

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) RECURRENT 2012–13 BILL 2012

Third Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

The SPEAKER: Just before you resume your speech, member for Gosnells, if people are going to stay in this place, presumably because they are interested in the bill that is currently in front of us, as always, they are welcome. If they have other business they wish to conduct, could they please take it outside of here.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [2.46 pm]: I had been highlighting the inconsistencies in the former Treasurer's dealings with non-government organisations that were commissioned to deliver programs relating to energy efficiency and the disgraceful way in which an organisation that was actually the recipient of only \$1.5 million was presented as an organisation that had received \$52 million and how the good works that that organisation had done were belittled by the former Treasurer. I believe that the former Treasurer was given bad advice. I think that indicates that we have a serious level of dysfunction in our Treasury. I am fearful that will continue when we know that we have an interim Treasurer and a soon-to-be-appointed Treasurer. We have a high level of dysfunction in one of the most important portfolios in the state government.

Other issues that arose during the estimates process and analysis of the state budget included matters around the prioritisation of funding for electronic school zone signs. Another area of priority that was not dealt with properly was around the assessment of priority housing for people. We have two areas here that are critical to people in my electorate. I know that the residents of the Gosnells electorate are constantly concerned by dangers on roads, especially when it relates to children who are crossing busy roads getting to school. They want to see what the prioritisation process is for the rollout of the electronic school zone signs. That is a day-to-day issue that people are desperate to receive answers for. They want to know when their school is going to get these electronic school zone signs. I had asked the Minister for Police, who explained to me that this was an operational matter and that I should put my questions to the Minister for Transport, who has responsibility for the Commissioner of Main Roads and his delivery of the money raised through the road trauma trust fund. I was not able to get a decent answer. That was a very disappointing aspect of this whole budget process for me and for constituents in the Gosnells electorate.

Likewise, the determination of priority housing and public housing is of major concern for people in my electorate. They are very generous souls in the Gosnells electorate, so much so that I have constituents who will go to all sorts of lengths to provide accommodation for people who are on the priority housing list but have not been given the treatment or the respect that they deserve by the housing system.

I had a meeting on the weekend with constituents who had almost given up on using the priority housing system. A sister had just come out of hospital and was in need of an oxygen supply tank, and is having to move from relative to relative as she does not want to wear out her welcome. She tries to stay just a couple of weeks at a time. Meanwhile, she has to go through the process of applying for priority housing—a Department of Housing property. As she said on Sunday, she does not want a mansion; she just wants a simple one-bedroom unit. She is desperate for that and she deserves it. She has serious health concerns and her doctors have told her that the only way she can continue the treatment and get benefit from it is by having a place of her own, yet this person is intimidated by the priority housing system; she is fearful of the interview process. This shows that that priority housing system is not working effectively for constituents in my electorate. It is a system that is making people so scared that they dare not enter the system. We have this notional figure that about 50 000 people are waiting for priority housing at the moment. I fear that that figure is much higher because there is so much bureaucracy around the current system. I do not mean bureaucracy in the sense of tedious red tape and paperwork; I mean bureaucracy that is intimidating. It is bureaucracy that is designed to scare people off so that they cannot get their name on the priority housing list.

My concern is that we have many more than 50 000 people who are in need of housing, and who are currently couch surfing and moving from relative to relative. Those people deserve much better treatment than they are presently getting out of our public housing system. I know that it will cost the state a great amount to rectify this problem; there is no question about it. Finding adequate public housing will be an expensive exercise, but in a state as rich as Western Australia where people and organisations are making such massive profits out of our resources—we only have to think of BHP Billiton with a \$23 billion profit last year—those resource companies can certainly pay a lot more back to the state. I know the question is often asked about our position on federal government policies. I fully support the mineral resource rent tax. I fully support carbon pricing and I know that the Premier did, and I know about his support for the emissions trading scheme. I saw his support for emissions trading.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Do you support the carbon tax?

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Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I support a carbon tax as a phase in to an emissions trading scheme—the emissions trading scheme that the Premier always supported. He supported it when it was put forward by Malcolm Turnbull, and I am sure he still supports it deep down. I believe that the pricing of carbon is essential to our state's future.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [2.54 pm]: Just to ensure that the Premier calms down, I will also say that I support the carbon tax. The federal government's carbon tax, as mentioned by the member for Forrestfield, has a compensation package. There is no compensation package for the 63 per cent increase in utility charges that the Premier has imposed on the citizens of Western Australia. This Premier is so gutless. He supported an emissions trading scheme years ago. He should not come into this house now and say that he opposes a carbon tax because it is politically favourable for him to do so when we know—it is on record—that he supports an ETS, and the carbon tax is part of the ETS structure. There is a compensation package with the carbon tax. There is no compensation for his 62 per cent increase in utility charges.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We know now that the member for Armadale backs the carbon tax and we will tell all his constituents when they get their nine per cent power price rise. Well done, member!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Fine, and what will they get from the Premier—a 62.5 or 63 per cent increase over three years? That is what they will get from the Premier.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Does the member support a carbon tax?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I would like to tell my —

Mr C.J. Barnett: He is too scared and too frightened.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is becoming intolerable that the Premier cannot behave himself in the chamber. I have made the point in this chamber before that if the Premier had any guts, he would call on a debate on these issues. If the Premier was a believer in any of the things that he yells across the chamber, he would facilitate a debate in this chamber, but inane and constantly ridiculous interjection by the Premier should not be allowed.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Cannington.

Debate Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: The Premier is gutless. He is running away. He knows that with his former Treasurer deserting him, he is under immense pressure. His behaviour in the past 24 hours in this house has been absolutely disgraceful. He cannot talk about the poor record of his government; all he can talk about is Canberra. The Premier was voted in as the Premier of Western Australia. He needs to attend to state government and deal with state issues, not federal issues.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I do.

