now recognised that postnatal depression can increase the rate of marital breakdown because of the stress, strain and issues that are not dealt with. It can affect the mother-infant relationship, leaving it underdeveloped, or even undeveloped. Research from longitudinal studies of postnatal depression indicates an increased number of children exhibit conduct disorder symptoms later in development; that is, in primary school and adolescence. This has been linked to either undiagnosed postnatal depression or postnatal depression that has not been dealt with. Postnatal depression is not a problem that occurs in the first few months following birth and is then forgotten. Without adequate community-based resources, the problems emanating from unrecognised, undiagnosed and untreated postnatal depression carry on throughout the lives of the mother and the child. A number of problems, such as law and order and dysfunctional adolescents, can be linked to inadequate resources in treating postnatal depression. As many as 20 per cent of women can suffer from postnatal depression. We know, from the anecdotal evidence of people working in the area of women's health, that the rate of postnatal depression may be higher because it is not reported, or is not diagnosed. The 20 per cent figure provided by the mental health division of the Health Department could be an underestimate.

Terrific work has been done by researchers, practitioners and clinical psychologists in Western Australia. Research was done at King Edward Memorial Hospital in 1995 and 1998 and a number of statewide initiatives were developed. Some of these have been implemented, but some have not. I refer to the work of Julie Watts and Sherryl Pope in a report on the Childbirth Stress and Depression Project. The 1998 report is volume two. It is a comprehensive analysis of the outcome of the recommendations and work that was done in 1995. I will canvass a number of issues raised by the project's participants. Julie Watts and Sherryl Pope held community forums and feedback sessions on what was happening in the field of postnatal depression. During group discussions in these workshops, participants raised a number of issues that impacted on their ability to work with women suffering childbirth-related mental health problems, as well as the issues faced by the women. These issues reflect the problems of under-resourcing and lack of appropriate community-based resources for women with postnatal depression. I quote -

insufficient time in antenatal clinics to adequately assess risk factors

assessment of risk factors and identification of women at risk of PND not given priority by management and therefore, work schedules did not include these tasks

many health professionals being expected to undertake a "counselling" role in addition to other tasks without sufficient training or supervision . . .

lack of availability of health professionals with expertise in the area for consultation

overbooked child health clinics in many areas made conducting psychosocial assessment difficult because of lack of time and privacy

difficulty in having mental health services accept referrals for women with PND.

That is a very real problem, given that the mental health area is the primary area within the health system that oversees funding and services for women with postnatal depression. I quote again -

inadequate services for women, including respite care, individual assessment and psychotherapy

lack of referral options for women who cannot afford to pay for private psychological counselling, assessment and therapy

limited services for women with childbirth-related mental health problems in rural areas, especially specialist treatment services and respite services.

These problems are compounded for women in rural areas who have less, or even non-existent, access to services. While much of what I am referring to is about the problems for women in the metropolitan area, these problems are compounded for women in rural or remote areas for whom there is no service at all. Those are some of the issues service providers face. They are quite significant in relation to what they can do for women in the community. Let us bear in mind that most women who have suffered postnatal depression do not need to be hospitalised and do not need psychiatric care. Most of these women would reject the notion that they were mentally ill, and see postnatal depression as the result of their having a child. There is a problem in the current service delivery by having the mental health unit oversee that health service delivery, because of the very strong stigma attached to it. Women do not wish to go to the Graylands facility to seek assistance. They need the service on the ground in their local environment, and there are not enough facilities in that area.

The work done in 1995 and subsequently in 1998 produced two main findings: Women did not know what was happening to them when they were suffering postnatal depression so they could not identify the negative feelings they were experiencing. As a result, they did not know where to go for help. Health professionals felt the same: They received insufficient training to identify and diagnose, and insufficient services were provided to which to refer women, who had been identified and diagnosed as suffering postnatal depression. In 1995 the Commonwealth Government funded the work done at King Edward Memorial Hospital, and that funding continued until 1998. There was an expectation that the State Government would pick up the program and continue to fund the education and training in diagnosis and the other strategies that were implemented from 1994 to 1998.



In 1998 the Commonwealth Government ceased funding the childbirth stress and depression work. That work did not continue in the same way that it had for the previous three years because of a lack of adequate funding. As a result, between 1995 and 1998 a lot of work was done with health providers, community health workers, clinical psychologists, general practitioners and medical officers who were put through quite vigorous training courses and, as a result, could recognise, diagnose and try to assist these women. This is the concern of those working in the field of postnatal depression: Because we do not have that concentrated training and focus, we will lose a lot of the ground that has been gained in the past three years, and as there is a turnover in staff, GPs and community health nurses will not be able to screen for postnatal depression, diagnose and then refer women to facilities, if they exist. There is a great concern that the good work that has been done over the past few years in that area of training will be undone because those strategies are not continuing to be funded and are not being given the priority they need.

I put on record my view that postnatal depression is very much a community issue, and it must be seen in this context. It should not be labelled as a psychiatric issue or primarily a mental health issue. Once it is labelled in that way, a barrier is set up immediately for women to access care. That barrier should not be built. It is very important that we equip community health nurses and the like to improve their ability to diagnose and identify this problem, and to work with the women who are not presenting as having postnatal depression, but who may be presenting with some other problems. As I said earlier, because there is a reluctance to recognise they are not coping, women do not present immediately. The clinicians and the health workers at the coalface of primary care must be well skilled in using diagnostic tools to recognise postnatal depression.

I will talk about the role of women's health centres in the provision of services to women with postnatal depression. It goes to the heart of the need for increased funding for community organisations which work with women suffering postnatal depression. The minister may recall that I asked a number of questions in the Estimates Committee in May and received some response on his behalf from George Lipton. I will revisit some of those comments very briefly. First of all, I will tell members what is happening on the ground. Women's health centres are critical, locally-based health facilities, and women feel very comfortable approaching them and receiving medical assistance from them. For the past five years three women's health centres have been trialling a program for women with postnatal depression - those in Fremantle, Gosnells and Rockingham. For the past five years, since 1994, they have received the same amount of funding per centre - \$50 000 - to run a postnatal depression program. That money has not been indexed to the consumer price index and, as I say, has not been increased for the past five years, notwithstanding their requests for that to happen. That money has been insufficient to run the program. Members may recall that during the 1998-99 financial year, the Fremantle Women's Health Centre closed its program because it ran out of money.

Ms Anwyl: It is a shame.

Ms McHALE: It is, but this is even more shameful: In the past, to keep the service running, the staff worked for nothing - on a voluntary basis - so that the women who accessed the service were not jeopardised. That can happen for only a certain amount of time.

Dr Turnbull: Which clinic was that?

Ms McHALE: It was the one at Fremantle. Last year the staff members said, "No more, we have to close. We are not working for nothing" - and rightly so.

Dr Turnbull: Do you think Fremantle was the right place for them to go? There are quite a few other places in Fremantle.

Ms McHALE: It is a women's health centre. I do not know whether the member for Collie understands how critical that sort of a centre is for women who, for years, have never felt terribly comfortable going to other service providers; male general practitioners might be one such group, but let us not surmise why women have not gone to them. Women's health centres provide an environment which understands women's issues and deals very sensitively with the presenting and underlying problems. Women like to go to these centres for those reasons, and the demand can be quite high. There was a degree of publicity about the fact that that centre had closed.

The women's health centre network put in a submission to the Government to run a statewide program for women, which would pick up the women in rural and isolated areas. That submission would have provided postnatal depression programs in each of the 12 women's health centres across the State. The proposal was for a maximum of \$810 000, which would provide a comprehensive, integrated, community-based service for women, with access to clinical psychologists. Either that has not been accepted by the Government or it has not received a response. Worse than that, after four years of not being indexed to the consumer price index, in reality the money that is available has significantly reduced. We know that a particular sum of money may have bought a certain amount of services five years ago, but it will not buy the same amount of services today because the value of the dollar has decreased. This year, for the first time, there was a CPI adjustment, but there was no increase in funding to the centres. The centres are now receiving \$52 500 adjusted by 2.25 per cent for the CPI. The reality is that these centres should have been indexed and their contracts should have been adjusted at least to correct the CPI for the past five years, and preferably to fund the service at an adequate level. However, the Government has not done that. The Government has indexed it for the first time, but the damage has been done. I ask the minister when he responds to clarify and confirm that there has not been a CPI adjustment since 1994 and to comment on whether that would be a possibility. We need more services throughout the State, not just a trial in three centres.

It is interesting that when there was publicity about the closure of the Fremantle Women's Health Centre, the Fremantle centre got a telephone call from the mental health unit in late June or early July. The telephone call was to let the centre know that there would be a healthy amount of money for postnatal depression for non-government organisations.

Unfortunately, I must report that absolutely nothing has happened. The centres have been underfunded for the past four years, have not received a CPI adjustment and have, for the first time, got a meagre increase of about 2 per cent for CPI. They were told - a little carrot was dangled in front of them - that they would get more money and absolutely nothing has happened. Again I ask the minister in his response to comment on where the plans have gone for this healthy amount of money for postnatal depression services in non-government organisations. Has it been swallowed up in the overall mental health budget or is it not happening at all? I seek from this Government a commitment to adequately fund a statewide program for women with postnatal depression, because certainly nothing is happening at the moment. If the amount of money for the contracts remains the same, we will see a repeat of what we saw at the end of the last financial year, and in all likelihood, we will see it in the other two centres as well.

I will talk more about what we need for a balanced and appropriate service for women with postnatal depression. Again, a good source of intelligence is the very thorough report done by the postnatal depression unit and project at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. I will refer to a number of comments on current services that have been made by that project. The childbirth stress and depression project clearly has the effect of increasing community awareness of postnatal depression among women with young babies and also health professionals. It, therefore, increases the demand for the services that, in reality, are not there. Currently in Western Australia appropriate services are not provided to meet the raised community expectations. This leads to an increased sense of frustration and women's helplessness. Women's health centres are not guaranteed ongoing Health Department funding. Each year they must apply for their funding and await the contract that the Health Department might sign. In May, the minister or his adviser informed the House that the budget would, in all likelihood, be completed by early July; in fact, it was not until September that the health centres received their contracts. They went through a couple of months without knowing what would be their funding. We know from the evaluation of women's health centres that they are extremely successful in the delivery of health services for women. It is not a question of not knowing whether the centres deliver; we know that they are highly successful in dealing with women's health problems generally and are extremely successful in dealing with programs for postnatal depression.

It is crucial that women suffering from postnatal depression be given access to existing community-based mental health services, including various support services, counselling and perhaps psychotherapy. The majority of women who suffer postnatal depression suffer mild to moderate depression. As I said earlier, the majority of women do not need hospital treatment. They certainly do not need psychiatric hospital treatment, unless they have severe disorders or the depression goes unchecked and develops into much more serious disorders. Women who require psychiatric consultation or admission represent only a small number of those affected by childbirth-related problems. In 1994 that was estimated to be about 5 per cent. The current system places too much emphasis on medical intervention and insufficient emphasis on counselling, support, psychotherapy and so on. Those services can be adequately, and not terribly expensively, provided at a community level. That is the great advantage of community-based services: They cost much less than hospital-based or psychiatric hospital care because they do not need the infrastructure. The problem is dealt with early, and hopefully the difficulties for the women are resolved. Several things are needed: First, I have talked about the Government needing to respond to the submission from the network of women's health centres to provide a statewide service. The three centres that currently provide a program must have their funding guaranteed, at least have it indexed and at best have it adequately funded.

There is also a need for ongoing research into the area of parenthood and easing the transition from non-parenthood. As those of us who are honest enough to talk about our experiences of parenthood know, it is incredibly stressful, it is very disruptive to our lives as we knew them and it takes a long time to adjust to our changing roles and some people never totally adjust. Much work can be done in antenatal care to help ease parents into parenthood. The work being done in that area at present is not adequate. The Postnatal Depression Support Association does not receive any government funding. It runs a telephone help line and cannot even afford to have anyone staff the office. A minuscule amount of money would be required to help that organisation and it would have significant benefits to women who might just want to ring up and talk to somebody when they are feeling incredibly depressed or stressed. Rather than focus on inpatient facilities at Graylands, day facilities for women might be preferable. It is critical in dealing with postnatal depression for the woman to stay at home, to stay close to her partner and with the child. Keeping the woman at home means one does not compound the problems of separation and isolation. Above all else, postnatal depression needs to be driven as a community issue, not as a psychiatric issue.

The earlier work done by Watts and Pope talked about the importance of having a centre of excellence. That was a firm recommendation of the report but it has not been implemented. That is unfortunate. A centre of excellence would provide a focal point for health providers and other researchers; it would focus their attention in a multidisciplinary environment. Such a centre could act as a clearing house for research and ideas specifically involving postnatal depression. This idea is still very much on the agenda and should be looked at.

Something has happened from the work done by Pope and Watts. I understand that finally there is an agreement to reprint the booklet which was made available to all women who had given birth. This booklet has been out of print for a considerable time. I understand that while it has not yet been reprinted, there is agreement to do so. That is good but unfortunately we have lost time. I think the booklet has been out of print for more than six months, but the minister may correct me if I am wrong. About 12 500 women have given birth in that time and their having a booklet about how to identify what they are feeling, who to go to and the services available would have been very useful. It is unfortunate that that booklet was not reprinted when stocks ran out because we have missed an opportunity there.

We need a statewide policy on childbirth and mental health. We need further community-based services for women. We need to provide continuous funding for the existing postnatal depression programs and to the women's health centres to conduct these programs. We need to strengthen the existing services on the ground. Here I am referring to the problem in

our northern suburbs with the Stirling City Council threatening to close about eight child health centres. I believe the Health Department has a role in that.

Dr Constable: A major role. The department wants to close them down.

Ms McHALE: I ask the minister to comment when he responds on what can be done to ensure that those child health centres are not closed and to reassure women - particularly those in the northern suburbs but I believe the problem extends beyond Stirling - and the House that those centres will not close. If they close, we will lose an important on-the-ground screening opportunity. These centres are located in areas with high populations. On the whole they are not in areas where the population is decreasing or ageing; they are in areas where the number of families with young children is increasing. It is important to have screening and diagnostic facilities located at localised centres which women can walk to. The Stirling City Council or the Health Department conducted a study which showed that over 35 per cent of women walk to these centres. Members must know that there has been enormous population growth in suburbs like Beeliar and many families do not have cars or much money and the women must walk to local centres. If they cannot walk, they do not get there and the problems go undiagnosed.

To recap, members on this side of the House are demanding an increased commitment to community-based services. We do not necessarily want to pour money for postnatal depression into the psychiatric services, rather we want to see where the area of greatest need is and to put the money there. However, while I have the opportunity I will ask the minister about the future of the psychiatric emergency teams. This service is very important in helping women. The reality is women suffering from postnatal depression experience difficulties 24 hours a day. It is not just between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm; depression can hit at four o'clock in the morning or 10 o'clock at night and they cannot cope any more. Having a service like that offered by the psychiatric emergency teams is very important for people in the community who are experiencing an emergency and need to be able to contact such a service. I would like the minister to clarify this if he can, but I understand that the PETs have, one might say, disbanded - the minister might say regionalised. That in itself is a concern and I also believe the money which was originally allocated to the teams has not gone to the regions. I will be happy if I have it wrong but perhaps the minister may comment on that. I am raising the issue of the PETs because of the importance of having an emergency crisis team which can be contacted 24 hours a day. Removing that takes away another community-based, on-the-ground resource which is there to help women.

Before I conclude, I will canvas one further point: In the estimates committee hearings, Professor Lipton stated that representatives from women's health centres had not approached the mental health division for increased funding. On 25 May, Professor Lipton said -

. . . those centres can approach us if they are short of funds. That has not happened in the past six months.

