

**SELECT COMMITTEE INTO THE
GOVERNMENT'S LOCAL PROJECTS, LOCAL JOBS PROGRAM**

Establishment — Motion

Resumed from 17 October on the following motion moved by Hon Tjorn Sibma —

- (1) A select committee into the government's Local Projects, Local Jobs program is established.
- (2) The select committee is to inquire into the Local Projects, Local Jobs program, "the program", with particular reference to —
 - (a) how each project was developed, evaluated and selected for funding;
 - (b) how payments were made and acquitted under each project to ensure financial probity and accountability;
 - (c) how actual or perceived conflicts of interest were declared and managed under each project;
 - (d) the number of projects funded and, for each project, the amount of funding provided and number of jobs created;
 - (e) whether community, education, arts and sporting groups within the state were afforded an equal opportunity to access the program;
 - (f) whether funding to the program affected the quantum of funds available for grants or other funding sources for community, education, arts and sporting groups within the state; and, if so, in what way; and
 - (g) any other related matter.
- (3) The select committee shall consist of five members.
- (4) The select committee is to report no later than 12 months after the committee has been established.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [1.04 pm]: I will briefly summarise the remarks I made the last time we dealt with this motion. The intent behind this motion is simply to follow the money the whole way through the process—from the inception of plans to the commitments entered into, the administration of moneys by departments and the reconciliation of those funds. The last time I spoke, I mentioned, to a degree, my reluctance at having to move this motion.

The reason I have put this motion is that this issue has been raised consistently over the last 12 months, and although some information has been provided by the government about the Local Projects, Local Jobs program, only in a very generous sense can I say that that information has been helpful. The information provided by the government has largely been piecemeal, evasive and inconsistent. If we are to discharge our responsibilities as a house of review, and if we are to hold the Premier to the noble pledge that he made upon being sworn in as Premier to run an open, transparent and accountable government, this is where we test that commitment. Unfortunately, the government has been found wanting in this respect, and this has generated the need for me to put this motion in these terms. This motion has not been put to irritate the government. It has not been put to waste time and resources. It has been put because legitimate inquiries have been thwarted, dismissed or evaded, and, frankly, that is unsatisfactory.

One might dispute whether it is worth pursuing a quantum of funds of this degree. I think it is, for this reason. For a large part of this year, this chamber has been in uproar about the quantum of cuts to the education budget. The size of those cuts is largely equivalent to the size of this program. I put it to members that if a cut of \$40 million or thereabouts from a line agency is worth protesting about and seeking redress for, the expenditure of about the same quantum of money on other projects and commitments is also worth evaluating.

I now want to give members five reasons why this committee needs to be established. These are not the only reasons, but they are the most significant. The first is that there is complete uncertainty about the financial nature of the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. On some occasions, the program has been presented to us as a grant scheme; on other occasions, it has been explained away as anything but a grant scheme. It is worth the committee investigating this issue to get clarity about the fundamental question of what kind of program this is. I will go into that in more detail later.

The second reason is that over the last 12 months, despite myriad programs and projects funded under this scheme, not one business plan—not even the bare outline of a business plan—has been presented by this government. The

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government has had countless opportunities to present the justification for one, two, or even three programs but that has not yet happened and, frankly, that is unacceptable. The third reason this motion is worth supporting is the obvious demonstrable bias in the way that funds have been distributed. Frankly, it begs more questions than it answers, and I will get to that as well. The fourth issue, and perhaps the most sensitive one—I want to be utterly deliberate and measured in what I say—is that a scheme of this nature lends itself to the potential for the mismanagement of funds because of conflicts of interest, or lends itself to scrutiny because of the perceptions of conflicts of interest. The management of either actual or perceived conflicts of interest is a fundamental accountability discipline. It is one, I think, that appears to be lacking in the administration of the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. The fifth reason that I will put it to members very simply is the very flimsy defences offered by the government in defence of this program. In some respects, it waves red flags and provides encouragement to scrutinise the nature of these commitments individually and the administration and governance around the scheme as a whole.

I might just pick up where I left off. Questions have been put in this chamber that have been largely un-noted. Questions have been put outside this chamber through freedom of information requests, which unfortunately have resulted in unsatisfactory outcomes. I believe I mentioned very briefly a freedom of information request that I submitted to the Premier. Without going through every iteration of that particular inquiry, let me summarise. Initially, 1 024 documents relating to this program were identified within a certain time period. After a process of giving five extensions to the Premier's office to provide the documents and to narrow the scope to make it administratively easier, I was granted full access to only three documents, edited access to five documents and a complete denial to seven other documents identified. That was out of the broad net of over 1 000 documents. There are discoverable documents. There is discoverable material out there that is not being provided either to this chamber or to me by virtue of this particular freedom of information application. Frankly, I find that to be unacceptable.

As for the reasons for this committee, there is an unacceptable lack of clarity about whether this scheme is a grants program or some other program. This is not necessarily a puritanical obsession or a commitment to terminological exactitude; this is just a fundamental definition. What is this program? Is it a grants program or is it something else? This Parliament has been given two separate answers, which do not hang together. The first was from the Treasurer's budget speech of 7 September 2017, and I quote —

To boost local jobs we are spending \$39 million on the Local Projects Local Jobs grants program, which includes \$10 million in regional areas.

Early media releases, strangely released ahead of that budget by Minister MacTiernan on 5 July 2017 and by Minister McGurk on 26 July and later on 18 August 2017, all referred to the Local Projects, Local Jobs program as a grants program. That terminology, however, seemed to evaporate by the beginning of this year. In debate in the other place on 13 February, the member for Armadale said outright that it is not a grants scheme. Both of those things cannot hang together. Why is this important? With the indulgence of the house, and not to bore members—I am not in any way casting aspersions on the capacity or grasp of the fundamentals of public administration in this chamber—it is important to understand what a grant is. The document into grant administration I am citing here was prepared by the Auditor General's office from July 2016. At page 4 it states —

A grant is a financial assistance arrangement or contribution provided to either a non-government organisation, another public authority or an individual for discrete purpose and period, by either instalment or lump sum.

