

the directorate and the department at the time. It is not the department's or the director general's practice to include names of public sector officers in parliamentary questions, which is why I answer the question as such.

I would like the member to explain to me at some stage what the line of questioning is and what the real question behind this is. Does the member think that these officers are part of the Labor Party's secret "SS" in the public service that she talks about or is there an accusation of corruption or inappropriate behaviour? In that case, the member should just come out and ask the question. Unless I am directed by this house to name public officers, I will not do it. The member talks about ministers in this government intimidating the public service. I repudiate that and I will not allow her to do it.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT — FUNDING

356. Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the \$90 million previously announced in December 2007 to support the natural resource management regional councils in Western Australia will be available in the 2008-09 budget?
- (2) Does the minister still support the regional delivery model for natural resource management in Western Australia?
- (3) If yes to (2), what funding will be provided to assist regional natural resource management bodies in 2008-09?
- (4) Given that the Australian government has announced that, through the Caring for our Country program, approximately \$20 million will be made available to support the regional groups in Western Australia, can the minister confirm that the Western Australian government will provide matching support for the regional groups?
- (5) Is the minister aware that delays in announcing the funding or reduced funding to the regional groups will have substantial impact on large numbers of people within the community of natural resource management groups and volunteers and on the momentum of the projects they are undertaking?
- (6) If yes to (5), can the minister state what measures the government is putting in place to prevent such delays or reductions in funding?

The PRESIDENT: I invite the minister to answer that "short" question in less than a minute!

Hon JON FORD replied:

I think I might be able to manage that, Mr President.

On behalf of the Minister for Agriculture and Food, I thank Hon Paul Llewellyn for the question, but unfortunately, I do not have an answer to the question. However, if it comes in, I will provide it.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS — CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Hon Ken Travers) in the chair.

Select Committee into Public Obstetric Services — Report — Motion

Resumed from 2 April on the following motion moved by Hon Helen Morton —

That the report be noted.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I thank the chamber for allowing me leave to continue my remarks. I was not in a position to respond on behalf of the government when the report was last considered, but I am now.

WA Health acknowledges that the Select Committee into Public Obstetric Services developed a comprehensive and accurate report on the current status and future direction of obstetric services in Western Australia, and thanks the committee for the work it did. WA Health supports all the recommendations identified and documented by the select committee, and has developed a maternity policy framework in alignment with these recommendations. The framework identifies key priorities for improving maternity services and care for women and their families in Western Australia.

WA Health is pleased that the maternity services framework is consistent with the community feedback and expectations and the recommendations from the select committee. WA Health's recently established Women's and Newborns' Health Network is collaborating with area health services to implement the maternity policy framework titled, "Improving Maternity Services: Working together across Western Australia". Currently, implementation plans for the maternity policy framework are being developed for each area health service and will be completed towards the end of 2008. Recommendations identified by the Select Committee into Public

Obstetric Services will be considered during the implementation planning process. Some of the recommendations have been implemented or are being addressed and implemented.

I thank the committee for the work it has done.

Question put and passed.

“Local Government Structure and Electoral Reform in Western Australia: Ensuring the Future Sustainability of Communities” — Statement by Minister for Local Government and Regional Development — Motion

Resumed from 2 April on the following motion moved by Hon Bruce Donaldson —

That the statement be noted.

Consideration of statement adjourned, on motion by Hon Sue Ellery (Minister for Child Protection).

*Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission —
Thirtieth Report — “Annual Report 2006-2007”*

Resumed from 20 September 2007.

Motion

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I move —

That the report be noted.

This is a relatively brief report providing information on the activities of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission over that period. Page 1 indicates that during that period the committee conducted three inquiries, held 29 deliberative meetings, took evidence from or was briefed by 71 persons and undertook investigative travel to two locations, but, unfortunately, did not attend any conferences.

Hon George Cash interjected.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: Unfortunately.