That is not true. If the minister inquires into it, he will find that the Western Australian network of women's health centres made a number of approaches to the mental health division. Each six monthly report in the past three years states that the Fremantle health centre has a shortfall. After the estimates committee, a meeting was held in June. It was put very clearly that there was a serious funding shortfall and that if it was not addressed, further funding crises would occur. The point is that contrary to what Professor Lipton said, health centre representatives had approached the mental health division in a number of instances. It is important in understanding the funding crisis to have on record that these community centres report their financial difficulties and shortfalls well before they take any urgent action of going to the media and so on. Their primary concern is to ensure that they have adequate funding to provide services for the women who contact them.

I will conclude by summarising that members on this side of the House believe that without increased funding to postnatal depression, we will continue to see greater social problems, as I have indicated, increased marital breakup and an increased rate of conduct disorder amongst children who have been in that family environment in which post-natal depression has gone either undetected or unresolved. The difficulties of women not being able to develop that mother-infant relationship - it does not come naturally to the majority of women but develops over time - if left unchecked, will result in other behavioural problems which will manifest in the education, justice and other systems. It is very important that we get an adequate funding base for this problem that faces over 20 per cent of women, because if we do not, it will cost us in the long term.

**DR CONSTABLE** (Churchlands) [4.53 pm]: I support the motion of the member for Thornlie. I do not intend to repeat the matters she has brought to the attention of the House on the incidence and other aspects of postnatal depression. I want to pick up on one issue which she touched on and which will affect women in my electorate in the next week or so; that is, the proposed closure of eight child health centres in the City of Stirling. I will begin my remarks by repeating the points that have been made about the importance of child health centres. For many women with their first, second or third infant - certainly their first infant - it is the main source of advice and contact they have in child rearing, and also the main support for them as new mothers. The child health centre nurse is often able to pick up the early signs of depression and problems of these new mothers. The idea of shrinking the availability of those services in the late 1990s to women who are perhaps more isolated than ever due to the fact that their mothers and family support systems are often not there, is absurd and very short-sighted, given that to have these services available to women with young children is preventive medicine at its best.

As I understand it, the situation in the City of Stirling is this: In 1991 there were 21 child health centres within the bounds of the City of Stirling. As I understand it, the staff of the centres is provided by the Health Department and the centres are owned and provided by the City of Stirling, so it has always been a nice marriage between local government and services provided by the State. Since 1991, seven of the centres have been closed, one of them in my electorate at Woodlands. The plan now is to shrink the numbers from the 14 that exist to only six. This is to service nearly 10 000 mothers. It is the most extraordinary proposition. Next Tuesday night, the City of Stirling will be voting on the proposal to close eight of those centres. They are at Wembley Downs, which is in my electorate, Trigg, Balga, Yokine, Balcatta, Alexander Park, Mt Lawley

and Hamersley. That will leave six centres in the following locations: Nollamara, Mirrabooka, Osborne Park, Scarborough, Karrinyup, Dianella and Inglewood. If a woman lives in Wembley Downs and is able at the present time to walk to the child health centre, because there is only one car in the family and her husband or partner drives that car to work each day, she will no longer be able to walk because Scarborough will be the closest centre to where she lives.

Mr Day: How many people living in Wembley Downs would have only one car so that they would have to walk to the child health centre?

Dr CONSTABLE: What an arrogant question to ask! I met with a group of women there yesterday. They all told me that they shared the one car in the family. The minister should not assume in that arrogant fashion that all families, because they live in Wembley Downs or Doubleview, have two cars. The minister is absurd.

Mr Day: Where do people go if they live in Darlington?

Dr CONSTABLE: That is not an argument. It is outrageous for the minister to talk like that. He should listen instead of defending himself in that outrageous manner.

We all know the effect that this will have on women living in the City of Stirling. It will reduce access for those women to health services, such as immunisation; it will reduce access for those women to general developmental monitoring of their children; it will reduce access for those women to the support they require. It assumes quite wrongly that women will be able to get to those centres somehow. As the member for Thornlie said, at the present time a survey carried out by the City of Stirling shows that one-third of women walk to the centres. Most of them will be cut off from access to the centres if they are closed or they will be forced to contemplate making public transport arrangements. I will give a good example of that in a moment. We made phone calls from my office yesterday to Transperth to get an idea of how women living in various places, who now have close access to child health centres, will be able to get to the Scarborough centre. If a woman lives in Trigg and does not have a car, she will have a 45 minute bus trip plus a 700 metre walk to the child health centre. That means that she will have to take a pram on the bus. She may have another child, which means she will have to handle a toddler and an infant. The minister should consider that.

This reminds me of a matter raised in Edith Cowan's maiden speech in 1921. I will read it because there is a good lesson here for the minister. She said -

I have been asked to draw the attention of the Minister for Railways to the fact that by charging a shilling -

This is 1921 -

- for every perambulator put on a railway train he is militating against the very best class of immigrant, namely, our own children.

To that remark the minister responded with the interjection, "I will withdraw it at once." Mrs Cowan went on to say -

It has been suggested that a sort of court-martial should be held to inquire into this question, and that the Government should be asked to make the punishment fit the crime; the suggested punishment being that the Minister for Railways should be made to parade the streets of Perth for the whole of one afternoon with a heavy infant on one arm and a bag of groceries on the other. If that is done it is thought that it will serve to draw the Minister's attention to the very great handicap which is placed upon mothers who wish to come into town to do some shopping and who cannot bring a perambulator, for the simple reason that they cannot afford to pay the railway fee of 1s. It may be suggested that the fee was imposed with a view to inducing the mothers to stay at home.

Perhaps the closing down of centres is being done to stop women using them. To continue -

I do not think it will have that effect; they must go out to do their shopping and since the Railway Department insists upon their leaving the perambulators at home and carrying heavy infants, those mothers do not feel very kindly disposed towards the Government.

Women who live close to child health centres that are being closed do not feel kindly disposed towards this Government. We should take a lesson from Edith Cowan's words and suggest that for one afternoon our own Minister for Health borrow an infant who needs to be pushed in a pram and a toddler and perhaps do some shopping and get on a bus with the two children, travel 45 minutes from Trigg, get off the bus with the pram and the two children and walk the 700 metres to the appointment at the Scarborough Child Health Centre to see what it is like. Perhaps we could arrange for some rain so that the minister needs to carry an umbrella at the same time.

Mr Day: Just as they would if they lived in Swan Hills or Darling Range.

Dr CONSTABLE: That is not enough argument for closing down centres. Perhaps the services in those areas should be improved.

Mr Day: There are very good services in Darlington and Swan Hills.

Dr CONSTABLE: Only in that way will the minister understand the burden that will be placed on women. Closing down these centres will save peanuts for the Health budget; they are not a huge expense. Savings gained in preventive medicine and early detection of disabilities and developmental delays in children are huge. Expenses will be created further down the track if these services are cut off.

Mr Day: There is no suggestion of cutting off the services. I entirely agree -

Dr CONSTABLE: The minister should think about it; there is no question the effect will be to cut services. At the Wembley Downs Child Health Centre attendance has increased from 1 084 visits in 1995 to 1 811 in 1997. Overall in the City of Stirling 28 000 visits were made to the existing 14 centres in 1997. The six remaining centres will not be able to cope with 28 000 visits. Cutbacks will be made to home visits and group work with mothers because the six centres will not cope with the demand. The Government's reasoning behind the reduction in services to save a few dollars is silly and indefensible.

Mr Day: You must accept that the metropolitan area has changed substantially over the past 20 to 30 years and the distribution of population has changed.

Dr CONSTABLE: Of course it has changed. That probably means that more services are required, not fewer. The demographics in my electorate have changed dramatically. The number of young children has increased markedly in the past eight years. The demographic cycle shows young families coming back, not going away. Therefore, those services will be more in demand. Classrooms in the early grades are bulging at the seams because of the increase in the number of families with young children. The minister cannot keep coming up with the glib notion that everyone is moving out of the western and inner suburbs. That is not happening. The figures in the City of Stirling report show that to be the case.

Mr Day: I am glad you referred to the City of Stirling because I understand it is seeking to close some centres.

Dr CONSTABLE: The Health Department requested that the City of Stirling close these centres. It was not initiated by the City of Stirling.

Mr Day: You mean the North Metropolitan Health Service.

Dr CONSTABLE: It is part of the Department of Health for which the minister is responsible, irrespective of whatever sublabel it has and I am directing my comments to him.

Mr Day: It is not actually; but I can appreciate people perceiving that.

Dr CONSTABLE: But you are the minister. The community nurses at the centres will not be in a position to do the follow-up home visits that people say they will be able to do. This is a timely motion from my point of view. It is of great concern to women inside and just outside my electorate that one of their major resources and support systems is being cut back to the extent it is. I support the motion and I urge the minister to re-examine this policy of shrinking services which he justifies with glib arguments when they are needed more than ever in our community.

**MS ANWYL** (Kalgoorlie) [5.05 pm]: I will make some comments on the position of mothers residing in rural and remote areas of Western Australia. It was interesting to hear the interchange between the member for Churchlands and the minister about the travel that may be required. Although I support the member's comments that it is lunacy to close down successful maternal and infant health centres, I ask members to spare a thought for women residing in areas of Western Australia where no such services are readily available and where they must rely on people travelling intermittently from other places. For some women residing in extremely remote areas, the contact with the Royal Flying Doctor Service or other women living on neighbouring stations is their only chance to get support in this important area. We must spare a thought for those women who are unable to access the services available to women in the metropolitan areas.

Having said that, there are of course a number of women's health centres throughout Western Australia. What is particularly disturbing to anyone who has anything to do with women's health centres is that they do not receive guaranteed funding from year to year. I recently attended the annual general meeting of the Goldfields Women's Health Centre in Doogan Street, Kalgoorlie. I heard about the successes that are evident in gathering funding from a variety of sources. However, for whatever reason the Health Department refuses to allow these very important services to receive annual recurrent funding. Each year is a battle for them. They cannot provide continuity of service with any real guarantee from year to year.

The other issue that affects women in rural and remote areas is lack of family support and extended family that is often taken for granted in the metropolitan area and some other less "transient" remote areas. In Kalgoorlie-Boulder another issue is compounding all of this; that is, the extremely common nature of long working hours for men. It is not unusual for men to work shifts lasting a minimum of 12 hours. By the time they have travelled, it is not uncommon for working men to be away from their families for up to 16 hours a day. That in turn puts even more stress and strain on the family unit. Surely it is clear that if there is potential for postnatal depression, factors such as lack of access to services, lack of family support and unavailability of spouses to assist with child care will be telling.

Dr Turnbull: That does not necessarily lead to depression. It leads to stress and many other difficulties for a mother with a young baby. The actual onset of depression is due to other factors.

Ms ANWYL: I am not suggesting mothers will get some sort of reactive depression due to those factors. I am saying that if they have a predisposition to postnatal depression those three factors will compound their difficulties.

Another factor that we have not mentioned is the retrograde and savage budget cuts made to the federal child care budget and the ability of women to access day care for occasional respite purposes and on a regular basis if they need to do that. When I had the shadow portfolio of Family and Children's Services, it was quite common for me to be advised by women that they were no longer eligible for the occasional day care assistance they had previously enjoyed. Because the fees had risen so sharply, they could not afford it. In my experience it is common for women with three children below school age, for example, to want an odd day on which they care for only one child for the purposes of sorting out, say, a behavioural problem. That cannot readily occur these days for women with a middle or low income.

The other matter I raise relates to the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia. Again, I have frequent contact from women in the goldfields about this matter. I understand its budget is funded not so much through the Health Department as through Family and Children's Services, but nevertheless the association provides an extremely important service for all women in Western Australia who wish to access it. Of course, it provides assistance with breastfeeding. Women in remote and rural areas, particularly those who do not have extended families, may want to avail themselves of this service. However, only a couple of thousand dollars a year is made available to this service. A conference is forthcoming and fundraising is under way at the moment, but I have had approaches from branches of the Nursing Mothers' Association in remote areas of Western Australia who would like more funding to enable them to support the mothers who wish to breastfeed and need assistance from the association.

Kalgoorlie-Boulder has one hospital - the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital - at which there are 800 live births a year, which is significant given the size of the population. A gynaecologist once said to me there was not much else to do in Kalgoorlie and that could account for the high birth rate. People living some distance from Kalgoorlie-Boulder access the hospital. Although there is a very successful women's health centre, it is a sad budgetary fact that it is not possible for that centre to provide services for all the outlying regions. We have heard in this Parliament time and again - I have been in the north west recently where this issue is very important - of the inadequacies of the patient assisted travel scheme. That certainly impacts on the ability of women to access these services.

I will also explain to the House a particular initiative taken during mental health week a couple of years ago. A group of mothers who had sustained postnatal depression wrote a book, in which they set out their experiences. Those women were present at the launch of the book during that mental health week. A certain amount of courage was involved in that decision because there is still a stigma associated with postnatal depression, and we all know that in country towns and areas people are readily identified because of the small populations. These women were brave to publicly launch this book and to discuss their experiences and those of their families with postnatal depression. Selby Pritchard and other women launched that book, and it is important to note that it is still in demand and is available from the Women's Health-Care Centre in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. In fact, the proceeds from the sale of the book are continuing to assist women with postnatal depression, because the funds are used to provide child care so that local women can participate in postnatal support activities. It is also important to note that the report on childbirth stress and depression by Pope and Watts made it clear that postnatal depression support groups are important and should receive recurrent funding. I shall be pleased if the minister can explain why the Health Department will not guarantee recurrent funding for women's health care centres.

I also comment on young women. There is a great deal of evidence that young women have particular difficulty accessing general practitioners. We know that in many country areas there is a shortage of GPs, and that compounds the problem because it places extra pressure on those medical services, such as the accident and emergency department of a hospital, which must pick up the demand that cannot be met by existing general practitioners. Although Kalgoorlie-Boulder, I am pleased to say, has recently been granted the status of an area with unmet demand for general practitioners, it is a problem for the town and for many surrounding goldfields towns. Young women traditionally do not access medical assistance at the same rate that older women do. Various research has been carried out on that. In my electorate the average age of the population is 29 years and that, added to the high number of births each year, demonstrates the real need in the electorate.

I had intended to talk about some of the challenges facing the Aboriginal maternal and infant health service, Nguntju Tjitji Pirni, and Bega Garnbirringu Health Services, which is the Aboriginal medical service. Sometimes women present to the hospital, having never had a medical checkup during the nine months of their pregnancies. If that is the situation before the birth, there is not much hope of their receiving ongoing medical assistance after the birth. It is an area of some challenge, and it is important that Aboriginal women also be able to access medical assistance after the birth of their children.

There is no psychiatric facility at the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital. Another important issue is that of training, particularly professional training. The Pope and Watts report at recommendation 8, made specific findings about the need for that sort of professional training to be available. Again, it is an issue for country areas because of the extra cost of providing the training. I have been alarmed recently to be lobbied by student enrolled nurses, other nurses, midwives and the Nursing Mothers Association for the, albeit modest, financial assistance I can provide for training purposes. That matter should be met from the public purse, and it is in the public interest that training be funded.

I return to the general issue; services must be made available as much as possible to all women who have postnatal depression as it is so important for them and their families. It affects the whole family, and I have explained that for women living in remote areas this problem can be compounded by so many other factors.

**MR DAY** (Darling Range - Minister for Health) [5.19 pm]: I agree with the members who have spoken - this is a serious issue and one of important community concern. To that extent, I agree with the first part of motion moved by the member for Thornlie, although I am not sure the incidence of postnatal depression is one in five; I am told it is one in six or one in seven. I guess that is a matter of detail and not one we should spend time talking about. I reject the second part of the motion and will seek to move an amendment to recognise what has been done and will continue to be done by this Government to provide increased services both in the mental health area generally and for women who are suffering postnatal depression specifically. It is important to note that one of the major achievements of this Government, not only in the Health portfolio but also generally, has been the substantial increase in the resources allocated for the provision of mental health services over the past four years. In fact, the extra resources total about \$80m, and \$20m in additional funding now goes to mental health. We now spend about \$160m a year in total in this area, which is a very significant achievement. I accept that more can be done. However, under the four Ministers for Health in the coalition, major advances have been made in improving both the range and the distribution of mental health services in the State.

