

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 2 December.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [5.47 pm]: It is beginning to feel a bit like the end of term in this chamber. I was enjoying Hon Peter Collier's speech; it was very informative. I am very impressed by his attention to detail in citing his references. Some of his federal colleagues might want to pay very close attention to this. Hon Peter Collier obviously has an excellent research officer.

I will begin by formally thanking the Governor for the speech he made. It is always a great day when we have those formal occasions, and I am sure that no member of this house takes those occasions lightly. I believe that we have too little ceremony in our lives, so these are always very significant, sombre and important occasions. I am always proud to be part of these events, as I was on that day when the Governor made his speech to open this Parliament.

Because we have fixed terms in this house, we experience these periods of partial change, working up to next May, when we formally become the new Legislative Council. I want to pay tribute to a couple of individuals who have had very significant changes of role in the aftermath of the election. The first is my colleague Hon Kim Chance. I will save most of my remarks to the day next year when we get a chance to do our Council roasting of him, but I very much appreciated working with Hon Kim Chance when he was Leader of the Government in the upper house. He always provided me with timely and insightful guidance.

Hon Kim Chance: Frequently wrong, but timely!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Kim Chance says it was frequently wrong, but a new member would never dare to think that. It is only with the benefit of time passing we can work this out. I give myself until next May to work this out.

Hon Ken Travers, in his Address-in-Reply contribution yesterday, paid tribute to some of our former colleagues who are no longer members of Parliament, and I concur with all the remarks he made. I want to mention Hon Graham Giffard, with whom I served when he was chairman of the Legislation Committee. Once again, he was a member who always willing to provide guidance to people who were less experienced in the practices and processes of this house and the committee system. I always found Hon Graham Giffard to be a genuine champion for working families and the Labor movement in general. I am quite sure that having made that very courageous decision to try to change houses, one day he will be back amongst us.

I also wanted to note and give my very sincere congratulations to Hon Sue Ellery and Hon Kate Doust, who have provided the first all-female leadership of a major party in this house. Both very richly deserve those positions, and so far I think they have played a very instrumental role in getting us right on track and working as a team in this house —

Hon Ken Travers: They have a majority of female members to support them on this side of the house.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: They have a majority of female members supporting them, as Hon Ken Travers points out.

It is worth noting that Labor has, yet again, made significant history with its representation of women in Parliament, and I should just put on record my complete mystification about some of the comments made about the attitude of some members of the Labor Party to women in politics. As a member of the Labor Party in Australia for several decades, it has been very much at the forefront of my mind that we needed to increase and strengthen the representation of women. I have been very pleased to be part of that team within the Labor Party—a team of very capable and competent women—who have taken this to a point when we now come into the Legislative Council, and in the last Parliament eight of our members were women, which was exactly half. However, I have noticed that some members of the Liberal Party—most notably the Premier—have made some very strange remarks about some people on our side apparently having problems, particularly with young, successful women. I have been puzzling over where those comments came from, and it seems to me that they might be being engendered by two observations, both of which I think are wrong.

My first observation is that there has been a widespread view in Australia that when women rise to a certain point in the hierarchy they are subject to particular scrutiny that perhaps would not be afforded to their male colleagues. Sometimes it is called the “tall poppy syndrome”, as it relates to women. Members can all think of examples—I do not have to go into them—but in the case of those who were referred to in the first couple of weeks of sitting of this Parliament, I cannot think of anyone who would come into that category. I can only think that the Premier has misunderstood some of those points that have been made in the past.

My second observation is about Eva Cox, a great contributor to the intellectual life of Australia. Eva memorably said some years ago that we would know when men and women had achieved a state of equality when women could be as mediocre as men and still rise to those positions. I think perhaps we are getting slightly closer to the truth if we interpret the comments of the Premier and other male members of the Liberal Party. However, as I say, it is a source of mystification to me and I will be interested to see how these things unfold, such as the Liberal Party's defence of some of the less capable people who have been put into positions of authority.

