

Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Rita Saffioti

COASTAL TOWNS AND SETTLEMENTS CABINET SUBCOMMITTEE

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The matter can proceed. Before we continue, I call to order the Minister for Transport and the member for Bateman. Now we can proceed.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.00 pm]: I move —

That the house calls on the Deputy Premier to resign from the Coastal Towns and Settlements Cabinet Subcommittee so he can concentrate on the vital health and training and development portfolios.

There is no more important portfolio than health, and Western Australia deserves a full-time Minister for Health who is focused and determined to deliver health outcomes that Western Australia richly deserves. I remember that in the lead-up to the 2008 election the member for Dawesville said on many occasions that the then Minister for Health, Hon Jim McGinty, was a part-time Minister for Health. We all know that the current Minister for Health wants to emulate Hon Jim McGinty. He is always comparing himself with Hon Jim McGinty, but we never thought he would try to inspire the same narrative around his performance. The minister is more focused on the exit door than he is on the important issues confronting his portfolio. The Minister for Health's legacy to the portfolio is an approach of complete failure of oversight and of lacking the determination and the work ethic to make sure that the health portfolio works properly. He is a part-time minister with a sloppy work ethic that has damaged the health system and led to a number of failures right across the portfolio. The Premier must remove him from his new hobby subcommittee because this minister needs to concentrate on more important issues, such as getting on top of his errors in his own portfolios. Let us look at his legacy of neglect. We have the problems at Fiona Stanley Hospital—delays, lacking in staff and riddled with cost overruns —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the members for Carine and Murray–Wellington to order for the first time. We are getting the wall of noise again. I do not want any more interjections.

Mr R.H. COOK: It is a hospital riddled with overruns and is now referred to as “Fiona Shambles Hospital”. Perth Children's Hospital is 78 beds short. I would love to mention the minister's failures around Royal Perth Hospital. They are not failures of political capacity but the result of a complete lack of work ethic and political will. The problems that beset the new Midland hospital are a legacy of neglect and of a failure to focus upon attention to detail. Looking at Fiona Stanley Hospital —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, I want to hear the member for Kwinana.

Mr R.H. COOK: Fiona Stanley Hospital was finished last year and was supposed to have patients in it by April this year, but it will not receive an unplanned admission until 2015. The hospital is lacking staff. As a result of the minister's privatisation policies, we will pour \$180 million into the pockets of Serco to look after a hospital without a single patient. Why? Because the minister has in place his little set-and-forget policy—privatise, expect people to get on with it and do not worry. He hopes that things will work and proceed properly. Do not forget that the minister had a wilful ignorance of the delays at Fiona Stanley Hospital. Even though the evidence was mounting and everyone in the department was saying that it would be delayed, for some reason the minister relied upon his director general's verbal assurances that the project was under control. He wilfully ignored what was going on in his own department and he neglected one of the most important hospital projects in this state. Do not forget that in November 2011 he said, “Look, don't worry about the workforce development issues with this hospital. It's all under control.” He said at the time —

I rise today to reassure the house and the people of Western Australia that we have a sufficient health workforce to meet today's needs and future needs.

Yet members of his department came into the chamber last week during the estimates hearings and said that we lack staff in neonatal, intensive care, obstetrics and operation theatres. We have a drastic staff shortage, not because the minister has been blindsided or we did not know about these issues, but simply because this minister lacks the work ethic and the ticker to pay enough attention to detail to drive his department to make sure these projects are in place when they need to be. We all know the problems of staffing because of the problems that flowed from keeping Royal Perth Hospital open. It was a good political decision but a dubious policy decision.

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As a result of those decisions, the minister said that he would legislate to protect the hospital. That failed. The minister said that he would redevelop Royal Perth Hospital.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: He would have said that in the member for Belmont's electorate. That failed. The Liberal Party lied to the people of Western Australia about all those issues with Royal Perth Hospital and now the people of the inner suburbs of Perth are left scratching their heads and asking, "What was this guy about?" He was very confident that he would legislate, but he was too lazy to implement the legislation. He was very confident that he would redevelop the hospital, but that is no longer in the budget. What the hell is going on with this minister? He lacks the work ethic and ticker to drive the show.

Let us look at the cost overruns at Fiona Stanley Hospital alone. There are \$330 million in cost overruns. The IT spending spree is beyond control. IT consultants are racking up six-figure bills on behalf of the Minister for Health simply because he did not pay attention when he privatised the contracts and the running of that hospital. He did not pay attention when the department told him that his paperless hospital would not come into being. He did not pay attention when departmental officers sat around saying, "We really have no idea how we're going to deliver these promises." This is the set-and-forget minister who has, essentially, taken his eye off the ball. At the time of these bills and the overruns that were being run up, this minister was too busy being the Minister for Tourism. Thankfully for the people of Western Australia, the Premier took that portfolio off him. The Premier now needs to act once again to ensure that the hospital system runs properly.