During this period the committee also tabled 20 reports. There were 14 report findings and 86 recommendations. There was quite a bit of activity during that period by the committee. Members will see on page 7 that 20 reports were tabled during that period. As I said before, I urge members to read those reports because they are particularly important. Many issues appear to arise, at least on a monthly basis, that involve some aspects of the operations of the CCC. Therefore, I believe members should be aware of exactly what the CCC oversight committee is doing on their behalf. It is not a matter of that oversight being on behalf of only the government; it is also on behalf of this chamber and the other chamber, making up the Parliament. In other words, the joint standing committee oversight is on behalf of all members. I urge members to read those reports and ensure that, should questions be asked, each and every member will be able to answer them.

Question put and passed.

*Metropolitan Region Scheme Amendment No. 1029/33 — Alkimos-Eglinton —
Statement by Parliamentary Secretary*

Resumed from 10 May 2006.

Consideration of statement lapsed.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs — Tenth Report — “Overview of Petitions”

Resumed from 27 September 2007.

Motion

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: I move —

That the report be noted.

The situation in which we find ourselves in relation to dealing with petitions is very interesting. I do not know, but I think the Senate may be considering doing what this house does. The Western Australian Legislative Council is the only house of Parliament that takes any action regarding petitions that are tabled in the house. More and more people are seeking to use this last resort after usually exhausting most of the opportunities to put their case. If there is a very strong feeling within the community about an issue, a petition is organised and a member of Parliament is approached who may have an interest in the issue within the member’s electorate. The petition is then tabled and the petitioner is asked to provide a submission. The member for Parliament who tabled the petition is asked whether he or she wants to also make a submission. The committee then deliberates on whether a broad inquiry will be held, or whether the minister concerned or the relevant agency should be first approached so that the committee can get a handle on the issue raised.

We found that the number of petitions being presented is increasing. We should be taking the time to visit some of the sites. The deputy chairman is probably wondering where I am leading to. There are some local sites that we could visit. We went to the waste recovery centre a while back. That trip was very informative. We also travelled to Point Peron in Rockingham when the marina was being developed. Both those visits gave us the opportunity to meet with the people concerned and look at what they were talking about. That was a very important exercise. It is very informative for the committee itself because in some cases we may not be aware of certain circumstances unless they occur in our own electorates.

At the moment a number of petitions are before the committee for consideration. That would suggest that we could be visiting a number of sites. It is very important that the committee does just that because it will give us a greater understanding of what petitioners are asking for and we will be able to take into account what the minister or the government has said.

The old uniform legislation committee used to handle petitions. I think Murray Nixon was the chairman. The committee members did a terrific job. They spent most of their time concentrating on petitions. Where do we go from here? I suggest that when the house considers committees after the 2009 election, it should consider establishing a committee that deals only with petitions.

Hon Barbara Scott: That was a very good committee.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: It was.

Hon Ray Halligan: It was the constitutional affairs committee, and I was on it.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: Obviously Hon Barbara Scott was on it too.

Hon Barbara Scott: I was.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Hon Ken Travers): I am sure the committee was full of fine members. I ask the member to get back to the report.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: The structure of the committee considering petitions is very important if we are to live up to the expectations of the people who go to a lot of trouble and effort and who are very passionate about certain things happening within their community. Such a committee needs to be very focused on petitions. We may need a separate committee. I do not see what else such a committee would look into. It is necessary for a committee to consider visiting sites much more than we are doing at the moment. In a lot of ways we do not have the time to visit sites. The committee needs to be structured that way. We need to be able to have an inquiry rather than simply look at the tabled evidence or evidence given to us by witnesses.

When members look at the diversity of the petitions that come to this place, they will get an idea of why I have raised this issue. As I said, the first petition we considered related to the proposed marina at Point Peron. We went to Rockingham and met with city officials and those who were concerned about what was happening to the environment. We were very fortunate that Hon Kate Doust, who was raised in that area, was a member of that committee. I think she still has relations down there.

Hon Kate Doust: My mother.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: That is a very close relation. She was able to assist us in some of our deliberations before we went down there. I used to traverse that area a lot during my tour from the farm during the January holidays. We spent our holidays at Point Peron for a number of years. They were very enjoyable times. It was like we were in a time warp. Nothing has really changed since 1960. Some 48 years later, the only difference is that a fence has been erected around the RSL caravan park. It is almost as if everybody walked out in 1960 and left it. Some work needed to be done on it to bring it up to scratch.