Last week we had a debate in this place about the mining and export of uranium. It was very noticeable that on several occasions during that debate government members referred to the mandate that it had been given by the electorate to undertake some of these policies. I think that over the course of the next few years we are going to be looking very closely at this concept of the mandate. One of the matters that has become painfully obvious since 6 September—or more likely about a week later, when the Liberal Party felt it was in a position to go and claim victory—is that it simply was not prepared to win. It was not prepared for office. I cannot think why that would have been the case, other than the fact that it staggered on for an unconscionable amount of time with a leader who was clearly unelectable. The reality is that anybody who knows and understands Western Australian politics knows that it is well-nigh impossible for Labor governments to be elected to third terms. On the rare occasions when they have, it has usually been in a minority situation. So anybody on the other side of politics who knows political history should have been ready to walk right in there and pick up the baton from day one.

The other extraordinary matter that I just want to note at this stage is that we did not have an unproblematic second term. I know that is entirely lost on members opposite. In light of some of the events that unfolded after the 2005 election, it was really quite extraordinary that we got to September in the state we did, whereby we were well poised to win and the opposition was a complete rabble, with no policies —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: What about the five ministers that were sacked —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is precisely the point I am making, and yet the Liberal Party was still not ready to take over, was it? That is precisely the point I am making. Therefore, for the government to be sitting on the other side of this house claiming a mandate for anything is a stretch of the imagination.

Several members interjected.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm): Members, Hon Sally Talbot is not responding. Hon Sally Talbot has the call.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: There was one aspect of the Governor's speech that I thought should be applauded—at least from this side of the house—and that was when he observed —

This Liberal National Government is a minority government.

It would do well to remember this. To reach the end of a second-term Labor government which had overcome the most amazing and dramatic hurdles during that time whilst still governing with stability and still returning surpluses in its budgets—as it had always promised to do—and which had an infrastructure program rolling out across the whole of Western Australia, and only be able to return a minority of seats was really quite a dismal result.

Several members interjected.

Hon Simon O'Brien: We took 10 seats off you, even though you'd rigged the system!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Simon O'Brien, please.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You did nothing; you know you did nothing; everyone knows you did nothing; and they are still coming to terms with the fact that you are going to do nothing!

Hon Simon O'Brien: Denial is not a river in Egypt, it seems, in this house —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Members, we have got only two or three minutes before recess. Could we hear the member out, please —

Hon Simon O'Brien: You're a great comfort!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Simon O'Brien, please! Hon Sally Talbot has the call.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am working up to a natural pause, so that honourable members opposite can go and calm themselves down and have their dinner and all that sort of thing.

Hon Kim Chance: They get excited!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: They do get very excited. Unfortunately, they get excited at the wrong moments. When we were talking about uranium there was no debate at all.

Hon Kim Chance: They should speak to their partners about it!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Absolutely they should.

In the next couple of minutes, before we break, I will make some comments about some remarks that Hon Ken Baston made, not during the Address-in-Reply but just recently in the house when he was talking about the gross number of votes that each party had won. He made the point that, statewide, more people voted Liberal than Labor. The fact remains that we won 28 seats in the Legislative Assembly and the Liberal Party won 24 seats. With that information in front of him, Hon Ken Baston would do well—in fact I am happy to give him my copy—to study the 2008 pendulum. Do members have such a thing on their side? Perhaps they do not. I would be very happy to lend them a copy of this.

One very obvious fact it shows is that almost always the Liberal Party receives more votes than the Labor Party, and yet it still loses. The reason for that is that it needs to win the votes in certain places to win government. The Liberal Party is sitting on margins of 19.4 per cent and 23.4 per cent, and it is perfectly obvious how the figures can be played with in that way, and members can stand and skite about them, but that argument carries absolutely no water whatsoever.

Hon Simon O'Brien: All right, all right, you won! You actually won! We will take the mat—we will —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is what I was waiting for. I thank Hon Simon O'Brien!

Hon Simon O'Brien: The strength of your argument, Madam State President, has convinced me. I'm happy with that—I'm out of here!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am sure that Hansard has noted the interjection. I shall be posting that out to members of the Liberal Party as well as the Labor Party!