Moving on from "Fiona Shambles Hospital", we look at the new Perth Children's Hospital. The minister was left scrambling to find another 48 beds at that hospital, which he said had plenty of beds and capacity. He was not even aware of the concerns of the senior clinicians and the parents of children in that hospital to even know that was a problem. It was not until those parents took drastic action in the media that the minister even acted on the issue of capacity at that hospital. He was not even aware and he was not prepared to do anything about it. Other people had to drag him kicking and screaming to the policy issues that beset that hospital. The minister was quite happy to blithely let that hospital project drift along without addressing the capacity needs, which he admitted by his own actions were inadequate. We all know the hospital is still a good floor short.

We look at the dreadful state of affairs with the new Midland Health Campus and see what the government's addiction to privatisation has done to health services in that area. I want to place on the record very clearly that we in the Labor opposition have the very highest respect for Dr Michael Stanford and the people of St John of God. We have the greatest respect for the services that it provides in its private hospitals. St John of God has done nothing wrong. It was up-front with this government from day one that if it were to run that hospital, it would not be able to provide a swathe of services to the people of Western Australia. This hospital will be unable to provide a range of health services to mostly women in the Swan District area. The minister likes to make light of this particular issue and he talks at length about his vasectomy and about how he had it under local anaesthetic. I am not sure whether anyone has ever had a general anaesthetic to have a vasectomy, by the way, but the minister likes to talk about that as if the issue of women's health services in the Swan district is something that should be made light of, that it should be just an afterthought—something that is plugged into the system after we have actually provided the main hospital services. We know that there are over 1 200 childbirth deliveries at the Swan District Hospital each year. Those are the women who should be delivered the full range of family planning services and who, while they are in the care of the hospital, should be able to receive the advice, the support and the services they need. But, again, because of the lack of oversight by this minister, we now see a whole range of services that will be provided down the back, out of the way in the other clinic. The government has still to explain how it will provide that clinic, because it has no idea. The same set-and-forget minister who privatised services at Fiona Stanley Hospital, and we saw all the cost overruns and IT problems there, is now stuffing up things at the Midland Health Campus.

Let us look at the performance of the Department of Health generally. We had some good early gains with the national emergency access targets, otherwise known as the four-hour rule in this state, while Peter Flett was the director general of the health department; he made some great gains on behalf of the department. Yet, we now see that Western Australia is the only state that is actually going backwards in its emergency departments. The majority of hospitals in Western Australia are falling behind their previous performances in meeting their national emergency access targets. While we are seeing all the other states improving their performance in this area, Western Australia is actually going backwards—falling behind. If we look at the weighted average unit costs of patients in our hospitals, the minister talks about how we are disadvantaged under the national emergency pricing scheme, but that is not the point; the fact is that the cost of treating patients in Western Australia is going up—not reducing to get anywhere near those national efficiency price indicators. While we have a minister who would rather go off and look at coastal communities, we have rising prices in our health department and reducing performance in our emergency departments, and that is why the minister is now spending 28 per cent of the government's budget on health—not because of his commitment to health, but

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because of his lack of performance in the department and the portfolio. It is ridiculous to say that because of that he is a great success.

Mrs G.J. Godfrey interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: Member for Belmont, is it true that the cost of treating patients in our hospitals is increasing? Yes, it is. Is it true that a majority of our emergency departments in our metropolitan hospitals are falling back in their performance in meeting the national emergency access targets? Yes, it is true. There is a diminishing performance and increasing costs of treating patients, and all the time we have this minister sitting back and patting himself on the back saying, “Retirement looks good.”

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr R.H. COOK: Last week the Corruption and Crime Commission said that the clear and present indication of corruption and fraud in relation to the procurement and procedures of the health department indicated that it needed to have its guidelines tightened up, and those things are a danger for the department. Yet, in 2009 the minister pulled apart the very vehicle that the department needs to ensure that that does not happen. This is the minister who by his own neglect is allowing the department to drift along. Now is not the time to have the Premier pulling him out of the action to go off and examine coastal communities; now is not the time for the Premier to say, “It is all right, bloke; you slow down. We will get you doing this nice, little, cushy hobby-driven task.” Now is not the time for the minister to be going half pace. This minister took his eye off the ball; he has taken his hand off the tiller and now does not want to look at the landscape of the health department because of all the problems that he has had in that area. He wants to look at the horizon, the coastal waters of Perth where he wants to entertain his passion for fishing. Now is the time that the Premier should be on the minister’s back, making sure he continues to deliver value for money for WA taxpayers, not giving him a retirement package in the final years of his time in Parliament.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [3.16 pm]: This motion should not have to be moved because it demands —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order now for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is a motion demanding that the Minister for Health; Training and Workforce Development actually do his job. We are telling him to do his job, do what he is paid for, and not go off on frolics of his own simply because he is so unhappy that the Premier took away the tourism portfolio. He loves tourism. Off he goes in the government jet, flying up to Kununurra, marching off with his cap on and his rods over his shoulder. Everyone saw him there—I heard it on the radio—marching off to go fishing. We have heard about the minister’s other antics around the state, going off and pursuing his one true love, which is fishing. Our demand is for the minister to do his job, and his job is health minister and training minister. What has happened is this: since the Premier sacked him from tourism he has been moping around unhappy. We have seen it in here; there he is, “Mr Sad Sack”, getting around the place saying, “Oh, I really miss tourism; I really loved it.” The minister whinged and whined so much that the Premier, in the greatest act of appeasement since the 1930s, has given him this job. He appeased the minister by giving him this job last week. This is the job the minister really loves; it is the one he wants to do. Let us have a look at what it is. Let us have a look at the eight-paragraph press release the minister actually based a media conference on. Here it is: the minister is going to set up a committee—another committee—with a bunch of ministers on it, and not including the environment minister, to have a look at coastal towns and settlements. It will look at these things: Coral Bay and the Abrolhos Islands settlements will be examined as a priority; and on top of that there will be the south coast—so the priorities are Coral Bay, the Abrolhos Islands and the south coast. What do we find after just a bit of research? On 19 March 2011 the then tourism minister, now sacked, did an interview with *The Weekend West* about his great loves and his top five holiday spots in WA. In that interview he said —