It is important to recognise that not only women's health centres are involved in providing sufficient postnatal depression services. Postnatal depression services are a part of the core business for all the government specialist mental health services; likewise for the government community health services. They are an important part of the service provided by most general medical practitioners in the community as well as some non-government organisations. In addition to the core postnatal depression services provided by the specialist mental health services as part of the government sector, the Health Department of Western Australia purchases some postnatal depression services from three metropolitan non-government women's health care organisations in the south west and the eastern metropolitan regions, and those centres have been referred to by some of the previous speakers. Specifically, they are the women's health and information centres in Rockingham, Fremantle and Gosnells. The services provided by those organisations represent an additional and alternative community-based option for women who need advice for a range of women's health issues, including postnatal depression.

The focus of those non-government organisations is, in the main, for women experiencing mild to moderate degrees of postnatal depression. Any treatment of serious episodes of postnatal depression is conducted in liaison with specialist mental health services. It is a contractual requirement for non-government organisations to liaise with the specialist mental health providers and other community health services to ensure that for more serious episodes of postnatal depression, specialist treatment is made available and managed by the specialist government and private providers. In the 1998-99 financial year, each of those three non-government agencies received \$51 300 for the provision of postnatal depression services. Although many would like that funding to be more, it is a significant allocation to those organisations for the services they provided in the last financial year.

In August last year, some communication took place between the peak body for the women's health centres - the Western Australian Women's Health Organisation - and the mental health division of the Health Department concerning postnatal depression issues and services. The organisation was informed that additional funding for postnatal depression services would be made available at some stage in the future, but that increases in funding would be based on the outcomes of a statewide planning process. The mental health division has met with each of the three non-government agencies to determine the best way to provide services and what might be provided in the future. The coordinators of each of the centres expressed a desire to expand the services they were providing and to receive additional funding to do so.

The Fremantle agency, in particular, was requested to provide the mental health division with details of what it stated to be its inability to provide the service for the full 1998-99 financial year. In response to that additional information, the mental health division recognised that the Fremantle agency met the requirements as they related to services specified in the original agreement for the purchase of mental health services; however, I am informed that there was not, and never has been, any expectation that the Fremantle agency would provide services over and above those that were stated in the agreements. There was no expectation for the Fremantle Women's Health Centre to meet all of the community demand covering postnatal depression in that part of the metropolitan area. A whole range of organisations and service providers, including general practitioners, are important in treating postnatal depression and in providing advice. No-one could ever expect the Fremantle Women's Health Centre to meet all the demands in that area.

The purchasing intentions of the Health Department of Western Australia for 1999 through to 2002, and in particular those intentions which relate to the mental health division, state clearly that it is intended to expand the service for women and infants with a focus on reducing the incidence and the severity of postnatal depression. An analysis of the existing postnatal depression services has been undertaken for Western Australia looking, in particular, at the current practice and the gaps in the services provided. It is intended to expand the services which are provided, based on the results of that analysis. The department intends to expand postnatal depression services provided by the non-government sector in the current year. Tender specifications are currently being finalised. I am advised that potential service providers will be asked to submit proposals within the next month or so.

An amount of \$380 000 has been allocated to expand the provision of postnatal depression services in this financial year, and I expect that to continue in future financial years. In the last financial year, each of the three non-government providers were given funds totalling \$153 900 for the provision of services associated with postnatal depression. Therefore, the increased allocation of \$380 000 is a very substantial increase, indeed. It will be made available, in part, to non-government organisations to provide increased postnatal depression services. The department is also looking at how best to provide services in rural parts of Western Australia. It is also intended to reprint the childbirth stress and depression booklet, which I must say is a very good publication.

Ms McHale: It should have been made available earlier.

Mr DAY: I was not aware that there was a gap in the provision of this booklet to new parents. As I say, it is a very good booklet and the sooner it can be printed and distributed to new parents, the better.

The Government and the Health Department take this issue very seriously. The provision of an additional \$380 000 in this financial year to expand services in treating postnatal depression will be a very welcome development. The booklet which was produced originally in 1997 by Sherryl Pope and Julie Watts is very good one, from the inspection that I have had of it today. We are very keen that it will continue to be provided to new parents in Western Australia. It is also intended that additional health professional education will be made available for professional development in the area of postnatal depression, particularly for general practitioners. How best to do that is currently being considered by the Health Department for both rural and metropolitan areas. The Health Department is currently considering, for example, the implementation of a service which is similar to the "Bouncing Back" program which currently operates in the great southern region of Western Australia. More detailed planning will be undertaken on how best a similar program could be provided in other areas. I am advised that the "Bouncing Back" program has been developed with two main principles in mind: First,

a systematic approach that places postnatal depression as a whole of family issue, rather than just being focused on the woman in particular; and, secondly, an attachment approach which emphasises the positive parent-child relationship. Both approaches are very important.

Although it does not relate primarily to the motion, some reference has been made to child health centres and the possibility of the closure of some centres in the northern suburbs. The only centre which has been brought to my attention previously, and which is the subject of possible change in arrangements and will be absorbed into another child health centre, is the one located in Trigg. It is my understanding that there is a joint proposal between the City of Stirling and the North Metropolitan Health Service for the existing Trigg Child Health Centre, which only operates part time, to be absorbed into the Karrinyup Child Health Centre. My understanding is that the distance between the Trigg Child Health Centre and Karrinyup is about three kilometres. I do not think that is a great distance and, as I said by way of interjection, we must recognise that there has been a substantial change in the demographics in the population in the metropolitan area. I accept fully that many young mothers still live in the electorate of Churchlands, for example, and other longer-established electorates in the metropolitan area.

Dr Constable interjected.

Mr DAY: What may have been the most appropriate way of providing services when the child health centres were established 40 or 50 years ago may not necessarily be the most appropriate way to provide the services in the future.

Dr Constable: I think you have been misinformed by people who are penny-pinching and saving peanuts.

Mr DAY: It is necessary for the various health services, in this case the North Metropolitan Health Service, to look at how they can best provide services in the future. There is no suggestion that people who need to access child health centres should not be able to do so. However, it may be better to focus the resources which are available to a certain extent on some of the existing centres, rather than having them spread over a large number of centres.

Dr Constable: That means that a lot of women will not go to them. Is that what you want?

Mr DAY: Of course it is not what I, the Government and the Health Department want. I find it hard to believe that a woman in Trigg who may have a baby would not go to a child health centre simply because she must go to Karrinyup.

Dr Constable: They must get on a bus for 45 minutes and walk the 700 metres to get there with a pram, an infant or a toddler, some shopping and an umbrella. You should try it sometime and see. I will organise it for you.

Mr DAY: I am a parent and I understand some of the stresses involved in parenting, and they are very substantial at times.

Dr Constable: I bet you have never done that.

Mr DAY: I have certainly caught a bus with my children, but there is a degree of overstating the problem.

Dr Constable: I am not overstating the problem.

Mr DAY: I find it difficult to believe that mothers who need to access a child health centre would not be able to travel from Trigg to Karrinyup, for example.

Dr Constable: Can you tell me which route the bus takes to do that? You don't know because no-one talked to us.

Mr DAY: I do not have a detailed knowledge of the bus routes in Trigg and Karrinyup. How do those mothers go shopping now?

Dr Constable: It is impractical. They probably wait until Saturday morning when their husbands are home with the car, but the child health centres aren't open on Saturday mornings.

Mr DAY: What does the member for Churchlands do for the parents who live too far from a child health centre in her area at the moment?

Dr Constable: It is too far because you have closed them down. You closed them all down and I will show you the map.

Mr DAY: What does the member say to the parents in her electorate who live too far from a child health centre to walk there?

Dr Constable: Seven years ago everyone would have been able to walk there. Now they cannot, and it will be even harder after next Tuesday.

Mr DAY: I understand what the member for Churchlands is saying, but we must find a reasonable balance between the provision of services and accessibility to people who need to use the services.

Dr Constable: They do not have to be open all the time; just enough so women can walk to them.

Mr DAY: In some of the other electorates around not only the metropolitan area, but also the State, generally speaking, people must travel further than those in some of the examples mentioned by the member for Churchlands.

Dr Constable: We do not have a cardiac surgery unit in Broome; people must fly to Perth. That sort of argument simply does not work. You are shutting down a good system in the metropolitan area where people can access these services on a very flimsy argument, and very few dollars will be saved.



Mr DAY: Reference was also made to the psychiatric emergency team. It is my understanding that the existing single psychiatric emergency team is being remodelled on a regional basis, so approximately four psychiatric emergency teams can provide a response. That is understandable. It gets back to the issue of the expansion in the population in the metropolitan area. It is unrealistic to expect that one psychiatric emergency team could cover the whole of the metropolitan area from the southern part in the Warnbro-Safety Bay area to the Yanchep area and out to the other side of Mundaring and Armadale, for example. This is not a decision I have made as minister, but I entirely understand the decision that has been made by the general manager of the mental health division of the Health Department, and his colleagues, that they will reorganise the services so a better response can be provided on a more local basis. There is no suggestion that the services provided by the psychiatric emergency team are being downgraded at all.

For the reasons I have mentioned, it is my intention to move an amendment to the motion.

Ms Anwyl: What a surprise!

Mr DAY: Given that I have said that a substantial increase in funding will be provided for postnatal depression services in this State, it would simply be erroneous for this House to pass any motion which did not reflect the fact that we are substantially increasing that funding.

*Amendment to Motion*

Mr DAY: I move -

That all words after "children" be deleted and the following be substituted -

and commends the Government for the substantial increase in funding provided over the past four years for mental health services generally, and notes that an additional \$380 000 will be provided in 1999-2000 for services associated with postnatal depression specifically.

**DR TURNBULL** (Collie) [5.38 pm]: I support the amendment moved by the minister. The motion put forward by the Opposition indicates that funding must be increased immediately. The minister has just presented a case which indicates there is an immediate increase in funding in one area and a review of the structure of the delivery of these services is being undertaken and that could be associated with an increase in funding. In talking about this issue, I will look at the overall picture of postnatal depression and its management and, in particular, at how those services operate in country areas. The member for Swan Hills will be speaking about this issue as it relates to the inner city and metropolitan area.

In 1995 I was Chairman of the Select Committee on Intervention in Childbirth. The committee carried out an 18-month study into intervention during childbirth and the effects of that intervention on mothers and their children. Some interesting facts arose from that. The committee heard from Sherryl Pope, who had just made her first presentation on the incidence of postnatal depression in Western Australia. The committee regarded the issue of postnatal depression as so important that it allocated a separate chapter for it in the report.

Postnatal depression has predisposing factors. These factors are highlighted by the lifestyle of many young and older women in Australian society. Postnatal depression is predisposed by an increase in age of mothers having their first baby. The booklet on childbirth stress and depression produced by Sherryl Pope and Julie Watts highlights the dramatic increase in the age at which women have their first baby. The Minister for Health and others have already referred to the booklet this evening. I quote -

The average of women having a first baby in Australia has risen from 24 years old in the 1970's to 29 years old in 1995.

When I was a medical student in the early 1960s, the professor in obstetrics outlined the predisposing factors in the incidences of problems related to childbirth. One of the predisposing factors was a woman having her first baby over the age of 27 years. That increased the propensity for depression, the incidence of intervention in childbirth, pre-eclampsia, higher blood pressure and diabetes. Many other factors are related to this age of 27 years. In Western Australia the average age of childbirth is now nearly 30 years. On average, 50 per cent of all women having their first baby in Western Australia have an increased rate of all the issues associated with childbirth. Unfortunately, it must be recognised that the lifestyle which many young women choose, which includes a late marriage and a career before marriage and family, is actually predisposing them to postnatal depression.

Studies such as the Select Committee on Intervention in Childbirth and the research of Julie Watts and Sherryl Pope are putting that message into the community and warning people who delay having their first baby that these things need to be watched for. The select committee found that the greatest predisposing factor for intervention in childbirth is older mothers. The incidence of older mothers has increased so much in our society and in Australia because many mothers are delaying childbirth for so long. Fifty per cent of all mothers having their first baby over the age of 30 enter into the private health system and end up with the possibility of a caesarean section. These are important predisposing factors and something that needs to be concentrated on in Western Australia. We should concentrate on educating mothers that they should look at their lifestyles.

About 10 days ago, I spoke in the House about the predisposing factors of small babies and how small birth weight relates to the development of hypertension, high blood pressure, cardiac disease and cerebral-vascular accidents in middle age. Low birth weight is also related to the lifestyles of mothers through smoking, alcohol and stress during the antenatal period. Such stress is related to trying to hold down a job and inadequate diets, which relate to digestive upsets. So many things are related to this. The antenatal period is the most important part of managing postnatal depression. If mothers can be

encouraged to attend a good antenatal class, there is a better outcome in the postnatal period. The member for Kalgoorlie mentioned the Bega Garnbirringu program in Kalgoorlie. That is the whole premise that program works on. Aboriginal mothers become involved early to help develop a good antenatal program. It is the same in country areas. Those factors are not being funded under the mental health program or a postnatal depression program in the Health budget. However, I emphasise to the House that the antenatal period is most important in the management of postnatal depression. The antenatal programs must be supported. In most country areas the child health nurse, who is part of the community health system, contributes to the antenatal classes and programs. It is important that we ensure there is enough money for the antenatal programs to progress.

Even when the committee was researching its report, it found that the integration of these services is perhaps better in rural areas than it is in metropolitan areas. I cannot comment on the issues raised by the member for Churchlands, such as the availability of a child health nurse in outer metropolitan areas. I cannot comment on that. However, I agree that amalgamating services to produce efficiencies is not necessarily the right way of managing a service which should be reasonably close to the mothers who need it. Issues such as how the mother gets there should be taken into account. There was difficulty with the antenatal service in Donnybrook. Mothers were told they could go into Bunbury for the service because the class was not big enough. Only two mothers at a time were attending. We managed to get round that problem, to a certain degree. The physiotherapist, who is extremely good, has taken on a number of those antenatal classes. She does that despite the fact that there might be only one or two mothers at a time wanting access to that service. The attempt to integrate an antenatal service with the community health nurse, the community health services and the child health nurse is a good way of putting antenatal services into a good position.

There are other indicators of postnatal depression and one of the worst is mental health problems prior to pregnancy. Unfortunately, in my time as a doctor I have had the experience of two mothers with postnatal depression suiciding. Those mothers had the predisposing factor of mental health problems and one of them was old to be having her first baby. It was tragic. She had shown signs of postnatal depression and was being given a lot of support but unfortunately she had access to a gun and that was the easiest method of suicide for her. The woman's mother was staying with her to give her extra support. She gave the baby to her mother and said she would be much better at looking after the baby. The woman then asked her mother to look after the baby and that she was going for a walk. The poor mother did not have any warning of what her daughter was going to do.

In the severe forms, postnatal depression can be very difficult to deal with. A number of severe cases have been managed without hospitalisation, with the assistance of the Silver Chain Nursing Association. I have spoken to the minister about this problem. The latest round of funding and contract design for Silver Chain restricts its ability to move the focus from the clients it deals with. In country areas, we must regain some flexibility so that Silver Chain nurses can provide services. Fortunately, there has not been the same need to call on that assistance as there has been in the past, but that is the case. I helped to set up a home and community care service in our area, which provides intermittent care and supplies services to people at home. We set up the HACC service specifically for two very severe cases of postnatal depression about 12 or 13 years ago and the service has continued since. The service is flexible enough to provide some services at times. The trouble with trying to provide services for a reasonably severe case in one's community is it does not happen very often. We need flexible community health and other services to adapt to that problem.