Dr A.D. BUTI: He goes on about the poll issue. No-one on this side of Parliament has ever talked about poll taxes.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Neither have I.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I mean toll taxes. In question time, why does the Premier talk about “we”? He said, “We were supporting a federal government discussion paper” and it was not a policy paper. The Premier is a joke at the moment. He cannot take the pressure. He has now become the Treasurer. He cries because the member for Bateman has deserted him, and we will get on to that in a minute.

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The Premier can tell my constituents that I support the carbon tax; I am very happy about that and have no problem with that at all. I will also tell my constituents, who live in the suburbs, that all the Premier is interested in is the CBD. He has no interest in anything south of the Narrows Bridge or the Swan River; all he is interested in is his palace and his stadium.

In estimates two weeks ago, the Minister for Sport and Recreation had no idea of the cost of the stadium or the footbridge. The Premier stated yesterday that he did not know what it would cost. He has allowed \$300 million for transport infrastructure related to the stadium, but in that \$300 million he cannot tell us how much the footbridge will cost, which he lauded as a major initiative on his government's watch. At every opportunity, he has been unable—as has the Minister for Sport and Recreation—to specify the breakdown of that \$300 million for transport infrastructure for the stadium.

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In estimates the Minister for Sport and Recreation was unable to tell us what will happen if there is a major environmental issue as a result of the stadium being built. What happens if we find asbestos on the site? Where is the Premier going to transport it to? Will he deposit it in the electorate of Cottesloe? That is unlikely. Does anyone here want to put up their hand for it? Will the member for Wanneroo take asbestos in his electorate?

Mr P.T. Miles: We do not have a landfill site.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Where is it going to go? I can assure members that the history of industry around Burswood shows that there is a high chance that asbestos will be found.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Does the member think that the golfers are in danger playing golf on that course, as they have been doing for 20 years?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We are talking about a stadium. What a stupid question from the Premier. We are talking about digging the foundations for a stadium to hold 60 000 people, not for a little hole for a golf course.

In another estimates hearing I asked the former Attorney General about a new courthouse in Armadale. To the credit of the former Attorney General, he admitted that Armadale does require a new courthouse and said that it was a major priority in his portfolio. He also stated that he would take this matter through to the next budget process. He made that statement less than two weeks ago. I would be interested to know whether, when he made the statement in estimates that he would be taking to the next budget process the possibility of a new courthouse in Armadale, he had already made his decision that he would not be around to take that priority project through the budget process. The former Treasurer and Attorney General surely is not the favourite man of the Premier because the Premier's behaviour in the last 24 hours has been absolutely deplorable. He is under immense pressure. He cannot cope with being Premier, let alone being Premier and Treasurer. He does not really know what he will do about the Attorney General's portfolio.

A few weeks ago the former Treasurer argued that if unemployed people from the eastern states were not prepared to come to WA, they should have their unemployment benefits reduced. That is an interesting statement. Does the Premier actually agree with the former Treasurer's pronouncement that the unemployment benefits of people from the eastern states who do not come to WA should be reduced?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, I don't, but I think that people who are unemployed should have a greater responsibility to seek employment where it is available.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The former Treasurer's position is interesting. One must wonder whether he received legal advice on that proposition.

Mr C.J. Barnett: He wouldn't have gone to you for it.

Dr A.D. BUTI: What did the Premier say? I did not quite hear.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I was talking to my friend over here. I wasn't talking to you.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It would be interesting to know whether he received legal advice regarding that proposition and I wonder whether he will take that to Tony Abbott if the former Treasurer is successful in becoming the next federal member for Pearce. I wonder whether it will become federal coalition government policy to reduce unemployment benefits if people are not prepared to come to Western Australia. Under the argument that the Premier keeps making every day, if it is a federal policy, it must mean it is also a state policy. Get it now, Premier: federal Labor policy is not state Labor policy; we are not directed by Julia Gillard or any other federal minister.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, you are.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Give us proof. Where is the proof, Premier?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I have little chats to Julia. I had a chat to her yesterday.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am sure that the Premier has chats with Julia and that the Prime Minister of Australia tells the Premier of WA that she directs our party! What an absolute joke. If the Premier is stating that as a truth, he is misleading Parliament. Let it go down on the record that the Premier has stated that Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister of Australia, has told him that she directs how the Western Australian state Parliamentary Labor Party should behave and what policies it is to implement. You have misled Parliament.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I didn't say that at all.

Dr A.D. BUTI: What are you saying then?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Sit down and get your act together.

Dr A.D. BUTI: What are you saying? Where is your proof? You said that you had proof —

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Mr C.J. Barnett: I did not at all.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You said you had proof —
Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! I have given the call to the member for Armadale. He is the person I expect to hear from in this place. I do not want any further conversations across the chamber between members about whatever topics they want to discuss.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The Premier has stated here today that we take directions from the federal Labor government. When I asked the Premier where his proof was, he said that he had talks with Julia Gillard and she told him as much. Now the Premier is denying that. Where is the Premier's proof? He does not have proof. He is now denying the proof that he said he had a minute ago. He has misled the house. He has no proof. He is under immense pressure because the former Treasurer and Attorney General has left the government and the Premier cannot handle it. All the Premier can do is get up and criticise the federal government and try to tell us that we are being directed by the federal government. There is no proof of that because it is not true. It is not true and the Premier knows it is not true.