I’m a dead keen fisherman so going out fishing from the Abrolhos or Coral Bay.

There it is! Look at this: he is appointed to a committee to look at Coral Bay and the Abrolhos and one of his top five holiday spots is “the Abrolhos or Coral Bay”. What an incredible coincidence!

Mrs L.M. Harvey: At least it is not Bali!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Then we go to the third one—the south coast. Where is his next favourite holiday spot after the Abrolhos or Coral Bay? Walpole! There they are.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

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The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you now to order for the third time. You might be going very early to Bali!

Mr M. McGOWAN: There we have it. This is an effort at appeasement by the Premier of his sad and unhappy health minister because he does not want to do health and he does not want to do training because they are all too hard. What he wants to do is have an excuse to go to the Abrolhos or Coral Bay. How do we know he is so dead keen on his fishing? Because he is the patron of the Perth Game Fishing Club. Here is a photograph of him out there doing, as the caption says, some “arm-lengthening strengthening exercises, wrestling with sharks”. There he is out there. What we have here is the government using an announcement to keep him happy and give him a role that he actually wants to do rather than the role he should be doing. We heard about this from the Minister for Seniors and Volunteering, likable fellow though he is; he said that people will be eligible for a Seniors Card if they are aged over 60 years and work less than 25 hours a week. There we have it; that is the Minister for Health! He should put his application in now, because that is him to a tee!

The sad thing is that this is actually a serious issue. We have serious issues with health in Western Australia, including the management of Fiona Stanley Hospital, the non-delivery on promises at Royal Perth Hospital, and the management of IT at Perth Children’s Hospital. I refer to a report by the Corruption and Crime Commission, “Report on Fraud and Corruption in Procurement in WA Health: Dealing with the Risks”, which was released last week, the day before the announcement of the Deputy Premier’s fishing committee. The Corruption and Crime Commission, in the executive summary of this report, states in part, and in the gravest of terms —

WA Health does not have adequate measures in place to prevent fraud and corruption in its procurement activities.

Further along it continues —

In the context of the \$3.6 billion spent on procurement in 2011–12, the significance of this systemic failure could hardly be over-estimated.

That is what the CCC says about the minister’s management of billions of dollars of procurement in the Department of Health. What happened the day after that? The Minister for Health is appointed to a committee so that he can head off to Coral Bay and the Abrolhos Islands to satisfy his fishing fetish! What management or sense of priorities is there in this government when the Premier does that? In the same week, last week, there was the revelation to the Premier—the rest of us already knew—that the Midland Public Hospital will not be offering the full range of services expected of a major public hospital of that scale. We have to ask the question: how is it that the Premier did not know? Was it incompetence on his part, or was it incompetence on the part of the Minister for Health? Which was it? One of them must be incompetent; surely it cannot be both of them. It could not be the case that the Minister for Health actually told the Premier and he forgot—surely not! Surely not, when we are dealing with a \$5 billion contract.

We heard the revelations about Midland Public Hospital and the fact that that hospital will not offer the full range of services one would expect it to offer, and we witnessed the Premier’s surprise in relation to those revelations. I actually think this is a poor decision, and I might add that a number of members of the public have raised this matter with me, because they are wondering what is going on in our health system when commonplace family planning and associated services are not going to be offered in a publicly funded hospital. This is a serious concern. I am concerned. Our public hospitals should offer the full range of services appropriate to their size and scale, not based upon any other criteria. That is what I think should happen. The Premier claims he did not even know about that; it is a \$5 billion contract, and he did not even know.