Good grant administration ensures that grants are awarded equitably, expended for the intended purposes and contribute to the intended program outcomes. Agencies need to demonstrate that assessment and approval of applications is in accordance with approved policies and processes, and grant programs are monitored and results evaluated.

This is a fundamental definition and the fundamental guidance on how grants should be administered. This scheme, which presented itself as a grants scheme initially, would have appeared to have tied itself up to these kinds of disciplines.

The recommendations of this report were very interesting and they are worth reflecting upon in how we evaluate the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. I will cite two of the six recommendations provided. Recommendation 2 states —

appropriately advertise the availability of grants. This should include key details about application requirements and any deadlines for submission

Recommendation 3, of which there are three parts, states —

document any conflicts of interest as part of the grant assessment process. This should include:

- a. declarations of any real or perceived conflicts by members involved in the assessment process
- b. details of how the conflict was resolved

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c. where no conflicts are present this should be documented

This is fundamentally how a grants program is run. This is how Local Projects, Local Jobs was presented to us originally but, strangely, that definition has dropped and there has been an outright disavowal of this program as being a grants program by a member in the other place. I want to establish which it is. That kind of lack of clarity is completely unacceptable for a scheme that has disbursed nearly \$40 million.

The other reason we need this inquiry is that no business case, no justification really, has been presented to substantiate the expenditure that has been made. That is not to say that it should not have been made or that it is not substantiated. It is just that no argument has been presented that would satisfy the curiosity of this chamber. From an answer provided by the Leader of the House to a question I put on 28 November last year, we are advised that at that time 855 individual grants had been approved and nearly 650 had received funding or at least initial funding. Of the 855 programs that we assume—I do not know whether any further programs were approved—we have not received one business case, not one single justification. Frankly, I find that to be unacceptable.

We have to ask ourselves whether examples of genuine community need were going unfulfilled, unmet, unserved or unserviceable by the sweep of other state government grants schemes that would have necessitated the construction of the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. We do not know that. We do not understand the parameters of the Local Projects, Local Jobs scheme because we have no metrics or structure through which a business case can be presented. That is my assumption, at least, and it needs to be explored by the work and investigations of a committee established for that process.

But that is not the only question that arises. We have some understanding of the suite of projects approved under this scheme, but how many projects—how many propositions—were rejected? Is that not also the marker of a grants program—fitness for purpose—or was this just a swing-through, grab as much cash as possible and throw it out to as many groups in members' electorate as possible? Because without any justification or sense of parameters, how are we to assess, for example—I am not picking on anyone in particular—that \$100 000 for the Alexander Park Tennis Club upgrade was an appropriate expenditure that met the parameters of this program; or, for example, the \$350 000 that was put together for the establishment of the Stephen Michael Foundation; or the \$80 000 given to the Wanneroo Amateur Boxing Club to purchase a minivan. Those things may all have been meritorious, but we do not know whether they were appropriate because we do not understand—it has not been presented to us in a satisfactory way—the parameters of this scheme, how it was governed, how it was evaluated, and to what purpose and object the funds have been distributed.

The third matter that should give us cause for concern and motivation for inquiry is the obvious bias in the way that funds have been distributed. I am going only on partial information because we do not have a government-approved master list of all the projects—they have been presented in part—and we do not know exactly where they are and to whom they went, at what quantum and to which electorate. In *The Sunday Times* of 4 February, Gareth Parker at least attempted to quantify to whom the money went and at what level. At that stage in February, a total of \$23 million had been either committed or spent. Of that \$23 million, Labor seats—either Labor-held seats or seats gained by WA Labor—received \$21 million of that \$23 million; roughly 93 per cent of the entire program. Fast-forwarding to this point, my understanding, on the basis of information that has been presented, is that the full quantum—the full bucket—has been spent. I am absolutely certain that seats held by the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA did not receive any additional expenditure. So something more equivalent to 96 to 97 per cent of a \$39 million program has been spent in Labor seats. There might be a good reason for that.

Hon Sue Ellery: Yes—we won.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: There we go. That is hubris; we need a better justification than that.

Also, there are inequities in the level of funding distributed among Labor seats. There might also be good reasons for that, but it is worth trying to get an understanding of why, for example, the seat of Bicton appeared to receive \$606 000 worth of Local Projects, Local Jobs, although the seat of Willagee received \$235 000. Those are contiguous seats. Also, why the electorate of Murray–Wellington received \$1.1 million of Local Projects, Local Jobs funding and its neighbouring seat, Collie–Preston, received—it is still a large amount—\$697 000. We can make the same observations of Mirrabooka versus Girrawheen, or Wanneroo versus Butler. Members would expect there to be somewhat of a more even distribution if this program was actually attending to genuine need at the community level. The lumpiness should alert us to something perhaps being not quite right.

I will not labour the point, but I have said that I will not mention anything untoward or make accusations or name people, but I am very concerned about the potential for a program like this, as it has been or appears to have been administered, to provide fertile territory for conflicts of interest to arise, or for at the very least for the perception of conflicts of interest to arise. No doubt every single member in this chamber, as in the other chamber, is a member of a community group or organisation—likely multiple groups and organisations; that is part of being a member

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of Parliament. But with that also comes a certain responsibility about how funding might be delivered to those groups, and through which means. The government has had every opportunity to explain to the house how these conflicts of interest, if indeed there are some—or the perception of those conflicts—have been managed. Instead, I think the Premier's remarks in public have been that there is no problem at all, and that this is simply evidence of members being in touch with their communities. That might be the case. But I have been in this chamber long enough to know that we, unfortunately, cannot take the Premier at his word. We cannot do that; we need evidence. This is more of an issue because this scheme does not appear to have been publicly advertised. It was not open and competitive. No submissions, as I understand, were ever entered into or generated by a sporting club, a school P&C, an RSL, a scout hall or anything like that. So how did people know this scheme was available? How do we know, for example, that perhaps family members or friends, associates, union affiliates, or even members of staff in a member's office, were not also members of an organisation that just coincidentally and happily happened to receive funding through Local Projects, Local Jobs? I do not know whether that is the case, but I do not know whether that is not the case either. It would be the role of the committee to establish whether anything like that occurred. There is a fundamental accountability discipline. This is not reaching for the marble or about setting extremely high, exacting standards that can never be obtained; this is just fundamental financial management about which we still do not have a satisfactory answer. Answers can come only by way of a committee structured in this way, with the terms of reference that have been set out before us.