Getting back to the former Treasurer's proposition that the unemployment benefits of people in the eastern states should be cut if they are not prepared to come to Western Australia, I would like to consider whether it is constitutional—we will not go into that now—under section 99 of the Constitution. Arguably, it may pass the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, but what a ridiculous policy it is. People often have to stay in certain states for personal and family reasons. Under the policy advocated by the former Treasurer, Western Australian residents who had to move to the eastern states for personal or private reasons would also have their unemployment benefits reduced. He is prepared to punish the citizens of Western Australia. We know that the Premier does not agree with that policy. At least that is one good thing he has said today.

I move on to the issue of the Premier's priorities. The Premier said that he would tell all my constituents that I support the carbon tax. Go ahead, Premier. If he wants to pay for an ad in the local paper, go and do it; I do not mind. We will also tell our constituents how the Premier has neglected the suburbs. He has no interest in the suburbs. He is a typical western suburbs-type person who is interested only in the CBD and who looks down on people who live in the suburbs and anyone who does not live within walking distance of the CBD or the western corridor.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You're a snob!

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am a snob who lives in Armadale! The Premier just has his priorities wrong. All he is interested in is the CBD. Where is the money for the new courthouse that we are dying for in Armadale that even the former Attorney General said is of the highest priority? The Premier has no interest in it at all. Within three weeks of being elected to this house, the Premier threatened—as if I would be trembling because the Premier would put an extra focus on Armadale—that he would visit Armadale a lot over the next year. How many times did the Premier go to Armadale last year?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I was at Armadale recently.

Dr A.D. BUTI: How many times did the Premier come to Armadale in his official capacity? Just two or three times if he is lucky. He also has been involved in opening things in my electorate with his ministers without inviting the local member. That is poor form. I did go to one function that the Premier attended in Armadale about two years ago. That was the child advocacy centre, which, as the Premier knows, is a very prominent addition to my electorate. The Premier can tell my constituents that I support the carbon tax and I will tell them day in and day out until the next election what the Premier thinks about Armadale. He has no interest in the place.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What do I think of Armadale?

Dr A.D. BUTI: As the Premier said, we can be judged by our actions, and the Premier's actions for Armadale have been zilch. All he has done for Armadale is increase utility charges by 63 per cent. That is what the Premier has done for Armadale.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You're not up to parliamentary debate. The weakest form of debate is to assert that someone has said something that they haven't.

Dr A.D. BUTI: What a classic—being told that by the Premier! He is the champion of it. Maybe I am learning from him. Earlier today the Premier talked to the member for Girrawheen about actions. The Premier tried to imply that by her actions she did not care.

Mr C.J. Barnett: She failed to act on the police transfers.

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Dr A.D. BUTI: The Premier has failed to act regarding the bushfire victims at Kelmscott. The Premier said that the victims of the Toodyay and Margaret River fires have been given ex gratia payments, not compensation. If they are ex gratia payments and not compensation, why are the victims of the Kelmscott fires not receiving the same ex gratia payment? They have suffered just as much. Why should they not receive up to \$190 000?

Mr C.J. Barnett: When have you come to represent their views to me?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I have written to the Premier a number of times. I am not actually the local member. Does the Premier understand that?

Mr C.J. Barnett: You haven't come to see me personally.

Dr A.D. BUTI: So now the only way to represent constituents is if we have personally visited the Premier! Unless we have visited the Premier, we cannot represent our constituents. The Premier is an absolute joke!

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [3.10 pm]: I am very keen to make a contribution to the third reading debate on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2012–13 Bill 2012. I begin by saying that during the one-week period of the estimates debate, a number of interesting observations were made that I think need to be highlighted again. One of those observations is the inability of ministers to provide details about the efficiency dividend. Indeed, most, if not all, of the ministers were asked during the estimates process to provide those details. However, the only portfolio area in which it was inadvertently outlined that some work had been done to identify where a three per cent efficiency dividend might be delivered was the portfolio of a minister in the other place—the Minister for Child Protection; Community Services. While not at all seeking to attack or denigrate the Director General of the Department for Child Protection, Mr Murphy, it was very interesting that, as I think was his role, he had already alerted his staff to areas that might have to be cut from child protection to ensure that the directive by the then Treasurer and this Premier was delivered. I think Mr Murphy conducted himself very well in estimates, because he had already been looking at his department's budget and had started to identify areas. It was very interesting that very few other ministers were able to indicate where they expected the efficiency dividend to be delivered. Certainly the opposition had every right to ask that question to ascertain which programs or services from each of the ministerial portfolios faced potential cuts.

One of the things that was very telling, and that has underpinned the opposition's ongoing campaign on behalf of Western Australians, particularly people on fixed incomes, people on government benefits, people on pensions and people whose budgets are already stretched, was the comments of the Energy Ombudsman, who was able to divulge that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of complaints to his office. These complaints relate predominantly to the astronomical price of electricity under this government—the 62 per cent or 63 per cent increase in the price of electricity—which, as we all know, has, and is continuing to, hurt people absolutely. That was confirmed by the Energy Ombudsman. There are also a number of other indicators that confirm this. They include the fact that my area, the Peel, has the highest number of people who are applying for assistance under the hardship utility grant scheme, which provides financial support for people who are having difficulty paying their utility bills. The Energy Ombudsman also highlighted the fact that since this government had come to office, the number of complaints about Synergy to the Energy Ombudsman—in other words, the number of requests for investigations—had increased by some 171 per cent in the period 2008–09 to 2009–10, and by 75 per cent in the period 2009–10 to 2010–11; and that the number of complaints overall had increased by a staggering 375 per cent. When questioned, the Energy Ombudsman indicated that those complaints were very much related to the cost-of-living increases in the energy area. That was a very telling statistic that came out of the estimates process.