A very good service is provided by the Nursing Mothers Association of Australia. It is a completely voluntary, community-based organisation which provides a wonderful service to mothers with babies in and after the postnatal period. Very dedicated women volunteer their time to become nursing mothers' counsellors. A roster service provides a 24-hour telephone counselling service. I have been negotiating with the Minister for Health over the past year for the Health Department to pay for a 1800 number or a 1313 service for the Nursing Mothers Association. The minister recently assured me that the department is looking at funding this telephone number and we are preparing a business plan to get this service. It will be very good because people in Kununurra, Willagee or Collie who need the service will only need one counsellor on the end of the line. The Nursing Mothers Association is to be congratulated for the services it provides. With the assistance of the Minister for Health, I will progress this funding assistance to the Nursing Mothers Association.

I agree with the Minister for Health and the other speakers that postnatal depression is an extremely important issue in our community. Unfortunately, the trend to older mothers having babies has increased the number of women with this condition in our community. We need to look at support mechanisms for those mothers particularly as many of them do not have strong family support. However, mothers must acknowledge that they have a part to play in ensuring that they try to live a lifestyle which gives them and their babies the best chance of having a healthy antenatal and postnatal period. I recognise that the Government has increased the funding in the mental health allocation for postnatal depression and that will be of assistance to those mothers suffering moderate to severe cases of postnatal depression and who need that support.

**MRS van de KLASHORST** (Swan Hills - Parliamentary Secretary) [5.57 pm]: I support the first part of the motion moved by the Opposition. It is very important that this House understand that this is a serious problem in our community. I commend the Opposition for bringing the issue to the attention of the House.

Mr Barnett: The Opposition seems to have lost interest in the debate.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: The opposition members are not here.

Dr Turnbull: The member for Churchlands is still here.

Mr Barnett: This is your private members' time and the people who moved the motion don't stay to listen to the debate!

Mrs van de KLASHORST: That is true. The mover of the motion is not here to listen to the debate.

Dr Turnbull: And neither are any of the other people who spoke, except for one member.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Having been a member of the Select Committee on Intervention in Childbirth I know and have read a lot of about the trauma and heartbreak of postnatal depression. What postnatal depression is has not been said in this place and put on record. The members of this House are mainly of the male gender and I think it might be an idea for their information to refer to the real trauma of this problem. Postnatal depression has been described to me as being biological, psychological and sociological. Sometimes it can be so bad it will cause a chemical imbalance in the brain. For the sake of the male members, the problems associated with the condition range from what the member for Thornlie called the "baby blues" - being depressed for one or two weeks after the birth - to a very long illness which in severe cases, as the member for Collie touched on, can lead to suicide. A friend of a friend of mine had four children without any problems, but after the fifth child was born she developed postnatal depression and attempted suicide twice before getting help.

Symptoms of postnatal depression can include general feelings of sadness and not knowing why, not being able to cope generally, feeling inadequate in the role of motherhood, feeling physically ill and tired and losing or gaining weight. A common problem among people with postnatal depression is denial that they have it. As the member for Collie said, and as the Select Committee on Intervention in Childbirth found, intervention techniques favoured in our society such as caesarean sections, bringing on labour more rapidly, slowing it down or administering pain killing injections into the spine could lead to postnatal depression. The committee covered this aspect and made several good recommendations which the member for Thornlie may care to examine. Many of them have been followed through. One of the points made throughout the report was that less intervention could lead to less postnatal distress. The committee also found that natural childbirth centres such as those at King Edward Memorial Hospital and the Swan District Hospital help with prevention of this problem.

I agree with the member for Thornlie that postnatal depression is not only a medical issue, but also a community issue. By that I am referring mainly to the range of emotions that can be felt by a new mother from feelings of sadness and inadequacy not to the severe medical condition which has to be handled by professionals.

I draw to the attention of members the community efforts of the people of Midland. I congratulate the women's health care centre in Midland on running regular postnatal depression clinics. The clinics are run by professionals and volunteers who care for the mothers in the area who are in need. Also in the Midland region a group of mothers have joined together of their own volition after suffering postnatal depression themselves to work with people in the community who need someone to talk to and to help them work through their problems. I have received some positive feedback on this group of mothers who are voluntarily providing people in need with someone to help them. They are an example of how the community can own a problem and assist with it. Also, in Lockridge a 10-week structured group therapy session run by counsellors is working well. The Postnatal Depression Support Association is made up of volunteers and is based at King Edward Memorial Hospital. This association should be congratulated and be shown our appreciation for what it does for women throughout the State.

As I often say in this place, it is important to have "horses for courses". My outer metropolitan electorate faces different problems from those of the member for Churchlands, whose constituents have difficulty getting to their local centre. In areas such as mine people often live many kilometres away from help and require telephone counselling. I believe the Postnatal Depression Support Association runs telephone counselling sessions. This is a very good service for people in the outer metropolitan area and outside the metropolitan area.

It is important to ensure that severe cases of postnatal depression are handled by professionals, specifically general practitioners or the appropriate mental health people. Mothers can help mothers and community people can assist, but professionals must be available when they are needed.

I commend the minister on the fact that \$380 000 worth of extra funding is being allocated for postnatal depression this year. That is a great step forward.

I have also helped facilitate in the Swan Hills area a mobile multi-access health centre for young people, which is in a large van and is run by general practitioners from the Swan Hills area. We all know that young people in the outer metropolitan area sometimes find it difficult to get into the Midland region, so that health centre will be taken out to them and will go to all the centres in my electorate, such as Bullsbrook, Wooroloo, Mt Helena, Stoneville, Parkerville and Gidgegannup. Some of those places do not even have a bus service because of their small population and the fact that people do not use buses, even though a bus service has been trialled in some of those areas. The staff of this multi-access health centre will talk to young people not only about how to avoid postnatal depression by being aware that it might happen to them and by putting in place preventive strategies, but also about birth control and pregnancy, and about how women should look after themselves if they intend to get pregnant, and during and after their pregnancies. Money and effort must be put into prevention, and the minister is doing that. We need to ensure that people in the whole of Western Australia are aware that these services are available. I am pleased to support the first part of the motion moved by the member for Thornlie, and I am also pleased to support the minister's amendment, because he has indicated that an additional \$380 000 will be provided in the 1999-2000 budget for services associated with postnatal depression.

Dr Turnbull: It is an extra \$800 000 in total.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Yes, and that means that we can look at what is best for all the different areas of the State. I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment put and passed.

*Motion, as Amended*

**MS McHALE** (Thornlie) [6.08 pm]: The minister has come here this afternoon and suddenly announced that money will be made available for postnatal depression.

Dr Turnbull: I do not think it is suddenly.

Ms McHALE: The minister has indicated for the first time that funding will be made available for postnatal depression. The Opposition has been calling for that increase for months. The minister has made the announcement and the availability of the money is welcome; however, he has not made it clear whether the money will be provided to non-government agencies. He has said it will be made available through the mental health division, which is a concern.

Dr Turnbull: I think he said it would be going to women's health -

Ms McHALE: Is the member for Collie telling me unequivocally that the money will be directed to those centres? I ask the member because she is interjecting. Maybe we should place on the record that the member for Collie said that the money is to be available to the women's health centres. If that is the case, the Labor Party will be monitoring the situation closely. Women's health centres desperately need money. If the member for Collie states unequivocally that money will be available to those centres, the Labor Party welcomes that money. As we have pushed this issue, the minister has come forward with \$380 000. That amount is not sufficient - not even half way - for the total program required by the network of women's health centres. Is the money to be directed to women's health centres specifically for postnatal depression? Is that the understanding of the member for Collie? The member interjected throughout my speech, yet she is now silent and will not make eye contact.

Dr Turnbull: I am checking the notes I took when the minister was speaking. As far as I understood what he said, it was for those services provided in the three centres of Rockingham, Fremantle and Gosnells.

Ms McHALE: I hope this is not the same money that went to those centres for the last few years - namely, the \$150 000.

Dr Turnbull: He said \$380 000.

Ms McHALE: I heard him say that, but not that the money will be available for non-government centres, and specifically through women's health centres. Can the minister clarify, now he has returned to the Chamber, in unequivocal terms whether the money will be available for non-government centres?

Mr Day: Some of the \$380 000 will go to non-government centres, but it includes provision for the reprint of the book and so on.

Ms McHALE: I see. So, in reality, a question arises about how much money will be directed to the women's health centres.

Mr Day: There will be a substantial increase in the amount available for non-government organisations.

Ms McHALE: I hope it is over and above the \$150 000 they received for the last five years; otherwise, we will be duped once again.

Mr Day: It is in addition to that amount. There will be a significant increase in the funds available; that is, in addition to the provision previously provided. The organisations will need to submit proposals to be considered. The amount of funds available for the non-government sector will be substantially increased - in the order of doubled.

Ms McHALE: The women's health centres have already made submissions. If that is new money not already allocated, it is welcomed. If the significant proportion of the funding will go to women's health centres or non-government centres, it will help women experiencing postnatal depression. It will be a tragedy for women and a waste of money if it is lost in the mental health system.

Mr Day: It is coming from the mental health budget.

Ms McHALE: So it is not new money.

Mr Day: It is new money for these organisation from the substantially increased mental health budget.

Ms McHALE: But it is not new public health money.

Mr Day: For goodness sake - our health budget has increased by \$153m in the past two years!

Dr Turnbull: All you do is complain. Why can't you be happy?

Ms McHALE: I bring to the attention of House the difficulties the community organisation, and others, are experiencing. We use this House in an appropriate manner. The member for Collie should know that we do not come here and only complain. I wish the member would desist from making such inane comments. The reality is that more money is needed for these services. If it is new money, it is welcome. However, I advise the minister that members on this side of the House will follow this promise very carefully to make sure the money is delivered to the non-government centres.

Question (motion, as amended) put and passed.

**TABLING OF DOCUMENTS BY MINISTERS***Ruling by Deputy Speaker*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Bloffwitch): Before we proceed with the next motion, I will rule on a point of order taken earlier today. The standing order clearly states that if a minister has in his hands documents that are official documents, they

should be produced. The minister has told me that he was quoting from the first page of the documents, and the second page was a legal explanation. I will order the minister to produce the first page.

I warn all ministers about this practice. If ministers do not wish to table a document, commonsense dictates that they should write some notes for themselves and not hold the original document in their hands. If ministers stand holding the document in their hands, the House will require them to table the information. I am upholding the point of order.

I will order the minister to table the main document which the minister said is a letter he received, but I will not order him to table the legal document. However, I am warning all ministers that should a similar situation arise in the future, they will be asked to table all the documents in their hands.

## EDUCATION DEPARTMENT COMPUTER SOFTWARE CONTRACTS

### *Motion*

**MR CARPENTER** (Willagee) [6.16 pm]: I move -

That this House condemns the Minister for Education for mismanaging the awarding of computer software contracts by the Education Department of Western Australia which has resulted in significant cost blow-outs and losses to the WA taxpayer.

I shall concentrate on two contracts in my remarks; the PeopleSoft Pty Ltd contract, with which many people are already familiar because it has been the subject of some controversy, and the RM plc Key Solutions contract which is also the subject of much controversy. Grievance has been expressed by companies which missed out on the tender.

In relation to the PeopleSoft computer software contract, I indicate that the original contract was between \$3.5m and \$4m to provide software consultancy services and outsource implementation and customised services. The final position provided by the Minister for Education to the House was that the cost of implementation of the computer software package is around \$23m. That represents a substantial blow-out of 500 per cent on the original figures anticipated by the department. No explanation has been provided for this.

The documents the Australian Labor Party has obtained via freedom of information legislation trace the history of this process from the beginning until March this year. However, there is no explanation in the documents for the blow-out in costs. I would like to hear from the minister how the computer contract started at \$4m and ended up at \$23m.

Mr Barnett: Which contract?

Mr CARPENTER: The PeopleSoft contract.

Mr Barnett: There are four major contracts.

Mr CARPENTER: I am talking about only two, and I have already mentioned that they are the PeopleSoft contract and the RM plc Key Solutions contract. How did the anticipated cost of \$4m for the PeopleSoft contract become a real cost of \$23m? The first set of documents we obtained in relation to PeopleSoft Pty Ltd is dated 23 January 1996 when the Education Department decided it needed new software to aid the devolution of human resources management to schools. A letter from the Education Department to the Chairman of the State Supply Commission, Mr G. Di Pietro, the coordinator of contract and supply services reads -

As a result of the Personnel 2000 Project and the Education Department's proposal to devolve Human Resources Management to schools, it has become necessary to replace the current system with a commercially available software package, in order to meet changing requirements.

The estimated value of the proposed contract is \$3.5-\$4 million which includes software, consultancy services and outsourced implementation and customisation services.

It should be noted that there is no "in-house" development involved in the process.

That is an interesting statement considering the minister's explanation in March this year of the true cost. The estimated cost at that stage was \$3.5m to \$4m. The department sought an exemption from the State Supply Commission on the basis that the contract was less than \$7m and it would be able to manage the contract rather than the State Supply Commission. That exemption was granted by the State Supply Commission which is most unfortunate, given the outcome and the details associated with that contract. I do not know how often the State Supply Commission grants exemptions; however, if the two contracts we are considering this evening are any indication, it might be well advised to think more carefully before granting exemptions.

In February 1996, the Education Department employed Unisys Australia Limited and DMR Group Australia Pty Ltd to design specifications and help evaluate the proposal. Unisys and DMR were therefore employed to design the specifications for the new software and evaluate the proposals for them. That is important because these two companies play a very important role later; they in fact got the contract, which is amazing. They were employed to design the proposal for which other companies would tender and they conclude by getting the contract which, as we know now, is far greater than the anticipated figure.

After designing the specifications, DMR and Unisys sought permission to submit a bid, which also was not anticipated in the initial stage. Their aim was to evaluate the proposal. A letter from Garry Duffield, Chief Executive Officer of the State Supply Commission to the Education Department of WA on 22 February 1996 states -

I refer to advice sought in relation to Unisys and DMR submitting a bid on the above Request for Proposal (RFP) after having assisted in the formulation of this documentation.

After reviewing all the information provided by Mr John Nicholas at the meeting held February 22, 1996, the Commission approved the following action to be taken:

- allow Unisys and DMR to submit an offer on the above RFP, subject to State Contracts vetting the specification and being satisfied that it had not been written inherently around these companies.

In other words, that occurred after the State Supply Commission satisfied itself that the proposal and design by Unisys and DMR was not designed so that they would be virtually the only people who could meet the specifications.

The letter continues -

- Unisys and DMR to take no part in the evaluation process.

That is what one would expect. Those companies were therefore given permission to submit a bid for the project after having designed the proposals for which other companies would bid.

The specifications of the design by the consultants from Unisys Australia Ltd and DMR Consulting Group Australia Pty Ltd say that the vendor must be a large company despite earlier documents saying that the proponents could be small local companies. One of the positions the department was putting forward was that this could result in the generation of employment and relationships with small local computing companies. Of course, that did not happen. One of the reasons Unisys and DMR were given the contract in the end was because of their size. It was believed that they could provide better backup and continued support to the project than could a smaller company. If a company designs a proposal which says that it will be much better if a large company gets the proposal, and that company happens to be one of the major large companies and puts in a bid for the project, it could be suggested that the company has helped design a proposal to which it is ideally suited. That is a most unfortunate aspect. One of the points that should come out of this is that when these situations arise, departments and the State Supply Commission should tell companies which use consultants to help draw up propositions for which other companies are supposed to tender that they cannot get involved in bidding for that proposition. It is inherent that they will have an advantage over other companies.

Three bids were put forward which were deemed to be of interest and to which greater attention was to be paid. Basically a short-listing process was done. Two companies, including Unisys, submitted a proposal with the PeopleSoft Pty Ltd software. The names of the two other unsuccessful companies have been deleted from the document, so I cannot give the House those names. Another company put in a proposal which was short listed and which used another software from SAP Australia Pty Ltd. Incidentally, the SAP software proposal was the cheapest tender, but it was deemed by the evaluators that the PeopleSoft software package was better suited to the requirements of the Education Department. It came down to a race between two companies - Unisys and another company, the name of which has been deleted from the documents.