I want to head off the inevitable defences or objections to this motion, or the reasons the Local Projects, Local Jobs program is above reproach. The first justification the government used is embedded in its very title—local jobs. After 12 months we are utterly uncertain about the jobs being spoken about. Where are these jobs? How many of them are there? Are they permanent jobs? Are they jobs for members of Parliament, or are they genuine jobs for the community? Because I have not seen the uplift in employment rates that appears to be insinuated.

The second defence is that this is merely the fulfilment of election pledges, and that is true. But we have sought to understand when exactly these election pledges were made. My friend Hon Michael Mischin asked about a particular redevelopment project at Halidon Primary School. All he sought was an explanation of the exact commitment made, to whom it was made and when it was made, because it does not appear to have been made originally, as best we can tell. There has also been an uneven treatment in the way that the government has honoured some election commitments more than others. Not all election commitments are equal. Even if this scheme is the mere fulfilment of pledges made at a local level, the government is not absolved from abiding by the rules of proper process and distributing funding prudently. This is not a get out of jail free card.

The third defence is that the recipients deserved the money. I want to be clear that I have not begrudged a single recipient of Local Projects, Local Jobs funding—not a single one! Indeed, they may well have deserved that funding and benefited from that help. However, that is not the point. I subscribe to the fundamental economic notion that there is no such thing as a free lunch and that programs such as this come at some cost—that is, an opportunity cost. Although some groups may have benefited, others may have suffered because they were not given an equal opportunity to partake in this funding scheme or because an allocation of funding that may well have been allocated to them or earmarked in another way was consumed by the government's need to cobble together a \$40 million program to fund something else. It is completely unacceptable for community groups of equal need to be treated unequally because they fell on the wrong side of an arbitrary political boundary or did not have a personal relationship with the Labor candidate or member of Parliament. That appears to have been the case and is utterly unacceptable.

It is only because of the government's shifty evasions and self-congratulation that I have been motivated to put this motion to the chamber in the terms that I have put it. At its heart is the unaccounted for expenditure of close to \$40 million at a time of so-called budget repair. If members take budget repair seriously, they would take budget expenditure seriously and scrutinise it to the best of their ability. That opportunity has been unacceptably denied to this chamber and, indeed, to this Parliament by a government enjoying the fruits of victory. Those fruits do not last long; they sour. It is clear that if we continue at the pace we have been going, we will be absolutely none the wiser about how the scheme was cobbled together, how it was administered and how the public service was leaned on to fund schemes that it otherwise would not have funded. This is a very simple motion. If members believe that it is their job to follow the money, they will support this motion, because we have no clarity, no line of sight and many questions still to be answered.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [1.33 pm]: I rise on behalf of the government to put our position on this motion. I indicate at the outset that we do not support this motion. There is an amendment that has been agreed to by the mover of the motion and, I understand, is supported by the formal opposition. Instead of establishing a select committee, the motion will be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations with the same terms of reference and the same chairperson. I will talk about that in due course.

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In the first instance, I want to address the substance of the motion. In 2016 and early 2017, the Labor Party made a series of election commitments from opposition. Some related to what I refer to as big-ticket statewide issues. Also, seat by seat, local candidates made election commitments specific to their electorates of financial support for community groups, sporting groups, local government, schools and the like. They were branded under the heading “Local Projects, Local Jobs”. Once we were elected, the funds were acquitted through the grants programs of the agencies within which those promises fell. For example, in my portfolio, the Local Projects, Local Jobs election commitments that related to schools were acquitted through the grants program and grants processes of the Department of Education. A series of election commitments were branded under the heading Local Projects, Local Jobs. We did not promise to establish a program of funds. Unlike royalties for regions, we did not promise to establish a separate fund in government. Unlike the commonwealth government’s community development program, we did not promise to establish a separate funding program. Seat by seat, we made a series of very specific election commitments branded as Local Projects, Local Jobs.

Before us today is the motion that we should allocate the resources of Parliament to investigate the origins and detail of election promises that were made by a party in opposition. I have two things to say about that. It sets a new low standard for what Parliament ought to put its resources towards. I do not even know how the committee would do this. It would be examining how a party in opposition made decisions about election promises. It is a disproportionate response to what is claimed to be the issue. When I formally move my amendment, I will make the point that the resources of Parliament, and particularly of the Legislative Council, because of its make-up, are somewhat stretched at the moment. We have approved three select committees. If we had set up a fourth select committee, resources would have been stretched. I will put a more sensible proposition—that is, to refer it to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. I make that point because we are asking Parliament to do something that it has never been asked to do before—that is, to examine the process by which a party in opposition made local seat-by-seat promises. It is absolutely extraordinary! If the shoe were on the other foot, could we also examine how sitting government members in 2016 and 2017 determined how they made promises? For example, if the then member for Perth made a series of election commitments—I will talk about those in a minute—should we examine how she determined to make a commitment to tennis club X as opposed to tennis club Y? That is what we are seeking to apply to what was then the Labor Party in opposition.

As I recall, candidates and members of Parliament did a variety of things to determine what promises and commitments they would make. Some sent surveys to community groups to ask what they needed. As people who lived in their communities, others had relationships with organisations, which is nothing untoward. Although the mover of the motion was careful in what he said, he certainly sowed the seeds to suggest that there was a perception that something was improper in the way that tennis club X was selected as opposed to tennis club Y. Part of the reason they were successful—apart from the fact that the essential reason I think was that Western Australians were sick of Colin Barnett and his government; nothing more and nothing less for lots of people—is that many of our candidates were deeply embedded and active members of their community and they knew that tennis club X needed facilities and tennis club Y did not. That is how decisions were made. There was no grand conspiracy, but we are being asked to devote the resources of the Parliament of Western Australia to examine how a political party in opposition came to make its election promises. In one point of the commentary we just received, we are being asked to consider whether there is something inappropriate in the government doing two things at the same time—that is, making tough decisions to fix the finances of the mess we were left and at the same time delivering our election promises; that there is something wrong with making tough economic decisions to fix the finances while at the same time delivering on our election promises. That is what we were elected to do. There is nothing wrong or improper in that. But we are being asked to establish a committee to investigate what I think is a disproportionate response to an issue. It is overreach.