Hon Simon O'Brien: I'm off to Government House very early, just like Alan was!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Before we wind up, I wanted to say that there is a remarkable difference in the two election losses we have had recently: the Liberal Party lost the federal election last year and there was celebration nationwide as Australia went out and claimed a new identity —

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Before the dinner suspension, I was making some observations about the difference between the two changes of government this country has seen in the past 12 months. I was observing that, in my experience and I am sure that of many other members on this side of the house, the loss of the Carpenter Labor government has been greeted with some degree of trepidation. People realise now that they have a government, albeit a minority government, that does not really seem to know what to do.

Before I go on I want to say one other thing about the change of government; that is, during the past two years or so of the Carpenter Labor government I was chairing a working group in Peel to look into the provision of affordable housing. The working group was looking at the five local government areas in the Peel region. The group comprised very energetic and capable people from local government and housing organisations—all the major stakeholders in the Peel region—and, indeed, many other people travelled down from Perth to Mandurah to contribute. They included people representing the major developers, the housing industry and various social service providers in that sector. We produced a draft report. I can confidently say in a bipartisan spirit that it is a report that deserves to see the light of day. I hope the new Minister for Housing and Works will find that report. I would be very pleased to see the recommendations in that report taken to the next stage and implemented.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: I am certainly interested in having a copy of it.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is good. I thank Hon Robyn McSweeney for that. I will talk to her about it outside the chamber.

Given that I am responding to the Governor's address, I will make a number of observations about that first day of the thirty-eighth Parliament. I notice that some of the portfolio designations have changed. I am sure that people on our side of the chamber broadly welcome some of those changes in a general sense. I notice that there is now a Minister for Mental Health, which is probably not a bad thing. On the negative side, I notice that there is no minister for climate change. That is something of a surprise to me. When Hon David Templeman was Minister for the Environment, he carried the title Minister for Climate Change. I believe he was only the second minister in Australia to be given that title. It seems odd to me that, given even the conservative parties in this country have recognised that climate change is not simply a figment of the left's imagination but is something that we must grapple with, the new government has not gone to the trouble of putting it in the minister's title. I hope that will be addressed in some other way as we move through the months.

I was obviously very much involved in the document the Labor Party released before the election concerning its environment policies, and what we had achieved and intended to achieve over the next four years. After the elections I did a compare and contrast of the policies that the conservatives released. It was interesting to see the degree of overlap. I must say that we have in common two of the three issues that have been identified as great iconic Western Australian environmental issues. The Great Western Woodlands is something that has only relatively recently come to the top of the political environmental agenda. I think that is partly because of the science we are now working with on climate change. Not the least of the most interesting aspects of the Great Western Woodlands is the extent that it serves as a carbon sink. It is obviously under great threat from a lot of influences such as climate change, salinity and the deforestation that many of our wilderness areas are subject to. It is very important that we put in place policies and programs to protect the Great Western Woodlands and reap the benefits it can provide in light of climate change. I notice that in the Liberal Party policy, as with other areas, there is a huge discrepancy in the amount of funding that the two major parties were prepared to commit to it. Whereas the Labor Party was prepared to commit \$10 million over four years, with more funding available after the model of the Great Western Woodlands management scheme was devised, the conservatives allocated only \$3.8 million over four years. I will be looking very carefully at how that money is spent as we move through this term of government and hope it is indeed spent in the best possible way. It seems to me to be an appallingly small amount of money to devote to such an important project.

The other issue in both policy documents is the preservation and protection of the Kimberley region. Again, there is an enormous discrepancy in funding, with the Liberal Party allocating only \$9 million while the Labor Party was prepared to consider \$15 million. There are a number of other issues concerning the protection of the Kimberley. I cannot see why the Liberal government would not continue with the Northern Development Task Force. It seems to me that, when that group was established, it was a perfectly sensible and bipartisan way of managing the development of the Kimberley. It is an act of political petulance to make such a song and dance about winding it up. That fits in with another attitude now being exhibited by the Liberal government; namely, its attitude to the cutting of red and green tape. If the government looks at some of the plans for places such as the Great Western Woodlands and the Kimberley, alongside the rhetoric about cutting green and red tape, I think a lot of alarm bells will ring.

