

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 25 May on the following motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot —

That the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [2.17 pm]: It gives me a great deal of pleasure to make some comments in response to the Governor's address. Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson was an outstanding choice for Governor and she is doing a sensational job in that role. I spent almost three years working with the Governor. To see her interest in science in our schools and also Aboriginal welfare is a credit to her in that she has made every effort to make inroads into both of those areas. I thoroughly enjoyed working with her.

I would like to take this opportunity, Madam President, in a formal capacity, to congratulate you once again as the first woman President of the Legislative Council. It is quite an achievement. Congratulations to you and to the Deputy President and Chair of Committees, Hon Simon O'Brien. Although it is a little belated and is getting a bit monotonous, I would like to congratulate the government once again on its fairly emphatic win. It is a clear representation of the fact that we have a bit to learn. But, of course, in life we can only excuse losing if we do not learn from it. If we are going to grow, learn and achieve as a political party, we must understand why we lost and what our mistakes were, and take steps to correct them. I have no doubt whatsoever that we will re-emerge in the not-too-distant future. Having said that, I would also like to congratulate the new members of the chamber, particularly those on the crossbench who have not been represented in this chamber for a time—the members from Pauline Hanson's One Nation, the member from the Liberal Democrats and the new Greens members. I also congratulate Hon Rick Mazza on his re-election; our National Party colleagues and close allies in government; and, of course, my colleagues in the Liberal Party.

We have four years during which it will be our role to hold the government to account. From my perspective, I enjoyed being in opposition last time. I came in in opposition. I think everyone should have a period in opposition to get used to the trappings of government. Having said that, I prefer to sit on that side of the chamber than on this side of the chamber. If there is one silver lining to losing government, having been a minister for eight and a half years, it is getting back this little thing that I have not been used to—a life. But I thoroughly enjoyed it.

We have hit the ground running and over the next four years we will keep the government to account. Having said that, I wish members opposite all the best, particularly those with the role of minister. Being a minister is a magnificent job. Having been a minister for eight and a half years, I know it is one of the great privileges of my life and I will never, ever regret it. I can say that I lived the dream, and I continue to live the dream in a different capacity. Being a minister of the Crown is quite unique and special and it is to be treasured.

There are a couple of things about being in government. One thing that members opposite need to hold on to is humility, and the other thing that they will want to try to avoid is arrogance. They can capture the two. Ultimately, of course, if they can get an even balance and hold onto humility while avoiding arrogance, they will have every chance that when we put ourselves on the line again in four years' time, the stakeholders out there will say, "Yes, they are good people. We believe in them. They are sincere and we will vote for them again." Alternatively, we can present ourselves, on the other side of the chamber, as a viable alternative. There has been spades of humility by members opposite! The backslapping and high-fiving has been extraordinary. Good luck to them. With a win like that, why would they not? As I said, they have to be very careful in government. I know the honourable member is shaking her head, but we can see what has been going on already in three months. The world of politics is a fickle existence. It will change like that; just wait.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Thanks for the lesson.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Good; no worries at all. The member has tried every level of government in Australia, so she should know.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: We're learning from you.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Keep listening, because the honourable member has a lot to learn. I have a lot of experience.

When we get down to it, the government is already in trouble. The hallmark of why it was elected is Education Central; that is why it was elected.

Hon Sue Ellery: I thought it wasn't.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No. The Leader of the House has to listen to this one; this is a pearler.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The honourable member is the very first one to have the self-righteous attitude that when she talks, we listen.

Hon Sue Ellery: Are you pointing at me as well?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, I am not; this is gesticulating. This is the art of politics.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Leader of the Opposition, I remind you that you are talking to me, not inviting interjections from other members.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Madam President. I promise you that I would much prefer to speak to you.

Education Central was the pivotal policy upon which the government was elected. The reason I know that is that for the first three months of this government, all we heard from the Minister for Education and Training, the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, and the Premier was that they took it to the people and they were elected on that policy. It was so good that they abandoned it after three months!

Hon Sue Ellery: Isn't that what you asked us to do?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No. I am delighted. If the government wanted to do that, why on earth did it go to the people with that policy in the first place? With that in mind, over the last three weeks, we have had answer after answer prefaced with the same old monotonous lines of "having been part of the government that saw our hard-earned credit rating downgraded due to its gross financial mismanagement", which was said in the very first week, "I am not sure where the member gained her understanding", and "In respect to the Labor government having to clean up the many financial messes left behind by the former government". These are from representative answers.

Hon Sue Ellery: You don't think you left a mess.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Uh-uh, uh-uh! Madam President, if it is good for me.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have got my hand up.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Peter Collier has the call and I encourage him not to invite interjection.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Madam President; I will adhere to your ruling, as always.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Uh-uh, uh-uh!

Hon Sue Ellery: You don't get to say uh-uh, uh-uh.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, I do. I have the call.

The PRESIDENT: Members! Only one person has the call and he is not going to make any progress if people keep interrupting him.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have unlimited time. We have a legislative agenda we have to get —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The honourable member really has forgotten what level of government she is in. She is in the Legislative Council. We listen to the ruling of the President. We do not ignore the President. As much as it is difficult to hear this stuff, she is going to have to hear it. I am in pretty good form today. I reckon I could go to at least 10 o'clock and then come back tomorrow. I reckon we should have an all-nighter on the last day, just like that mob over there did to us. That is what I reckon we should do.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Madam President, I put to you that we are going to have an all-nighter. Will that not be great?

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There is too much unruly interjection, Madam President; it is really disconcerting. I have talked to our guys about this. We are bringing in our swags on that last Thursday. We are having an all-nighter. The Clerk might like to let the kitchen and Hansard know. Be prepared. We are going to give back what we received. On that last Thursday night, we are going to talk all this out, we are going to move amendments and we are going to do trivial stuff to waste this chamber's time just to give back. So, Madam President, be prepared.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You'll be lifting your work rate; that's something.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Look and learn, honourable member.

We were talking about electricity prices and the disastrous financial state left by the former government. You get my point, Madam President. All I am saying is that pretty much every answer that came from the amateurs in the other place in the last two weeks was nonsense.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Uh-uh, uh-uh! Madam President, I really am trying.

The PRESIDENT: I know you are trying very hard to be heard.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is very difficult when I get constant interjections and I have made it quite clear that I am not going to accept interjections today.

That was the first one. Obviously, there is a lot of humility over there and members opposite have taken to government particularly well.

I will remind members opposite about a few stark statistics that they might like to consider. Since 2001, which was the last time the state Liberal–National government was voted out of office, there have been 12 federal and state elections in Western Australia. There have been five state elections and seven federal elections. Since 2001, the Labor Party has received above 40 per cent of the vote on two occasions and the Liberal Party has received above 40 per cent of the vote on seven occasions. The average ALP primary vote since 2001 is 34.2 per cent. If members opposite genuinely think that they were embraced overwhelmingly because the public of Western Australia was so enamoured with them, they might like to look at these statistics. In 2014, just a couple of years ago, the Labor Party got 21.5 per cent of the vote in the Senate election. That is a princely sum—one in five Western Australians voted for the Labor Party! Members should not think for one second that the public of Western Australia are rusted onto WA Labor. They should stop being so high and mighty about this win.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is exactly what they are doing. At the very least, if there is a modest swing against this government in four years' time of, say, five per cent, it would pretty much be out of office.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, it would. That is 10 seats. It would be pretty much out of office. It would be hanging on by a thread. I am stating the statistics. Whether or not the government likes it, I am stating the statistics; these are facts. All I am saying is that members opposite can continue backslapping and high-fiving all they like, but when it comes down to it, we were on the nose as a government. As I have said before, I acknowledge that. As is historically based—anyone who knows anything about politics will agree with this—governments are notoriously voted out of office; oppositions are not voted into office. We are already seeing examples of the current government not learning from its past mistakes. It is already making decisions that indicate arrogance. As I mentioned in the debate on Perth Modern School three weeks ago, if a party starts being arrogant before it is even elected, it really has some problems. It probably has a few issues that it needs to address before it starts, or continues, to focus entirely on the opposition. It needs to start performing.

Let us have a look at a couple of other things with regard to humility. We have heard, particularly from Hon Dr Sally Talbot and Hon Darren West, great platitudes that the Labor Party is the bastion of women. I acknowledge, once again, that we have a long way to go in that space. The Liberal Party really has to look at addressing the issue of female representation—no disrespect to my male colleagues. Having said that, we have heard that the Labor Party is the sole recipient of the suffragette movement. Yes, we have the first leader of the Legislative Council who is a woman, Hon Sue Ellery. It is a well-deserved position. I think Sue has the experience and, dare I say it, the fibre, to hold that position. Having said that, Madam President, I move on to your position—the position of President. It is a great position and I congratulate you on your position not because you are

a woman, but because I think you are eminently qualified to hold that position. After the election we were very keen to support you or Hon Adele Farina as President. I would have thought that Hon Adele Farina would also have been a likely candidate for the role, having been Deputy President for four years. She did a very good job in that role. I have to be honest; I was a little bit surprised when I saw a WA Labor media statement about the McGowan Labor government's ministers elect. Down at the bottom of the statement it stated "Legislative Council President or Deputy President: Kate Doust". I could not work that one out because I was sure that the Labor Party was not going to try to get the position of President and Deputy President—that was the only solution I could come up with—because we would have supported Hon Kate Doust for the position. Then I learned that everyone on this side of the chamber was a desired candidate for President rather than Hon Kate Doust. Why on earth would the government, which had just been elected overwhelmingly, not take this wonderful opportunity to have one of its own to be the first candidate for the first female President? Why were members opposite so keen to get someone from this side of the chamber to be President?