In support of his motion, the honourable member put to us in his argument that we consider also how many propositions were rejected. Folks, we are talking about election promises from a party in opposition. We are being asked to consider whether a tendering-type process was entered into. We were in opposition! We were a political party going into an election, trying to connect with our local communities, and we are being asked to consider that. The fact that he can ask whether a tendering-type process was entered into and, if the answer is no, that there is something wrong with that, is a false premise to begin with. It was a party in opposition making a series of election commitments. It is absolutely extraordinary.

Then we are being asked to consider whether there was bias in how those election promises were made in certain seats. I look forward to hearing from some contributors on the other side about what promises they made in the last election and, indeed, before that in respect of, let us say, Armadale, Rockingham, Kwinana or Victoria Park. I am interested in hearing the election promises made in those areas. If there were none, why? Could that be bias? Could it be they are biased? What have the people of Armadale, Rockingham, Kwinana and Victoria Park done to deserve such bias from the party that was in government and seeks to be in government again? Why were they not

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given election promises? Do members know why? It is because political parties make decisions all the time, weighing up what is in their strategic best interests and how they have to allocate their resources given they know that they cannot win every seat, although we gave it our best shot and did pretty well at it. Every party knows they cannot win every seat, so they are realistic about the promises they make. To suggest that somehow the process we adopted was biased and, therefore, wrong because we exercised some form of bias against certain seats is extraordinary, particularly because—I have the list and I will go through it in a minute—we made promises to seats we did not win and we are delivering on those promises. They were put out under the heading of Local Projects, Local Jobs, a branding exercise within which, once elected to government, the funds were acquitted and remain being acquitted by the respective grants programs in the respective agencies.

We are being asked to devote parliamentary resources to examine the processes of a political party in opposition and, frankly, I think it is overreach. It is absolutely extraordinary. Each of the agencies has used its own procedures to administer funds to organisations and to fulfil the reporting and acquittal requirements within those organisations. For example, I can tell members about my own portfolio. In the Department of Education, all public schools are required to provide an acquittal report. When applicable, public schools were also requested to provide a project status report on any unspent funds by 31 December 2017 and 30 June 2018. The non-government sector reporting and acquittal processes were detailed in the individual grant agreements and require a project acquittal report and certification of statement for grant recipient by 30 June 2018. Shocking! It is shocking that we used the grants acquittal process of the relevant agency to acquit the funds. Members opposite can go and poke around in there. I do not mind if they poke around in there, because that is what they will find: a proper process was established and followed for acquittal of those funds.

Local Projects, Local Jobs is a collection of election commitments made in opposition. It is a one-off allocation of funding as per those election commitments. It is not, and was never promised to be, an ongoing funding process. No opposition party, including the Liberal Party, in the history of Australian elections has ever run an open tender-type application process for its election commitments. No party in the history of Australia has done that, yet we are being asked to consider the proposition that because that was not done, there is something to be investigated; there is some reason to cast suspicion and aspersions—nasturtiums as my grandmother would say!—on the nature of the program. That is absolutely appalling and completely disproportionate to the issues I think the honourable member wants to examine.

I want to do a bit of, to quote the ad, “Compare the Pair” if I can call it that and ask speakers who are due to speak next, particularly from the opposition Liberal Party, to identify for me the difference between Eleni Evangel, the then member for Perth, and the current member for Perth, the then candidate for Perth, making promises. Eleni Evangel on 5 March 2017 posted on her Facebook page that she was going to commit \$750 000 to sports clubs—not referencing any grants program—including the Leederville Tennis Club, Floreat Athena Football Club, North Perth Bowling Club, Perth Soccer Club, North Perth Tennis Club and East Perth Football Club. What is the difference between Eleni Evangel promising—not attaching it to any funding program—\$100 000 to Kyilla Primary School for nature playground upgrades and the current member for Perth promising \$100 000 to Kyilla Primary School for nature playground upgrades? The current member for Perth did it first, but other than that, what is the difference? What is the difference between Eleni Evangel, I think on 28 February 2017, promising on her Facebook page \$500 000 to North Perth Primary School for undercover area upgrades and the then Labor candidate for Perth promising \$450 000 to North Perth Primary School for undercover area upgrades? Other than \$50 000, what is the difference?

Hon Aaron Stonehouse: They are both pork-barrelling.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That may well be the case, my friend, but the keyword is “both”. The point I am trying to make is that there is nothing new in the way our party organised or came up with its election promises. What is the difference between Eleni Evangel on, I think, 28 February 2017 —

Hon Colin Tincknell: That is the exact problem. There is nothing new.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If the honourable member wants to conduct an inquiry into how every major party develops its election commitments, go ahead, but that is not the motion we are debating.

Hon Michael Mischin: It’s the government.

Hon SUE ELLERY: This was a government member, Eleni Evangel, and her promise on, I think, 28 February 2017 on her Facebook page of \$25 000—not attached to any grants scheme—for new turf and resurfacing at the Leederville Tennis Club and \$14 000 for improved amenities at the North Perth Tennis Club. What is the difference between that and the promise of the then member for Swan Hills, Frank Alban, of \$60 000 for an extended undercover area at Mundaring Primary School? The then member for Forresterfield, Nathan Morton, promised \$120 000 for perimeter fencing at High Wycombe Primary School. What is the difference between that and the

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then candidate for Bicton, Matt Taylor, who was a member, but not the member for that seat, promising, I think, \$120 000 for a feasibility study into the future development of East Fremantle oval? I will just check for *Hansard*'s purposes the actual amount of money.

Hon Michael Mischin: Since you are on a roll —

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not taking Hon Michael Mischin's interjection.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not taking them.

The PRESIDENT: No, you are not.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Member!