What I also thought was very interesting in the whole estimates process was the incapacity of ministers quite often to answer questions that I thought were very pertinent. During one of the committees that I was involved in, I asked the Minister for Regional Development what I thought were relevant and appropriate questions about royalties for regions funding to the Peel. I highlighted to the minister, as I have in this place on a number of occasions, that the Peel region continues to make the third highest contribution of royalties to the state. I also highlighted to the minister that the Peel region, along with the south west region, continues to be the fastest growing region of the state. The population of the Peel, current and projected, is made up of a mixed economic demographic. That is particularly because the Peel has a higher than average proportion of people who are living on low or fixed incomes. That is only natural, because we know that the Peel, and particularly Mandurah, as the city centre of the Peel region, has always been an attractive place for retirees. Certainly in the current economic climate, the large number of people in my electorate who rely on self-funded retirement packages or plans are now very much feeling the impact of the global and national pressures on their income, because it is linked to their superannuation. There are a number of economic indicators that show that the population of the Peel faces a number of challenges. Those challenges include the economic capacity to make ends meet. However, despite the fact that I highlighted to the minister that the number of HUGS funding applications from the region is the

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highest in the state, despite the fact that I highlighted to the minister that Mandurah, and indeed other areas of the Peel region, has had the highest number of bank foreclosures in the state in the last six to 12 months, and despite the fact that I highlighted to the minister the importance of small business in the region and the fact that small businesses, particularly in the retail sector and allied service areas, are also feeling the pinch, the minister's response to me was simply, "I am happy with how the royalties for regions funding is being divvied up." That was his response. I do not accept that, and if I get angry and stroppy with the minister, then it is because I want him to understand that I will have to keep reminding him of the importance of the Peel to the state's economy, and of the very clear fact that the Peel region has not received anywhere near its fair share of the royalties for regions funding programs.

I have highlighted in this place and I highlighted in estimates last year that the Peel region received only about \$9 million in 2010–11 from that \$900 million capacity spend. Last year I think about two per cent of royalties for regions funds came back to Peel in royalties for regions projects. I have not asked for even 20 per cent or 30 per cent; all I have asked is that this minister and this government recognise the key challenges that the Peel region faces, and if the royalties for regions scheme is developed, to return royalties to those regions that generate the royalties as part of the criteria. Then at least Peel would get its fair share and be recognised for its contribution to the royalty coffers of the state. I do not believe that has happened under this government, and I do not believe it has happened at all under this minister. I have raised in this place before my argument about the identity of the region and the fact that the Premier, in answer to questions, has made his view plain that he regards Mandurah, the regional city, as part of the metropolitan area. I have always disputed that and I will continue to dispute that. The Premier needs to understand, indeed all members of this place need to understand, that the people of my electorate, and the people in my city in particular, have a view about their identity. It is a view that they hold very strongly. It is a view that is held by local government and by the local government authorities of Peel; that is, we are a region in our own right and the regional city within that region is Mandurah. I will continue in this place to put forward that argument, and I will continue to argue that the royalties for regions funding has to be more equitable, particularly in relation to need and population.

The Peel and the south west regions—I am sure the member for Collie–Preston also has a view on royalties for regions funding to the south west—are still the fastest growing regions. Peel will be expected to take a significant proportion of the population growth of Western Australia over the next 20 years; therefore, it is through the royalties for regions program and ongoing government-funded departments and portfolio areas that the Peel should be demanding and receiving its rightful share. I do not denigrate the Pilbara or the Kimberley, or even the midwest and the goldfields. However, a comparison of the statistics on population and some statistics on need indicates that the Peel region rates very highly in the area of need. This government is bypassing or overlooking that, and I believe it needs to be rectified.

Finally, I want to mention the police portfolio and to say this very clearly: the hub system is failing. Policing in Mandurah, as a distinct part of the Peel policing district, was changed through this government and we were sucked up into what is now known as the south metropolitan hub. Every day now I get calls and I talk to people about the increased number of burglaries and safety concerns in the Mandurah–Murray area and wider Peel areas. We need our police district returned to us, and it needs to be reconstituted as the Peel police district and resourced appropriately. It is not resourced appropriately under this government, and that also needs to change. We simply need more policemen and policewomen in the Peel working through the stations of the Peel region to make sure that policing is delivered where it is needed in the growth areas that we know exist and to address the hot spots that we know exist there too. That is not happening at the moment. This Minister for Police has overseen a failed process.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [3.24 pm]: I, too, would like to make some comments about the estimates that were put up as the so-called budget two weeks ago. They are certainly disappointing from my electorate's point of view. The member for Mandurah talked about one of the issues—that is, the policing areas and the hub system. A huge amount of confusion as well as dissent and uncertainty is caused in the community when a 25-minute response time is considered acceptable for people to wait for a policeman to attend an incident. One lady in Capel, who is an ambulance officer and found herself surrounded by people, did not think it was acceptable that she had to wait an hour for a response from police. That was just terrible.

My main point of contention is the lack of money in the budget for the so-called gas pipeline. This is still being touted by the Premier as something that will happen, yet there is no money in the budget for it. What a two-faced, double-handed, double-sided trick he has played over the people of Collie! He was out there working along with Minister Grylls, the Minister for Regional Development, offering \$10 million to Grange Resources to assist it to put in a gas pipeline from Bunbury to Albany. He then tried to turn up in Collie but we turned the weather on so that his plane could not land in Collie! He was not welcome to turn up to hand out \$20 million worth of royalties for regions!