The Unisys bid was considerably higher than the other company's bid. On most of the scoring rates for the various particulars of the proposition, Unisys and the other company scored the same rating. However, the Unisys bid was higher and that was explained by the fact that consultants and support staff might need to be flown in to assist with the project. Unisys, although it was not the lowest tenderer with the PeopleSoft bid, was the successful tenderer. The department had anticipated the cost of this process to be about \$3.5m to \$4m. The first evidence that the cost had blown out was on October 2 in 1997 in a letter from Charles Vinci, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the State Supply Commission, to Mr Stephen Home, the Executive Director of Human Resources, Education Department of Western Australia. The State Supply Commission obviously has an ongoing interest in this matter because the department had to explain to the State Supply Commission that the cost to maintain the contract had blown out beyond the limit for which it was given an exemption from the State Supply Commission. It had to go back to the State Supply Commission and ask for a further exemption. That letter states -

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 September 1997 requesting an extension to your devolved purchasing authority to allow for completion of the Personnel 2000 project.

I have reviewed the independent consultant's "Personnel 2000 Project Review Report" and am satisfied that the project controls appear adequate to ensure a successful completion on time and within budget.

Based upon the review findings and the ongoing monitoring of the project the Commission has agreed to an extension to \$11 million to allow the project to continue.

That was on 2 October 1997. On 31 December 1997, there is another letter from Garry Duffield, Chief Executive Officer of the State Supply Commission, to Stephen Home, who was the recipient of the previous document. At that stage, Mr Home was relieving the Director General of the Education Department of Western Australia. It is interesting that in October, an extension to a figure of \$11m was mentioned, and by 31 December the figure had gone up to \$13m. The letter from Mr Duffield to Mr Stephen Home states -

The reports of Mr David Cannon, independent consultant are of concern to the Commission as is the continual cost blow-out of the project.

That is the first time I came across the word "blow-out" in association with this matter. It is difficult to get a handle on what the estimated costs would be once it got beyond that first estimate of \$3.5m to \$4m. However, Garry Duffield described the process as a cost blow-out. It continues -

It is noted that even at this late stage of implementation, further enhancements are required "to cope with changing business needs or to facilitate automation of tasks previously performed manually". These further changes will have a flow-on effect in the testing of the complete facility.

Subject to your department providing a detailed briefing to the Minister for Education on the status of the Personnel 2000 project, the Commission agrees to an extension to \$13 million to allow the project to continue.

The Commission recognises your department's continued role in the risk management of this project -

In other words, it is not the State Supply Commission's responsibility -

- and would appreciate receiving regular monthly reports on progress.

Therefore, from January when the anticipated cost was around \$4.5m to October when an extension was sought to take the allowable costs up to \$11m, we arrive at 31 December 1997 when there was an extension to \$13m to allow the project to continue. In these documents there is no explanation of why that occurred. It should be explained, because that is a major differential between the anticipated first cost and the final cost based on those figures of December 1997. In fact, it is about three times the anticipated cost.

We must also bear in mind what the PeopleSoft Pty Ltd outcome was for the Education Department. It was generally considered to be a complete shemuzzle, and it resulted in major problems with payments to teachers earlier this year. I do not think those problems have yet been resolved. The department was paying out far more for that than it ever anticipated, and it was paying a sum that seemed to be escalating dramatically as 1997 wore on.

The next date of interest in this process comes not from the freedom of information documents but from information provided to the Parliament. In March 1999, the Minister for Education, Hon Colin Barnett, in reply to a question from the member for Belmont, said that the PeopleSoft software system had cost \$23m. There is a huge difference between the \$13m that was the extension granted by the State Supply Commission to allow the Education Department to continue to manage its own contract and that \$23m figure. There is an explanation given for that, to which I will come in a moment. There is some discrepancy in the costs at this stage, because \$23m was not the only figure relating to the cost that was supplied at around that date.

In the estimates committee hearing on Thursday, 27 May 1999, which is a couple of months after the minister made that statement to the Parliament, Mr Home, who was the recipient of some of those earlier letters about the cost problems, was asked this question by Mr Kobelke -

What was the cost of the total contract for developing the software package?

Mr Home says -

The \$13m contract was with UNISYS Australia Ltd, DMR Consulting Group Australia Pty Ltd, and Peoplesoft Pty Ltd, which was the consortium which put it together. It was split into three separate components.

Mr Ripper stated -

You previously advised Parliament that it cost \$21m.

To which Mr Home replied -

That includes the departmental labour. The \$13m contract was over three years with the three members of the consortium. Some 20 or 30 departmental staff were engaged exclusively on that project for three years. That is the additional cost which took the total cost into the vicinity of \$21m.

No doubt there is an explanation for this. The implementation of the PeopleSoft Pty Ltd package was a major problem for the Education Department, but there was no evidence in the earlier stages there would be such huge internal expenditure to complete the implementation of the software package. There was a specific statement earlier on: "It should be noted that there is no in-house development involved in the process". On 23 January 1996, this process was anticipated to cost the department \$3.5m to \$4m. It was said that there would be no in-house development. A figure of \$13m was paid to the consortium and another \$10m on top of that went to in-house costs. This occurred because 20 or 30 people had to be seconded to work exclusively on the project over three years.

Today's motion condemns the Minister for Education for mismanaging the awarding of computer software contracts by the Western Australian Education Department in relation to significant cost blow-outs that have cost the taxpayers money. The words "cost blow-outs" are not my words. The State Supply Commission described this process as a cost blow-out. It was only talking about a blow-out from \$11m to \$13m. It was not concerned with the extra \$10m that the Education Department spent on its own staff trying to manage this process. That is an enormous cost blow-out. The minister, as he has told this Parliament before, is responsible for what happens in his department. His department decided it would manage the details and implementation of this contract. It was not the State Supply Commission. The State Supply Commission was asked for an exemption so that the Education Department itself could manage the contract. That exemption was granted and the result has been a cost blow-out for which the minister is responsible. According to these documents, the blow-out to the consortium is at least a couple of million dollars. The question remains as to whether the consortium should have been the successful tenderer for the reasons that I outlined. Another \$10m - that we know about - cost blow-out has occurred internally within the Education Department. This occurred when people on the ground delivering education were screaming out because of a lack of resources. The money has been swallowed up in this way.

It is legitimate to ask the minister why this has occurred. He is responsible for the activities of his department. He has the responsibility of explaining to the Parliament how this process, which was to cost the Western Australian taxpayers \$3.5m to \$4m, ended up costing them \$23m. It has also delivered a massive management problem to the Education Department in relation to its human resources management information systems.

The other contract that I want to speak about briefly because I want to give the minister some time to respond is the RM Software contract. It was an Education Department software package for the school management system as opposed to the ones for human resources, teachers, staffing structure, payments and so on. This system is for the school itself - the curriculum and all the information that the children and the teachers need in the provision of education. It is a very important piece of software for the delivery of education to the children of the State.

Within the Education Department of WA school management system project procurement plan, there is an explanation of why the process was initiated in the first place. A software package called MAZE was already being used by the Education Department. It was being delivered by a Western Australian company called CAZ. The MAZE package was deficient in many of the areas that were required by the Education Department. It was possible to update and improve the package. That had been going on for some time. The Education Department ran into a problem with its relationship with CAZ in the provision of training for the use and updating of the software. For that reason the department decided to seek new software rather than to resolve the problem. The existing software was used by schools in every other State. The Government decided that it needed new software and would involve itself in a process to attract new software.

The first letter of importance is from Mr Charles Vinci, the acting chief executive officer of the State Supply Commission to Mr Joe Di Pietro, manager, Contract Services, Education Department of WA. The letter relates to a request to increase the Education Department's level of exemption. It was seeking an exemption for the contract as well. If it can manage the contract, the State Supply Commission does not have to do it. The exemption is for the school management system software. He states-

I would like to advise that the State Supply Commission has approved your request based on the information provided. The Commission also notes the substantial difference between the proposed initial costings conveyed to your Tenders Review Committee (below \$5 million) and revised estimated cost based on submission received (in excess of \$12.5 million).

Therefore, the initial proposal was that the software package and installation would cost below \$5m. As a result of the costing analysis, the overall cost of implementing the software over a six-year period is now \$12.5m. The anticipated cost was initially \$5m and ended up being \$12.5m. I think the final contract was in the vicinity of \$10m. There is a discrepancy between the first anticipated cost with the Supply Commission and the final cost when the contract was awarded. A breakdown of the estimated cost shows the software was around \$2.2m, the maintenance around \$7m, installation \$1.8m, and training \$1.5m - a total of approximately \$12.5m. The annual ongoing costs of the package are around \$1.16m, substantially higher than the annual ongoing costs of the previous package. A maintenance cost was paid to CAZ for its MAZE system, which was around \$60 000 a year. The original software cost \$600 000 for two years. The costs for the proposal are huge in comparison with the system that it replaced. They were far greater than was anticipated by the Education Department. It should give the minister cause for concern. Why is the department seeking exemptions to have the contracts managed internally when they turn out to be more expensive than they anticipated? Procedural problems with the contract have been given some publicity.

The department appointed Jenny Grummet as the executive officer for the evaluation committee of the department. Jenny Grummet and other people sat on this committee which looked at the various proposals. They looked at all the different propositions, the software and the capabilities and knocked out quite a few and reduced the applicants to a short list. What upsets some of the unsuccessful tenderers is that Jenny Grummet subsequently went to work for the successful tenderer.

Mr Barnett: Your style as a parliamentarian is you are very free and easy with naming people. You did it yesterday and you are doing it again today.

Mr CARPENTER: It is in this document.

Mr Barnett: You might well reflect on the naming of individuals in this Parliament. You did it carelessly yesterday.

Mr CARPENTER: I did not do it carelessly yesterday but the minister can reflect upon that in his speech. Does the minister want to respond to this or does he not want to say anything?

Mr Barnett: Make your speech and I will respond.

Mr CARPENTER: I will finish quickly and give the minister some time. Jenny Grummet was the executive officer who oversaw the initial propositions. She then went to work for the successful tenderer. That is one of the issues which has upset the unsuccessful tenderers although she was not on the final panel which determined the successful tenderer. The Education Department has defended Ms Grummet's position in relation to that. However, it is an issue with people in the business of trying to get work with the Education Department.

As for my naming Ms Grummet, the minister is again displaying his gross ignorance because she has already been the subject of newspaper articles. It is a shame that the minister is so self-righteous, thin-skinned and ignorant. He is a hands off minister in Education. He has no interest in it whatsoever. The minister's interest is in Resources Development and he is a lousy Minister for Education because he is not interested. He does not know what is going on in his department, he has no idea what the department does, he leaves it to the department and runs into trouble. The only time the minister has manifestly gotten involved in what was happening was when he overrode the best interests of the department and the State



and awarded that swimming contract to the Royal Life Saving Society. The member for Cottesloe is a dud as the Minister for Education. He should move out. Everybody knows that the member for Cottesloe has many capabilities but they are not in Education and that is the sad truth. He should not be in it. He came into the Education portfolio to resolve a problem the other minister had in relation to that dispute with the teachers' union. He resolved that very quickly, full credit to him, but he should have moved on after that.

The State Supply Commission has been asked to investigate what are described as "anomalies" and controversial decisions related to this project and the awarding of this second contract. The problem with the investigation is that the minister responsible for Works and Services, who is not in the Chamber at present, has made it clear that the outcome of the inquiry will not be made public. That is most unfortunate because very serious issues are involved, including whether the Education Department inadvertently leaked the entire database of one of the tendering companies to a competitor. I understand that may be the subject of court action. Serious matters about the awarding of this contract should be resolved. The State Supply Commission report should be provided to Parliament so that members can receive a clear indication of what has happened with the provision of this second contract.

I only wanted to address these two contracts. I am glad the minister has told me that at least four contracts are the subject of some controversy; I will try to find out about the other two. I would like to hear the minister's explanation of what has happened with these two contracts and why.

**MR BARNETT** (Cottesloe - Minister for Education) [6.48 pm]: The motion moved by the member for Willagee states in part -

That this House condemns the Minister for Education for mismanaging the awarding of computer software contracts . . .

If the member were serious about this, he would establish that the contracts were mismanaged and that I was somehow directly involved in that.

Mr Carpenter interjected.

Mr BARNETT: I have yet to speak for 15 seconds. As Minister for Education I accept responsibility for what happens within my portfolio but I make it clear - and I will talk about these contracts - that I was not in any way directly involved in the handling of computer contracts, nor should I be. Nevertheless, I accept ministerial responsibility. As he has a propensity to do in this House, the member for Willagee could not resist naming people towards the end of his speech.

Mr Carpenter: It was in the Press.

Mr BARNETT: He has a great propensity to repeatedly and carelessly use the names of public servants and others in this Parliament. His comments also degenerated into an element of personal abuse. His claim that I am a dud Minister for Education is his opinion, to which he is entitled.

As education spokesperson, I hope the member for Willagee does what I do; that is, get around to schools and talk to people. So far this year I have visited more than 80 schools and since I have been Minister for Education I have visited probably more than 400 schools. Carmen Lawrence was another Minister for Education who got out and visited schools. Since I have been minister, a new curriculum has been introduced, a new Curriculum Council has been formed and enshrined in legislation, the School Education Bill should be concluded by tomorrow which will replace 1928 legislation, and early childhood education programs for four year olds and five year olds on a universal basis have been introduced together with a revised school starting age at a cost of approximately \$250m.

There has been a growth in vocational education programs for years 11 and 12 from 3 per cent to 26 per cent of students and a rapid introduction of technology throughout schools, including the learning technology program under which 26 000 new computers will be put into schools. I note in passing that 195 new computers have gone into schools in the electorate of the member for Willagee this year at a cost of \$522 000

Mr Carpenter: Are they new?

Mr BARNETT: Yes. I have also been involved in the restructure of many of our schools. Despite hysteria about school closures, more schools have been built in this State during the term of this Government, particularly during my time as Minister for Education. Middle schooling has been introduced and senior colleges, specialist business schools and the like have been developed. If that is a dud performance, so be it. I will be happy to rest on the record as it stands. The member for Willagee plays personality politics rather than debating the issues.

Four major contracts have been undertaken by the Department of Education in the computing software area in addition to the \$100m - \$80m of which was in government schools - that was spent on the technology program in upgrading computing, hardware and software, cabling and professional development throughout the 800 school sites. The first project was the Microsoft Pty Ltd licensing agreement. This allowed a software package to be negotiated for all computers in all schools, including home computers used by teachers.

The packages included under the arrangement are Windows, Office Word Processing, the Explorer Internet package and the Encarta Encyclopaedia package. The cost of negotiating that licensing arrangement for all schools, including teachers, resulted in a saving of approximately \$3m a year compared with the cost if schools had individually sought licensing arrangements.

The second contract is the Oracle financial government accounting system which obviously relates to reporting and accounting within government and which has been introduced. The implementation cost was about \$3m which is within budget.

Of the contracts to which the member referred, I refer to the RM School information system. These contracts do not stand alone. There is a change in the way that schools are operating in this State. Two aspects of that change which go hand-in-hand are curriculum development and self management. People need to understand the dimensions of the change that is taking place. The curriculum framework is an outcomes-based framework. In other words, rather than having a prescriptive syllabus that lays down what the students will learn, the curriculum is geared towards levels of achievement. The philosophy behind that is that schools will have the ability to do their own thing within that curriculum outcomes framework and develop a syllabus to suit their location, their philosophy and the skills and abilities of their students. That can be implemented only if schools have at the same time the ability to manage their affairs more independently. Schools cannot have curriculum reform if they cannot also have management reform. Those computer programs have been part of delivering to schools the ability for self-management. There is an educational reason, not simply an administrative and financial reason, for the changes that have been introduced.