Hon SUE ELLERY: What is the difference between those things and a promise in the seat of Balcatta from the Labor Party candidate of \$40 000 for reticulation for the Hamersley Habitat Community Garden run by volunteers? What is the difference between the promises that I have already read out and a \$5 000 grant for multicultural games and sensory toys for children with special needs to the Mt Lawley Toy Library, or \$30 000 for the Albany police and community youth centre for an upgrade to information technology and computer systems? Compare the pair; what is the difference? If members think there is a fundamental problem, they should change the terms of reference of this committee. That is in the hands of some people in this chamber to do. If members think that it is pork-barrelling and we need to have an investigation into pork-barrelling, let us do it. But that is not what we are voting on today. We are voting on an examination of one political party's election promises made during the last state election. I do not see that there is a difference.

Several members interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I have been here for 17 years. I do not need to be told by the monkeys opposite where I need to look when I am speaking.

Several members interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I withdraw, Madam President.

Withdrawal of Remark

Hon PETER COLLIER: Point of order, Madam President.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I withdraw, unreservedly.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have not given my point of order yet.

Hon SUE ELLERY: But I have withdrawn.

The PRESIDENT: Leader of the House, sit down. Let him do his point of order.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you. I found the comments of the Leader of the House offensive and ask her to withdraw.

Hon SUE ELLERY: To you?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: The Leader of the House has already indicated that she will withdraw those remarks.

Debate Resumed

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you, Madam President—indeed, I did.

I will go back to the point I was making: compare the pair. There is no difference between the nature of the election promises that were made. There is no difference. To suggest that it is worthy of an examination of only one side of those election commitments because one is now in government and the other is not reveals the opposition's bias, if there is any bias in this. If the opposition is genuinely concerned about how Western Australian political parties craft, consult and consider their election promises, this inquiry needs to be much broader than the terms of reference before us. But that is not what the opposition wants, and so those are not the terms of reference before us.

One of the points that Hon Tjorn Sibma made was around business cases, and that no business cases were proffered or have been provided. Here is the deal: say the election promise was \$5 000 to the Mt Lawley Toy Library. That was the promise. We did not say, "If elected, we will examine whether we think you should get \$5 000 for multicultural and sensory toys for the Mt Lawley Toy Library." That is not what we said. We said that if elected, we will give \$5 000 for those toys. That is what we said and that is what we have done. The other point to make

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is that the Langoulant report into what was a financial disgrace as a result of the previous government's management of the finances and major projects, states —

“A business case is prepared for all investment proposals with a total capital cost of \$1 million or more.”

Even if members were to argue that they thought a business case was appropriate, the standard defined by John Langoulant in that excellent work that he did was \$1 million.

What is effectively proposed is disproportionate to what is claimed to be the problem. Essentially, I think parts of the motion are fluff and nonsense and the honourable member disingenuously pretends to be oblivious to the nature of political election commitments, because I think he is smarter than that and knows exactly how election commitments are made. There is a bit of disingenuous stuff in there, but I will allow that. If that was put to one side, maybe at the heart of it the member is saying that he is not satisfied with answers given in Parliament. It would not be true to say that no information has been provided to Parliament, because it has, through parliamentary questions and the estimates processes in both houses. I will go through some of those.

The first term of reference is about how each project was developed, evaluated and selected for funding. There is a bit of disingenuousness in that term of reference because it proposes a system of evaluation of potential election commitments that the honourable member knows his party has never applied to its own election promises. But in any event, information was provided by the Premier in the Assembly estimates in September last year about how payments were made and acquitted. Information has been provided in a variety of answers to questions, some of which I have given, about how grant agreements are signed with the relevant department, the community group must be incorporated, funding is released via the agency and the group must then provide relevant acquittal documents to the agency by the due date according to the agency's acquittal processes. I will give members some examples of the information that has been provided to Parliament about that—for example, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development information provided in June this year. With respect to police, grant recipients are required to complete an application form outlining the project details, budget and project outcomes, and to return the acceptance of offer form on completion of the project. An evaluation and financial acquittal form is to be completed and submitted. That information was provided to Hon Tjorn Sibma in June this year.

In respect of the Department of Education, the information to which I have already referred was provided in June this year. In respect of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, that information was provided to the minister—that is, member; he will be a minister one day, in about 30 years—on 26 June. I was also asked questions about that process by Hon Jacqui Boydell in the Legislative Council estimates hearings when I was representing the Premier. In respect of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, information on the funds acquittal process was provided in June this year. Information on standard project outlines and acquittal processes was provided by the Department of Culture and the Arts in June this year. The department of sport and recreation provided information during debate and also to Hon Tjorn Sibma in June this year.

Members opposite can search the *Hansard* of the estimates hearings for both houses; they can search *Hansard* for the debates that have been held in this house and the other house; and they can search *Hansard* for questions without notice of which some notice has been given, and questions on notice. Hon Tjorn Sibma's proposition that no information has been provided is not sustained by a simple search of *Hansard*.

I do not think that term of reference withstands scrutiny—the notion that no information has been provided. There is a difference between getting information one does not like and getting no information.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Mr Acting President, I have already indicated that I am not taking interjections.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Martin Aldridge): Order, members. Hon Sue Ellery has the call and I think the debate will be better facilitated if interjections are kept to a minimum.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Term of reference (d) states, in part —

the number of projects funded and, for each project, the amount of funding provided ...

That information has been provided; lists have been provided. I have provided lists when asked questions during the estimates hearings and I know other ministers have provided lists as well. In addition to that, the total amount of some \$39 million across 750 projects was outlined in the 2017–18 budget papers.

Term of reference (e) states —

whether community, education, arts and sporting groups within the state were afforded an equal opportunity to access the program;

Here, again, I think the mover of the motion was being a little disingenuous. Is it his proposition that his party, when preparing its election promises for 2021, is going to adopt this process? Actually, I expect it will; it will have to. It will have to adopt a fundamentally different process from any it has adopted before; I look forward to seeing

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if that will be the case. If we are to accept the standard that has been put to us by the mover of the motion, we are going to see the Liberal Party present and develop its election promises in a fundamentally different way for the 2021 election.