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Mr C.J. Barnett: So you are saying I'm not welcome in Collie!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: We did not want the Premier in our town

Mr C.J. Barnett: You don't want me there!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The real issue is that in 2000 the Premier put out a paper saying that the generation of energy in WA should be only by gas. He went forward and tried to demolish, dismantle and pull apart the coal industry in Collie. He tried very hard to do that. He did it very well to some degree, while at the same time offering trinkets to the people of Collie and offering a mining company \$20 million to go to gas when the cheapest and most obvious electricity there came from coal-fired power. I am sure the Premier would stand in this place and say that the cheapest power in WA by a street is still coal-fired. It is cheaper not only by a third, but also by more than a third than any other power there. It is a good thing to see the Premier nodding. However, will he give commendations to the people of Collie for the workplace changes they made when they went from working seven-hour shifts to working eight, nine, 10 and 12 hours a day, seven days a week to try to bring down costs in the coal industry? No, he went out and tried to white-ant the industry again by standing out there and telling Grange Resources that it should be using gas instead of coal. He was very adamant in that. In a report in *The West Australian* of 23 May 2012 headed "Grange wins fight over gas pipeline" by Peter Kerr, the Premier is quoted as saying —

"Whilst the State would prefer Grange to be making use of a gas pipeline and gas-fired electricity" ...

The Premier accepted the decision because of the cheapness of coal. Is that not a double-handed play against the people of Collie? Why not come out and say at face value, "You're doing a good job" and not subsidise another company to white-ant? It really was white-anting. One of the lowest things the Premier could do was white-ant the coal industry that works very hard. The Premier was not happy when one of the coal companies was sold. He certainly jumped up and down then because he thought power production may cease and things may happen that would really pull this state apart. We can remember what happened when the Varanus Island blow-out occurred up north. Who carried the state then with electricity? It was the Collie coalfields. It is dangerous to move totally to gas instead of having a balanced fuel policy. I am not saying by any means that we should have all coal-fired stations—never would I say that. We must have renewables and we must have gas, but to try to wipe out the coal industry in the way that the Premier and Brendon Grylls have done is shameful. I was surprised that the Premier tried to show his face in the town of Collie a week ago—I am very surprised about that. I will go further than the coal industry to the \$30 million which had been allocated for a desalination plant but which is no longer in the budget. There is only \$4 million to help restore the river and to do some salt mitigation work, but there is no money for a desalination plant, as was recommended over that period of time. The trial that was held down there took 20 000 tonnes of salt out of Wellington Dam, yet the Premier will not follow through on the desalination plant. Why? There is only one reason. It is the word "Collie". If the desalination plant had been the Premier's idea and if it was to be somewhere else, the Premier would have said that it is a very good project. It is a very good project, Premier, and it should be funded. Not only has the Premier taken out the \$30 million, which was \$15 million each from the state and federal governments, it is my understanding that he has sent back \$15 million to the federal government. If he has not, he has duped it as well, because that is \$15 million that should not have gone into the budget estimates because it is federal money. I do not know where it has gone. I certainly cannot find it in the budget papers. I would like to hear an explanation for where that money is. That money has been taken out. The people of Collie thought they finally had a solution for the river, which is not so much a river anymore as a drain. They have planted trees in the back area and stopped some of the flow. There is a trickle of water coming through the town. I understand that there is \$700 000 in the royalties for regions program for the Collie River restoration program, but there is no money to improve the water quality. That really needs to be looked at, otherwise we will end up like many other states and countries because we will have a river that cannot be used because it is little more than a drain. We will not be able to swim or fish in it, both of which can be done now. It will not even be able to be used for industrial water unless it is desalinated at the other end, because the salinity level would be too high. I am not sure the Premier understands that. Does he want to understand it? I do not think so.

To move on to some of the other areas that will be impacted by the budget, I turn to the government's high fees and charges. I will not dwell on them for too long, other than to say that every day people come to my office and tell me that they are sliding down the wall and that they cannot afford to stay in private housing because the little bit of money they had for rent is now being used on extra fees and charges. They are trying to get a state house because they are slightly cheaper. In fact, because of the construction work in Collie, they are lot cheaper than the average private house. I am concerned about the impact that is having on the average person in the street. It is my rule of thumb, having been in the political game for quite some time, that whereas a family with two children, a mortgage and a car used to be able to survive on a single income of \$40 000, now that same family can no longer survive on \$50 000. People are sliding down the wall and choking. Yes, the Premier can tell me

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about the mining boom. Many of my constituents are working because of the mining boom. But a fair percentage are not and they are really finding it hard because fees and charges are knocking them over. Some are selling their three-bedroom or one-bedroom fibro homes because even though they bought them for \$200 000—not \$400 000, people—they are finding them very difficult to maintain and to keep up payments while, at the same time, trying to keep their kids at school, and that is because of this miserable budget and this miserable government that we have had for the past four years. No-one has seen anything like it. We have nearly another year of this government to go. We will be going into the fifth year of this government, which is really hurting people. The longer we have this government, the worse things become.

I am concerned that the Premier is in the pocket of Woodside. I am not so sure, but everything is pointing towards gas, gas and gas. He is not even defending himself for coming out and saying that that is the way he wants to go. His papers all point that way; cabinet decisions point that way. No-one stands up for the community down there, which really pulls its weight within the Western Australian community. The onus is totally on this community, and the Premier would have to say, “Very much so.”