The main point I noticed when I was comparing the two policy documents was that, quite unbelievably, there is simply no mention in the Liberal's policy of marine parks. I do not know whether someone did a cut and forgot to paste when they came to that section of the policy document. I cannot see how Liberal members would put together a plan for environmental sustainability and water management without talking about marine parks. I refer now to the Labor Party's document. I have met almost all the conservation groups so far in the few weeks the Labor Party has been in opposition, and I have found a very supportive attitude to the policy Labor talked about before the election—namely, regional marine planning.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: I think the Liberal government brought in legislation.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: There is absolutely no mention of marine parks in this policy document. Members opposite can talk about having introduced the act, but the New Horizons policy on marine parks, which was introduced by the Richard Court government, is obviously in great need of updating. The science has changed and the processes of development have speeded up.

We need a new approach to marine parks and that is exactly what the Labor Party was proposing to do. It is not only about climate change; it is about changing water conditions and pressures of development. The plan that we took to the election was premised on the proposition that if we do not act now the users of the marine environment and the community of Western Australia would be the losers. We were talking about an ecosystem-based approach to regional parks. It is a very sophisticated plan, which is the sort of plan our environment and community need to take us forward over the next couple of decades.

I draw the attention of the Minister for Environment and the government to this document and point out that the Labor Party has set the bar very high with this proposal. The community and conservation groups—the stakeholders in the environment area—know exactly what is possible and they will hold this government to account to produce something that effectively protects the marine environment. We are not seeing any signs of that at the moment, and that is a great disappointment.

I refer now to the way in which the minority government has come into being. There is no doubt, and it has been widely acknowledged by members on this side of the house, that the royalties for regions program was very clever. I do not mean that in a derogatory sense. It was a well-crafted message to the electorate. Unfortunately, it conceals that over the seven and a half years that we were in government there was a massive transformation in the way that the regions were treated by the government. People lost sight of how bad things had been before we won government in 2001 and introduced programs such as the Regional Infrastructure Funding program.

A previous Labor Premier, Geoff Gallop, told a story at the launch of Country Labor (WA) in 2003, which was about the time that he took over as Leader of the Opposition. He said that he took some of the senior shadow ministers on a tour of all the major centres in regional Western Australia. He said that everywhere they went the story was the same; it was about decline, the withdrawal of services and the closure of businesses. Businesses in the main streets had been boarded up and throughout the length and breadth of this state people were pleading for a serious program of investment in regional Western Australia. A few years later he went back with essentially the same cohort of ministers. The story then was at the other end of the spectrum. The regional centres were bursting at the seams. They needed more land and infrastructure for the main streets. They could not accommodate everyone who wanted to set up in regional Western Australia. It is a telling observation. It is similar to the marine parks: We have set the bar very high and people in regional Western Australia will not be hoodwinked by the rhetoric about the percentage of royalties being spent. It is not a well-crafted plan. We are seeing it unravelling—coming to bits—before our eyes.

In question time today the opposition asked two questions about assistance to seniors. Answers to those questions were not forthcoming. The ministers should read the government's policy documents so that they know what is expected of them.

Before I leave the subject of royalties for regions program, I noticed last week that we had a very small breakthrough in working out some of the details of the royalties for regions program. We found out that pensioners in Mandurah would not be eligible for petrol vouchers. We then asked whether that means, despite the fact that the government says it will run the royalties for regions program along the same boundaries as those for the development commissions, that the Peel Development Commission is not part of the program. The response was no, that it would be sort of part of the scheme for some things but not for others. We have an excellent development commission in the Peel Development Commission. Maree De Lacey is one of the most capable persons one could meet in the public service and she has an excellent team around her. That is grossly unfair to people like her who have the competence and experience to deliver in a very effective way for a community like Peel, instead of flip-flopping around waiting to see what will be in the paper tomorrow about how this thing will work.