Hon Alanna Clohesy interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! The member on her feet has indicated that she does not want to entertain interjections. That includes members on her own side.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I did not say that, but thank you for that protection.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Mr Acting President, perhaps someone needs to go for a walk.

Term of reference (f) states, in part —

whether funding to the program affected the quantum of funds available for ... community ... groups within the state;

The answer to that was provided by the Premier in the Assembly estimates hearings on Thursday, 21 September 2017.

I do not think the honourable member has demonstrated in his terms of reference that, in fact, that information is not already on the public record, through the Parliament. I do not think he has demonstrated that. Again, that goes to the notion that the proposal for a select committee is way beyond what is actually required.

I want to come back to my starting point. The Labor Party in opposition made a series of election commitments that were branded under the heading Local Projects, Local Jobs. Once elected, we acquitted those funds through the grants programs of each of the respective agencies. It is that simple; it is not complicated, but the notion that we are going to devote the resources of a parliamentary committee to examining the way in which one of the major parties in this state develops and then delivers its election promises is astonishing to me.

A lot of work is currently being undertaken by select committees of the Legislative Council; that is a fact, and it is a perfectly normal and not-unexpected function of a house that is made up of seven parties. It is not that unusual. Nevertheless, a better proposal—one that will not add to the strain on resources—would be to take the same terms of reference, have the same person as the chair and the same reporting period, and refer it off to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. That is a standing committee to which resources are already allocated, and I think that would be the best use of resources.

Amendment to Motion

Hon SUE ELLERY: I move —

- (1) Delete paragraph (1) and insert —
 - (1) The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations shall conduct an inquiry into the government's Local Projects, Local Jobs program.
- (2) Delete “select” in paragraph (2).
- (3) Delete paragraph (3) and insert —
 - (3) For the purposes of this inquiry only, Hon Tjorn Sibma is appointed chair of the committee and Hon Alanna Clohesy is appointed deputy chair.
- (4) Delete paragraph (4) and insert —
 - (4) The committee is to report no later than 12 months after the referral.

To assist members, if the amendment is agreed to, the amended motion will read —

- (1) The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations shall conduct an inquiry into the government's Local Projects, Local Jobs program.
- (2) The committee is to inquire into the Local Projects, Local Jobs program, “the program”, with particular reference to —
 - (a) how each project was developed, evaluated and selected for funding;
 - (b) how payments were made and acquitted under each project to ensure financial probity and accountability;
 - (c) how actual or perceived conflicts of interest were declared and managed under each project;

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- (d) the number of projects funded and, for each project, the amount of funding provided and number of jobs created;
 - (e) whether community, education, arts and sporting groups within the state were afforded an equal opportunity to access the program;
 - (f) whether funding to the program affected the quantum of funds available for grants or other funding sources for community, education, arts and sporting groups within the state; and, if so, in what way; and
 - (g) any other related matter.
- (3) For the purposes of this inquiry only, Hon Tjorn Sibma is appointed chair of the committee and Hon Alanna Clohesy is appointed deputy chair.
 - (4) The committee is to report no later than 12 months after the referral.

While that is being distributed and members are taking the opportunity to consider it, I will say that I think it is a better use of the resources of the house. The terms of the amendment motion change nothing apart from the committee that will conduct the inquiry and the chair, out of respect for the fact that the original motion was moved by Hon Tjorn Sibma.

To reiterate the points I have made, the Labor Party went to the last election with a series of localised election commitments branded under the heading Local Projects, Local Jobs. Once elected, we acquitted those commitments through the grants programs of each of the respective agencies—no more, no less.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [2.10 pm]: The opposition accepts the amendment as moved.

Amendment put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [2.11 pm]: I stand to support the amended motion, and I start by referring to a comment I read out in a non-government business motion last week. I said —

The public interest must come first, transparency must come first, openness must come first.

Those comments were made on 18 June 2016 by the then Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier. We are asking nothing more and nothing less than what the Premier promised—the public interest must come first, transparency must come first, openness must come first. To hear a self-righteous lecture from the Leader of the House over there telling us how terrible it was, and how much overreach it was, is contemptible. All we are asking is that the Premier be true to his word. It is obnoxious in the extreme for members opposite to believe, now that they are on the treasury bench, that they can change the goalposts. Somehow, we are the terrible ones; we are the devil incarnate, because we are doing exactly what members opposite promised when in opposition. That is exactly what they promised, and all of a sudden, Mother Teresa over there has decided that they are beyond reproach.

Point of Order

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: I believe that the Leader of the Opposition meant to refer to the Leader of the House by her proper title.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Martin Aldridge): I remind members that it is a requirement under our standing orders to refer to members of the house by either the position they hold or their name, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition to do that.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Mr Acting President, I will rephrase that. The Leader of the House, acting like Mother Teresa, decided that she would treat us as the devil incarnate.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: What is wrong with acting like Mother Teresa?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Nothing. I think it is great, but if she is going to act like Mother Teresa, she can at least be virtuous to the words that her leader said, and that is to be open and transparent. That is all I am asking.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Kind, giving, gentle —

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have actually got the call; you can stand in a minute—no, in 42 minutes.

Our biggest issue is profound. The Leader of the House is right. The Labor Party made this commitment. I have shown the WA Labor financial management plan, “A fresh approach for WA” in this chamber before. It shows a project called Local Projects, Local Jobs, costed at \$22.2 million. How come the budget papers this year show \$39 million from 2016–17 to 2018–19 for the Local Projects, Local Jobs election commitment that provides grants

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to community organisations to deliver over 750 projects across the state? If the Labor Party went into this project with \$22.2 million, how come it is \$39 million in the budget papers? I think that inflation is about two per cent at the moment, so it has gone up 500 per cent in less than 12 months. That is why we need this committee to find out where the government got the extra money. It did not have enough money to keep the Schools of the Air open, but the political winds changed that. It did not have enough money to keep Moora Residential College open. It was due only to the good federal Liberal–National government that it was kept open. Do not come in here with self-righteous indignation and tell us that it is a grants program, just keeping up election commitments. The grants program was \$22.2 million. It was not \$39 million. Where did the extra \$17 million or \$18 million come from? That is what we want to know. We are not asking too much.