Mr C.J. Barnett: The carbon tax is directed at coal. Do you stand against the carbon tax?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: We are not frightened of the carbon tax, because we know that we can survive with the changes that are being made. The tax that I do support is the mining tax. If the Premier ever comes to Collie to look around, and it may be that he comes in disguise, he will see what the mining companies have put back into our town—stuff all! Absolutely nothing has been put into the town for over 100 years. Everything has come from the pockets of ratepayers. From time to time the mining companies chuck a trinket out to get a little road done. They put up a big sign, but the input of money is poor. I refer not only to the mining and coalmining industries, but also to Worsley. It is giving people incentives to move to the coast. Worsley has moved its jobs down there and now it has decided to move people out of Collie. The government is silent on that. I am certainly not going to be silent on that. It is great to see the Premier pulling out a booklet, a great booklet —

Mr C.J. Barnett: I think it is very good.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: That is right. I put it on his desk during the break so that he would know where Collie is. It is quite obvious that the Premier cannot find it and that he does not know what it looks like. Even on that day the Premier could have landed in Bunbury and driven up. But he did not; he took the cheap option and went back to Perth. I heard him doing a couple of laps over the town. It was not good enough to land in Bunbury and drive up, because he was scared that someone might have mugged him on the 30 kilometres of road to Collie. His body language —

Mr C.J. Barnett: According to you, I am not welcome to go to Collie. You just implied that I wasn't welcome.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: How many times has the Premier been there in the past 10 years? Once.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Once.

Mr C.J. Barnett: More than that.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The last time he was there he had a fight with a very good Liberal lady, Rosanne Pimm, who was the shire president. That was a long time ago. He did a dummy spit and then got up and stormed out the door saying that he governed for all of Western Australia, not just Collie. He would not listen to the arguments that were put to him. I was in that room. I saw him there. That is the attitude he has carried all the way through.

Mr C.J. Barnett: As energy minister, I did the coal-fired power station, something you and Gallop could not do.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The Labor government built two coal-fired power stations; that is, Bluewaters phases 1 and 2. Maybe the Premier has forgotten that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No. What state are they in right now?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Look at the other half a job that was done. It is the same as most other things. It is the same as the stadium—the government has done half a job. We do not know whether it will have swings in the background, paddle pools or an oval in the middle. Yes, the Premier can walk out of the chamber—the truth always hurts! That is really good. The Premier will be on the video walking out of the chamber. I will certainly tell my community how he walked out on Collie again—not once, but twice.

Now that the Premier has gone I will move onto something else. The federal government announced funding to upgrade the pathology unit at Collie Hospital. I found out that the state government has taken away the car that was used to do off-site pathology testing. People who need pathology testing now have to get a taxi. People can ring for a pathology appointment, but if there is no taxi, they have to wait. I am talking about people who have serious complaints—people who need dialysis—and who need the tests but cannot leave their houses. The

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government has taken away the car that was used and now they have to get a taxi. If that is where this government is headed, I have grave doubts about whether it will get its so-called second term, which it believes is its right. Some things have come to a head this week, because the Treasurer walked out on the Premier. It does not matter what spin is put on it, he got up and left. He has had enough. I think a bit of that is because the Treasurer was not running the budget; rather, the Minister for Regional Development is running the budget. Certainly the billion dollars that he was pulling out frustrated the former Treasurer. The Labor Party supports royalties for regions, but it will have a better approach. It will be far more transparent, and not loaded towards the small communities in the wheatbelt that are now living like kings—gold paving! Go and look at the old picture theatre in Merredin. There has been \$1.5 million spent on that, while we have other areas in health that have not been looked after. It is a great restoration job, but is it top priority? I do not think so. There are people out there who are hurting, and we are looking at that money being thrown in the air, and if people are quick enough to grab some on the way through, good on them!

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [3.41 pm]: I stand now to talk about budget estimates to save the member for Collie–Preston from collapsing!

I would like to talk about the budget estimates process, during which I raised quite a few things. One of the main issues I had was year 7s from regional areas going to high schools. I tried to get it through to the Minister for Education that we will have young year 7 kids probably having to go hundreds of kilometres away from home to go to school. People in regional areas used to keep their kids at school near home until year 7 and built everything around that, and then the kids would go off to boarding school or hostels. I do not think enough thought has been put into this decision that will affect not only families, but also the community. I am the chairman of regional football development for the great southern, and a lot of our small towns are affected by the fact that we do not have many young people. Year 7 students are very important to a lot of the sporting groups. In schools such as Wellstead Primary School and South Stirling Primary School—which is just on the border of my electorate—the year 7s add that bit of maturity to the school. They are the school prefects and the school leaders, but they will be going away to school. We talk about role models setting examples for young people, but when these very young year 7 kids go away to hostels, they will go into an environment with peers who will be probably five years older than them. A lot of these young kids play in the junior football teams in the town, and when they come to places such as Albany to play for the school, they will be playing against kids five years older than them. They will be mixing with people five years older than them, and I just do not think enough thought has gone into it. I spoke to the minister about it and she said, “Oh well, there is the cohort, and it is only six months in some cases.” A six-month age difference in that age group is noticeable, and I think it is very important that their parents are around them and they are in a family environment. Some of these kids might go home only at the end of each term. They are long distances for the kids or the parents to travel back and forth, and a lot of parents are farming or seeding or whatever and cannot get into town. It will also put an extra pressure on the parents in that they will have to come to town more often to see their young children. I think it is a sign of a cold and heartless government.

In regional areas such as Albany we have the working poor. The husband and wife might be working, but they are the working poor and they do not get family allowances. There has been a 62 per cent increase in utility bills, and I think the Premier said that people can claim a payment on their family support card. But when the husband and wife are both working, they have to put their children in day care, and by the time they have paid for that and payday comes around, they are the working poor. The mother is not home during the day and the father is not home during the day. The Education and Health Standing Committee, of which I am a member, is finding that young people are starting primary school who have never had a book read to them because their parents are both busy and work long hours. They do not have time for those family things such as reading and sitting and talking to children because they are both working. They both have to go to work to survive, and I think it is the bane of our state. I do not care who is in power; the family unit must come first. I am very concerned that young children are turning up to school unable to read or write because the family has not been able to get together. All my children could read before they went to primary school, and I would say that in that era, which was probably 10 or 12 years ago, 90 per cent of kids could read before they went to school. The education and health committee is now finding that these young children are not able to do that, and it is a real concern.