The school information system - the RM plc software - is an integrated software package relating to information on 260 000 students, school finances, timetabling, student learning outcomes and curriculum. It is very much about what happens within schools. There have been complaints from Hon Ed Dermer in the upper House, and there have been complaints from local suppliers. The State Supply Commission has explored and investigated those complaints, and I have been advised by both the department and informally through the State Supply Commission that there were some minor defects in the way the Education Department handled the process in terms of not recording minutes properly, not advising unsuccessful tenderers, and not doing a detailed cost benefit analysis. However, the conclusion from the State Supply Commission is that despite those defects, that contract was generally handled in a satisfactory manner.

There have been no cost blow-outs on that project; it has performed to budget. There were some slight anomalies in the way it was administered, but on review by the State Supply Commission, that project was okay.

Mr Carpenter: Will you supply us with the State Supply Commission report?

Mr BARNETT: I have not seen the report. I am referring to it, but I have not seen it.

Mr Carpenter: Will you supply us with a copy?

Mr BARNETT: I have not seen it. I have not read it.

Mr Carpenter: Then how do you know what is in it?

Mr BARNETT: I am referring to comments that were supplied to me about the conclusion of the report - a simple, straightforward process.

Mr Kobelke: Will you be straightforward and open and give an undertaking to table the report?

Mr BARNETT: I do not give any undertakings to table reports that I have not looked at carefully.

Mr Kobelke: Then do not quote from it.

Mr BARNETT: I am not quoting from it. I am stating the conclusion of the State Supply Commission, conveyed informally to my office.

Mr Carpenter: You have not seen it!

Mr BARNETT: Has the member seen it?

Mr Carpenter: No, but that is not what I asked.

Mr Ripper: We will put in an FOI application.

Mr BARNETT: All right.

The PeopleSoft system relates to the payroll system of the department. Members should bear in mind that the Education Department is the largest employer this side of Melbourne. Its teacher employment alone is 17 500 full-time positions, stretched across 800 school sites. The total payroll of the department is extremely complex in terms of the number of people, which is in excess of 25 000, the number of sites, and the pay and conditions of employees, with temporary teachers, relief teachers, part-time teachers, teacher-sharing positions and the like. When I first went into the Education portfolio, I walked around the payroll section, and I do not know the exact number of people, but I suggest that in the order of 200 people were manually handling payroll matters. Imagine the cost of that!

The introduction of a computerised payroll system has been difficult, but I do not shy away from the need for that system. The original project was budgeted at \$5m. It is true, as the member said, that by December 1997, \$13m in direct payments had been made. There was a high degree of customising of that system, which had to be paid for, to suit the needs of a vast work force spread across 800 different sites, with extraordinarily complicated pay and conditions.

Mr Carpenter: That work force has always been there. It did not just appear suddenly.

Mr BARNETT: The member does not understand.

Mr Carpenter: I do understand.

Mr BARNETT: There is no doubt that the process has been more expensive, and there has been ongoing expenditure of some \$2m. The extra cost that has been incurred has been for the customising of the system. There has been a problem with the implementation of that system. Much of that problem occurred at the school sites and reflected the lack of training and professional development of the people who are handling the school information system, who are typically school registrars. There was a lot of inaccurate keying in of information, which resulted in underpayments and overpayments of staff. An enormous effort has been made and extra staff have been employed to correct the problems. As someone who formerly worked with employer organisations, I made it very clear to the department that a prime responsibility was to ensure that people are paid correctly and on time. That was not happening.

The department has worked extraordinarily hard to correct some defects in the system. Issues are still involved, but the system is being bedded down. A big effort has been made, and many of the extra staff brought in to work on the problem are now not required. The system is starting to work properly. Much of the problem has required the development and training of staff in schools, and the keying and entry of information has probably been the biggest problem. However, we are getting there.

I recognise that it has cost more than anticipated. However, the alternative system was to have 200 people manually handling payroll issues. Members may not be aware that if under the old system a teacher went on leave or a teacher was sick, and a relief teacher was appointed, that simple transaction went through 23 pairs of hands in the department. Therefore, 23 people were involved in the decision to appoint a relief teacher.

Mr Carpenter: That is not the point.

Mr BARNETT: It is exactly the point. If one could calculate the real cost of the old system, it was enormous. Problems have arisen, not with the PeopleSoft package, but with its customising and its implementation. I do not shy away from that fact. I wish it had cost \$5m, but it has been \$13m. At the end of day, the system will allow self-management to be developed at schools, allow the curriculum to be properly used and allow a more efficient payroll and human resource management system. We are not there yet, but we are nearly there.

#### *Adjournment of Debate*

**MR KOBELKE** (Nollamara) [7.02 pm]: I move -

That debate be adjourned.

Question put and negatived

#### *Motion Resumed*

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

#### Ayes (14)

Ms Anwyl  
Mr Carpenter  
Dr Edwards  
Mr Graham

Mr Grill  
Mr Kobelke  
Ms MacTiernan  
Mr Marlborough

Mr McGowan  
Mr Riebeling  
Mr Ripper

Mr Thomas  
Ms Warnock  
Mr Cunningham (*Teller*)

#### Noes (27)

Mr Baker  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Bloffwitch  
Mr Board  
Mr Bradshaw  
Dr Constable  
Mr Cowan

Mr Day  
Dr Hames  
Mrs Hodson-Thomas  
Mr Johnson  
Mr Kierath  
Mr Marshall  
Mr McNee

Mr Minson  
Mr Nicholls  
Mrs Parker  
Mr Pandal  
Mr Prince  
Mr Shave  
Mr Sweetman

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

#### Pairs

Mr Brown  
Mrs Roberts  
Ms McHale  
Mr McGinty  
Dr Gallop

Mr Court  
Mr Masters  
Mr Omodei  
Mrs Holmes  
Mr House

Question thus negatived.

**MINISTER FOR POLICE**

*Tabling of Letter*

**MR PRINCE** (Albany - Minister for Police) [7.06 pm]: I understand that a little earlier when unfortunately I was not in the Chamber, the Deputy Speaker ruled that I should table a letter from lawyer Mr Peter Ward to which I referred in question time. I was happy to table it at the time, but I was not given an opportunity to do so.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Barron-Sullivan): Was that the first page to which the Deputy Speaker referred?

Mr PRINCE: Yes.

[See paper No 163.]

*House adjourned at 7.07 pm*

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### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard

#### GLOBAL FINANCE, AUDIT REPORT

50. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Minister for Fair Trading:

(1) For each of the years -

- (a) 1996;
- (b) 1997; and
- (c) 1998,

who was the auditor appointed by Global Finance in accordance with section 53 of the Finance Brokers Control Act 1975 ("the Act")?

(2) For each of the years -

- (a) 1996;
- (b) 1997; and
- (c) 1998 -

- (i) on what date did the Auditor deliver to the Board the audit report in accordance with section 50 of the Act;
- (ii) did the audit report contain any findings or qualifications that Global Finance had not complied with the Act or any of its other obligations pursuant to section 61 of the Act;
- (iii) if yes to (2)(c)(ii) above, what were these findings or qualifications; and
- (iv) was any further action taken by the Board in respect of these findings or qualifications, and if so, what action was taken;
- (v) if not, why not; and
- (vi) will the Minister table the audit report?

Mr SHAVE replied:

I am advised:

(1) Marsden Partners 1996 to 1998

(2) (i) 1996 - 21 March, 1997  
1997 - 1 April 1998

1998 - The Auditors did not provide a report - Global Finance went into voluntary administration in February and liquidation in April 1999.

(ii)-(iii) Yes. The Reports for 1996 & 1997 expressed concerns that the auditor was not satisfied Global Finance had not breached section 44 (5) of the Finance Brokers Control Act 1975. In addition, the 1997 Report sought advice from the Board in relation to a legal opinion obtained by Global Finance which indicated the issue of concern to the auditors was not covered by the Finance Brokers Control Act.

(iv) The Board:

- Commenced an investigation.
- Requested an interim audit report for the period April to June 1996.
- Instructed Global to amend its Interest Disposal Authority form.

(v) Not applicable.

(vi) Yes - the documents are tabled. [See paper No 162.]

#### LOT 418 JUNIPER ROAD, SHIRE OF AUGUSTA-MARGARET RIVER

60. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

(1) With respect to the proposed development at Lot 418 Juniper Road in the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, will the Minister confirm that a compromise between the landowner and the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) has been reached in relation to the sand pads erected on site?

(2) What is the nature of this compromise?

(3) Will the sand pads which were placed partially over the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park (LNNP) boundary be removed from the National Park?

(4) If not, why not?

- (5) Given that a standard condition placed on development approval for residential locations such as Lot 418 includes a 30 metre low fuel zone, will the Minister provide an assurance that the illegally cleared portion of the LNNP in front of Lot 418 will not be permitted to comprise a part of the required 30 metre low fuel zone?
- (6) If not, why not?
- (7) What action will CALM be taking to ensure prosecution of those responsible for the illegal clearing of a part of the LNNP?
- (8) If no action toward prosecution is intended, why is this the preferred option?
- (9) Can the Minister confirm that the agreement between CALM and the land owner to modify the sand pads will include a reduction in the height of the sand pads from approximately 10 metres to approximately 5 metres?
- (10) If not, why not?
- (11) Can the Minister confirm that since the construction of the sand pads CALM has advised the landowner about appropriate landscaping?
- (12) Can the Minister confirm that Lot 418 is part of the Ridge Landscape Amenity Area as defined in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge Statement of Planning Policy (LNRSP)?
- (13) If not, why not?
- (14) Can the Minister confirm that Lot 418 is contained within the National Park Influence Area as defined in the LNRSP?
- (15) If not, why not?
- (16) Given that CALM have advised the landowner of Lot 418 about appropriate landscaping did CALM advise that 5 metre high sand pads in the existing position of the sand pads would contravene Policy Statement 3.3 of the LNRSP?
- (17) If not, why not?
- (18) Given that CALM have advised the landowner of Lot 418 about appropriate landscaping, did CALM advise that 5 metre high sand pads in the existing location would contravene Policy Statement 3.8 of the LNRSP?
- (19) If not, why not?
- (20) Given that CALM have advised the landowner of Lot 418 about appropriate landscaping, did CALM advise that 5 metre high sand pads in the existing location would contravene Land Use Strategy 3.17?
- (21) By what rationale is the Minister convinced that buildings on 5 metre high sand pads in their existing location in a National Park Influence Area will be compatible with the conservation and landscape values of the Ridge?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) There has been no compromise reached between CALM and the owner. The Shire of Augusta-Margaret River has made a decision in respect to the building approvals on the private properties the member has mentioned.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Yes. The area of national park has been rehabilitated and will not form part of the fuel reduced buffer.
- (6) Not applicable.
- (7) CALM will be taking no further action in respect to prosecution of those responsible.
- (8) This is the preferred option in this case as the impact on the national park is minor and the proponents are first offenders.
- (9)-(11) CALM has no agreement with the landowner in terms of any development controls or specifications. The Shire of Augusta-Margaret River has taken CALM's suggestions onboard and made a decision accordingly. I understand modification to the height of the structures will occur.
- (12) The location is not in the ridge landscape amenity area.
- (13) The location is in the principle ridge protection zone under the Leeuwin Naturaliste-Ridge Statement of Planning Policy.
- (14) No.
- (15) See (13) above.

(16)-(20)

CALM advised the owner and the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River regarding possible actions that could be taken to minimise the effect of constructing houses in this location. CALM has opposed the construction of houses in this area since first noticing the construction in September of 1998 and has advised the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River accordingly.

(21) See (16) above. Approvals were granted for the construction of four houses on these properties prior to the Statement of Planning Policy being gazetted.

#### FORESTS AND FORESTRY, REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT SUBMISSIONS

69. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

How many of the 30,410 public submissions to the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) called for -

- (a) an end to woodchipping in old growth forest;
- (b) an end to logging in old growth forest;
- (c) the protection of all old growth forest;
- (d) the protection of one or more of Giblett, Beavis, Carey, Jane, Kerr, Sharpe, Dawson, Ordinance, Peak, Rocky, Gardner, Darradup, Layment, Butler, Hilliger, or Long forest blocks, or any part of the proposed Wellington National Park; and
- (e) the reforming or scrapping of the RFA process?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

The purpose of the "Analysis of Public Submissions" for the Regional Forest Agreement was to describe and analyse the submissions, and to show how the issues raised were addressed in developing the RFA. The "Analysis of Public Submissions" did not undertake a statistical analysis of the type suggested by the above question.

#### COMMITTEES AND BOARDS, FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

95. Mr BROWN to the Minister for the Environment; Labour Relations:

(1) Since February 1993, what former Members of Parliament have been -

- (a) appointed to a Government Board, Commission, Committee or other body; and/or
- (b) appointed by the Government to any Board, Commission, Committee or other body; and/or
- (c) employed or appointed within the Government in any capacity, paid or otherwise, under the Minister's control?

(2) In each instance -

- (a) what is the -
  - (i) name of the former Member; and
  - (ii) the title of the position,
 to which they have been appointed;
- (b) which organisation/department is responsible for the position; and
- (c) what remuneration is paid for each position?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

WorkCover WA:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

Commissioner for Workplace Agreements:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

Kings Park and Botanic Garden:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

Perth Zoo:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

WorkSafe Western Australia:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

## Department of Productivity and Labour Relations:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

## Department of Conservation and Land Management:

- (1)-(2) (a) Hon A A Lewis, Chairman, Fire Review Panel.  
Mr Leon Watt, Chairman, Lands and Forest Commission.
- (b) Department of Conservation and Land Management.
- (c) Hon A A Lewis - \$41 403.75 total payment.  
Mr Leon Watt - \$12 000.00 per annum.

## Department of Environmental Protection:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

## Department of the Registrar, Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission:

- (1) Nil.
- (2) Not applicable.

## Office of the Minister for the Environment:

- (1)-(2) (a) Hon R Pearce, Member, Interim Forest Industry Ministerial Advisory Committee.  
Mr Leon Watt, Deputy Chairman, Interim Forest Industry Ministerial Advisory Committee.
- (b) Office of the Minister for the Environment.
- (c) Hon R Pearce - \$12 550 per annum.  
Mr Leon Watt - \$12 550 per annum.

## MINIMUM WAGE

104. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the decision of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in which it has increased the minimum wage by \$12 to \$385.40 per week?
- (2) What is the State minimum wage under the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993?
- (3) Does the Minister intend to increase the State minimum wage to a level equivalent to that awarded by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission?
- (4) If not, what is the reason for the differential between the minimum wage determined by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and the minimum wage under the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) \$346.70 per week.
- (3)-(4) The process for setting the minimum wage under the *Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993* is currently being reviewed. Submissions are under consideration and an announcement on any changes to the process will be made as soon as possible.

## GLOBAL FINANCE, AUDIT REPORTS

127. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Minister for Fair Trading:

- (1) For each of the years -

- (a) 1996;
- (b) 1997; and
- (c) 1998,

who was the auditor appointed by Global Finance in accordance with section 53 of the Finance Brokers Control Act 1975 ("the Act")?

- (2) For the audit reports for -

- (a) 1996;
- (b) 1997; and
- (c) 1998,

- (i) on what date did the auditor deliver to the Finance Brokers' Supervisory Board (the Board) the audit report in accordance with section 50 of the Act;
- (ii) did the audit report contain any findings or qualifications that Global Finance had not complied with the Act or any of its other obligations pursuant to section 61 of the Act;
- (iii) if yes, what were these findings or qualifications;



- (iv) was any further action taken by the Board in respect of these findings or qualifications;
- (v) if yes, what action was taken;
- (vi) if not, why not; and
- (vii) will the Minister table the audit report?

Mr SHAVE replied:

(1)-(2) Refer to the answer on Parliamentary Question 50.