Hon Sue Ellery: Why do you think?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am going to tell the member. The answer is numbers, and 18 always beats 17.

Hon Sue Ellery: That is correct.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Absolutely! Hon Sue Ellery actually admits it. The government was willing to compromise the Presidency for the numbers; is that right?

Hon Sue Ellery: How was it compromised?

Hon PETER COLLIER: The government was willing to forgo the Presidency for the numbers.

Hon Sue Ellery: Wouldn't it be in everyone's interests, with such a massive majority elected in the Legislative Assembly, to ensure that we could deliver on our election commitments and the policies that we took to the election and ensure that we could pursue our agenda?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I cannot believe the interjection. Is Hon Sue Ellery saying that the people on this side of the chamber or the Greens cannot make their minds up? We sat on that side of the chamber for the last eight years with a thumping majority; did we ever abuse it? Can Hon Sue Ellery tell me once when we ever used the gag or the guillotine? Can she tell me once?

Hon Sue Ellery: Nobody uses the guillotine in this chamber—nobody!

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is only a convention, though. You guys tried to make us use the guillotine. The Labor Party had us sitting here until 10 o'clock one morning for some nonsense.

The PRESIDENT: Members! You are now having a conversation, not giving a speech. I encourage you to focus your discussion with me.

Hon PETER COLLIER: To uphold the conventions of this chamber, I would never, as leader of this chamber, forgo those conventions. We were challenged, time and time again, to challenge our integrity and role and bulldoze legislation through. We never did it. Never once did we do it. For Hon Sue Ellery to suggest that somehow we bulldozed legislation through is nonsense.

Hon Sue Ellery: I never said that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is exactly what the member said. We sat in those chairs for hour after hour. We were scrutinised day in and day out. We sat in this chamber for two full nights but we never compromised. The government does not have a majority in this chamber; it has 14 members.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right. To suggest for one second that anyone on this side of the chamber did not deserve to be elected is sheer arrogance. It is the electoral system that the members opposite put into place. When I heard former member Hon Lynn MacLaren carry on about the electoral system and how corrupted it was, I thought, "Give me a break!" These guys were a part of the construction of that electoral system. They cannot come along and say, "This is the electoral system we want," but when it does not suit them they do not want it anymore. They cannot do that and say, "We're going to play but only if we win." What nonsense! What a load of garbage! The role of the President was to be compromised just so that the government could get its legislation through. I mean no disrespect to the Greens. I have respect for the Greens because its members stand up for what they believe in. I do not agree with them most of the time but they stand up for what they believe in. That is fine. The Greens are essentially part of government. It voted with the Labor Party 86 per cent of the time in the last —

Hon Diane Evers: Let us have our go when the time comes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: What does the member mean by, "have our go"?

Hon Diane Evers: Don't assume that we will vote any particular way each time.

Hon PETER COLLIER: In the last Parliament the Greens voted with the Labor Party 86 per cent of the time—most of the time. It abstained six per cent of the time. Over 90 per cent of the time, the Greens voted with the Labor Party.

I have to wonder whether members opposite would have bothered with that if they felt so comfortable with that role and respected the fact that every member over here has just as much right to vote as anyone over there. Having said that, the outcome was fantastic, Madam President. I have known you for many years and I think that you are eminently qualified.

What about Hon Adele Farina? With all due respect, she must be wondering what she did wrong. We former ministers sat in those chairs and, quite frankly, she was a pain in the neck in that role. I mean that affectionately; I really do.

The PRESIDENT: I am not sure Hon Adele Farina will take it that way.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I hope she does. I can assure her that I meant it with great affection. We knew that when we sat in those chairs as ministers and we had a piece of legislation under scrutiny that we had to know our stuff when Hon Adele Farina stood up. She was relentless; she was forensic. She made life hell for us. We knew that we would not get out of that chair until that legislation was fully and utterly scrutinised. If members ask anyone in the south west about Hon Adele Farina and the work she did down there, they will tell them exactly what she did for them. I know the questions that I got on TAFE numbers and education across the board. In addition, she played an outstanding role as Deputy President for four years. After all that time and all her commitment to the party in opposition, what was her reward? She was banished to the back bench. As I said, if Madam President had been appointed a minister, which I think she deserved, although she will probably enjoy this role as well, we would definitely have supported Hon Adele Farina.

I know it is a bit difficult for members opposite but my point is that it is all well and good to be the upholders of the suffragettes but they should make sure they do not get too bold with their assertions that they are the upholders of all that is right for the representation of women. When there was an opportunity to appoint a woman President, members opposite did everything they possibly could to get a man from this side to take on the role—it is true.

Let me look at a couple of issues. I would like to go through some of my former portfolio areas, but I will save a bit of that for the Loan Bill 2017, which we will have some fun with. First of all, again regarding humility, one of the things that used to drive me mad as a minister was when Hon Dr Sally Talbot stood up relentlessly, day after day, and talked about how we used to be chauffeur driven all over the place in our white limousines and that we had a special key to use in the lift to go up and down. I did not have a clue what she was talking about; I never had one. Apparently, you can get into Dumas House with a special key and it goes straight to the top. Somehow, that would make us less significant. Somehow, that gave us lofty privileges of being ministers that we were not entitled to. We used to hear it time and again: “Off you go with your chauffeur-driven limousines, in and out.” That has nothing to do with us being members of the Liberal Party; this is the politics of envy with members opposite. It has nothing to do with us being Liberals or living in an age of entitlement, it is just the fact that ministers have a role. We used to hear this day in and day out so I naturally assumed that the ministers opposite would forgo their white limousines. I assumed they would forgo the keys to get up to the thirteenth floor of Dumas House, although they do not go there. There is a videoconference facility up there and they obviously do not use that, which I will get to in a little bit. I assumed government members would not use their white limousines and that it would be the end of the Government Garage. I thought: “The Bolsheviks are back in town. They're not going to use cars; they'll use their own energy-efficient VWs.” I was really pleased when the Premier caught the train from Rockingham to Perth on day one. I thought this was the start of the new regime and that the government was true to its word and would be egalitarian. They would all be the same and would not use the white limousines with the chauffeur service. But, of course, I was wrong.

Many times in the last three months I have seen the white limousines waiting out the front of Parliament House. Several times, I have seen ministers being picked up in their white limousines. I do not have a problem with that. I think it is part of the job, but there cannot be a double standard. Members opposite cannot criticise us for it when they were on this side of the chamber and then do exactly the same as we did when we were on the government side of the chamber. When I was President—it is only a matter of time!—when I was a minister, I always drove myself to work. I used the car service only when I visited schools, attended a function at night, or something along those lines. I used it rarely. I never had one of the keys, but it would have been nice. Sometimes I got in the lift at seven o'clock in the morning and it took me half an hour to get to the top. I hardly ever used my ministerial credit card. I was dying for someone to apply the freedom of information process to my ministerial credit card. They would have found a couple of coffees at a ministerial council meeting, and that was it. I never, ever abused the privileges of that office. That is what used to bother me.

As I said, I was somewhat disappointed when I found that the mob opposite not only kept the limousines, which shows, if anything, that they have a double standard, but that they have two cars. They do not have one; they have two cars. One car was not good enough for them; they had to have two. I saw this and thought: hello, hello. I'll have a go at Hon Sally Talbot about this, but I better get my facts right first. So I checked on it.

Hon Donna Faragher: She would have been condemning us if that were us.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, she would have condemned us for using the chauffeur-driven white limousines and the magic key. I am still really disappointed I did not get one of the magic keys!

I asked a few questions to find out how members opposite got two cars. I read about it in a story in *The Sunday Times* on 14 May. It talked about double dipping and how some ministers had a second car because of changes to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal ruling. I asked a series of questions, as you do in opposition. I asked about the notion of double dipping. I will not go through the whole list, but I asked how many ministers double dipped, when the Premier found out about it and how many members paid back the double dip. The first answer I got was absolute rot, quite frankly. It was about five paragraphs of nonsense. One paragraph really incensed me. If anything, it inspired me to go even further; I would have left it alone after the first question otherwise. In part, the answer states —

It is disappointing that this was kept secret and it is disappointing that this government has been forced to clean it up. This affects all ministers and as such this government is moving to have it rectified as soon as possible.

What a backhanded go at the former government. I did not think that was right because we never did it, so I asked another question. I thought: you're not going to get away with that, mate. I have to be honest, Hon Martin Aldridge asked a similar question on the same day and got the same response that it was disappointing this had been kept secret—how juvenile. The next day, like a red rag to a bull, I asked another question. The Premier said he had written to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal about this issue. I asked when the Premier had written to SAT, whether he would table a copy of the letter to SAT; and, if not, why not. The Premier replied that it was on 12 May 2017 and that he would table the document. I have a copy of the letter he sent to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. He sent the letter on 12 May 2017. The story was published in *The Sunday Times* on 14 May 2017. Honestly, do members opposite think we are stupid in this chamber? Those of us who have been in government all know that the Premier got a question from *The Sunday Times* on either the Thursday or Friday and he thought, "Oh, I better fix this up!" He then wrote to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. If he felt such a moral obligation to fix this onerous problem that the former government had left him, he would have done it on 12 March, three months before. He would not have waited until May. It is nonsense to suggest that he did it. I thought I would take this a bit further. In his response to the question, the Premier said that the former government was responsible and that we had hidden it. His words were that the government was "forced to clean it up" and that we had "kept it secret". Kept it secret—rubbish! The next day, I asked the Premier whether the determination of the double dipping was listed in the *Government Gazette*; and, if so, on what date was it listed? I got a very curt response —

(1)–(2) The determination was published in the *Government Gazette* of 23 December 2016, special edition 232.