We have seen almost a doubling of the pool of this grants project. Make no bones about it, it is a grants program. There is a bit of confusion among members opposite, and that is why we must ascertain, in this committee, where it actually sits. On what basis was the expenditure justified or required? The grants program for these projects has not undergone any competitive selection process whatsoever. The government keeps on holding up the Holy Bible of transparency in the Langouant report, but will not adhere to its own principles and recommendations. The Premier also said that every single one of the government’s election commitments went through a rigorous evaluation process. When Hon Tjorn Sibma stood up and said that he wanted to find out which ones missed out, the Leader of the House scoffed at that—it is a Labor Party thing—as if somehow he is diminished as an individual because he stated the bleeding obvious. The Premier said that every single one of the government’s election commitments went through a rigorous evaluation process, so we should be comfortable with that in the Parliament—the Labor Party went through a rigorous evaluation process. Should we take the Premier at his word? Only inasmuch as the government said it was going to spend \$22.2 million, and less than 12 months later it had elevated that figure to \$39 million. Let us have a bit of truth and transparency in this. We are not asking for anything more than truth and transparency. If everything went through an evaluation process, and all is above board, what on earth is the government hiding? Why is it afraid of this? This is not unusual, as the Leader of the House carried on, but post-government, the project has almost doubled in cost after the election.

The government has no moral high ground on this. It has been taking \$150 000 here and \$150 000 there, from the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, and the Landsdale Farm School, which is helping students with a disability. It might be only \$200 000 or \$300 000, but we would not have had all this pain in those schools if the government had not doubled the cost of this project. We want to know where that money has gone. Government members cannot wake up every morning without carrying on about the financial mismanagement of the mob opposite. It is like a daily affirmation for these guys—the Libs are terrible; financial mismanagement. They feel empowered when they wake up and make their anti-Liberal affirmations. But it is not funny. We are not being unreasonable in this. We are just saying, “Be true to your word, guys.” Let us have a look. Is it a grants program or is it not? We are very confused in this, and I have been through this before.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Of course it is a grants program. Did you not listen to the Leader of the House?

Hon PETER COLLIER: What she said was wrong, and I will show you.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I did not interject once when the Leader of the House was speaking. The Bolsheviks tried to congratulate themselves on this program, but the house decided otherwise. It disagreed with that.

Withdrawal of Remark

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Again, Mr Acting President, we should be referred to across the chamber as the honourable members, not the Bolsheviks. I would ask the honourable Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that comment.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Martin Aldridge): Order, members! The Deputy Leader of the House has moved a point of order with respect to comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. The standing practice of what constitutes unparliamentary language in this house comes down to context. On this occasion, I do not consider that the words used are unparliamentary. However, the practice in this place is that when a member objects to certain words used, the member is invited to withdraw those words as a courtesy. I invite the member to withdraw those words; however, I will not insist on their withdrawal.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have used that terminology on numerous occasions in this chamber without offence, quite frankly.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: On a further point of order, Mr Acting President, I will ask that you take this ruling away—not today, but that you seek the advice of the President at another time. I am certainly offended by being called a Bolshevik. We are the Australian Labor Party, and for the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that we are

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some strange Russian group, which has a torrid history, is appalling. It does not matter that he has said it before. I will ask the President for a ruling in the future. But I am offended by the use of that term. I am offended by the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that we are Bolsheviks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Deputy Leader of the House, there is no point of order. In the President's absence, I get to make the rulings on these matters. You have rights, as afforded to you in the standing orders, to challenge my ruling. I have given my ruling, and there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are talking about grants. Is it a grant or is it not a grant? During our previous debate on this issue, upon which the house ruled and decided not to congratulate the government on its Local Projects, Local Jobs program, Hon Darren West said —

We made these election commitments, plain and simple. They were election commitments. Local Projects, Local Jobs is not a grants scheme, and we will continue to deliver on these election commitments and expect our members of Parliament to continue to work with those groups and advocate for the things they need.

Later in that debate, he said —

I am going to focus today on Geraldton and talk about some of the important grants that we were able to deliver and promises that we were able to keep.

Hon Tjorn Sibma then said —

No, they are not grants! I thought you said that they are not grants!

Hon Darren West then said —

The member is right: it is not a grants scheme.

He then said again —

Indeed, it is not a grants scheme.

So, it is not a grants scheme? Okay. However, Hon Darren West disagrees with what the Premier has said. The Premier has said it is a grants scheme. On Thursday, 7 December 2017, in a media release titled “Local Projects, Local Jobs delivers for communities across the State”, the Premier stated —

Local grassroots projects have received a boost in the 2017–18 State Budget through the McGowan Labor Government's Local Projects, Local Jobs program.

The program provides grants to community organisations, such as sporting groups and not-for-profit organisations, to deliver important upgrades to facilities and programs.

Hon Darren West also disagrees with the member for Bicton. She stated in the *Melville Times* —

“The other funding commitments are part of the Local Projects Local Jobs funding initiative and I am seeking to get the grants out to successfully funded organizations throughout the Bicton electorate as quickly as possible.

Again, she states it is a grants scheme.

Point of Order

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Mr Acting President, I am trying to hear the member on his feet, and I would ask that if members want to have a conversation, please take it out of the chamber.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Martin Aldridge): Members, a number of conversations are happening around the chamber. It would be appreciated if those members engaging in extended conversations would take those conversations out of the house.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: The member for Bicton also stated —

“Government agencies are in the process of contacting these organisations regarding how to proceed with the delivery of the grant and grant conditions, some of which have already been contacted.”

So rather than an open and transparent system, which is what a grants scheme should provide, we have a decision that was made prior to the election but that is in fact a grants scheme.