The next petition we considered related to Royal Perth Hospital. There was a huge outcry as the community said that the government should not close Royal Perth Hospital. Thousands of signatures were gathered. Many people still feel very strongly about it. There is a stay of execution at present.

We looked at petitions relating to Mount Manypeaks Primary School and water rights on freehold land. The petition on the Daylight Saving Bill was very interesting. At present more people would probably support getting rid of daylight saving than would support keeping it.

Hon Simon O'Brien: We didn't even get a debate about it in this place.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: It was very difficult.

Hon Kate Doust: You shouldn't whinge; at least you got some legislation through.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Only because you were asleep over there.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You'll have to speak up; the acoustics aren't very good!

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, members! Hon Bruce Donaldson has not resumed his seat and therefore still has the call.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: I was just waiting for members to come to order. I have plenty of time to wait.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I was just filling in an awkward pause.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: And you do that well, but Hon Bruce Donaldson has the call.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: The committee considered a couple of petitions that would interest the Minister for Fisheries, including crabbing in Cockburn Sound and Wilson Inlet pink snapper size limits. Other petitions related to Perth Modern School and road reserve management in the Shire of Toodyay. That petition came about as a result of some trees being knocked down in Toodyay. Some of those trees were quite close to the road. Consideration was given to the size of plant that farmers have to shift along those roads from property to property. If someone leaves that road for any number of reasons, the chance of survival is pretty minimal because unfortunately those trees do not bend over and break when someone hits them. They remain very solid. The ground around them is not even shaken. The Shire of Toodyay—I personally always supported this—said that the road reserve was never designed as a native vegetation or conservation strip. It was there to build a road on. Times have changed. Many years ago most of the vehicles were not capable of going much more than 40 or 50 miles an hour, or 60, 70 or 80 kilometres an hour. They were going full bore. Things have changed dramatically. The trees have grown bigger and, worst of all, a lot more have been planted. Members would have heard me carrying on in this place about the Wanneroo-Lancelin road, before the Yanchep turn-off. Those planted gum trees claimed a lot of lives on that piece of road. I am not talking about the native vegetation; I am talking about very large trees that were planted not far from the edge of the road. It may have looked good as a vista but we lost some people we should never have lost on that road. The Shire of Toodyay believed it also had a duty of care. It was concerned that there could be litigation. In this day and age, litigation is happening continually.

We also considered another petition relating to the Daylight Saving Bill, one on policing to the Bullsbrook community, one on urban development at Emu Point Drive, Albany and one on Neil Winzer's prayer for relief, which has been around for a long time and has caused a lot of angst. There were also petitions about the protection of mature trees on public land, mental health and daylight saving—again. There has obviously been a lot of strong feeling about daylight saving—surprise, surprise. I will not go through each and every one of those petitions in detail, but that is just a snapshot of what this committee is all about. That is why I say that we should structure a committee to do justice to some of those petitions and provide better outcomes, with the knowledge that we actually visit the site. I am quite happy for that to be arranged within the next two months. We could set aside time in some of the recess weeks to visit those sites. We also probably need to look at other jurisdictions in which petitions are tabled and then investigated. I understand that we could learn an awful lot from some jurisdictions.

There is a greater expectation in the wider community of response from parliamentarians. The community now sees petitions as strong instruments for accessing Parliament. A number of petitions are finalised reasonably quickly, because either there is legislation before the house or we find out that the petition will not achieve anything because the government has already moved in the direction of satisfying the problem. I think Hon Kate Doust raised the issue of the school crossing in Burswood Road. That petition is also included in this report. The outcome of that petition is that the Town of Victoria Park is now liaising with Main Roads, and a crossing with traffic wardens will be provided. I understand that the house is considering restructuring the committee system in the next Parliament, but I do not know. I hear these whispers and rumours. Perhaps you know something about it, Mr Deputy Chairman (Hon Ken Travers). I do not know very much. My own committee is thinking about how best to accommodate what people now see as an important facet of the interaction between the community and Parliament.