The government designed the contracts and tendering to ensure that outcome, and that was revealed in an answer to a question without notice in the other place by the then minister representing the Minister for Health in the other place, Hon Helen Morton, more than two years ago. On 16 May 2012, she said —

On 13 October 2011, high quality proposals were received from St John of God Health Care Incorporated and Ramsay Health Care Limited. The Ramsay Health Care Limited proposal did not preclude the provision of these services.

She continued —

The request for proposals noted that provision of these services was not mandatory.

Therefore, family health and reproductive services were actually specified in the tender documents as not being mandated for the new hospital. That is what the government’s own process established, and then we have the Premier saying that he did not know anything about it! What is going on?

This is a serious issue for the people of the eastern suburbs and a serious precedent for our public health system. The government’s reaction to last week’s revelation of potential systemic corruption in procurement in the

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Department of Health was to appoint the Minister for Health to chair a committee so that he can go to his favourite fishing spots! That is the government's answer.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is a government of committees—committee after committee! If the government wants to establish another committee to do with the planning of coastal areas, the Minister for Planning should be the chair. That is a no-brainer. He is a senior minister of some capability, and he should be the chair, rather than this retiring, fading-away bloke who clearly does not want to do his job anymore—the Deputy Premier; Minister for Health; Minister for Training and Workforce Development. Those are serious roles, and he should be performing them properly with all of his ability, rather than worrying about these other tasks that the Premier has allocated to him.

DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Deputy Premier) [3.27 pm]: What a nasty person the Leader of the Opposition is! I did not raise with the Premier anything about the committee I have been asked to chair. He asked me to chair a committee to look into issues about which he is concerned, and what better person to do it than someone who has had a close involvement with all those issues? My role on the committee is to be the chair. The ones doing all the work on the committee—as they already have—will be the Minister for Tourism, the Minister for Regional Development, the Minister for Planning and other ministers who will be invited to sit on the committee as required, including the Minister for Fisheries and the Minister for Local Government. The Minister for Planning has done a lot of work around the development of planning strategies for Coral Bay. The Minister for Fisheries has done a lot of work around getting better access to the Abrolhos Islands, as has the Minister for Tourism in promoting tourism in that area. The initiative of developing new towns in the south west is a very good one, and it was raised by the Premier.

I will chair this committee, and, sure, I have a very strong interest in those areas. I might tell members that the first space in my diary to be able to go to some of those places with other ministers to look at those issues is in October. The Leader of the Opposition says that I work 20 hours a week and do nothing, yet the first space in my diary for two or three spare days to go and look at these issues is in October.

People say that because I am getting closer to retirement, it decreases my willingness to work hard, but the opposite is true. When one approaches the time at which one might step down, it is when one wants to achieve the most; get out there, make things happen and drive things hard, because only a limited amount of time is left to make them happen. The whole scenario around this is how much time I have. I point out to the Leader of the Opposition that the last Labor government had 12 subcommittees of cabinet while we have only six, counting the coastal towns committee. The then Minister for Health was also Attorney General, which is a huge portfolio on its own, and he was on three subcommittees, as I will be. He was also a member of the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee, which is also a huge job, so he had a massive amount of work to do. The suggestion is that I have been sitting back while the health system has not been going well. I put it to members that only opposition members think that the health system in this state is not going well. I can assure them that members on this side of the house who represent everyone out there think that the health system is going well. All members have to do is look at the difference in the management of health between our government and the Labor government. In comparison with the other states, we went from being the worst in just about every measure to now being among the best. I am glad opposition members have given me this opportunity, because they will remember that the other day I could not find the piece of paper about the national report on health. It refers to issues such as the number of potentially avoidable deaths. This is probably the most important one. When we brought in the four-hour rule, which was a great initiative of this government, we said that one of the reasons we were doing it was to reduce mortality in our hospitals. When the Labor Party was in government, corridor after corridor had people desperately waiting for a bed; indeed, between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of people who presented at hospitals were sitting in hospital corridors for eight hours waiting for a bed. Where are they now? They are in beds. What did we expect that initiative to do? We expected it to reduce the mortality rate—that is, to reduce the number of people dying under the Labor health minister because they had been sitting in a hospital corridor waiting for a bed. The report states that the number of potentially avoidable deaths per 100 000 people decreased from 162 in 2007 to 140, which is lower than the national average. The percentage of emergency patients treated within time has increased from 59 per cent to 64 per cent. Western Australia was noted for significant improvements between 2007 and 2011 in the death rates attributable to respiratory and circulatory disease and cancer. There has been no change in the median wait time of 30 days for elective surgery since 2007–08, but we are the second highest of all the states with an average of 36 days. Ninety per cent of elective surgeries were completed in the appropriate time, which was the best figure recorded in the nation.