How could we have kept it secret if it had been in the *Government Gazette* four months before? It was in the *Government Gazette*, which is publicly available, yet somehow, these terrible Tories—the terrible former government—that had no transparency had kept it secret! The Premier said this publicly.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Leader of the Opposition, was it the case that people had two cars or did they have cars plus cash?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will answer that. It is a very good interjection. I will take that interjection, Madam President.

Hon Jim Chown: Or was it the whole cabinet, including the Premier?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would love to know, Hon Jim Chown.

I thought: righto, you guys, I'm going to give back, with credit. I asked that question and then I had another go. I asked how many ministers were double dipping if, by chance, they had not read the *Government Gazette*. The former government did not keep it a secret; in fact, it was in the *Government Gazette*. I asked how many were double dipping and, if they were double dipping, how many had paid it back, and I was basically told where to go. I should have learnt from this. When the Premier was the education minister back in 2007–08—I got my researchers to do a survey of this—27 per cent of the answers I received from the then education minister, now the Premier, told me to put the question on notice. I should have been prepared for this. The Premier has form. I asked

that question. As a member of the opposition, I should ask how many ministers have double dipped and how many have paid it back. I took it a step further. I also wanted to find out how many vehicles were on a novated lease. If they are on a novated lease and they still have to pay that novated lease, how will they pay it out? Will they have to pay it out or will they keep the two cars?

In answer to the first lot of questions about the double dipping and whether they have paid it back, I was basically told where to go. I have asked that question on three different occasions and each time I have not been given an answer. We still do not know how many ministers have double dipped. We still do not know whether any ministers who double dipped have paid the money back, including the Premier. The fourth part of the answer was —

I am advised that there is not enough time to provide the answer and I request that the member put the question on notice.

Ministers have sat around the cabinet table or they have got the Premier's office to put out an email to ask, "Is your minister's vehicle on a novated lease?" Bang—two minutes later, it comes back. They cannot even do that; I have to put it on notice. So, I put it on notice. You can keep on trying to avoid me, guys, but it is not going to work. I will get the answers to this, I am telling you. This is not a good start. This is that arrogance I keep talking about. If the government responds to questions like this less than three months after it has been in government, imagine what it will be like in four years' time!

I was staggered to read about it in *The Sunday Times*. The government must have a good connection to *The Sunday Times*. I have to be honest, I told *The Sunday Times* about these questions I had been asking, and it followed up. I did a bit of background for the journos. *The Sunday Times* asked the same question about how many ministers have double dipped and how many have paid it back. *The Sunday Times* reported —

Mr McGowan previously said he became aware of the allowance soon after the election, and he sent a letter to the SAT asking it to reconsider the determination on May 12—the same day *The Sunday Times* put questions to his office.

A spokesman for the Premier yesterday said Mr McGowan had not received the extra allowance.

"The Government has now applied the amended SAT determination to all ministers to reflect the decision," the Premier's spokesman said.

"Ministers have one vehicle except where the SAT allows otherwise, the exception being for non-metropolitan members. This is in recognition of the significant challenges faced by regional members in accessing their electorate.

"In cases where office holders had been paid, since March 17, the motor vehicle allowance in addition to receiving a government vehicle, there is no expectation this money be repaid as they were paid in accordance with the tribunal determination."

I want to repeat that in case some members did not pick up on that. If they got their vehicle allowance, they got it for two months but they do not have to pay it back. That is \$4 000 that they do not have to pay back. A minister earns \$270 000. The mob opposite—this crew, the Bolsheviks opposite—have put a \$1 000 a year cap on increases to a public servant's salary. Let us look at Mrs Smith, a year 3 teacher from Joondalup Primary School, Nurse Baxter from Royal Perth Hospital and Constable Smith from Fremantle Police Station. They are getting their \$1 000 a year salary increase from the workers' party. It takes them four years to get \$4 000. How long does it take a minister to get \$4 000? Two months. In two months, this government's ministers got \$4 000 that they are not entitled to, yet they go out and say to the workers—21 000 teachers and tens of thousands of nurses—"Sorry, guys, suck it up. Do it for the state; take one for the team." Where are their union mates now? Why are they not out there crying from the rafters? Talk about hypocrisy. That is a shocker. That is so bad.

Let us move on to another question to see whether this government has developed an arrogance at this very early stage of its tenure. I thought I would ask another question. A question about conflict of interest is always a great question. I did not know the answer, to be perfectly honest, but I thought I would just ask it. When I asked this question, a flood of journos came to me and asked, "What is going on? Who do you know?" I said, "You're just going to have to wait!" I did not know anything. I honestly had no idea. I asked —

Have any ministers or parliamentary secretaries declared any conflicts of interest?

I asked a simple question of the government. The first two questions were answered. The third question was, "Since 17 March 2017, have any ministers or parliamentary secretaries divested themselves of any conflicting positions?" I asked this question on the first day of this Parliament—on 16 May. I was just fact-finding. I was sniffing around as a member of the opposition. Do members know what response I received from the Premier? The response was —

It is not possible to provide the information in the time required. I, therefore, ask the honourable member to place this question on notice.

The government does not know who has declared a conflict of interest! Once again, that was the very first question I asked as Leader of the Opposition in this chamber. I was told to put my very first question on notice. Again, arrogance is already there.

Then I asked another question. Another issue that was creeping along related to a document left on a desk used by the former government, apparently. The Premier made a big deal about this in the media. It was about Roe 8. A document was “found” on a desk and it just happened to get in the hands of a journalist. I thought: I am going to find out about this. As government members would know, if they had distributed that document somewhere else, they would be facing a criminal offence. Under the State Records Act, that cannot be done. If the Premier or someone in the Premier’s office took that document and gave it to someone else, it is against the State Records Act. We are following up on that. I tell members right now that we will not let this one go. I tried to find out where that document came from, who had it and who transferred it to the Premier; did the Premier hand it to anyone, who handed it to the Premier, and one thing and another. To say that I did not get a response would be an understatement. Again, it was just ditto when it referred to questions to the Premier. I asked a multifaceted question about who found it and whether it was entered into the TRIM records management system and a whole raft of other questions. The Premier’s response was —

- (1)–(2) As the Premier stated in the other place last week, the document was not received by anyone. It was left in a ministerial office. This document was subsequently provided to the media in the spirit of openness and transparency.

How condescending. It then went on to refer to a raft of other things but I did not get an answer to who got the document and who provided it to the Premier et cetera. I asked a number of other questions but I was shunted from pillar to post each time. There was absolutely no response whatsoever. We are following up on this one. I remind members that transferring a document from one person to another without their authority, particularly an official document, is against the State Records Act. It is an offence to transfer that document, punishable by a fine of \$10 000. We are following up on that. The government can be too smart by half, and be open and transparent, as the Premier says, while not telling me anything, or it can give me information, and there will be no issues. However, if the government is continuing to send me down the garden path with its responses, that will make me go harder. I am saying that right now. When the government keeps giving me back this nonsense about putting things on notice, and these flowery things about looking after the mess of the previous government, it just makes me more determined than ever.

Let us have a look at another one. I heard that the last time the Labor Party was in office, it employed its mates in the union movement and family members, so I asked a question about whether the Premier would list the names of the chiefs of staff of each cabinet minister, including the Premier; and, if not, why not. I also asked whether the chief of staff of any cabinet minister, including the Premier, was related to any Labor member of the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council. I got the names of the chiefs of staff, but for the next question, about whether any of them were related to members, the answer was yes. That is fine; no worries, guys. When I asked a question the next day about who was related to whom, I got the response I wanted. Again, it will not bring down the government, but those are the things that an opposition should do. We used to sit on the other side, while those guys were over here carrying on about how terrible the government was in one thing and another. Three months into its term, I have this litany of information—pages and pages of it. I am keeping a record of instances of arrogance and complete disrespect for this chamber. As I said, that is a bit of gratuitous advice, and I have no doubt that the government will ignore it. The fact that it is happening so consistently at such an early stage of this government’s tenure is concerning.

Right—where can we go now? Okay, the next subject is very important to me—Perth Modern School. The decision to move the school was probably the worst decision that the Minister for Education and Training will ever make. Having said that, the decision she made today about Perth Modern School is the best decision she will ever make, because she has saved Perth Modern School. The last words I said in the debate last week on this matter was that if she did not change her decision, regardless of anything else, she would always go down as the minister who destroyed Perth Modern School. Fortunately, that has been avoided. The Perth Modern School debacle has been avoided. We did our bit, but once again it was the community that came along and told this crew that that is not how government is handled. When I made my first comments about Perth Modern School, I said that the government became arrogant before it was elected, and I stand by that. The Labor Party made a decision on Perth Modern School that had purportedly won it government, and over which it had purportedly conducted enormous public consultation, but it was fatally flawed. Absolutely nobody wanted it whatsoever.

Members opposite were strident on this matter. Two weeks ago, when we debated it, the minister spent 45 minutes, without coming up for air, telling us why it was such a good policy. We were wrong; we got all the modelling

wrong, and everyone loved it. The public gallery was full, with hundreds of parents, and we tabled petitions with thousands of signatures, and we continue to do so. Every single advocacy group in Western Australia was against it, but members opposite knew better than us; they knew better than everyone. It really frustrated me, because, as I have said on numerous occasions in this chamber, I am first and foremost an educator. All I ever wanted to be was a chalkie; I have said that. I wanted to be a chalkie from the time I had Frank Hayes in year 7 at North Kalgoorlie Primary School, and Tony Terry in year 9 social studies at Eastern Goldfields Senior High School. I could have done law, medicine or whatever I wanted to, but I wanted to be a chalkie. That is why, when I held the treasured role of Minister for Education, I always made sure that I consulted with the community. When dealing with children, a minister is always vulnerable. To be told ad infinitum by members opposite and by the Premier that they were elected on this issue and that it was the right policy was very frustrating. It made me remember those heady days of 2007 and 2008 when I was trying relentlessly to get the then Minister for Education to abandon the ill-fated outcomes-based education policy. *Hansard* is full of hours and hours of debate and hundreds of questions. Every single advocacy group in Western Australia that knew anything about education was calling for the abandonment of this flawed policy. But the minister would not do it, and ultimately it cost the minister her job, or at least contributed to that. I really like that former minister, and I get on very well with her, but at the time it was very frustrating.