I have referred to how the minority government cobbled together its partnership and walked into government.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It crawled into office.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: We said they had no team. That is becoming more obvious every day.

It was observed in the debate we had on uranium in this house last week that there was one issue on which they could not play the small target. They are already on the record as saying that they would open up the state to uranium mining. Therefore, we brought on the debate. Of course, we did not have a debate. They did not want to debate uranium mining. They know what the community thinks about uranium mining. They have seen all the polling that has been done on uranium mining. However, there was one exception, and I pay tribute to Hon George Cash for having the fortitude and confidence to talk about where the points of difference are.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Sadly, he is leaving.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: As Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich said, sadly, he will be leaving this place.

We did not hear anything from the Minister for Environment, which is a strange and perhaps telling development. I have referred to cutting the red and green tape. I think we have established that the government has two inquiries into this; one is by the industry working group, which we have asked questions about in this house, although we did not get far on that. We cannot get any answers to why the industry working group, comprising about 10 or 12 people, all happen to be men. It is extraordinary. Are there no women in this state who could contribute to this working group? There are a number of glaring omissions in a group working at that level.

We think that there is a high-level ministerial task force reviewing the environment legislation and approval processes associated with that legislation. That is far from clear. I noticed in the Liberal Party's policy document that the Minister for Environment should be chairing this high-level working group.

Hon Jon Ford: High-level public servants.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It might comprise high-level public servants, but I think the Premier is chairing it.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: He is doing everyone's work.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: He is becoming known as the "minister for everything".

Several members interjected.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Members, there is only one Hon Sally Talbot in this house.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: We have lots of questions to ask about uranium and it will be difficult to get answers to them. That is all right because we will find other ways of getting the answers. We need to know about the regulatory regime, the mining methods and the storage of the tailings. We know what a problem nuclear waste is and that various members of the Liberal Party are on record as saying different things about the storage of the waste and whether it will come back to Western Australia. What about the storage of the tailings?

We have substances with a half-life of 75 000 years, yet we are talking about protecting the environment with state agreements. We need to know about transport. We need to know which ports will be used, although I fear that this is becoming clear with the Premier's strange insistence on putting government money into the Oakajee port, so we will see how that pans out. The reality is that regardless of which party has been in government, Western Australia has experienced a series of regulatory failures with catastrophic implications. We have had Wittenoom, which we have just about cleared up. We have had Capel, and you, Mr Deputy President (Hon Barry House), will know all about what happened in Capel with the tailings from the mineral sands mining and what a disaster that was when it was found that all the playgrounds and car parks in the town had been built on radioactive tailings. Of course, we have also had Esperance. That is why I put such emphasis on the importance of getting this regulatory regime right. Please do not tell me that the government is looking for South Australian expertise to write its regulatory regime. If members opposite want to tell me that, let me draw their attention to the 2003 Senate inquiry into the regulatory regime for uranium mining. It found that a pattern of underperformance and noncompliance had been shown and that changes were necessary in order to protect the environment and its inhabitants from serious or irreversible damage. Those are the findings of a Senate inquiry in 2003. I understand that as at July this year, neither the commonwealth nor the Northern Territory or South Australia had implemented any of the inquiry's recommendations, so members opposite should not tell us that they are going to ask the South Australians to help them draft the regulatory regime. These are very serious questions that we need to ask, yet all we get from this minority Liberal government is waffle about cutting red tape, about uranium mining and about the nuclear industry, and silence from the minister. What does the Liberal Party stand for? Does it want nuclear power? Without wishing to breach standing orders by referring to debates in the other place, I have read some of the inaugural speeches and it is very clear to me that the Liberal Party stands for an awful lot of things when it comes to nuclear power and nuclear waste. Members opposite should raise some of these matters in their party room and see whether they can knock a few of their colleagues into shape.