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Our health system is managing very well. What have we done in terms of the great infrastructure? We have allocated \$7 billion to renew health infrastructure across the length and breadth of the state. On top of that, we have allocated from royalties for regions \$500 million for the Southern Inland Health Initiative package and \$190 million for the Northern Inland Health Initiative package, which has yet to be fully rolled out. Those fantastic infrastructure works are currently proceeding. What else did we bring in apart from the four-hour rule and elective surgery targets that have significantly reduced the number of people waiting for surgery in this state? We introduced the Friend In Need emergency scheme. If we did not put that in place, we would need an additional 160 beds each day. We would need a hospital with 160 beds. If we had to build a hospital to cater for those 160 beds —

Mr R.H. Cook: There's nothing new about that.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the first time. Let the minister continue.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It treats about 600 patients on any given day, and about 160 of those would otherwise have to go to a hospital. If we had to build a hospital to cater for those 160 patients, we would need to spend between \$500 million and \$600 million to do so and we would need to spend recurrent funding of between \$400 million and \$500 million a year to look after those patients in that hospital. Instead, we have spent \$26 million to look after them in their own home and provide first-class care. Under this government, community child health services have expanded significantly. There are additional school nurses, we have funded additional child health services and Aboriginal health services, and we have provided more funding for palliative care. The patient assisted travel scheme has doubled since we have been in government. We have also provided extra funding for the Royal Flying Doctor Service scheme. We as a government have worked very hard to make sure that we increase the quality of health services in this state. I put it to members again that we have significantly improved the health service since we came to government. When the Labor Party was in power, day after day we would see front-page headlines stating "Health system in crisis". The news and *The West Australian* ran that headline all the time.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Bassendean!

Dr K.D. HAMES: Unlike the shadow Minister for Health, when I was the shadow minister, I did not get stuck into the Minister for Health every time something went wrong. In fact, my previous press secretary, who was with *The West* at the time, would tell me off. She would ring me to get a negative comment about the health minister and I would say, no, I am not saying that because I agree with him. She would say, "Surely, you can say something bad about it?" I would say, no, that program is a good program. The shadow Minister for Health should take a leaf out of my book. All the shadow Minister for Health does is whinge, whine and carp. He called me lazy and said that I lack a work ethic. I ask members to read today's matter of public interest. It states "vital health and training and development portfolios". The correct title is Training and Workforce Development. The shadow Minister for Health cannot even get my title right!

We work very hard in my office. We work very hard in the Department of Health. We have achieved remarkable results in this state. It has not been easy going from the basket case of health in Australia to being at the forefront of health management. It has not been an easy task. It has taken a lot of hard work. Sure, there have been hiccups along the way, which the opposition has loved to point out. What happened with the hiccup with Fiona Stanley Hospital? We did not open in May, which was a date set by the opposition. It was not the date that I set. It did not open in May. It has been delayed. What has that delay cost? It has cost just under \$20 million, and we decided to stage the opening, which has cost \$30 million. What did it cost the Labor government for the Office of Shared Services? What were the blowout costs for the Perth Arena development? It cost hundreds of millions of dollars, with a massive blowout in costs.

When it opens, Fiona Stanley Hospital will be a first-class hospital. We noted recently that the South Australian government significantly delayed the opening of a hospital because of information technology issues. I admit it has been a problem. It has been a massive task downsizing two hospitals and building and opening a brand-new one. Members should remember that until December, we had only a hospital worksite. If anyone in this room has ever built a house and got the roof and everything all done, and then thought about all the other stuff that has to be done before moving into the home, they will know that there is a massive amount of work. We underestimated how long that would take. Three months clearly was not enough. It was a massive task. When it opens —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the second time. Members for Bassendean and Mirrabooka, let the minister talk. Minister, please finish.

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Dr K.D. HAMES: I am bringing my comments to a close, because a lot of members want to talk about the committee and its value and importance. I totally reject any suggestion that I am not doing enough in health. I think my record speaks for itself. It is one that this state should be very proud of.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Tourism) [3.39 pm]: I will say a few words about the Coastal Towns and Settlements Cabinet Subcommittee and the Deputy Premier's involvement in it. Similar to nearly all members on this side of the house, the Deputy Premier has a large interest in tourism development in Western Australia, as should every member in this house. Tourism development is essential to jobs creation and to providing opportunities for Western Australians. It is essential so that overseas tourists can enjoy the highlights of the Western Australian coastline in particular. That is exactly what the committee will examine. My history on this matter is quite interesting. I was on the Economics and Industry Standing Committee, along with the members for Cannington, Collie–Preston, South Perth and Riverton, the now Treasurer. We had a look at some of the issues relating to caravan parks and camping grounds, which drew us to Coral Bay. We had a look at some of the issues confronting Coral Bay and the community. We looked at the constraints on tourism development and the problems associated with running the existing tourism facilities in Coral Bay, which are due to the ad hoc nature and substandard planning processes that preceded development in that vicinity. Out of that inquiry into caravan parks and camping grounds, the government has developed a strategy around caravan parks and camping grounds and we have put some good funding behind it. That is a separate issue from this but that does not necessarily mean that the government has been sitting on its hands with Coral Bay. The Minister for Planning has done a lot of consultation through his agency. The agency has been working very diligently on a structure plan for Coral Bay that will allow orderly planning of the Coral Bay precinct to go ahead, allow further development of tourism in Coral Bay and ensure that when visitors go to the Coral Bay region, they have the kind of experience that makes them want to go back. As Western Australians, this is the sort of experience that we should be enjoying, be proud of, and be able to talk about to other Western Australians and our overseas friends and say that it is a great place to visit. At the moment, I would say that Coral Bay falls somewhat short of that in some areas. That is due to a lack of orderly planning, but now the structure plan is in train.