That is why Education Central was frustrating: it was not a policy that had any public support at all. In fact, I would say it had the support of two people—the Minister for Education and Training and the Premier—who tried relentlessly to convince everyone else that they were right and we were wrong, but ultimately, when it came down to it, it did not work. I am very pleased that the minister has made her decision, and Hon Donna Faragher was today congratulating the minister on that aspect of the decision, although not on the second part of the decision.

Hon Donna Faragher: Credit where credit is due.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right. That in itself is staggering, considering that the government was so rusted onto the old policy just two weeks ago. Having said that, the next part, the Kitchen Park business, really disappointed me. How the government can go from being totally rusted onto the idea of a multistorey building in the city two weeks ago to saying that it does not like that anymore and it is going to build a school in Kitchener Park in Subiaco is absolutely beyond me. Not only that, what aggravates me more than anything is that it is our fault. Just listen to this tripe. This is from *The West Australian* on Monday, which is yesterday. The article reads —

Education Minister Sue Ellery said Labor had taken a comprehensive policy to the election to address the school overcrowding issues in the inner suburbs of Perth.

“This is a serious problem that we inherited from the previous Liberal National government,” she said. “As we work through the policy, we are listening to the community so we can address some of the concerns raised.”

It is our fault? You have got to be kidding—talk about red rag to a bull with me! There is no comprehensive policy in this rubbish. Education Central is not a comprehensive policy; it is about building a multistorey building in the middle of Perth. There is nothing about Kitchener Park at all, and nothing about a Subiaco school. It is all about one school and one solution. The policy itself states —

A McGowan Labor Government will build Education Central near Yagan Square in the Perth City Link Precinct. During the construction phase of Education Central 500 new jobs will be created.

It then goes on with all this tripe about the manageability of Education Central et cetera, but that is all it mentions. This one policy document, which is nine pages long, has one solution—that is, a multistorey building in the City of Perth. It does not talk about Kitchener Park. To have the audacity to come out and say that we left the government with this mess is just extraordinary. I cannot believe that the minister can say it with a straight face. As I have said over and over again, the policy that I announced about eight months ago was multifaceted. Just to repeat it, once again, it was a new school in City Beach.

It was an expansion of Carine Senior High School, Churchlands Senior High School, Mount Lawley Senior High School and Shenton College, and it was a rebuild of Balcatta Senior High School; it was a multifaceted approach. It was well thought out after an extraordinary level of work had been done by the Department of Education. The Minister for Education has been almost monotonous on this stuff about the growth areas not being in City Beach. Yet again, she simply does not get it. The whole point of building the City Beach school was to take that pressure off Churchlands. The areas around Floreat, Wembley, Wembley Downs and Woodlands et cetera will continue to grow. The students there will go to City Beach college, which will take pressure of Churchlands Senior High School; that is the point of the exercise. This will significantly reduce the student numbers at Churchlands, which is very important. The expansion of Mount Lawley Senior High School for 650 students helps to look after those inner-city students. Only 200 students in the inner city would go to the multistorey school, so they are not affected at all. The plan we came up with was multifaceted and effective. The minister is desperate at the moment to salvage something from this. For her to say that they are now building it in the wrong area is manifestly wrong. Two weeks

after the minister stood in this place and stridently advocated for a multistorey building, she is now saying, “No, that is all finished. We are off to Kitchener Park.” How ludicrous! I can just imagine what is going on in the department at the moment. The staff will be going, “Oh my goodness.” I can just imagine it. They are a most fantastic department but they will be absolutely pulling their hair out at the moment. The government has form for this and it will be saying to the department, “Just make it happen. It’s an A-class reserve but that doesn’t matter. We’ll get it through the Parliament. Don’t worry about it.” Bring it on guys. I can tell members opposite right now that we are going to have a big debate on that one. If that A-class reserve is changed and the government gets rid of that green space, we will challenge the government on it—I am telling you right now. Yes, we have to consider that environmental issue, but it is just the wrong decision for education and it involves a combination of factors. This government is arrogant enough, yet again, to say that this is what it is going to do and it is going to have it all orchestrated in two weeks, but that just cannot happen. At the moment, the staff in building services at the Department of Education will need to have double doses of Valium—I am sorry to be so flippant, but they will. I know what it is like to create a new school. It cannot be done in just two weeks. This government was committed to Education Central two weeks ago. All of a sudden it is wondering: what is that spot there? Okay, we will put it there. Let us do a random survey. Who lives within one kilometre of Kitchener Park? I do. Let us do a random survey of everyday Western Australians: who agrees with putting the school on Kitchener Park? No-one has put up their hand. In a random survey of Western Australians, 100 per cent of the population do not agree with it. If anything, the government must listen to the community and say that it has got this one wrong.

I got wind of this proposal on my way to my local for a coffee this morning. Members opposite are leaking like sieves at the moment; it is always a problem. I knew that this was happening so while I was having my coffee I spoke to a few people. We often meet there in the morning. I asked them what they thought about the news and they went rabid and said, “No way!” Yet again, I would love to know how much consultation was done in the last two weeks because, as I said, two weeks ago we were rusted onto Education Central. For the government to now say that it has done all this work is just nonsensical. I had a similar situation back with City Beach when we looked everywhere for a location. Someone said something to me today about had we done all this work on Kitchener Park. I said, “Rubbish! We did not do any work on Kitchener Park.” We thought of about 50 different areas across Western Australia—we might have even thought about Northam oval—but, of course, none of them were suitable and there were always reasons. We had to go through the process forensically. About two and a half years ago, I sat down with department staff and we looked at a map of central Perth right through to the western suburbs and I saw a gold mine. I asked, “What’s that there”, and they said it was the old Skyline Drive-in. It was perfect; it was right next to City Beach Senior High School. It still had the undulating cement left over from the drive-in so I said, “Perfect. Why can’t we put it there?” I was told it is Bush Forever land. How could it be Bush Forever if it has undulating concrete on it? We went through the whole thing and tried to work it out. It was going to take years to get through those approvals processes. In addition, as it worked out, it was not the right site; it was not large enough to have the two schools on a shared oval, which is fascinating after what I heard today. This government absolutely and stridently advocated for a multistorey school in the centre of Perth in Northbridge and now, two weeks later, it is suddenly saying that it is not going to do that anymore and that the site is moving to Kitchener Park with plans to open the school by 2020. Well, sorry guys, but to coin an Aussie colloquialism, you’re dreaming—you really are. This change in site will bring 4 000 students to Roberts Road. I live there and I can tell members that there is no hope of that happening down Roberts Road at any time of the day or night. We can tell those students to take public transport but there are parents of 12 and 13-year-olds who do not like telling their children to take public transport. It will be an absolute nightmare. For the life of me I do not know why the government is digging in on this one because, quite frankly, it is wrong. As I said, the minister’s department is the one that did the modelling.

That brings me back to the minister’s New South Wales trips. The minister took a trip, I assume under impost, to Victoria last year, which is fine. She went to look at a multistorey —

Hon Sue Ellery: I paid for it myself.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The minister should have used her impost. Apparently she could have used that; she could have double dipped. The minister went to Victoria and then, after the election, she went to New South Wales. Did I ask this question or did Hon Donna Faragher?

Hon Donna Faragher: I did.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Sorry, I heard about it and of course our hardworking shadow Minister for Education and Training asked a question of the minister. Apparently the minister, Hon Rita Saffioti and four others—six people—went to New South Wales to have a look at a multistorey building. I do not know why they had to go. They already had their policy written up and here it is. Why did they have to go? The policy was already written up so surely they had done the modelling and did not have to go to try to convince themselves. But they paid for a business class trip that I assume would cost \$28 000 or \$30 000 and they would have racked up a few Frequent Flyer points, which is fine. They flew over and met with members of the Department of Education, but the policy does not say anything about meeting with the —

Hon Simon O'Brien: If they had met with members of our Department of Education, they might have learnt something.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Precisely, they did not need to go to Sydney, but I assume that they at least contacted the minister. They met with the department and they had a look at the construction of the new Parramatta primary and secondary school. The total cost of that trip was \$30 880.44. The airfares cost \$28 008.39, accommodation for six people cost \$2 244.70 and other costs came to \$627.35. That is \$31 000 to go over and hear about something that they are already going to do.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Precisely—\$30 000 would get two chaplains or an education assistant.

I have a suggestion for the Minister for Education and Training. There is a little magic key she can get at Dumas House; I do not have it. Hon Dr Sally Talbot knows all about it; I have never seen it. If she turns it round, it will go all the way to the top, and she will not be interrupted. The honourable minister could have got in the lift, used that key, and gone up to the thirteenth level. Do honourable members know what is up there? There is a videoconferencing area. It is magnificent. Members who are ministers go to ministerial council meetings, and they are really good because there they get to interact with their colleagues and tell them why we are getting a rough deal. But there are other instances in which a minister is dealing with one or two issues, and to get on a plane on a Thursday morning, fly all day for a two-hour meeting, and then fly all the way back, is a pain in the neck. Quite frankly, I would much rather be visiting schools here in Western Australia than doing that, if it could be done more efficiently.