Hon KATE DOUST: I will make only a few remarks, because I know that Hon Giz Watson would like to speak on another matter, and she is currently away from the chamber. I agree with Hon Bruce Donaldson's comments about the work of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It is interesting to note that over the past 18 months the volume of work has been predominantly about petitions. I think I have referred to this aspect before. We have not actually reached the point of any self-referred inquiries, as we did in the first term of the present government. We are doing important work in determining how we can become more efficient and more productive in the way we deal with these petitions, and achieve not just better, but also more appropriate, outcomes. I imagine that it would be quite frustrating for someone who has had a petition tabled in this place by a member when it takes a year or more to receive some sort of response or outcome to what that person would regard as a fairly urgent matter. It is important that the committees constantly review their own processes and the manner in which they deliver outcomes, particularly in the area of the ways in which the public can better access Parliament.

I missed the first part of Hon Bruce Donaldson's remarks, but I would imagine that he referred to e-petitions as an area of interest for the committee. I note that the Procedure and Privileges Committee from the other place conducted a very brief inquiry into whether or not that house would go down the path of allowing e-petitions. I think the committee decided not to follow that up. I imagine that is because the other place does not deal with petitions in the same way as this house. The last time I was on my feet talking about one of these reports I made the comment that if the public wanted to have matters dealt with through a petition, they were better served tabling it in this chamber rather than the other. From what I understand, if petitions are tabled in the other place, although they go on the record, they are not pursued in any way. For all intents and purposes they will just be put on a shelf to gather dust. It is a real shame that when people have put in a great effort to round up not just small numbers, but sometimes tens of thousands of signatures to make a point about a matter, it is not followed up. When petitions are tabled in this house and referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, that proper procedure is followed, and the committee will make a decision about whether to conduct an inquiry. We have a fairly good track record over the past few years of following up on the vast majority of matters referred to the committee. That indicates that it is a much better process for the public. I encourage constituents who are thinking of putting forward a petition to address it to this chamber rather than the other one, and I indicate that they are wasting their time sending matters to the Legislative Assembly. I was quite surprised that the other place was considering whether it would deal with e-petitions, because what is the point of doing that if petitions are not actually dealt with in the current paper format? I would be interested to see whether that is progressed.

I pick up on another point made by Hon Bruce Donaldson about considering how parliamentary committees can be restructured, perhaps in the next Parliament. Again I note that the other place has said that its Procedure and Privileges Committee will review the current status of its committees. Having spent a relatively short time in this place as a member, compared to some members opposite, who have a much greater depth of experience and knowledge about how these things work, given recent commentary from some members in the other place, particularly the member for Cottesloe, about the way this chamber conducts its business—it is a house of review, and should be focusing on committee work and dealing with legislation—I get a bit confused about why the other house spends so much time in a range of committees dealing with matters that are probably more appropriately dealt with here. I look forward to the time when the parliamentary study group looks at the purpose and role of the other place. Perhaps we in turn can make commentary about how that house can conduct its business and improve its own procedures and performance in delivering outcomes for constituents, and leave to us the task of working through issues in committees or reviewing legislation. History has shown that this place does a far better job of dealing with the detail of legislation.

Hon Barbara Scott: You should tell your leader that.

Hon KATE DOUST: I am sure that he will read *Hansard* with great interest.

It is appropriate to put these matters on the record. I take on board the comments that Hon George Cash started to make last evening about the allocation to this place from the budget. It is really only when we become a member of a committee that we realise the problems in getting staff and other resources so that we can access information efficiently and on time to deliver outcomes via comprehensive reports. Those sorts of financial constraints create greater burdens on the committee staff that we have to deal with in managing the allocation of staff and their time to assist us. I therefore listened with great interest to Hon George Cash's comments. I am sure that many other members were also interested and probably shared the view he presented. I hope that in due course the government takes on board some of the comments that have been made about the level of financial assistance given to this chamber so that we can in fact do the job that we are meant to do for our electorates.

I hope that our committee will have an opportunity to conduct a fairly comprehensive review of the way in which we conduct business, the way in which we as a committee can better perform and the way in which we can better utilise new technologies to enable both the public to access us and us to disseminate information to the community. We must take on board the fact that things are changing so quickly that we cannot just sit back and let it all happen. We have to grab at those changes and work out ways of adapting as a Parliament to keep up with the changes and maintain relevance with the community. A lot of people, particularly young people, in the community have different ways of communicating and expressing their views. I am not suggesting that people should get to the point of texting petitions to the chamber, or some of the other things that my teenage children do with their phones. However, we should be open to a range of ideas on ways in which people can access Parliament and provide information on their views and on how we can get responses to them.