The reason that we need the Deputy Premier as the chair of a committee such as this is that he brings a lot of experience, a passion for the tourism industry and a passion for a range of different activities that tourists who explore the Western Australian coastline also value. His agency is independent of the work that needs to occur in the space when we look at developing coastal communities. The Minister for Planning obviously has a role in planning the coastal communities and the Minister for Environment will obviously need to be involved in consultation at various points along the way because the areas that we are looking at will indeed have some environmental considerations. As Minister for Tourism, obviously I am looking for tourism development. In his opinion piece in last Saturday's *The Weekend West*, Gareth Parker wrote about the importance of developing jobs for tourism and the importance of and the high priority that Western Australians place on being able to get out and enjoy the natural beauty of this state.

The Abrolhos Islands have been under the management and control of the Minister for Fisheries, and the shacks on the islands are an issue. There has been no ordered planning of what could be an iconic tourism destination. Instead, ad hoc development has occurred with a focus on commercial fishing and ensuring that there is rudimentary but adequate accommodation for people engaged in the commercial fishing industry. Indeed, to me, that is an undeveloped iconic treasure of Western Australia. Other members will speak on the value of developing the Abrolhos Islands, but that is our shipwreck coast. If it were not for the Abrolhos Islands, Western Australia might not have been developed. The focus has always been on fishing, but there are opportunities for diving and for developing and examining the history of Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Obviously, the Minister for Regional Development is involved in this space and the Minister for Local Government has a role as well. Basically, this committee demonstrates that we need a whole-of-government approach to this project. The Premier has taken the step of putting the next senior member of cabinet, the Deputy Premier, into the position of chair of this committee because that is the level of importance coastal development has to the state. We need to look at coastal communities right around the state.

We are also talking about the stretch of coastline from Augusta to Esperance. If members would care to read the Economics and Industry Standing Committee report, they will find that one of the problems we have with tourism development in Western Australia is that there are big gaps in the number of places to stop at for travellers in self-drive caravans and recreational vehicles. The people who are getting out and enjoying that kind of tourism activity—the seniors and baby boomers—do not like to drive for hours and hours. They like to drive for small stints and to stop along the way in their journey along our beautiful Western Australian coastline. It is important to have a mix of facilities and stopping opportunities for those people to enjoy. We need to have little coastal hamlets mixed with eco-camping sites and caravan parks. We need to involve all the decision-makers in

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government who are part of that process—that is, those from the Departments of Planning and Fisheries, when dealing with areas that are under the control of the Department of Fisheries, as well as tourism, regional development and lands. We need all those heads around the table to ensure that everybody is singing from the same songbook, and it is entirely appropriate to have a senior member of cabinet as the chair of that committee. I am really pleased that we will have as chair of that committee a former Minister for Tourism who is passionate about Western Australia and about ensuring that there is a viable top-quality tourism product available in Western Australia, and about developing opportunities for employment in the industry. I look forward to the progress of that committee, to bringing forward the recommendations of that committee and to the actions for the future of the state.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [3.46 pm]: It is quite amazing that the opposition has moved this motion. It can say all the names it likes, but the fact is that the committee has been formed because of the previous government's inaction in Coral Bay. That is the problem. The previous government—members of the opposition—still think —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Cannington to order for the second time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Members opposite still think that no-one lives in Coral Bay and that they live in either Carnarvon or Exmouth. The reality is that 150 to 200 people live in Coral Bay to service the industry, but previous planning decisions have led to the mess that Coral Bay is now in. I am saying, as the local member, that Coral Bay is a mess. To have the Deputy Premier—a member of Parliament who knows Coral Bay very well—head the Coastal Towns and Settlements Cabinet Subcommittee is valuable and would ensure that we right the wrongs of Coral Bay. Ad hoc development is occurring and people are living in an area called “Little Kenya”, a place that is noncompliant. It is, basically, a shantytown in Coral Bay. If something happens to that establishment, such as a fire, God help everyone. It is noncompliant and dangerous. If something disastrous were to occur where people reside in an area with hammocks and caravans that are right next door to each other and there was loss of life, people who opposed any houses or permanent structures in Coral Bay should hang their heads in shame. At the moment we need houses in Coral Bay. We need to reflect on the fact that people live in Coral Bay. How do we do that? We do that by acknowledging that it needs to be a town. That is my personal opinion and the opinion of my constituents who acknowledge that it needs to be a town to ensure that there is appropriate housing for people who supply the workforce and for business owners so that when we do go up to Coral Bay—I know some members do—to enjoy one of the most beautiful destinations we have on offer in Western Australia, people are there to actually service us.