We decided, as a government, that we would be more efficient, so we built the videoconferencing centre on the thirteenth floor of Dumas House. It has these big screens, so it is just like being in a meeting. It is just like being there.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: It's not on the thirteenth floor.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The fourteenth floor, sorry. If the government knows where it is, why did it not use it? There are these big screens. We can sit there and watch the guys at the back pick their nose or whatever! They forget they are on video, or they will be pushing —

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Come on. Raise the level.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is true! I am telling the member, one sees the funniest things. One sits there and sees the advisers sitting behind, interacting, and they do not realise they are on video, and it is actually quite amusing.

The government knows where I am going with this: why on earth would the minister spend \$30 000 on this, in a very cash-strapped community—we know that, because every question we get is telling us how cash-strapped we are—when she could get in a lift with her director general, her adviser and her chief of staff? It would take her two minutes to get to the fourteenth floor to have a videoconference. She did not even visit a school. She would not have visited Parramatta, because it is not finished. No wonder she did not go ahead with it; it is about \$50 million over budget and 18 months late. Imagine if they got over there and they said, “Oh, you beaut, let's have a look at our 17-floor Education Central”—that is what the one in Parramatta is—only to find out it is tens of millions of dollars over budget and 18 months late. They would say, “Oh, my God. We could have this thing built by 2020, and we can't do that. We can't go to Yagan Square because they haven't finished that and we've got to get someone to build it, because we're not building it; the private sector's going to do that, and we're going to pay \$14 million a year ad infinitum.”

There are some serious issues around this whole thing. The fact that the government can actually spend \$30 000 to fly to New South Wales for one day when the ministers could have got in a lift and gone up two floors is a sad indictment of the attitude of the mob opposite. The government carries on about financial mismanagement et cetera, but what a terrible start to government this is.

That gives me a nice segue into being in government.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, after I have finished my opening remarks, I will get into a bit of substance!

It is fine for members opposite to have a go; that is politics. It is tribal, and one gets used to that, but if the government is going to give it out, it is going to get it back, particularly in the instances I have raised. The government cannot justify even one of the instances I have raised, so good luck, guys.

My role in eight and a half years as minister was magnificent. I loved every second of it and I lived the dream. I desperately wanted to be education minister and I did it, and I am so, so grateful for the opportunity. As I used to say when I was coaching tennis or in the classroom, one can live life as a series of opportunities or as a series

of events, and as far as being a minister was concerned, it definitely falls into the former category—an opportunity. There was no way I was going to waste it.

In addition to that, I have a deep personal regard for Aboriginal people and always have. I am a Kalgoorlie boy. The Wongi used to come in off land when I was a little tacker; my dad used to keep the bread for them. They used to come and camp in our backyard in Boulder. They used to bring in boomerangs, and my whole wall was full of boomerangs from the Wongi. I was never fearful of the blackfella, ever. A lot of my friends were, but I never was; I just loved them. I loved actually interacting with Aboriginal people. I wanted to make sure that, if I got the opportunity, I would do as much as I could to help the original Australians. It is unacceptable that in the twenty-first century—we are all complicit in this—the quality of life for Aboriginal people is what it is. The fact that educational standards for Aboriginal people are appalling in comparison with their non-Aboriginal counterparts is unacceptable. The fact that living, health, and housing standards are so substandard for Aboriginal people is appalling. We live in one of the richest nations on earth. When I go out there and see my Aboriginal brothers and sisters and some of the quality of life in which they live, it really, really bothers me.

I wanted to make sure that I could do all I possibly could for Aboriginal people. I remember the opportunity arose in 2011; I was Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for six years. I remember saying to the boss at the time, the Premier, “I really, really would like Aboriginal Affairs”, and he said, “It’s yours, mate.” The sad part about it was that whenever I used to tell people I was Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, many of them would be almost in shock; “Why would you want to be Minister for Aboriginal Affairs?” I would say, “Because I love it”, and I really loved it. It was such a shame, because when we got out there and worked with Aboriginal groups and people, I realised that they really want to be part of this process of reconciliation. They want to be part of the endeavour to ensure that ultimately—not for the reasons members opposite provided—one day we will not need a Department of Aboriginal Affairs, or a section in government for Aboriginal affairs, because Aboriginal people will be able to have the same quality of life as their non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters in their nation. That is what I would love to see—to get to the point at which we know that an Aboriginal child is going to have the same opportunities as anyone from Northam, Kalgoorlie, Wembley or wherever else it might be, but we are very far off that.

Having said that, for the first two years of my role as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I was very frustrated, because the role of minister in that portfolio was pretty much redundant. Education, Health and Housing et cetera had their own little bucket of money for Aboriginal affairs, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs had virtually nothing to say or do about it. I expressed my frustration to the then Premier in 2013, after we won the state election, and I said, “There’s no point in having a minister or a department if you don’t have some authority.” We agreed then that we would establish the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-committee, and that worked really, really well. I chaired it and any decisions on Aboriginal affairs came through that subcommittee, and it was fantastic. The Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Committee comprises all the directors general of all the departments. The director general of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs used to go to those meetings and basically get flippant regard and felt that he had no say whatsoever. As a result of the establishment of the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-Committee, the director general then had the capacity to determine policy. That cabinet subcommittee was really good; it worked extremely well.

I understand that, in addition to abandoning the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the government has abandoned the cabinet subcommittee. I have to be honest with members, and I will not make this too political, but I think the government has made a serious mistake. People have their views on the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. When there is no Department of Aboriginal Affairs, there is no go-to place. I know there are issues of responsibility et cetera, but there will be no go-to place for Aboriginal people. We will go straight back to that silo approach to Aboriginal services in which the Department of Health will do what it likes, the Department of Education will do what it likes, the Mental Health Commission will do what it likes and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support will do what it likes, and they will go, “Up you” to anyone else. They will have their little pool of money and they will use it, and we will go back to the scattergun approach to Aboriginal affairs, with no coordination between departments. In four years’ time, we will look at each other and say that nothing has changed. But something did change five years ago: we coordinated Aboriginal affairs. I am really disappointed that you guys have abandoned that. I really hope that somehow members can find it in their hearts, particularly Ben Wyatt, who is a good man, to say, “We have to get back to that point where all the departments are working together”, because that worked really well.

The first thing I did was cosmetic more than anything. At first, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was in a multistorey building in St Georges Terrace. It had little rabbit warrens and no structure whatsoever. There was a place near the Department of Education. It was a perfect place to put it. It had great access for Aboriginal people, but, at the same time, there were great connections with education. First and foremost, what we have to get right to make a difference with Aboriginal people is education. When we get education right, I promise that that will instil those seeds of advancement in Aboriginal people that are so desperately needed. That is what I did; I moved the department down next to the Department of Education.

Then I worked on early intervention, which is absolutely imperative. There is a lot of disconnect between Aboriginal parents and their children and a lack of empowerment. Two years ago, we opened 37 Aboriginal kindergartens under the KindiLink program. They were spread right throughout Western Australia and provided early intervention, literacy and numeracy programs, parenting workshops, speech therapy and pastoral support. They are great. I desperately wanted to turn them into child and parent centres, with a much more expansive role, but, of course, as always, money was an issue, and we had to face that. That was money well spent. I really hope that the current government not only retains the KindiLink program and those 37 Aboriginal kindergartens, but also expands them and their role. I am telling members now that if we plant those seeds in three-year-old Aboriginal children, as a community, we will reap the benefits in five to 10 years. Those children will develop much more self-esteem and resilience. In addition, parents are part of the child's education, so parents are empowered as well. The foundations are there; the seeds are there. Guys opposite, please do something about expanding the program.

Another area that I looked at because I wanted to ensure that it was expanded was Aboriginal culture in our schools. We ensured that that was the case with the national curriculum, and I will talk about that a little later. We wanted to ensure that we had a cultural standards framework throughout our schools and we introduced that. In 2016, I introduced the Aboriginal cultural standards framework. There is a line in the sand now in all our public schools in Western Australia. Aboriginal culture is an embedded component of the curriculum. It is nothing to be scared of; it is something to be proud of. We were the very first state to introduce that cultural standards framework. The cultural standards framework is the way forward. I promise that it is embedded within our curriculum.

Another thing that I am proud of is the Partnership Acceptance Learning Sharing program. It was previously done through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I do not know what is going to happen to it now that there will be no Department of Aboriginal Affairs. That is a shame; it is a magnificent program. It deals specifically with individual government and non-government schools. They are asked to do a program—it could be a video, play, poem or story—that engages all of the school community. About 105 or 110 schools did the PALS program when it first started in 2011. This year, 526 schools throughout Western Australian will be doing the PALS program. More and more schools are getting involved in the acknowledgement of Aboriginal culture than ever before.

Another thing I did was with regard to the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council. The previous government abandoned it. It is part of the statute, but the government did not use it. Kim Hames, to his credit, resurrected it in 2009. When I took over, I expanded it. It is constituted of Aboriginal people. I am not an Aboriginal man. How dare I impose a policy on Aboriginal people if I am not an Aboriginal person? I sought great advice from the WAAAC. I was a little disappointed with the outcomes from the WAAAC. It wanted a summit to bring all the mobs together, which we did in August 2014 at the Pan Pacific Perth hotel. Several hundred Aboriginal people from right across Western Australia came to that summit. It was fantastic. I wanted recommendations from the WAAAC about what was needed, particularly to discuss the effectiveness of investment in Aboriginal affairs. I never received anything from the WAAAC. That is my one criticism. I was disappointed after the change of government when I heard a couple of members of the WAAAC say that government has to listen to Aboriginal people more. I was relentless with the council and said, "Guys, that's good, but you've had your summit." I remember vividly saying at the time, "I do not want it just to be a talkfest. Give me something tangible that I can work for and advocate for." We did not get that. I hope that the government will dust off the report from the summit and see what the council recommended. I made some changes to the WAAAC the following year and made Ian Trust, a man of great experience, chair of the WAAAC. Until the change of government, I had not received a report from that summit, and that disappointed me.