Several members interjected.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You should be quiet while the honourable member is giving a speech.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I thank Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. I am very conscious that last night Hon Ken Travers tested the standing orders and failed to get an extension of time. However, I am also conscious that we have a lot of work to get through in the next couple of days, thanks to the way the government has not organised its legislative agenda. It was very nice to go home early on a couple of nights, but it would have been good if it had spread its agenda over the proper period of sitting.

I will now briefly make a couple of comments about the conflict of interest issues of the Minister for Environment that we have pursued in this house. I again make the point to her that there was no sense of a personal attack in the questions and comments that we have raised in this house, any more than there was about Hon Norman Moore or certain members of the other chamber, who seem to have great difficulty understanding how to identify and manage a conflict of interest. I make the point that it is one thing to have in place arrangements to deal with conflicts of interest in cabinet. I am sure that everyone in this chamber has the ministerial code of conduct, which lays down quite clearly how conflicts of interest are supposed to be handled in cabinet. I cannot see how ministers can continue to not remove themselves from discussions when a conflict of interest is identified, which appears to be the case with this government. Nevertheless, we have something to refer to. It is quite another thing to be able to manage all the discretionary functions of a minister, and that is what we have been trying to get to the bottom of. All we want to know is how transparent this process will be and how we will maintain the situation so that everybody in this state can have confidence in the openness, transparency and fairness of the system. I know that the government has seen this as something of a distraction, but I assure it that members on our side have not been particularly enamoured with the idea of spending the first six or seven parliamentary sitting days trying to drag out of the government how it is handling these matters.

The Minister for Environment is supposed to be chairing this high-level ministerial task force that the government is supposed to have set up to review the environmental legislation and approvals processes. As I referred to earlier, the government's document states that the task force will be chaired by the Minister for Environment and will include the Minister for State Development, the minister for industry and the Attorney General. It is supposed to report to cabinet within six months of the election. I saw no sign of that in the answer I

received last week when I asked a question about this issue. The answer indicated that it is all being managed by the public service.

The government is supposed to have commenced the development of what it is calling the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. It is supposed to have started work on a biodiversity conservation strategy. I am taking this information from the Liberal Party's own document—the "Liberal Plan for the First 100 Days in Government". The government is supposed to be establishing expanded eligibility criteria for the Solar Schools program, an excellent program that the Labor government started. It is supposed to be setting up the new environmental community grants program, which it also flagged before the election. Yet when we go to the website for the minister's press releases, what do we find? There are a couple of serious issues on the website. There is a statement on the export of lead through Fremantle, and we know the government is flip-flopping all over the place on that issue. The Premier has an extremely embarrassed look on his face, as have all his colleagues, who did not know that he would go to Fremantle two days before the election and promise not to export lead through Fremantle. There are a couple of serious press releases on the website. However, on the whole, there is a press release on the presentation of the environment awards to the Kimberley fire management team, an excellent issue to put out a press release on; nevertheless, the press releases do not address the big-ticket items. There are also press releases on the newest addition to Monkey Mia being given a name; schools leading the way in battery recycling, which is a good thing; the Sumatran tiger cubs' debut at Perth Zoo; the launch of a new book to showcase Shark Bay; and the official opening of the Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre. Last week there was a press release indicating that Kambalda is as clean as a nickel. I do not know how mixed a metaphor can get, but that just about takes the biscuit. What else do I see on the website? There is nothing about the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, nothing about the biodiversity conservation strategy, nothing about expanding the criteria for the Solar Schools program and nothing about the new environmental grants program.

Hon Peter Collier interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am waiting, Hon Peter Collier.

I will briefly refer to another portfolio for which I have shadow responsibility—that is, youth. I have been following very closely the magnificent campaign on homelessness that the Youth Advisory Council of Western Australia has been running: home is where my heart is. I recommend that every member of this house go to the YACWA website and familiarise themselves with the work it is doing on this issue. I have not been able to get very far on this. All we know so far is that YACWA was told by the minister with responsibility for the supported accommodation assistance program that it should go to its own minister, and when I asked the Minister for Youth today what information she had provided, all I got in response was nothing. The government is dropping the ball on this issue as well.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Let us have one member address the Chair.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I urge members to read the press release that YACWA put out because it is a very thorough and effective organisation. Members would do well to listen to its advice and take it very seriously.