More importantly, I think we have to acknowledge the environment. Ad hoc development is occurring and we do not know how many people live in Coral Bay. The member for Bassendean should come and have a look for himself.

Mr D.J. Kelly: I have been there. I have been to Dianella, too.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: He is a typical city politician who knows nothing about regional Western Australia.

The SPEAKER: Members, through the Chair, please.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Members opposite would not know about regional Western Australia, but particularly Coral Bay. We need action now to prevent —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The opposition will never win seats in regional WA, particularly in the north west. Members opposite do not understand the need for a high-end committee led by the Deputy Premier to resolve these issues and to make sure that people who live in Coral Bay have appropriate housing and health services, and that their kids do not have to travel 300 kilometres on a bus to go to school in Exmouth. I have said many times in this house that something needs to happen. Coral Bay needs to be designated as a town site. This committee needs the leadership of the Deputy Premier, who knows Coral Bay and what needs to happen right across portfolios. Members should also be aware of the agreement with the local traditional owners about building houses in Coral Bay, and the water and power services that were put in a few years ago. A boat ramp was built under the former Labor government by a previous planning minister, which has caused huge environmental problems in Coral Bay because the cheapest possible option was chosen. It did not provide a proper causeway that would allow water to flow underneath; instead, it has rocks and rubbish is thrown underneath it. If members opposite want to talk about the government's record for doing things in regional

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Western Australia, they should think about the \$17.5 million royalties for regions investment to provide a level of accommodation —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: This government spent \$17.5 million to provide 70 accommodation units for people who work in Coral Bay to ease pressure on people who own businesses in Coral Bay. The government funded the provision of fully furnished units that will revert to the ownership of the Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation, the traditional owners. That is a great outcome for not only the traditional owners of the area, but also those people who will be fortunate enough to get the accommodation. I do not care what political persuasion people are, there is a problem in Coral Bay. I am not saying that we do not need people going to Coral Bay; I am saying that people live in Coral Bay and we do not need to increase the population. We need to cater for the population who live and work there currently to ensure a safe and appropriate environment for them. We need to protect the environment by making sure there is no more ad hoc development, such as is occurring at the moment. Coral Bay needs proper road infrastructure. We need a compliance audit to make sure that Coral Bay is maintained as a premier destination and it needs to keep pace with other developments occurring across this state. More importantly, we need to recognise Coral Bay as a proper town so that the people of Coral Bay have a chance to live a normal life and their kids have the opportunity to go to school.

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [3.53 pm]: I would like to speak briefly on the motion, as the Abrolhos Islands are part of my electorate. I decided earlier this year that this was one issue that I wanted to put on the table, because people have been talking about developing the tourism industry on the Abrolhos for a long time, but nothing has happened. The Abrolhos has the potential to provide a significant industry for Geraldton. I can remember that when I served on the advisory committee to what was then the Geraldton Mid-West Development Authority in the early 1990s, we did a study on tourism in the Abrolhos. When I thought about this issue earlier this year, I realised that nothing had been done since then. I am very happy that the government has listened to me and included the Abrolhos in this study.

I doubt whether many members have visited the Abrolhos Islands. It is an interesting region. The islands lie in a chain along the coast stretching a bit over 100 kilometres, with 122 islands, some 80 kilometres west of Geraldton. It is the southernmost true coral reef in the Indian Ocean. The islands lie in the path of the Leeuwin current, so they have a temperate climate. The islands are home to about 100 species of birds and two species of indigenous mammal. There are 389 species of fish, about two-thirds of which are tropical, and a breeding population of Australian sea lions. The islands were the site of the *Batavia* wreck in 1629 and 110 of the survivors were murdered in a mutiny. Of course, the significance of this is that the first European structures in Australia were built on the Abrolhos Islands. Another significant wreck was the *Zeewijk*. The survivors of the *Zeewijk* shipwreck built the first ocean-going vessel in Australia.

Mr D.A. Templeman: This is a history lesson.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Shut up and you might learn!

The fishing industry is part of the history of the Abrolhos and under the previous industry structure, the fishing season started on 15 March, when a large number of people moved to the islands. Since we have gone to a quota-based fishery, a lot fewer fishermen move to the islands and a lot fewer people are employed in the crayfishing industry and in the factories in Geraldton. I can see the potential for the tourism industry to develop in Geraldton with a couple of hundred jobs. The fishing industry is now more sustainable but offers fewer employment opportunities. Also, a number of pearling and aquaculture industries are being conducted at the islands.

A lot of people in Geraldton have never visited the Abrolhos Islands and it would be a good thing for them to be able to visit. A local land developer has been trying to develop a resort on the islands for about eight years or longer. His reward for that has been a mountain of red and green tape, and he is still no closer to getting there.