Another thing of course was the Aboriginal economic participation strategy. That strategy tried to engage Aboriginal people in, dare I say it, economic participation. It was really good. Hundreds of businesses came online. In fact, the online Aboriginal directory was established and it now has almost 500 Aboriginal listings throughout Western Australia, which is really good.

As Minister for Training and Workforce Development, I was very conscious of the fact that there is a real disconnect between employment and Aboriginal people, particularly in the regions, so I established the "Training together — working together" policy. We went right around the community and again established a committee, which Sue Gordon chaired. It was fantastic. We went all over the state to talk to Aboriginal people. The thing that they wanted more than anything was a go-to place for employment, so that they felt that they were given opportunities. With that in mind, as a result of those recommendations—again, it came from Aboriginal people; it was not the gospel according to Pete—the government established five Aboriginal workforce development centres. There is one in Broome, one in Geraldton, one in Kalgoorlie and one in Bunbury and there is one on Murray Street. Tens of thousands of Aboriginal people have gone into those centres to connect to employment with employers in the mining sector, the agricultural sector, the retail sector or whatever. It has been a conduit from training to employment. I hope, again, that the current government sees the benefits of those Aboriginal workforce development centres, because they are working very well indeed.

The regional services reform caused a lot of consternation in the community. It came as the result of the removal of around \$90 million of funding from the federal government for remote communities. The then Premier made some comments that we were potentially going to close 150 remote communities. He acknowledges that it was probably inappropriate to make those comments, and I acknowledge that as well. It caused a lot of dismay and uncertainty in those communities and we had to work really hard to get that back. The regional services reform unit was ultimately established 18 months ago to ensure there is much more coordination with those communities and that the communities are much more engaged in determining what service delivery is required. It is working very, very well. For example, the Aboriginal regional employment package will change the way the public sector recruits staff, awards contracts and buys goods and services by introducing mandatory regional targets. We introduced that as part of the reform unit. In addition, the Kimberley schools project is a \$25 million partnership between public, independent and Catholic schools that supports principals and teachers to deliver teaching tailored to local Aboriginal students. Again, the Aboriginal community is a part of that and 22 schools were piloted for it. The North-West Aboriginal Housing Fund, which is a \$200 million initiative to expand the state government transitional housing model, was developed with the Wunan Foundation to help Aboriginal participants set life management goals, manage personal finances and access community support networks. They are just a few of the projects that came from the reform unit.

Whether we ever get to the point at which we debate Hon Robin Chapple's bill, I want to make one thing perfectly clear for at least the 100th time: never, ever, on any occasion were we going to close remote communities—ever. I can promise members that that was never going to happen. I like to think that the reform unit, which, as I understand has bipartisan support—it certainly did when we were in government—will be expanded. I will ask some questions on that in the coming weeks to find out its status. If the government abandons that reform unit, I am telling members again that in five or 10 years when we go to those remote communities, exactly the same issues that existed five or 10 years ago will exist. I really hope that the government sees its way clear of retaining that reform unit. As I said, I loved the Aboriginal affairs portfolio—I really did. As a result of the initiatives, particularly at the entrance level with the KindiLink program and the student-centred funding model, which I will talk more about next week, with the parenting workshops et cetera and at the exit level with the Aboriginal workforce development centres, we are providing a lot more opportunities for Aboriginal students than ever before. I am going to be long out of here before we ever see any real advances in results in those areas, but I am very confident that those policies will improve Aboriginal outcomes. Mr Acting President, is it your first time in the chair?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas): In this chamber.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is? Good to hear. Welcome to the role.

Let us look at the other area for which I was minister for that last term; that is, education. As I said earlier, I was absolutely delighted to get that portfolio and it was a great portfolio. I have to be honest with members—I say this with all humility that I can garner—we handed over a Rolls Royce education system to members opposite. I will go through a few areas to show what we did, because in education we have become the envy of the nation. If the Minister for Education and Training goes over to ministerial meetings, she will get that from not only her Labor colleagues, who I got on very well in those meetings, I have to say, but also her Liberal colleagues. There is an enormous amount in education that I can deal with. I do not intend to go through the whole lot—I am sure members will be pleased with that—but I will cherry-pick a few areas of most significant reform. I will be talking about other areas in my speech on the Loan Bill next week.

One area that we needed to reform was the curriculum, because that is first and foremost the role that we need in a compulsory education system. We have to ensure that we best prepare our students for life beyond compulsory education. Regardless of whether they want to go to university, into retail or obtain a training qualification, wherever they want to go, we have to best prepare them in compulsory education. We were not necessarily doing that. For generations our education system was geared towards university entrance. In fact, everything was generated towards university entrance, yet, realistically, less than one-third of our students go to university. It just seemed absurd that in the twenty-first century, when we are much more of a multifaceted globalised society, we were not preparing our students for life beyond compulsory education. As I said, we might take a student to year 12 and say that they will do tertiary subjects. They struggle for the last two years of education because, quite frankly, they are certainly not interested in it and they are not qualified to take that subject choice. Saying to them at the end of year 12, “Off you go; we have done our job”, is how we got the problems that lie with resilience and self-esteem. If a student is doing subject choices in years 11 and 12 upon which they are consistently getting 40 to 50 per cent—remember that the state average for all Australian tertiary admission rank scores is around 57 per cent—of course it is not going to do their self-esteem much good at all.

A number of fads took place in education over recent decades, not least being outcome-based education, which was an unmitigated disaster. We made those changes in the first term, but we needed to move into something much more formal with the curriculum and that was with the Australian curriculum. The national curriculum was

important. As a die-hard, true federalist, I am always reluctant to hand over to the Feds. The problem with that is that when power or authority is handed over to the federal government, most of the decision-making is done on the east coast. With regard to the national curriculum, that was a no-brainer because there was much more population transience in Australia. It is very important that we have some sort of uniformity with the curriculum. The periodic table and the times table is the same in every state and we spell “curriculum” the same in every state. Why do we have eight different jurisdictions with different curriculums? That is why we pushed for the national curriculum. I chaired the ministerial council meeting for the first six months I was minister, and we were dealing with tying up the final outcome for the national curriculum. One of the first things I did was I insisted that we, as a jurisdiction, had the capacity to adopt and adapt. Yes, we were going to have the framework for the national curriculum, but in Western Australia, and all jurisdictions, we would have the capacity to adopt and adapt. That was accepted unanimously by other jurisdictions and that aspect of the national curriculum is very important. Phase 1 was implemented very seamlessly in 2015. I pushed back phases 2 and 3 as I thought we had had enough changes in our education system for the time being. We probably needed a bit of a Bex and a lie down, so I said we should push phases 2 and 3 back to 2018, again I consulted with the education fraternity, and they agreed with it. Going back to the national curriculum, there were a couple of things. Because our education system was always so focused on exit and the end product, we were always going to have problems. When I was coaching or teaching I always said that if I focused on the process, the outcome would take care of itself. In the education system in Western Australia, we were always looking at the outcome: What did you get for your ATAR? What did you get for your TEE? What did you get for your leaving? Or whatever it might be. It was always the outcome, as opposed to getting the entrance level right then the outcome taking care of itself.

One of the things I did very early on was provide a lot more emphasis on early intervention. We did it a number of ways. I have already mentioned the KindiLink program to help one of the most marginalised groups in the community, Aboriginal people, to become better attuned to life in primary school and then in secondary school. In addition, over the last four years we opened 21 child and parent centres throughout Western Australia. They are magnificent. They provide enormous early intervention support for students and their parents. All the centres are attached to a primary school and anything up to 10 feeder schools will come into them. They provide early intervention literacy and numeracy support, speech therapy, mental health support, dietary support, parenting workshops—they are vital for parenting workshops—and psychology advice. These wraparound services are all provided in one centre. They deal with tens of thousands of students throughout Western Australia every week. They are in lower socioeconomic areas because they are the areas of most need. Ideally, again, had we been in government, we would have expanded the centres. We went into the last election committing to another five centres. As we know, we did not get there this time, but I like to think that the government will consider it. Once again, I never heard one voice of complaint about the child and parent centres. They work magnificently. We have to get that early intervention. We have to put the seeds in place very early in a child’s life. For the KindiLink program, the child and parent centres and the new funding model, which I will talk about in my speech on the Loan Bill 2017, we looked at ways to ensure that funding was generated and how it should have a heavy focus on early intervention. That will reap the benefits in the years ahead. In addition, I launched the kindergarten syllabus, which the kindergarten and early childhood sectors have been calling out for for decades. They now have a clear syllabus so they are not just childminding areas. The syllabus leads into the national curriculum. It was overwhelmingly called for. On each one of these occasions, I consulted enormously with all sectors. I was never bold enough to suggest that I knew everything about education. As I keep saying, I have always been involved in education. I had 23 magnificent years in the classroom. I never had a day off; I loved the job. Apart from being education minister, it is the best job on earth. Having said that, I wanted to make sure that when I left I could put on my curriculum vitae not only that I had been education minister, but also that I had perhaps done something profoundly important to enhance education in Western Australia. The curriculum was important. After the debacle of outcomes-based education when the previous government did not listen, we listened, and we put in place a structure for the curriculum. It starts with a child at birth, which is when a child’s education begins, and goes right through to compulsory education. As a government, we did an enormous amount for higher education. I will see how I go; I will mention that either today or deal with it next week.