I turn to sport and recreation. I am concerned that we are spending all this money on a stadium in Perth. I know it is great for Perth, but when I go to regional areas I find that we cannot get enough sport and recreation workers in the communities, especially up in the Kimberley. I know there are issues around accommodation, especially in Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing, but sport is a huge bonus in the lives of these young kids and they are not getting that opportunity. I know we must have a stadium, but I think we are spending way too much and I do not think enough planning has gone into the stadium, and I think that the chickens will come home roost. The Premier might have retired by the time it is finished, but the people of Western Australia will be paying. We have been told it will cost \$700 million, but the member for Armadale raised today—it was raised also in

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estimates—that there could be asbestos in the area, and asked what will happen if there is. None of these things have been thought through; it is a knee-jerk reaction by the Premier. The Premier makes all the decisions, we all know that; no-one else gets a look in.

I think that is one reason the Treasurer left. He can see the way the budget has been set up, and that money has been hidden here and pushed aside there, and someone is going to have to answer for it. As an aspiring politician, the Treasurer knows that the buck stops with him—we all know what happens to Treasurers—and I can see that he has made a pretty good decision for himself, but not for Western Australia. I am very disappointed that the budget has not even gone through the upper house, and the Treasurer has resigned. To me, the Treasurer resigning in that way means, “I will get you back.” It is not, “I’m doing this for my career”; I think he was given an ultimatum and he has come back and said, “Well, I’ll fix you; I’ll resign now while the budget is going through.” It is not good for WA.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Pure fantasy; it is absolute fantasy.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It might be pure fantasy, Premier, but that is just what my constituents are telling me.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, you just made it up—pure fantasy!

Mr P.B. WATSON: Is it pure fantasy? There are a lot of people out there who believe in fantasyland, Premier!

Mr C.J. Barnett: Walk across here and ask the former Treasurer if it is true.

Mr M.P. Murray: As if he’s going to say that.

Mr P.B. WATSON: As if he is going to say that now.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Ask him! Ask him!

Mr P.B. WATSON: Why would the Treasurer, when it has not even gone through Parliament, just walk off and say, “No, I’m on my bike; you have it”?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Because preselection closed today.

Mr P.B. WATSON: The Premier cannot sit there now and say that nothing happened.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Preselection for the Liberal Party closed today.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Oh yes! Just put in for preselection and do not tell anyone, or whatever. But to do it now is a disgrace to Parliament. I have sat in this place for 12 years and heard the Premier talk about standards—“We must have the proper standard.”

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, we should.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: But the Treasurer goes before the budget has even gone through the house!

Mr C.J. Barnett: I am handling it now.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What sort of leader is the Premier? I would not want the Premier as a leader, and the former Treasurer obviously did not either, so I can understand him. But have some ticker and stand up to him.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are just not telling the truth; that is the simple fact.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I am not telling the truth?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, you are not.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It was fantasyland a minute ago, now it is not telling the truth.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are not telling the truth.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I do not think the Premier is a good leader. He went to one election and lost, and the next one he needed the National Party to get over. The Premier does not have a very good track record, does he?

Mr C.J. Barnett: We won 10 seats off Labor.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I would not like to go into war with him as a leader; God, he would be 50 yards behind me going the other way!

I turn to the gas pipeline.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You will be the last to know, because you have criticised it continuously. As the Minister for Regional Development announced, we are about to proceed with that.

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Mr P.B. WATSON: I have just had some meetings with some Canadian people who were interested in doing a gas pipeline, and they have looked at the figures and said it is not viable. They have gas pipelines all over the world, and they say it is not viable.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is not profitable from day one.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Is the government going to privatise the gas pipeline? Is the government going to do it itself? The government has put money in the forward estimates for four years from royalties for regions, but nothing has happened; now, the government is going to give \$500 000 just to do a route. I can tell the Premier where it is going to go; he can give me the \$500 000 and I will tell him where it is going. Who are the customers going to be? The government tried to blackmail Grange Resources, and the Minister for Regional Development said it must do it, and the government will give it money for it. How desperate is the government to get someone to do it? I know what the Premier is going to do coming up to the election. He will say, “Oh yes, we’ll get it done as soon as the election is over.” That is if the Liberal Party does happen to get into power, because it is looking a bit shaky at the moment. The Premier is looking very, very shaky. I have seen the Premier over 12 years in his up times and his down times. I can tell that he is in one of his down times now; yesterday in this place, the Premier was just so shaky. I feel sorry for the Premier because he has such a huge ego, he tends to trip over it occasionally, and it must have been a big fall yesterday.

I must compliment the Minister for Housing. He came to Albany and one of my constituents, Cathy Denehe, suggested something about private housing in Albany. What we have in Albany is a little different from what the member for Collie–Preston and the people in Perth are saying; we have an excess of private housing in Albany. What we do not have is government housing and Cathy’s suggestion is to use private housing. In the budget estimates hearing, the minister came out and said that the department would look at Albany being a trial for regional areas, and there is a trial in Perth at the moment. Obviously things have to be looked at, such as the way houses are left when people leave, but I think it is something that would be very, very good in regional areas. Everyone would be a winner, including some of the people who live in tents in backyards, some of the people who live up at Princess Royal Fortress at night and some of the people who live down on the foreshore. These are not people in houses; these are people in cars and in tents in backyards. If this way in which some people live was seen anywhere else in the world, people would say it is the Third World, yet we have the supposed mining boom. I know that some people are their own worst enemies; they go through the housing system, cause trouble and then want to know why they cannot get a house. However, there are other people who shifted to Albany for the better lifestyle and to find work and they are just living in absolute poverty.