#### LABOUR MARKET DEREGULATION, MR DES MOORE'S COMMENTS

167. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of an article that appeared in *The Australian Financial Review* on Wednesday 2 June 1999 under the heading of "Plans for Low- Income Earners Are Not Perfect"?
- (2) Is the Minister aware that the author of the article is Mr Des Moore, Director of the Institute of Private Enterprise?
- (3) Is the Minister aware that Mr Des Moore is the same Mr Des Moore commissioned by the Federal Government and a number of coalition State Governments to write a report on labour market deregulation?
- (4) Is the Minister also aware that in the article Mr Moore claims "... deregulation of the labour market ... would result in a fall in real wages which would likely be concentrated at the bottom end"?
- (5) Does any research conducted by the Government confirm that deregulation of the labour market will result in a fall in real wages as claimed by Mr Moore?
- (6) If not, what does the Government's research reveal?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(4) Yes.
- (5) No.
- (6) The Government has not undertaken detailed economic research into any association between labour market deregulation and real wage outcomes. The only Government commissioned research to have addressed this issue in recent years is Mr Moore's November 1998 paper "*The case for Further Deregulation of the Labour Market*", referred to in part (3) of the question.

#### TOURISM, NORTHCLIFFE

320. Mr BROWN to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Is the Minister prepared to meet with Northcliffe tourism operators to discuss the future of the tourism industry in the town and surrounds?
- (2) If so, when?
- (3) Will the Minister travel to Northcliffe to speak to the tourism operators?
- (4) If so, when?
- (5) If not, why not?
- (6) Given the importance to old growth forests to the tourism industry in Northcliffe, will the Minister visit the town and meet with tourism operators at the same as the Minister for Tourism?
- (7) If not, why not?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) At a mutually agreed time.
- (3) I would be happy to visit Northcliffe and discuss the issues facing tourism in the Northcliffe area.
- (4)-(5) See (2) above.
- (6)-(7) See (3) above.

#### FORESTS AND FORESTRY, MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE SOUTH WEST FORESTS OF WA, A REVIEW

434. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) With reference to the document titled *Management Strategies for the South-West Forests of Western Australia, A Review, February 1992*, will the Minister explain in relation to Table 24 what proportion of the annual volume of jarrah sawlogs were expected to be sourced from regrowth jarrah forest?

- (2) In the section of Table 24 titled Jarrah, how much of the 685 000 cubic metres described as 'forest residue and other' derives from -
  - (a) regrowth forest; and
  - (b) thinnings?
- (3) Does 'forest residue and other' refer to timber which has been felled in the process of obtaining sawlogs?
- (4) If not, will the Minister explain how 'forest residue and other' is derived?
- (5) Since the publication of the above document what are the revised figures for -
  - (a) annual sustainable volumes of jarrah; and
  - (b) annual sustainable volumes of jarrah 'forest residue and other'?
- (6) In 1992 how was the 685 000 cubic metres of jarrah 'forest residue and other' utilised?
- (7) How is the revised volume of jarrah 'forest residue and other' expected to be utilised?
- (8) In the section of Table 24 titled karri, what volume of sawlogs are derived from regrowth forest?
- (9) Has the sustainable annual volume of karri thinning residue been revised from the 1992 calculation of 100 000 cubic metres?
- (10) If so, what is the current volume of karri thinning residue calculated as?
- (11) Why was the volume of karri thinning residue revised?
- (12) What volume of 'other logs' is derived from regrowth karri forest?
- (13) How are 'other logs' utilised?
- (14) What volume of the 559 000 cubic metres of marri from Table 24 is obtained from regrowth forest?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(2) Previously harvested jarrah forest strata are not generally classified as "regrowth" in the way that karri forest strata are, since the jarrah forest generally exhibits a multi-aged structure. Regrowth jarrah logs can be sourced from a wide range of strata and forest structures. The figures contained in the 1992 document were calculated on a 'whole of forest' basis.
- (3)-(4) The Ministerial Determination of 16 August 1993 states that other logs are "derived from the remaining portions of felled tree boles below current sawlog specifications after a first or second grade sawlog has been obtained, together with timber from those trees which do not contain first or second grade sawlogs but which are felled as part of the silvicultural operation".
- (5) The Regional Forest Agreement for Western Australia contains estimates of the expected yields but it is the role of the next Forest Management Plan under State legislation to set the actual levels. The revised figures for the period 1999-2003 will depend on negotiations with contract holders, that are still continuing.
- (6) The 1992-93 CALM annual report shows that 22 m<sup>3</sup> of jarrah industrial wood, 42 141 tonnes of domestic firewood and 68 505 tonnes of industrial firewood were produced.
- (7) See answer to (5) above.
- (8) The volume of sawlogs derived from regrowth forest increases from nil as the regrowth forest matures until it provides the majority of the sawlog supply.
- (9)-(12) Karri regrowth thinning programs are to be reviewed pending the results of the current review of karri silviculture and logging plans.
- (13) 'Other logs' were utilised as second and third grade sawlogs and chiplogs.
- (14) This varies from year to year. See answer to (1) and (9) above.

#### SWEAT SHOP WORKING CONDITIONS

507. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that the National Nine Network program of 5 August 1999 "A Current Affair" reported on sweat shop working conditions in Australia?
- (2) What steps has the Government taken to identify sweat shop working conditions in Western Australia?
- (3) In what segments of industry have sweat shop conditions been identified?
- (4) What action is the Government taking to eliminate sweat shop conditions?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2)-(4) The Departments of Workplace Relations Advisory Committee has established a Working Party on Outworkers to examine and provide a draft report to the Workplace Relations Ministers Council on options for action to clarify the employment status of outworkers in the garment industry. The Federal Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business is currently preparing an issues paper for the consideration of the Working Party. Western Australia will be providing input to the issues identified by the Working Party.

#### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, CONEY STEVENS PROJECT MANAGEMENT PTY LTD

665. Ms McHALE to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance:

- (1) How many contracts were awarded to Coney Stevens Project Management by agencies and departments under the Minister's control in -
- (a) 1996-97;
  - (b) 1997-98; and
  - (c) 1998-99?
- (2) For each contract, will the Minister state -
- (a) the project that the contract was awarded for;
  - (b) the date that the contract was awarded;
  - (c) the expiry date of the contract;
  - (d) the value of the contract;
  - (e) did the contract go to tender; and
  - (f) how many companies or individuals submitted tenders?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(2) No departments or agencies under the portfolio of the Minister for Finance have awarded any contracts to Coney Stevens Project Management.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### BELLTOWER, TENDERS

**232. Dr GALLOP to the Acting Premier:**

- (1) Can the Acting Premier confirm that tenders for the construction of the Barrack Square belltower have closed?
- (2) If so, how many proposals were received and will he table a list of them?
- (3) Are all the tenders within the \$5.5m budget allocated for the construction of the belltower?
- (4) When will the successful tenderer be announced?

**Mr COWAN replied:**

- (1) Yes, tenders have closed.
- (2) Four proposals were received, but I will not provide their names.
- (3)-(4) I am not prepared to provide that advice because it is commercially sensitive information until the tender has been awarded. If the tender is awarded, that information is likely to become available.

#### BELLTOWER, TENDERS

**233. Dr GALLOP to the Acting Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Will the Acting Premier explain why it is not possible for him to release the names of the successful tenderers?

**Mr COWAN replied:**

There are no successful tenderers! However, I understand what the Leader of the Opposition meant. It is not appropriate for us to provide a list of the people who have submitted a tender until the tenders have been evaluated. When and if they have been evaluated a contract will be let.

Dr Gallop: It is a secret State.

Mr COWAN: It is standard practice and the Leader of the Opposition knows it.

## OXYGEN, FUNDING FOR HOME USE

**234. Mr NICHOLLS to the Minister for Health:**

The demand for oxygen by people in their homes is an issue of considerable interest to people in Mandurah and it is increasing. Is any further money available to fund the increasing use of home-based oxygen?

**Mr DAY replied:**

The member for Mandurah has taken up this issue in recent months, and I am pleased to advise him that an increase of \$250 000 will be made in the allocation; therefore, \$1.25m will now be directed to the home-based oxygen scheme. I am aware that the demand for home-based oxygen services has increased significantly over the past few years. It is required by patients with diseases such as chronic obstructive airways disease and congenital heart disease, and by a significant number of aged citizens. I have asked the Health Department to undertake an urgent review of accessibility to the service to ensure equity in access between metropolitan and rural Western Australia. We became aware in recent times of differences as a result of different funding mechanisms in access to ambulatory oxygen bottles in particular between metropolitan and rural Western Australia. I have also asked the Health Department to prepare statewide clinical referral guidelines for access to home-based oxygen. That is a very good outcome for Western Australians who rely on home-based and ambulatory oxygen, and the new guidelines to be produced in the next few months will produce an even better outcome.

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS, REMOVAL

**235. Ms McHALE to the Minister for Health:**

- (1) Why is the State Government planning to remove, thereby effectively sacking, the chief executive officers and general managers of the 12 public hospitals in Perth?
- (2) How much money will have been wasted by appointing four new teaching hospital CEOs in the past 12 months, only to make them all redundant?
- (3) Is it intended that the General Manager of the Metropolitan Health Service Board, Andrew Weeks, will assume the roles of all the CEOs and general managers?
- (4) How can the minister possibly believe that running our hospitals by remote control will improve the delivery of services to patients?

**Mr DAY replied:**

- (1)-(4) The Government has no plans to sack the chief executive officers or general managers of our public hospitals.

## EXPORT INCOME, SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

**236. Mrs HODSON-THOMAS to the Minister for Commerce and Trade:**

In respect of small to medium exporters in Western Australia, will the minister please advise as follows -

- (1) What percentage of the State's total annual export income is generated by small to medium enterprises?
- (2) Approximately how many small to medium exporters are in Western Australia?
- (3) How much funding in the form of direct grants was provided by the State Government during the last fiscal year to small to medium exporters to assist in developing export markets?

**Mr COWAN replied:**

- (1) I am advised that an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey covering the 1996-97 financial year - so it is to some extent dated - indicated that small and medium enterprises were responsible for 49.1 per cent of all export income, valued at \$3.2b, in Western Australia in 1996-97.
- (2) Approximately 1 297 small and medium enterprises were involved in exporting in 1996-97, representing 97 per cent of all export enterprises in Western Australia.
- (3) In 1998-99, the Department of Commerce and Trade - I am aware that other departments make funds available for assistance to enterprises - offered \$458 417 to applicants through the various grants, such as export planning, business visits, the export graduate scheme, the export market support scheme, the international projects market support scheme, the marketing research initiatives fund, the regional intrastate travel assistance fund, regional sample assistance, regional trade promotion, and regional interstate and overseas assistance.

## SIR CHARLES GAIRDNER HOSPITAL

**237. Ms McHALE to the Minister for Health:**

- (1) On how many occasions in the past month have patients at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital had to sleep in corridors or television rooms, and how many patients were inconvenienced in such a way?
- (2) Can the Minister confirm that on more than one occasion, five patients have been allocated to four-bed wards at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital?

- (3) How can the minister guarantee the safety of patients in these circumstances when they have no access to facilities such as emergency oxygen or emergency call buttons?

**Mr DAY replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) I am advised that on some occasions it is necessary for patients, upon admission, to be located in an area that is not the area in which they are finally accommodated.

Mr Graham: The corridor!

Mr DAY: These are issues for the management of the Metropolitan Health Service Board -

Mr Ripper: Is it operational again?

Mr DAY: Does the member want the answer to this question?

Ms McHale: Yes.

Mr Ripper: We want the minister to take responsibility for the answer.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DAY: I am advised that for the month ending Monday, 20 September 1999, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital implemented its "overcensus" policy on 17 occasions, whereby more patients had been admitted than beds were available in wards. This affected 178 patients. This was caused by, firstly, difficulty in recruiting sufficient nursing staff within the hospital -

Ms McHale: Blame the nurses.

Mr McGinty: The Government imposed the moratorium on nurses!

Mr Ripper: It is the Government's policy.

Mr DAY: Secondly, a very busy winter period.

Mr McGinty: What a disgrace.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DAY: For the Opposition's information, there is no moratorium on the recruitment of level 1 and 2 nursing staff. I am advised that the hospital has always done its best to get all affected patients into beds in wards by 10 o'clock on the morning following their admission.

Ms McHale: The damage is already done.

Mr Ripper: I hope the minister's ministerial office is on a short-term lease.

Mr DAY: I am also advised that decisions about patient allocations in ward areas are made by senior and experienced nursing staff. Patients are accommodated in areas that are readily accessible to nursing staff, if it is required due to bed pressures. Patients' needs for oxygen and emergency call buttons are always considered. At no stage has the quality of care provided to these patients been compromised.

Mr McGinty: A total of 170 people were left in a corridor in a month. That is a disgrace.

Mr Ripper: The minister should resign.

#### WEST PERTH FOOTBALL CLUB

**238. Mr BAKER to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Sport and Recreation:**

In view of the West Perth Football Club's substantial capital contribution to the lighting and other infrastructure at its home ground at Arena Joondalup, will the minister entertain negotiations aimed at seeking an abatement of the club's annual licence fee to the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust?

**Mr MARSHALL replied:**

I thank the member for Joondalup for the question, and for his interest in West Perth Football Club. I wish them well on Sunday. The minister has supplied the following response -

Following representations from the West Perth Football Club in 1998, the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust renegotiated the existing licence with the club. The annual licence fee was reduced. The rebate that the club received from the trust for food and beverage operations was also reduced. Due to an increase in food and beverage sales, the net return to the West Perth Football Club has remained equivalent to previous years. In addition, the trust was instrumental in securing a sponsorship agreement with the Swan Brewery which provides a significant financial return to the West Perth Football Club. Given the costs associated with maintaining the

football oval, the grandstand and other facilities, the trust is not in a position to provide further financial relief to the West Perth Football Club through another reduction in the licence fee.

As the Sports Centre Trust relies on state government funding for the operation of Arena Joondalup, any further reduction in the licence fee would equate to state government funding of the West Perth Football Club. I refer the member to the minister's answer to his previous question without notice. I am advised that the trust, through its management staff at Arena Joondalup, is working closely with the West Perth Football Club to initiate revenue producing activities such as staging entertainment-style events.

#### POLICE, INVOLVEMENT IN MARITIME UNION OF AUSTRALIA DISPUTE

##### **239. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Police:**

Can the minister confirm the following -

- (1) That intensive surveillance by police in Beechboro last year detected people openly breaking the law by trading in illegal drugs?
- (2) That the police officers involved in collecting evidence on drug dealing were instructed to stop their investigations and become involved in the dispute between the Maritime Union of Australia and Patrick, the stevedoring company?
- (3) That the Premier, the former Minister for Transport and the former Commissioner of Police met to discuss the MUA dispute and agreed that the commissioner would provide enough police officers to break the picket line to enable non-union trucks to enter the port?

##### **Mr PRINCE replied:**

- (1) I cannot answer that question as I have not been given notice of it.
- (2)-(3) I do not know whether it is the case, but I will endeavour to find out.

Mr Cunningham: It is an operational matter!

Mr PRINCE: I have never said that. That is what Hon Graham Edwards used to say; I have never said it. Regarding the meeting said to have taken place between the Premier, the former Commissioner of Police and the former Minister for Transport, was it some time early last calendar year?

Mr Brown: On 1 May, I think. There is a memo dated 1 May 1998 from the former Minister for Transport.

Mr PRINCE: I have no knowledge of such a meeting. I will make some inquiries to find out if such a meeting took place.

Dr Gallop: We know where the Government's priorities are, do we not?

Mr PRINCE: Our priority as a Government is to ensure that the criminals get caught and put behind bars. That is what the priority is and always has been.

Several members interjected.