I also want to make comment again that during the period covered by this report, the committee dealt with a diverse range of matters. Being a member of this committee has always been a very interesting learning process. Members of the committee have not dealt with just one issue. We have been continually energised because we had to deal with issues that we may not always felt comfortable with or knowledgeable about. It was therefore a good way of learning about the views of people about events that are happening in the real world. Some matters that are referred to in the report have been dealt with in more detail in earlier reports. I refer to the Point Peron

and Mangles Bay marina matter. It is a matter close to my heart, not just because my mum lives across the road, but because my family and I have had a long period of engagement with that area. I have some real concerns about the proposals for that particular type of marina, and I know that I was not alone on the committee with my concerns. I will watch that matter with interest. I do not believe a decision on the future of the marina will be made in the short term. I am not too sure whether the committee has received a response to our initial report from the government.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: I don't think so.

Hon KATE DOUST: I raised the matter myself with the minister's office—yesterday actually—and was told that a decision was a long way off and that other options were being looked at. I was encouraged to hear that the minister's office is now asking for the Wanliss Street proposal to be reviewed, which was an earlier recommendation of the committee.

Hon Bruce Donaldson: Were they able to tell you whether the federal government has ever done anything about the causeway?

Hon KATE DOUST: No, I did not ask that question; I was more interested in where things were at. Until the issue of the water flow in the causeway is addressed, there is no point in making any other decision about the proposed marina, as that is the key issue in that area and has been ever since the causeway was constructed in the mid 1970s. What was a lovely beach to swim in and sail on is now not the most pleasant place. Much of the reason is that the causeway has physically blocked off the natural flow of water in that area. It becomes quite stagnant; I do not know whether that is the right word. Until an appropriate design and appropriate funding is found and until there is the will to make changes to address the problem appropriately, the water-flow issue will be exacerbated by the construction of a marina. The marina will be so invasive into the point that there will be no opportunity for the water to flow. People in that area have talked about the simplistic approach of punching some sort of hole through the causeway. I do not know the impact that would have on the causeway or the costs involved. It is a very simple approach but it is one that people there talk about. However, that decision would have to be made before anyone could firm up on the future of any proposed marina. Most people there do not have any strident objection to development in the area, and there are many different paths to go down. I personally have issues with the current proposal, but I am sure that over time it will be modified or compromised in some way, or there might be another option. If the Wanliss Street option went ahead because it looked like a much better proposal, the Mangles Bay proposal could be considered at a later time. That might work well. Mangles Bay has been used as a temporary boating shelter since the late 1970s—pretty much since cyclone Alby. Boats pretty much moved from the sailing yacht club to the causeway around about that time, and Mangles Bay seems to have become more popular. Although the proposal there is still an issue, I am still of the view that perhaps opportunities for the development of Point Peron have been missed over time. Hon Bruce Donaldson referred to his very happy times holidaying in the RSL caravan park, and I know that other people went to Australia Post or education department holiday homes there. A lot of that area is very run down. There are some real opportunities to provide some form of redevelopment of the point so that those places have good-quality, family-type accommodation and are accessible to people and will attract them back to Point Peron. It is getting harder and harder for families, particularly those on low incomes, to find reasonably priced and interesting places to take their children to on holiday. There is a great potential for ecotourism at Point Peron. I know that people such as Bob Goodall and his environment centre have been involved and have actively encouraged development in that area for a long period. If members sat down and dealt with those issues before they locked themselves into one particular plan for a marina, they would get more support from the locals once the locals saw that the Point Peron area was being upgraded and rejuvenated in some way; and they might find it a bit more acceptable for another type of development to sit alongside that, whatever format it may take.