I was very disappointed that money was not put aside for the ring-road in the budget. I know that Minister Albanese gave \$250 000 through the federal member Tony Crook and that the government matched that, but it is something that is very important. Anybody who goes to Albany goes around that main ring-road and with the trucks coming in, especially in the grain season and particularly if Grange Resources gets off the ground, it is an accident waiting to happen. It is very, very dangerous and I think that being fixed up should be a priority, no matter who is in Parliament.

I asked the Minister for Health in budget estimates about the magnetic resonance imaging machine. There is a petition going around Albany at the moment, but it is a bit misleading because it states that we want an MRI machine. The Department of Health has given one of the local businesses the rights for the MRI machine; what we have to do now is get the licence from the federal health minister. That is something that I have been working very hard on. I wrote to and phoned the minister and told him how important it is that we have an MRI machine in Albany because we are a regional city. That also applies to the stroke unit. I was advised during budget estimates that there will not be a stroke unit as such, but there will be facilities that can be used so that if people have strokes, they will not need to be flown to Perth.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How’s the hospital project going?

Mr P.B. WATSON: The hospital is great. I brought that up in budget estimates, Premier. I said it is tremendous and I congratulated the minister. It is going to be a very good hospital. However, the MRI machine and the stroke unit are some of the issues that my constituents have brought to me. If the Premier listened, he would have heard me say that I got very good answers from the Minister for Health.

I have concerns about the airfares from Perth to Albany and Skywest Airlines. Skywest’s service to Albany is an absolute disgrace. I brought this up when I spoke to the minister today. The amount of delays due to maintenance issues when people fly into Albany is an absolute disgrace. I see the member for Eyre is coming into the chamber and he probably has the same issues about Skywest’s service to Esperance, but I do not know. Because we are a protected route, people can be sitting at the airport at any time, see “delay” on the screen and they do not have to look anywhere else because they know it is the Albany flight. Albany is a protected route. The other night I had a person email me, “I’m sitting at the airport again—more than three hours delay”. A few weeks

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previously I was in the airport with a number of people who were delayed three hours; we did not get home until 10 or 11 o'clock that night. There were seniors in the group and people who had been to Perth as part of the patient assisted travel scheme—people who really needed to get home. If the government is going to give a contract to someone like Skywest, it needs to make sure there are planes that do not break down all the time. Why does our plane break down? I know why; if there is an issue with a plane, Skywest just says, "Okay, it's an Albany flight—a protected flight". It is not the government's fault, but something has to be put into those contracts to say, "If you're the sole provider on this route, you've got to provide safe planes that don't have maintenance issues." I do not mind Skywest fixing the planes, but they should not have to be fixed in the first place if they are good planes.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Nollamara) [3.56 pm]: I, too, rise to speak to the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2012–13 Bill 2012. In doing so, I begin by thanking the government agencies that attended the estimates hearings for their representation and their respect in the estimates process. The advisers are always eager to try to answer the questions as best they can within the parameters presented by our political process.

It was distressing for me today to hear the Premier comment that he did not believe we spent any time researching questions and ran out of questions to ask. I assure the Premier that I take the estimates hearings particularly seriously, and I researched questions that I asked the agencies. I want to put on the record that in doing so, it is with my respect for the agencies and the work that they do. Therefore, I make sure that I go to the estimates hearings with prepared questions to afford the advisers the time that they give to us when they come into this place to assist the ministers. However, it must be as distressing as it is for the Western Australian public for people at those government agencies to be presented with this extraordinary situation in which the Western Australian Treasurer has been, I suppose, derelict in his duties in leaving before the budget bills have passed and before he has even been preselected. The former Treasurer has not yet even been preselected. Preselections close today. It seems completely odd that someone who had yet to go through the preselection process, which I assume Liberal Party members hold with as much respect as Labor Party members do for the people who live in their local electorates, announced that day that they are about to be preselected and made an assumption that they are the chosen candidate. I find it extraordinary that someone would make such an assumption as to say that because preselections close and they are in that process, they will stand down from one of the most important jobs in the Western Australian economy. It must be an absolutely distressing situation for all those agencies that presented in this place during estimates and gave their time to know that this government cannot even pay them the respect of saying to the Treasurer, "Yes, we accept that you want to go through the preselection process and we respect that. Put your preselection in, wait out the period, maintain and finish off the budget process and by that stage we will know whether you are the preselected candidate." My question is: if the former Treasurer is not preselected—nothing is certain in a party's preselection process—will he return to the position of Treasurer? We are in a situation in which suddenly we are being told that this person is the anointed one. No-one is anointed in politics. We get told today that it is his calling —

Ms A.R. Mitchell: Is this in the state budget?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes. I am talking about how distressing it must have been for all those advisers from those agencies who come to this place to do good work, who prepare for long hours to sit on those benches to assist the government's ministers to deliver answers in a budget estimates hearing, and then be treated with such disregard and disrespect that the government says to the Treasurer, "You go and sit on the back bench" and does not even push the budget through. How disrespectful to those public servants! How disgraceful is that! I have to ask the question: are members opposite telling me that he is going to be completely successful? Are they telling me that someone can put their hand up in the Liberal Party and say, "I am the anointed one. I have gone for a different calling." Clearly he is anointed, because you have sat him on the back bench.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: What if the National Party wins the seat?

Dave Kelly went through the preselection process just like everyone else did. He had no assumptions about that. He will take himself to the people just like members opposite will, just like I will, and we will make sure that those people elect us, not a government anointment.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.