I am particularly pleased that the Deputy Premier will chair the Coastal Towns and Settlements Cabinet Subcommittee. He has a strong interest in fisheries and tourism, and he has worked in Geraldton and he knows its people. Giving this job to the Deputy Premier underlines the importance of the committee. I would rate the minister as the best Minister for Health that Western Australia has ever had. This is in direct contrast to the shambles that he inherited from the former Labor government.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [3.56 pm]: That was probably the worst defence of a minister I have ever heard in this place. I thank the member for Geraldton for lending me the *Lonely Planet* guide to the Abrolhos Islands. With all that expertise, the member for Geraldton should be on the Coastal Towns and Settlements Cabinet Subcommittee—in fact, he should chair the committee. The member for North West Central stood up and

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basically said that he had delivered nothing for his electorate in the past six years. As a member of the Liberal–National government, the member for North West Central has done nothing for Coral Bay for the past six years.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to hear any interjections.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for North West Central said that he had delivered nothing for the people of Coral Bay for the past six years and the Minister for Tourism stood up and said that she could not chair that committee, but she could not explain why. Why can the Minister for Tourism not chair this committee? She is not good enough, apparently. The defence offered by the Minister for Health to the argument from the opposition that his workload was too great to chair the committee was, “I’m going to be the chair of the committee but I’m not going to do any work anyway.” That sounds familiar, does it not, Minister for Health? The Minister for Health defended his appointment as chair of such an important committee by saying that he was not going to do any work anyway and that others would do the work. Does that not sound familiar?

In the past few weeks, time and again we have asked questions of the Minister for Health about the management of the new hospitals in Western Australia. We all know about Fiona Stanley Hospital and the millions of taxpayer dollars that are going to Serco to run an empty hospital. Serco is conducting tours and people are paying to tour the empty hospital. The minister did not know anything about that. Today the opposition asked the Minister for Health about the budget for Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. We are halfway through June, and there will always be issues relating to hospital budgets, but what did the minister say today? He said that he had not been briefed about the PMH budget since the budget process. That was about eight weeks ago. The minister has not been briefed about the budget situation of PMH for eight weeks.

I want to talk briefly about Midland hospital. Time and again the Minister for Health tried to give some justification. He stated in this place that there would be a \$1.5 billion saving compared with the competitor. He came in the next day —

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Health, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The next day, the minister came in and said, “No, that was a \$1.5 billion saving to the public sector comparator” and there will be all this —

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Health!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There will be \$1.5 billion extra to fund these other services. Again, that completely contradicted what the minister had previously said. He has never used the figure of \$1.5 billion. I have gone through the documents—there is no figure of \$1.5 billion. The Minister for Health’s media release referred to \$1.3 billion. That is a \$200 million mistake, which the minister has had a chance to correct but he has never corrected it. The key issue in relation to the public sector comparator is that that \$1.5 billion, or \$1.3 billion, is not a cash saving. There will be this theoretical risk allocation that the minister has not been able to describe in this place. We asked the Treasurer today to actually confirm the \$1.5 billion figure.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

The SPEAKER: Premier, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I asked the Treasurer today to confirm the \$1.5 billion figure. If the Treasurer of the state heard the health minister stand last week and say, “We have saved \$1.5 billion”—a significant amount of money—one would think he might go and check it. One would think he might try to get across the issue. That is a big saving to talk about if it cannot be justified. The opposition has asked again and again for the government to outline those savings. What is publicly available is not enough to justify what has been said in this place. The Minister for Health has been loose with the truth on the hospital transitions. He does not inform himself about what is happening in these hospitals and now he has been appointed to chair the Coastal Towns and Settlements Cabinet Subcommittee! Seriously, this is a government that holds the people of Western Australia in contempt. It also holds the health workforce in contempt. The workforce knows there are issues out there. The people in the health workforce know there are transition issues. The minister laughs in their face. The government says, “We are creating a new committee. We have nobody else who can chair it, but because we stripped him of tourism, we will give him this committee to chair.” The minister has the training and workforce development portfolio. Unemployment is up —

The SPEAKER: Time, member!

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 17 June 2014]
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Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Rita Saffioti

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (19)

Dr A.D. Buti
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J. Farrer
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr W.J. Johnston

Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr M.P. Murray

Mr P. Papalia
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms M.M. Quirk
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti

Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr P.B. Watson
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (35)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr T.R. Buswell
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Mr V.A. Catania
Mr M.J. Cowper

Ms M.J. Davies
Mr J.H.D. Day
Ms W.M. Duncan
Ms E. Evangel
Mr J.M. Francis
Mrs G.J. Godfrey
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Mr C.D. Hatton

Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr R.F. Johnson
Mr S.K. L'Estrange
Mr R.S. Love
Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr J.E. McGrath
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Mr N.W. Morton

Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr J. Norberger
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Pairs

Ms L.L. Baker
Mr B.S. Wyatt

Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr P.T. Miles

Question thus negatived.