Hon Giz Watson is back in the chamber, so I will probably cease my comments. I just want to say, however, that I have been a member of this committee now for six years and it is still a very interesting committee. Members have developed very good working relationships, and we try to take a very practical, commonsense approach to achieving outcomes for the members of the community with whom we deal. I hope that continues and I look forward to the committee being more productive.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: A stream of public concerns and petitions are being given to members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. The variety of issues is quite extraordinary. However, there is an emerging pattern. The pattern seems to surround conflicts in the community about land developments, particularly in high-value locations and public land that might be sold off for private purposes. I understand that there is a completely separate report relating to the Point Peron project, but the standing committee's tenth report, "Overview of Petitions", is a very clear case in point. The Point Peron proposal is for a marina in basically an area of high value. It has not just high environmental value but also high community value for people in the area. The proposal is targeting land that is fundamentally part of the major conservation estate of Western Australia. I can understand why it is that the government land development agency, LandCorp, is consistently involved in land developments that involve selling off public assets, particularly selling off land that

is conservation estate or public parks and so on. At least two or three of those sorts of proposals are mentioned in this report.

The other proposal is effectively the urban development at Emu Point Drive, Albany. Again, the government agency, LandCorp, that is charged with the responsibility for socially responsible development is cherry-picking the state's conservation estate and areas of high conservation value and selling them off to co-fund other projects. The development of Albany foreshore is conditional to community acceptance that Emu Point will be sold off. That sale will co-fund the development of an entertainment centre, no less, on Albany foreshore. This pattern is consistent across Western Australia with LandCorp.

It is interesting to see how these projects are set up. Invariably the government sets up an advisory body outside a local government shire in association with a regional development commission—for example, in the case of Albany the Great Southern Development Commission—the shire and a few other representatives. It is a completely autonomous advisory body that does not appear to be clearly answerable to anybody but it can make proposals to sell off public land to co-fund often extravagant developments on foreshores. The same thing is happening in Bunbury with its City Vision proposal for foreshore development, where LandCorp, the South West Development Commission and the City of Bunbury are proposing to sell off public land to further develop the foreshore.

I want to draw the chamber's attention to a stream of petitions coming before the Parliament, all of which have similar elements to them, and to look at the possibility of putting together some of these petitions to see if there is a common thread that could be more thoroughly inquired into. Every time there is a proposal to develop the soft underbelly of the conservation estate or public parks, which is effectively what is happening, community members form local action groups, and acting independently, take on the fairly big entities of LandCorp, regional development commissions, local government and so on. Individually, these small campaigns are quite isolated, with people not knowing that there is a similar pattern across Western Australia. A stream of disparate community groups is coming to the committee with very similar complaints but there is no common thread in how the complaints are dealt with. In the case of Emu Point, it was clear that before the development could happen, it would have to go through an Environmental Protection Authority assessment. The committee chose to finalise the petition because another government department was attending to it. However, I note that the substantial issue underpinning the community's concern at Emu Point has not been addressed. This committee report, which basically says that we have put the matter into the hands of the Environmental Protection Authority or some other statutory authority, does not go to the heart of the concerns of the Albany community, whose foreshore is being sold off to fund extravagant development.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I would like to make a small contribution regarding the operation of this place's committees and particularly the committee that looks at petitions. The committee that Hon Bruce Donaldson was trying to think of earlier that looked specifically at petitions was called the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs and Statutes Revision. It was a committee of three persons but I believe that it operated very well indeed. I can recall that one year the committee presented 50 reports. One might suggest that was just creating work for itself or it was basing its need to be in existence on the number of reports that were presented. In fact, petitions, as we know, are grievances. They need not be the same. Some may well be, although usually each petition is completely different from another and it is often just the number of signatures on a petition that indicate the amount of support for an issue at a particular time. As Hon Kate Doust just mentioned, grievances are best brought to a chamber such as this which has had a process in place for some considerable time that often provides the individual or group with that grievance the opportunity to expand on that grievance to a committee of members of this chamber. The chairman of the committee would then write a report, or have a report written. The report would then be tabled in this house and be subject to debate. As Hon Kate Doust has mentioned, the report would also be presented to the government of the day, and a response would be sought from the minister. That is a particularly important process because it allows members from both sides of this chamber, and of all political persuasions, to come closer together on issues that they have come to realise have no political flavour whatsoever. That is the case on not only this particular committee, but also many others. I believe that this chamber and its members can be very proud of that situation, because it has enabled us to provide the people of Western Australia with the very best that the collective members can provide for them.