Pastoral care is the second area I would like to talk about. People talk about pastoral care now and it just rolls off the tongue. It is just a part of a school. The definition of pastoral care is very subjective, but, fundamentally, pastoral care is to look after the social and emotional wellbeing of a child. In an increasingly complex society, it is absolutely vital that our education system provides pastoral care. When I was a little tack in Kalgoorlie, we never heard anything about psychologists, chaplains, therapists or whatever. We did not have, believe it or not, any Aboriginal students in my class; they were in a demountable at the back, which was disgraceful. There were no students with a disability. I cannot remember any ethnic students. It was very much a white, Anglo-Saxon, Christian society back in the 1960s and education was very un-complex; it really was. It was very much chalk and talk, teacher-centred, with a lot of rote learning and regurgitation of facts. There was not necessarily any critical thinking. We have moved on from that, and we now live in an increasingly complex society. From an educational

perspective in terms of pedagogy, we now ask our students—plead with them—to think more critically and analytically, and not just assume they will come back with a one-sentence response. They have to think about things and try to come to a value conclusion. That aspect of education has changed. I have talked about that regarding the curriculum. In addition, every single day in our classrooms, hundreds of thousands of students bring a litany of complex social issues with them. Substance abuse, the broken family structure and the abuse of children, in a whole raft of manifestations, are major issues in our community. Teachers do not go into classrooms now with *Trends and Turning Points* or *Biological science: the web of life*, open to page 50 and do the questions. They ask students to think and then they need to be mindful of the fact that a lot of children suffer in silence. We have to support teachers with this, which is why pastoral care is so vitally important. In that respect, we expanded resources for pastoral care enormously over the term of the previous government.

Regarding bullying, as I said, tens of thousands of students are bullied every single day in silence. Unfortunately, bullies' methodologies have now become much more sophisticated than they ever were. It was previously called bullying when someone hit someone on the arm or decked them. It is no longer like that. Ostracising or alienating a child is much more powerful and damaging than hitting someone on the arm. The advent of social media means students can now alienate and ostracise their peers, and they do it in a very powerful sense. Degrading comments online or unfriending on Facebook may seem minuscule, but in the eyes of a seven-year-old, an 11-year-old or a 17-year-old, they are profoundly significant. Now, when a teacher goes into a classroom, they deal with a multitude of social issues. With that in mind, pastoral care is absolutely vital. Our schools have a number of strategies at the moment. For example, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, Aussie Optimism, Friendly Schools Plus and Positive Parenting are all anti-bullying programs that our schools use to enormous effect.

The Safe Schools policy is one area that recently caused some national debate. The Safe Schools policy was created at the federal level and funded by the previous federal Labor government. I have to be honest; I strongly objected to the original Safe Schools policy. Frankly, I will not even go into it, but some of the things it asked school students to imagine were offensive. I understand, and I regard myself as a compassionate person, that there are issues with bullying, particularly for gay students in our community, but this policy in isolation will not solve the problem. In its previous manifestation, this policy would not have solved the problem. I certainly never, ever banned the policy. I always left it up to individual schools, as we should with these policies. It was not like the Victorian government, which insists that all schools implement the Safe Schools policy; it is mandated. The current federal government did a review of the Safe Schools policy, which made it more empathetic, but, at the same time, it was still quite edgy. As minister, I would never have mandated the policy for Western Australian schools. We should do what we do with every other policy and allow it to be voluntary. As soon as you start doing that, guys—I am telling you—you suffer the possibility of drawing attention to a particular child. There is no discrete anti-bullying policy for obese students or ethnic students et cetera but bullying is bullying. How it manifests itself in our community is unacceptable no matter what happens, but the school community must be taken with any anti-bullying program that it implements. They cannot be imposed on schools. That is with no disregard—I am not remotely dispassionate—to any individual child, be they gay, heterosexual, transgender or whatever. All I am saying is that a school has to be taken with the community. This year, 29 out of over 1 100 schools in Western Australia chose to implement the Safe Schools program. They made that choice. I never on any occasion opposed the schools doing it; it is their choice, and that is the way I would like to think it will remain. If the government imposes the program, I promise that it will create enormous issues within our school community and the community as a whole. The current minister has said that she will fund the Safe Schools policy. I am not quite sure what she is going to fund because it is an online program that has already been established. She has said that she will fund it from an internal funding stream. I have to tell members that there is not much money in the education budget. If I walked down the street and saw \$2 on the footpath, I would pick it up and put it into the education budget. Western Australia does not have the spare cash to put into these policies; it simply does not. If the minister wants to go to the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee—or whatever its manifestation is—to ask for that funding, so be it. I implore members opposite, and I hope that they understand the sincerity behind this view, not to impose a mandated bullying program in our schools. If the government does, it will cause an enormous social issue that will come back to bite it on the backside. I am saying that the Safe Schools policy, regardless of what members think of it, is there; some schools use it but a large number do not. We have to ensure that every single child is made to feel significant, regardless of their size, ethnicity, ability or otherwise, or intellectual capacity. We have to say that every single child is important. That is why an anti-bullying program has to be a cultural attitude across the school community. That is happening in all our schools—public and non-government. Some of the programs in place in our schools that ensure that each child feels empowered to be part of decisions and that each child understands that every one of their peers is important are working really well.

Another area, and one that I copped a lot of flak on, was the expansion of the chaplaincy program. I was called a bible basher and all sorts of things, which showed a complete disregard for the role of chaplains in our school communities. The role is not theologically based; it is not a faith-based policy at all. The number of chaplains in our schools has expanded enormously. About 530 government schools now have a chaplain. Those schools have

made that call. I funded it and increased the funding significantly to add that additional support for pastoral care, but the chaplaincy program is there because the schools wanted it. On no occasion did I ever say that schools must have a chaplain. In fact, it was a headache for me because there was so much demand but we did not have the money. I had to go back to the EERC and get more money for it. There was so much demand that backbenchers everywhere were supportive. I challenge any member opposite to find any school that has a chaplain that will tell them that it does not want to have a chaplain. If they ask their schools, I challenge them to find one that says it does not want a chaplain, because they do. There is always a problem, of course. It was one of the things that we had a fight with the Feds on. The Feds decided that it was a good idea for a while—that was my guys, my troop—but they decided that they were going to bail, so we had to top up the funding. I will talk more about that when I discuss the gospel according to Pete on funding in education in my next speech! The current structure is not working. Two levels of government trying to fund education is manifestly flawed.

That brings me to another area, my baby, the independent public school system. IPS came from my years of experience in the education system. I am a public school boy—born and bred. I taught in the public education system and had no desire to go to the private education system because I was loving my time in the public system. I had my first time at John Curtin Senior High School, where I taught my first year with Michelle Roberts. I then went to Lesmurdie Senior High School, travelled a bit with the tennis, and then went into the private system. The only reason I went private was that in those days—back in the 1980s—teachers had to do their country service. I was desperate to do my country service when I first went out; I wanted to go back to Kalgoorlie. We had plenty of teachers in those days. There was an excess of teachers. I was desperate to go to Kalgoorlie but I was sent to John Curtin—go figure! I was sent to one of the most sought after schools in the state rather than back to Kalgoorlie. Having said that, when I got back after travelling for a bit, I went to Lesmurdie and I was told that I had to go to the country the next year. I had a couple of good tennis players at that stage so I asked them to give me a couple of years and I would gladly go. I was told that I had to go the next year; I said no. There was inflexibility in staffing in those days when teachers had to do country service. I said that I was quite willing to do it in a couple of years but I was told that I had to go then. That is the only reason I went into the private education system, but I am glad that I did. I had a few good years at Presbyterian Ladies' College, travelled again, and went to Scotch College for 15 years. I worked in the public education system, and at an all-girls school and an all-boys school.

When I came out of teaching, the Liberal Party was in opposition and it was abundantly clear to me that there was an issue with the perception of our public education system. The number of students was declining at an alarming rate. I did what I should do in opposition—as our guys have really started doing—and communicated with the schools and local constituents. It became evident to me that principals, administrators and teachers felt very constrained by decisions that were imposed upon them by central office. Decisions about a member of staff for Port Hedland were determined by someone in East Perth. The principal had no say in staffing levels. Why was this the case? Why was there a situation in which a principal, who was in middle management and knew his constituency, his environment and community, could not have a say in what went on in his school? It seemed so illogical to me. We talked around and went through it; we had a little group that met for a couple of years including a couple of principals from public schools, who obviously will not be named. I talked to a number of principals. At the beginning of 2008, the Liberal Party released the empowering public schools policy, which we took into the 2008 election, which came—as members will be well aware—a little early for us. It was a good policy that ensured that we empowered local communities. I do not know how we did it, but we won government that year. I was very disappointed that I did not get the education portfolio, but I got the training portfolio and was able to do some stuff there. I also had the energy portfolio, which I loved. About three years into that term of government, I was made education minister. The independent public school system is a magnificent system of education that has completely transformed public education in Western Australia. It ensures that authority is given at the local level, where it belongs. It has created boards constructed of members of the community—someone with financial expertise, someone with social expertise and someone with economic expertise. The boards represent the broad community. In addition to that, the principal has the authority to hire his or her own staff—at last! When a principal decides that they need a literacy and numeracy specialist, they no longer need to ring up East Perth and be told that such-and-such has been on the list for two years so they can have him or her. Principals can advertise positions in the paper and they can determine who will be the literacy and numeracy expert to suit their cohort of students. How can members argue against that? They cannot. The unions hated it and they hated me for it because those teachers who were called redeployees might miss out on their school of choice or may not end up in a school that they like. But it has increased teacher quality throughout Western Australia. This year, 524 out of about 790 of our public schools are independent public schools. We went into the last election with a policy calling for another 100 independent public schools. I reckon that would probably do it because some regional schools do not have the capacity to become independent public schools. They are too small so they probably will not need to. Another 100 schools would do it. I know that even though members opposite grudgingly supported IPS, there will be very little appetite to expand the IPS program because the unions will not support it. I am telling members opposite, though,

to listen to their communities. They should listen to their communities and ask the schools whether they like being IPSs. I visited 628 schools when I was education minister and never once had an independent public school tell me that it wanted to go back. Dozens said that they wanted to be part of the process. We are empowering the local community. Why should parents not have a say in the uniform, the logo and the structure of the school? They should have. The non-government sector has been doing that for generations, and it is working very well indeed. At last the public education system has taken the lead from the non-government sector. The non-government sector does not like it particularly much. Western Australia is the only state in the nation that has seen, for six years in a row, an increase in the market share for public education, and the biggest influx has been into IPS schools. It changes the culture of the school, ensuring that the school community is now empowered. IPS has been one of the great success stories of education in this state. A lot of the other states have followed suit. I reckon that if we had put a patent on IPS, we could have pretty much paid off our debt, because all the other states are following us. IPS, without a shadow of a doubt is a success story in education.