Mr PRINCE: What are members opposite going to do about holding up the sentencing legislation, the Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No. 1), the Prisons Amendment Bill and the Court Security and Custodial Services Bill, all of which the Opposition said was good legislation that would help deal with the criminals of this State? Bipartisan support has been thrown out the window in favour of opportunist politicisation. The Labor Party has a policy that allows free marijuana and heroin shooting galleries. One of the Labor members is acting in a way entirely opposite to party policy and is on the government side; that is, tough on drugs!

#### POLICE ACTIVITIES, GOVERNMENT POLICY

##### **240. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Police:**

Can the minister advise if it is government policy to provide officers to combat the illegal drug trade or to use the officers on industrial disputes?

##### **Mr PRINCE replied:**

The question of any form of breach of the law is a matter for the police to attend to. It does not matter whether it is a matter of drug dealing or any other form of criminal activity or the maintenance of law and order. The police should be there to deal with it.

Mr Brown: What about when the Premier is involved with the independence of the Police Force?

Mr PRINCE: If the member stopped shouting his slogans he would get an answer. All the member is doing is shouting slogans; he is not giving anyone the opportunity to provide an answer. I have been asked what the government policy is and I have tried to say what it is. The police exist to deal with breaches of the law whether in relation to drugs or any other form of unlawful activity. They maintain law and order and peace in society. That is government policy; it always has been and always will be.

Mr Brown: What role do ministers have in that?

Mr PRINCE: Ministers do not have, and by convention should not have, any power to direct police officers to do or not do particular things.

Mr Brown: What about the Premier?

Mr PRINCE: He is a minister as well. Ministers and Premiers have the power, by convention, to debate, advise, counsel and to discuss matters relevant at any time. I do not know whether such a meeting took place. I will make some inquiries.

#### BUSSELTON HOSPITAL, FUTURE NEEDS PLANNING

##### **241. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the Shire of Busselton, which continues to be the fastest growing municipality in Australia, and is still the largest rural electorate in Western Australia. This high population growth is placing pressure on Busselton District Hospital, especially over the summer months when many tourists bring their health problems to the Shire of Busselton for a holiday. Will the minister advise if planning is taking place to determine the future hospital needs of Busselton; and if so, when the results of future planning are likely to be made public?

##### **Mr DAY replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The Government has invested substantially increased resources in the south west region to improve the provision of health services, in both capital and recurrent programs. I am, of course, in part thinking of the opening of the South West Health Campus in Bunbury which has been established for not only the people in the Bunbury district, but also those in the south west region generally.

Following the opening of the South West Health Campus, the provision of services has increased in the mental health area, palliative care, renal dialysis and many other areas. A strategic planning exercise has been undertaken for the south west region, and it will guide the future direction for the delivery of health services at both a local and regional level.

I am advised that Busselton District Hospital theatres and central sterilising stores are currently being remodelled to improve the overall function and clinical standards of those areas. The refurbishment of the decommissioned permanent care unit as the day surgery recovery and post-discharge area has also commenced. These improvements to the facilities will result in an increased number of patients being able to receive surgery on a day care basis, and therefore reduce the need for overnight stays.

Finally, the master plan is currently being prepared in the Vasse-Leeuwin health service area for Busselton, Margaret River, Augusta Hospital and community health services. That will inform the planning process for both the board of management and the Health Department. It is expected that the final master plan will be completed by the end of this month and it will then be presented to the board of management for consideration, prior to submission to the Health Department.

#### POLICE, SCHOOL-BASED OFFICERS

##### **242. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:**

- (1) Are budget pressures leading to school-based police officer positions being cut?
- (2) Are decisions about the placement of school-based police officers made centrally or at the district level?
- (3) Which school-based police officer positions are currently under threat?

##### **Mr PRINCE replied:**

- (1)-(3) I thank the member for some notice of this question. As far as I am aware, and after inquiry, no budget pressure has led to any form of cut whatever in school-based police officer positions. Decisions are made at the district level at present, and that has been the case for some years. No school-based police officer positions are under threat. The district offices review the issue from time to time. In some cases the number of school-based police officer positions has increased. All police officers are instructed and encouraged to be involved with their local schools, which is an appropriate thing for them to do. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition and I saw a number of police officers involved at a primary school in his electorate.

Mrs Roberts: I was also there.

Mr PRINCE: The member may not have been in the Chamber when the member for Swan Hills raised a matter last week concerning the Eastern Hills Senior High School police officer. That was a temporary additional police officer allocated to the school for a short period between his transfer from one permanent position to another. If the member is referring to that, it was a temporary exercise. The member for Swan Hills takes it very seriously and the matter is being considered.

Mrs Roberts: I raised the matter early in the week with the Minister for Education.

Mr PRINCE: Did the member? I am sorry, I did not know. The member for Swan Hills raised it as a grievance.

Mrs Roberts: After I had raised it with the Minister for Education earlier in the week.

Mr PRINCE: That is fine. The police officer was at the school temporarily between transfer from one permanent position to another. This matter is under review by the district officer in that area.

## POLICE, SCHOOL-BASED OFFICERS

**243. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:**

Can the minister guarantee that none of the existing school-based police officers will be removed during the current financial year; and if not, why not?

**Mr PRINCE replied:**

No, I cannot and I will not because those decisions are made at the district officer level.

Mrs Roberts: It does not say much about your priority for crime prevention, does it?

Mr PRINCE: It is a matter for the management of the staff by the district officer.

Mrs Roberts: It is a policy matter. If you were serious about crime prevention, you would not contemplate allowing the districts to remove school-based police officers.

Mr PRINCE: No; the member is wrong! There is a difference between policy and management. The policy is there shall be school-based police officers. The management is that the district officer decides how many, and where.

## SENTENCING LEGISLATION, UPDATE ON PROGRESS

**244. Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN to the minister representing the Attorney General:**

In view of the very strong community support for tougher and more consistent sentencing laws, and the comments made by opposition members today, can the minister provide an update of progress with the new sentencing legislation currently before the upper House of Parliament?

**Mr PRINCE replied:**

I thank the member for the question. Unfortunately, that legislation is at best stalled, thanks to the activities of the Opposition. The Sentencing Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill was introduced on 29 October last year. It has been delayed by the Labor Party and other opposition parties in the upper House, and that has included a motion from Hon Nick Griffiths to split the legislation into two Bills and to refer the matrix to the Standing Committee on Legislation. That standing committee is still conducting research and has yet to report.

The Sentence Administration Bill came out of recommendations of the Hammond review into remission and parole. Hon Nick Griffiths said on Radio 6PR on 26 August 1998 that the Opposition has said it supports the Hammond report, it would love to progress it, and it will set everything else aside. He then promptly proceeded to split the Bill and hived it off to the Legislation Committee, from which it has yet to return. He also stated on Radio 6WF on 28 October that new sentencing laws were something the Government can expect the Australian Labor Party to support.

The new ALP prisons spokesperson, Hon John Halden, was reported in *The West Australian* after the Casuarina incident at Christmas as saying that the ALP would oppose the legislation as it would lead to more prison overcrowding. Once again, Labor has backflipped on its expressed position - that is something we are, of course, very used to - and delayed what is essential legislation.

On 15 June this year, the ALP supported a Democrat motion to defeat clauses of the Criminal Code Amendment Bill aimed at closing loopholes in the three-strikes law. These clauses were introduced by the Government to toughen its stance on how to deal with home burglary and home invasion. On 6 June 1997, the Leader of the Opposition said, as a good Rhodes Scholar should - and I recall congratulating him on this at the time, and subsequently - that the Opposition went into the election saying that it wanted to create a new offence in our community called home invasion, and that it wanted to have tougher penalties. However, the Labor Party has hived off and buried the Bill which we brought in and which plugs a couple of the loopholes dealing with the three-strikes legislation.

The Court Security and Custodial Services Bill was introduced in this place on 11 November last year, and after a lengthy and, as I think the members who took part would agree, exhaustive debate, it has now been delayed in the Legislative Council for a long time. If that Bill were passed, the 220 police officers who are presently employed in running lockups and moving prisoners around would be available for active frontline policing on the streets. The Opposition has stopped those 220 police officers from being engaged in active policing. That legislation has yet to be considered in the committee stage of the Council. In fact, Hon John Halden has moved that those Bills be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Administration.

The Prisons Amendment Bill was introduced into this Chamber on 3 December 1998. We had over 24 hours of debate -

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the minister to bring his answer to a close.

Mr PRINCE: I shall, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Swan Hills handled that Bill, and the Bill has finally passed, even though members opposite objected even to the clause that relates to the title of the Bill. That Bill is now before the Legislative Council. Our credentials on law and order are on the Table in this House and in the other place, and members opposite have stopped the lot for purely political opportunism. Members opposite are accountable, because I have just held them accountable, and they are the people who are stopping good law.



*Point of Order*

Dr GALLOP: If we are to conduct question time in a proper and efficient manner in this Parliament, could I suggest, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you remind the ministers of the Crown that there is a facility for ministerial statements.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

## ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY, APPLICATION FOR FUNDING

**245. Mr CARPENTER to the Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Minister for Sport and Recreation:**

I refer to the answer of the minister in the other place yesterday in which he confirmed that the Royal Life Saving Society had applied for a \$900 000 grant over three years and that the grant had been rejected.

- (1) On what date did the society apply for the funding?
- (2) On what did the society propose to spend this funding?
- (3) What was the reason for the application being refused?
- (4) What was the purpose of the grant of \$157 300 made to the society in the 1998-99 financial year?
- (5) Did the society apply for funding in the 1999-2000 year; if so, how much did it seek and how much did it receive?

**Mr MARSHALL replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The minister has supplied the following response -

- (1) The date is 3 June 1998.
- (2) The Royal Life Saving Society requested \$900 000 over three financial years to assist it to address more efficiently the issue of preventing loss of life and promoting safe participation in water-related activities.
- (3) The application was refused as a result of budgetary constraints.
- (4) The grant of \$157 300 made to the society in the 1998-99 financial year was received as follows: \$100 000 was water strategy funding from the consolidated fund. This was directed towards various initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of drowning in the inland waters of Western Australia. A further \$55 700 was development plan funding from the sport lottery account for various sport-related initiatives, such as country accreditation, elite camps and championships. A further \$1 600 was county package funding from the sport lottery account towards various sport-related initiatives.
- (5) The society has applied for business plan funding through the sport lottery account. This allocation has yet to be confirmed, although it is anticipated it will be similar to previous years. The society will receive \$100 000 in 1999-2000 through the consolidated fund for the ongoing water safety strategy.

## MUNDARING WEIR, WATER LEVEL

**246. Mrs van de KLASHORST to the Minister for Resources Development:**

- (1) Can the minister advise the level of water currently in the Mundaring Weir catchment dam - we have had some rain which may have addressed the terribly low levels earlier this year - and whether current levels will be sufficient for the summer needs along the golden pipeline?
- (2) If not - I know there was a concern about this matter earlier this year - what plans are in place to ensure the needs of regional users will be met?

Several members interjected.

**Dr HAMES replied:**

- (1)-(2) Members are not listening to the question. They expect me to give an answer about how much water is in the dam following the recent rain. This question is about the level of water in Mundaring Weir. It is asking whether there is enough water for the goldfields and the Agricultural Region. The answer is, unfortunately, no. Currently 34 gegalitres, 34 million kilolitres, are in the Mundaring Weir, which is about 54 per cent of the capacity.

Mr Thomas: How many kilolitres in a gegalitre?

Dr HAMES: One million kilolitres is a gegalitre. Unfortunately that is not enough to supply the needs of the goldfields and the Agricultural Region. That means that the dam and water supply will have to be supplemented from underground water, mostly from the Gngangara mound. The same situation occurred last year. I guess that goes to the point raised by the people from the region of the Harris River Dam, who are expressing some concern about bringing that water to the metropolitan area. With that dam, we will ensure all the local needs are catered for first, before the water is brought here. It shows that the people of Perth are quite prepared to have water supplied from the Mundaring Weir and even from the underground water supply in the Gngangara mound sent all the way to Kalgoorlie and to a significant number of regional centres within the Agricultural Region. While I am speaking, members will be pleased to know that significant amounts of water - about one million kilolitres a day - have run off into the dams in the past three weeks. That takes the level to about 228 GL, so we are getting quickly to the level at which we will not need any significant water restrictions this summer.

## CORRUPTION REPORT, TABLING

**247. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:**

On 10 March last year, the minister's predecessor told Parliament that he was awaiting legal advice before deciding to table a report into corruption allegations by former Western Australian detective, Frank Scott. On 23 March the minister claimed that he was still awaiting that advice. As it is now 18 months later, can the minister tell the House whether he has received that legal advice and, if so, whether he intends to table the corruption report; if not, why is that legal advice taking so long?

**Mr PRINCE replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question and for giving me some prior knowledge of it. I think she has made a mistake in that the question was first asked on 25 March this year, not 23 March, but that is just a minor matter. I hope it is just a small error. At the time I was unable to answer the question. If I recall correctly, the assistant commissioner for professional standards, Mr Mackaay, was away, Mr Meadows, the Solicitor General, was in the eastern States and I had not then got advice. The member gave notice to me that she intended to re-ask the question on 5 May. I had the information then, but the member did not ask the question. As I recall, I think I mentioned to her privately that I had the information and all she had to do was to ask the question, but that is beside the point.

The problem with this matter is that on 15 March this year, Mr Peter Ward, a solicitor, wrote to the Commissioner of Police saying that he acted for Mr Scott who held the rank of sergeant, first class. I will quote a part of this letter of which I am sure the member has a copy. It states that Mr Scott gives notice, pursuant to section 47A(3)(c) of the Limitation Act, that he intends to apply to the Supreme Court to commence legal proceedings against the Commissioner of Police for damages for loss of career and so on. It states that the basis of Mr Scott's claim is set out more fully in the enclosed draft statement of claim. I am holding up that draft statement of claim. I do not know whether the proceedings have been commenced in the Supreme Court. This lawyer acting on behalf of Mr Scott said that he was about to do so. On the basis of that and also having looked through the report, the Solicitor General gave me advice on 18 May. Because I should not quote the remainder of it, I will quote only the last line which states -

In my opinion, the report should not be tabled in the Parliament.

Mrs Roberts: Will the minister table the document to which he refers now?

Mr PRINCE: I am more than happy to give this to the member privately. If this draft statement of claim has not been filed in the Supreme Court, as yet it remains a matter of privilege between solicitor and client - not me, but between Mr Ward and his client. Mr Ward wrote to the commissioner saying that on behalf of Mr Scott he intended to bring an action. I am not sure whether he has, or has not. On the basis of that statement, the Solicitor General has given me an opinion in writing that says that the report should not be tabled in the Parliament.

Mrs Roberts: The minister separated a page. Is the minister prepared to table that separate page?

Mr PRINCE: No. That is simply the last page of the opinion of the Solicitor General to me on which I have made some notes. I will tell the member that it states -

In my opinion, the report should not be tabled in the Parliament.

I will not table the report. The advice of the Solicitor General is that I should not table it. Part of the reason is that a solicitor, on behalf Mr Scott, has said that he will commence proceedings and has sought leave to do so against the State of the Western Australia and the Commissioner of Police.

*Points of Order*

Mr KOBELKE: I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, you will correct me if I am in error because we now have new standing orders. However, it is my understanding that under the old standing orders, which I do not believe have changed in this respect, if a minister quotes from a document, he can be required to table that document. It is clear that the minister was quoting from the document which he held up, and the bottom of which was highlighted. I therefore request that you ask the minister to table all of those documents from which he quoted in giving his response.

Mr BARNETT: I understand the documents the minister has are legal documents.

Mr KOBELKE: He quoted from them; it does not matter.

Mr BARNETT: Yes; however they also relate to court proceedings and are legal documents. He has offered to indicate some information to the member privately.

Mr KOBELKE: We want the standing orders upheld. He should table the lot.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Normally, this type of document is not provided to the House. I would like some time to think about the matter and I will inform the House of my decision after I have had time to discuss it.