In the past, if the committee has been of the belief that a particular grievance concerns a policy matter, it has taken the issue no further. I assume that is also the current state of affairs, because the government of the day has been given the authority by the people of Western Australia to make policy decisions. Therefore, a parliamentary committee should not be given the right to suggest that a particular policy is wrong.

Most of the grievances that come before the committee are about administrative-type matters and actions or processes that should have taken place but have not taken place. The committee often takes some considerable time to look into the matter and seek out information that will enable it to present a comprehensive report to this chamber on which members can then make a decision. More importantly, I believe the committee process provides the opportunity for not only the person who has presented the grievance, but also the committee and

this chamber, to put that grievance, and the possible solution, to the government. The government of the day is then given the opportunity to respond in an open and transparent manner to that grievance. Whether the person who presented the grievance is satisfied with the solution is, of course, another matter, and not the one that I am discussing here. It is very important that the people of Western Australia know that the opportunity exists for their grievances to be aired before a committee, and that a comprehensive report will be presented not only to this chamber but also to the government for a response. The committee process also brings members of this chamber closer together, because those members of this chamber who sit on committees find quite frequently—in fact, more often than not—that they are of a like mind when it comes to resolving any issues that might arise.

The committee system has worked particularly well in the past, and it continues to work well. However, it is up to the people who make these decisions to decide whether the number of members appointed to a committee is appropriate, whether the task that has been given to a committee is burdensome, and whether a committee has been provided with sufficient time and resources to enable it to complete its task in a timely manner. Unfortunately, a former Clerk of this house decided to go down a particular path and provide this chamber with committees that comprised a large number of members. I do not think that is the way to go. I think committees should comprise a smaller number of members who have the capacity to meet as frequently as is required. The former Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs and Statutes Revision, which comprised only three members, is a good example of what can be done and how well a committee can operate. The committees of this house operate particularly well, and they will continue to operate particularly well if some of those experiences are taken into consideration in the future when the number and make-up of committees is decided after the next election.

The committee provides an overview of petitions on an annual basis. That is very good, because it gives members of this house who have not been associated with a committee of this type the opportunity to see the grievances that are put forward and how the committee, on behalf of this chamber, responds to those grievances. The committee should receive all the support that the house can provide. I applaud Hon Kate Doust on the forthright manner in which she has discussed the issues associated with the operation of this committee and the fact that more resources are required for the committee system in this chamber. More money certainly needs to be provided, because our committee system is a particularly important part of the operation of the Legislative Council.

Question put and passed.

Progress reported, pursuant to temporary orders.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

CO-OPERATIVES BILL 2007

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Sue Ellery (Minister for Child Protection)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Child Protection) [7.33 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Co-operatives Bill 2007 is to replace the Companies (Co-operative) Act 1943 and the Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903 with legislation that reflects the current commercial and social environment of cooperatives in Western Australia. The bill is essentially a response to the cooperative industry's request for more modern legislation that will facilitate interstate trade and the growth of cooperatives. Cooperatives are organisations that are owned and democratically controlled by people who have united to meet their common economic, social and/or cultural needs. There are currently 73 cooperatives in Western Australia. These cooperatives have been established for a variety of reasons, including value-added production, export development, marketing, and promotion of commodities. In Western Australia, cooperatives exist in a wide range of industries, such as retail, agriculture, manufacturing, wool processing, taxi services and arts and crafts. They have been a particularly vital part of regional Western Australia for a long time and contribute significantly to the economy of the state. The current legislation for cooperatives is based on outdated nineteenth century companies law that inadequately regulates cooperatives in the contemporary market. The proposed bill will bring Western Australia into line with legislation in other states and territories. A green bill was released for public consultation in September 2006. The green bill was made available for public comment and it was distributed to all registered cooperatives and various government agencies. That process has enabled this bill to be drafted to address the key issues raised during consultation and to minimise any disruption to business that might result from Western Australian cooperatives having to comply with the new legislation. The bill has also been prepared in ongoing consultation with an industry reference group comprising members and representatives from