With that in mind, I would like to pretty much finish up here. I am sure that everyone will be pleased with that. A number of my colleagues want to speak, and I get another chance next week, members will be pleased to know. I have another chance to talk about higher education, on which the previous government did an enormous amount, and a bit more about some of the reforms we instituted and, very significantly—members will love this—about money. We copped it relentlessly from the other side when we were in office, and I will give some cold, hard facts about funding. I promise that we will be watching every single school that members opposite have commented on for the last four years to make sure that they get back their purported cuts. I know that Hon Donna Faragher has been up at night going through the speeches of members opposite over the past four years.

Hon Donna Faragher: They are scintillating, as well.

Hon PETER COLLIER: They are scintillating; that is right. I will be talking about the student-centred funding model, and showing how that model really does what it should do. It funds every child in Western Australia regardless of where they live, their ethnicity, and whether they have a disability. It ensures that the money follows the child. At last, we have some transparency in our funding. I will leave it at that with regard to funding. As I said, I will be talking about that in my next contribution.

I conclude by saying once again that I feel privileged to have been a minister for eight and a half years, particularly education and Aboriginal affairs minister, and also Leader of the House for four years, but I am looking forward to and relishing the role of Leader of the Opposition and working with my colleagues and the crossbench, ensuring that we keep the government to account. It infuriates me when I hear this stuff about us leaving the government with a mess in the western suburbs, because I know it is not right. Members opposite can go off about financial disasters in their answers to questions, but in the area of education we left these guys a Rolls Royce. I would love to have been a fly on the wall when Hon Sue Ellery had her first meeting with the corporate executive. It would be a bit like Reg and Stan and the activists in *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. The honourable minister would have rocked up and said, "Well, the unions are back in town; the Tories have gone. What did the Tories ever do for us in education?" The corporate executives would be sitting there saying, "Well, actually, we do have the highest paid teachers in the nation", to which the reply would be, "Well, yes, but apart from the highest paid teachers, what have the Tories ever done—what have the Liberals ever done for education?" "Well, we had the best resourced schools in the nation." "Well, apart from the best resourced schools, what else have the Liberals ever done for education?" "Well, we had the best National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy results of any state in the nation." "Well, all right, apart from the best NAPLAN results in the nation, what have the Liberals ever done for education?" I can imagine that this is what would be going on. The corporate executives would then say, "Well, they sorted out the curriculum, actually." "Okay, they might have sorted out the curriculum, but what else have the Liberals ever done for us?" The reply would have been, "Well, they put a chaplain in every school." "I know they put a chaplain in every school, but what else have the Liberals ever done for us?" The corporate executives by that stage would be getting very frustrated. "All right, then, apart from having the highest paid teachers in the nation, the best resourced schools in the nation, the best NAPLAN results in a nation, putting a chaplain in every school, early intervention, what have the Liberals ever done for us in education?"

Hon Simon O'Brien: Independent public schools?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Of course, independent public schools. Hon Simon O'Brien has been on the corporate executive, has he not?

Hon Simon O'Brien: No, I have just been hearing some very fine speeches.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will just finish that bit of flippancy, but the point is, as I said, that I am proud of what our government achieved in education. We have gifted the present government an outstanding education system that is the envy of the nation. I implore the Minister for Education and Training not to waste this opportunity.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [4.17 pm]: I am absolutely delighted to associate myself with this motion, in which we join together in expressing our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and thanking Her Excellency the Governor for the speech that she was pleased to deliver to Parliament. It is a time to come together and contemplate where we have been and where we are going in the course of this Parliament, and what better way to start than by contributing to the debate on a motion moved by Hon Sally Talbot, which probably for the first time is one with which I would fully concur. I thank the honourable member for that. I also thank the Governor for her presence and her encouragement to all of us at this time. It has been noted several times in the course of this debate that we have a female Leader of the House, and we have acknowledged the election of the first female President of this house, after she went to present her credentials to the state's first female Governor. As a previous speaker has noted, I do not intend to dwell myself on the gender of those three officeholders because, quite apart from that, I think they are all competent occupiers of those several positions. In the case of our President, as with the others, I am sure she will perform with distinction, and she will have the support of members from all corners of the house to do that. Indeed, it is probably some measure of the ability that we ascribe to her that, despite the many onerous tasks that devolve to the President of the Legislative Council, the house has seen fit to equip her with only one deputy, whereas the Deputy President needs five. Perhaps a balance has been struck there that recognises the value of Hon Kate Doust in the role of President.

On the gender theme, there is probably not much more I can really contribute, except to note that I am the first male occupant of the Deputy President's role for several years, but I do not really think that that is stop-the-press news—so sorry about that. However, I thank the house for the great privilege of being Deputy President and Chair of Committees, and I pledge to do my best to serve in that role, and in particular to act in concert with our President to make sure that the dignity of the house is preserved and that our rights and privileges are defended whenever they may come under threat—and come under threat they do from time to time, not so much from pressures within the house but from without.

We all know what a blessed irritating nuisance Premiers, for example, can be. In this house, we have seen it with many successive Premiers that they do not understand the role of a house of review, but that is all right because we do. Collectively, this house understands its responsibilities and if the Premier of the day does not, that is too bad because he is not to influence the way this house conducts itself. Members on both sides over the years have staunchly stood up for the responsibilities of the Legislative Council, and they will certainly continue to do it now. I do not think that members here or in another place have been particularly well served by Premiers over the years when it comes to looking out for their welfare. That is just one of the ways that we find it manifest that Premiers want to interfere in things that they should not interfere in. Members have to understand this and sometimes they have to stand up to people. I regret that so often we see entitlements and other prerogatives of members of Parliament just given away on a whim because it seems like a good idea to some leader of some party or other at the material time. I will come back to that topic on another occasion.

I want to talk today a little bit about the recent election. I congratulate the Labor Party on regaining the government benches and we will no doubt be watching the performance of members opposite with great interest as time progresses. Indeed, I can see the Leader of the Opposition is already closely engaged, as is Hon Donna Faragher and others. I am sure that all members will make sure that they do their job as members of the house of review in making sure that this government does the right thing. I will come back to that in just a moment. During the course of today, I also wish to talk about a matter that I first raised back in 2014; namely, the efficiency of our road systems. My comments on that matter caused quite a deal of public interest at the time and I want to review progress on those matters. I will do that a little later in my remarks. We are going to break for question time fairly soon and I will probably not finish before then.

For now, I want to go back to that theme about what happens now that we have had a change of government. On 22 May, I had the great privilege to become the father of the house as its longest serving member. It seems like only yesterday that I was a young upstart —

Hon Alanna Clohesy: You still are—just delete “young”.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Thank you, but now things have changed a bit. At the time of the election, a number of new members came into this place. I think the number was 13 if my memory serves me correctly, which is not an extraordinary number of changes to have at a general election for the upper house. To all of those new members who joined us from 22 May, I welcome them and I hope that they will find their time in here, be it long or short, one that they can look back on with satisfaction and pride that they have been able to achieve some of the things that they set out to do when they came in here. I wish them all the best in working towards those goals, many of which were outlined in their inaugural speeches. I look forward to working with them, where appropriate, to achieve some of these goals. The election was also an occasion on which we farewelled, obviously, a similar number of now former members. It was a disproportionate contribution to that list from my party. It included not only quite a few people who did not want to go, but also one or two who did not even think that they were going

to go. That is the nature of politics; it can be a very cruel and ruthless beast and we have seen the parting of ways now with quite a few of the friends who were former members of the Legislative Council from the Liberal Party. I have to tell members that I miss them—some more than others, admittedly.

Hon Samantha Rowe: Which ones?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I will not give members a league table of “degrees of missing-ness” or anything like that. That would be quite indiscreet and indeed it might invite a response that I might not want to hear either, but I do miss members whose company I do not now have the pleasure of, including Hon Robyn McSweeney. I am very sorry to see that Robyn is not here. Hon Brian Ellis is another person who I know will be missed by members. I have never heard anybody say a bad word about Hon Brian Ellis and I know that a number of members here on both sides would share those sentiments. I was also sorry to see Hon Phil Edman depart from South Metropolitan Region; what a very hardworking member he has been. To all of those members, I wish them well. To others who I have not mentioned, I miss them, too, and wish them all the best in the future. The fact remains that it means a little more to me this time to see people go because now there is no-one else who was here when I came in, whether it was the nine or 10 who came in with me or indeed the whole house that was here when I first arrived. It is a salutary experience and a slightly lonely one to realise that all of those people who I looked up to on my arrival have all gone. It reminds me of a few things, but in particular it is a humbling experience to know that I have managed to endure with the pleasure of my party and the people of the South Metropolitan Region.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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