I will not take up too much more time. I cannot put too much emphasis on this next point. One of the things about being in government is that one gets the chance to set the agenda for the sort of society one would like to live in. One of the beauties of our parliamentary system is that it allows for a range of people to come into the houses of Parliament and to bring their own special brands of expertise and experience to the running of the state. However, once members are in government, they have to act as leaders because they are leaders. The danger that we face in the next couple of years—particularly in relation to something like uranium mining—is that the debate will be hijacked into a discussion about environmental approvals and the adequacy of regulatory regimes. I would like to suggest that that is ducking the main issue. If we were interested only in making an export market for this state, we would be growing poppies and exporting opium. We have to make those ethical decisions —

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Don't give them any ideas! That'll be the next thing they'll be doing. There will be red poppies everywhere.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I take the advice of the Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich very seriously, and I am a little alarmed at the alacrity with which the government responded to that!

One does have to make moral decisions about the sort of community one would like to live in. I suggest to members opposite that the sort of society that mines and exports uranium and gets involved in the nuclear cycle is not a society that Western Australians will warm to. We have to ask ourselves on a daily basis what sort of society we want to live in. Last week we listened to two inaugural speeches by new members in this chamber, Hon Shelley Eaton and Hon Carolyn Burton. We heard their vision of the sort of society they would like to live

in. I thought it was very moving. To be a member of Parliament is a very privileged position, but it is also an enormous challenge to rise to, and I think both our new members rose magnificently to that challenge. They talked about inclusiveness, equity and the kind of fair society they would like to see. I know that they will both work towards that to the best of their abilities over the next few months.

In May, new members will come into the chamber on this side, and I very much look forward to welcoming them to this place because I know that both of them—Jock Ferguson and Helen Bullock—will continue to make a contribution to defining the sort of society we want to live in and to working towards the kind of justice and equity that people on our side of the chamber believe in. I suppose it is a bit of an open question about how we will go with the extra members of the National Party in the house.

Hon Peter Collier interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I share Hon Peter Collier's optimism about this, believe it or not. I listened to Hon Wendy Duncan's inaugural speech with great delight; I actually think she is probably on the wrong side, and she might think that too! Members can be sure that, come May, we will still be here and we will still be talking about what we believe in, and we will still be bringing the fight right to the government.

To continue on the topic about what kind of society we would like to live in, there are some very worrying signs emerging. The Legislative Council members of this government are taking the art of not answering questions to new heights. Having been a parliamentary secretary, I cannot remember an occasion on which the previous government was asked questions in five or six parts and simply provided the answer, "Don't know" for all parts.

Several members interjected.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Order!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The government has the resources to enable it to answer the opposition's questions effectively, but it is simply not doing that. Some other worrying signs emerged last week. Members may have noted that I participated in a very small way in the surrogacy debate, but only because I could not believe the sort of old-fashioned, Tory rhetoric that was coming from the other side about what constitutes a "normal" family, and all this other sort of guff that I thought we had left behind about 35 years ago. If that is to continue, we are in for a rough ride. The opposition will not sit here and listen to that sort of talk; we will bowl it up to the government at every opportunity, and we will make the government think harder about what it brings to this place.

I will make one last comment about what was missing from the Governor's speech. At the end of his speech, I was thinking there must have been another page or that he had read only half of it. There was no mention of social justice. There was nothing in that speech about people. There was nothing in it about our community, or the sort of shape our community will take over the next four years. There was nothing about what I am talking about—the sort of society we want to live in. It was just a list; there was nothing about what people believe in.

I will leave members with this sentence from the 2005 Governor's address, under the Gallop Labor government —

The Government's program has the objective of ensuring that, as we build on our economic strength, participation in those opportunities and benefits is shared by all Western Australians, and that we achieve progress in a manner that fosters social cohesion and inclusiveness.

That is what we believe in, and that is what is missing from the Liberal Party's style of government.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Bruce Donaldson**.