The principal of a primary school received a letter. This letter is on the website, so members can download it from the website. The letter states —

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I am pleased to inform you of the details of the grant allocated to your school outlined below:

This letter is about \$20 000 for shade cloth. I will come back to that shade cloth, because that really offends me. Again, it is called a grant. The education department thinks it is a grant. The member for Bicton thinks it is a grant. The budget papers also think it is a grant, as I have mentioned. The 2017–18 *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* states at page 10 —

- \$39 million from 2016–17 and 2018–19 on the Local Projects Local Jobs election commitment, which provides grants to community organisations to deliver over 750 projects across the State;

The Treasurer, the Premier, the Department of Education and the member for Bicton all think it is a grants scheme, but Hon Darren West does not. He emphatically suggests that it is not a grants scheme. If it is a grants scheme, that is even more reason that we have to support this motion.

Let us look at what a grants scheme should do. I refer to a report from the Auditor General dated July 2016. It is not a report from the former government; it is a report from the Auditor General, so it is not tainted. In that report, the Auditor General made the following recommendations about what should happen with grants —

All agencies that issue grants should:

1. ensure policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and updated to reflect current practice
2. appropriately advertise the availability of grants.

I will repeat that —

2. appropriately advertise the availability of grants. This should include key details about application requirements and any deadlines for submission.

I wonder how many of those Local Projects, Local Jobs were advertised and closed on time. It continues —

3. document any conflicts of interest as part of the grant assessment process. This should include:
 - (a) declarations of any real or perceived conflicts by members involved in the assessment process
 - (b) details of how the conflict was resolved
 - (c) where no conflicts are present this should be documented

I will come back to that in a moment. It continues —

4. monitor grants in accordance with approved policies
5. undertake timely follow-up of recipients with outstanding acquittal information. Where appropriate, withhold future funding until acquittals are performed
6. periodically assess the effectiveness of grant programs.

That is from the Auditor General, who is responsible for overseeing established protocols and procedures within government. On every single level, the Local Projects, Local Jobs program does not meet those requirements. I repeat recommendation 2 —

appropriately advertise the availability of grants. This should include key details about application requirements and any deadlines for submission.

The Leader of the House stated as one of her defence mechanisms that it was up to the departments to go through their processes. I will tell members a couple of things about that. Let us look at the projects themselves. They are very generalised. I want to know whether they were advertised, particularly those projects that were not promised by the government prior to the election. Members should remember that the government promised \$22.2 million. The final acquittal in the budget was \$39 million. With that in mind, we have about 750 projects. Hon Sue Ellery is quite correct; we can ask questions and get information on the programs. That is not the issue. The issue is the process upon which they were determined and whether they were deserved.

Let us look at the projects. They include upgrades to Five Mile Camp worth \$55 000, the Access Geraldton upgrade worth \$25 000 and the Albany police and community youth centre upgrades worth \$30 000. I can keep going through these. As Hon Tjorn Sibma said—I agree, and I will repeat this—we potentially have no problems with any of those programs. If we look at them at face value, we would say that most of them are worthwhile, without any shadow of a doubt, but did they follow the procedures for a grants program? They certainly did not. They most definitely did not. As I keep repeating—the Leader of the House did not mention this—why did that program go from \$22.2 million to \$39 million? How can the government justify that increase when it is cutting education and essential services around the state? Apparently, we do not have any money but the government has enough money for pork-barrel in its own seats, and that is exactly what we have here.

The shade cloth issue is important to me. As a former education minister, I know how significant this program is. Shade cloths are very, very significant in a school. They are highly sought after. Hundreds of schools apply for

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them every year. We have a limited budget upon which we can draw to get those shade cloths for schools. We might have funds for 200 or 300 per annum and 1 000 or 1 500 schools may apply. They are very highly sought after, apart from the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. Hon Michael Mischin asked a number of questions about upgrades to Halidon Primary School, whether they be to the school, the toilets, an administration block or whatever. He could not get information from the Minister for Education and Training, who sits in this chamber, on whether that program was promised before the election or after the election. I am saying that that compromises the integrity of the real grants program in the Department of Education. As we know, the Labor Party had a very significant win last year. As a result of that win, these new members came out of the woodwork saying, “We wouldn’t mind some shade cloths” or “We wouldn’t mind an upgrade.” Were those works promised before the election? We do not know because we cannot get those answers.

Members can look at us on this side, throw stones at us and say that we are being political, but we are not. We are trying to ascertain the integrity of this program because we cannot get information through the normal processes of the Parliament. To assume that that is not the role of this Parliament and this house completely eliminates any real understanding or knowledge of what the Legislative Council is all about. It is the role of the Parliament to keep a check and balance on the executive level of government. If we are being questioned for that, quite frankly, as I said to members opposite last week, the seeds of destruction have commenced. They have already germinated. If we try to justify this and say that they were commitments from before the election, that denies members’ understanding of the process of this place. The government has doubled the cost of that program without any justification or acknowledgement. Attempts by members on this side of the chamber to go through the natural processes, as Hon Sue Ellery mentioned—through the estimates committees, questions on notice and questions without notice—have met a brick wall. That is why we desperately need this committee.

The issue relating to the shade cloths is massive. It might seem minuscule. It is worth \$20 000. I visited over 600 schools when I was education minister. When we go to schools and meet with the presidents of the parents and citizens associations, the principals and the teachers, they want a shade cloth. We would think that \$20 000 should be fine. It is not. It is difficult. We have tough economic circumstances. The P&C might chip in \$5 000 or \$10 000 but they want their \$20 000 from the grants program of the Department of Education. All of a sudden, because a school in Bicton in the City of Melville is now in a Labor seat, it goes to the top rung of the grants program. I can assure members that that is not how it works. That shade cloth grants program has a very forensic acquittal process. When I was education minister, I would have loved all the schools to have had shade cloths. Of course I would. I did not want to deny a school a shade cloth. Because that seat has changed or because that happens to be a Labor seat, they go to the top rung. That is what we are talking about. That is a significant issue. That is carried right through all these programs. I challenge anyone opposite to go through and say that there were no issues with those grants and whether they were justified. If it was a grants program, as the Leader of the House said, that was acquitted through the various departments, we want to look at the process that those departments adopted and ensure they were validly approved, because at the moment we have nothing to suggest that that is the case.

As I said, a lot of these things, such as \$20 000 for men’s shed upgrades, \$20 000 for new shade structures, \$45 000 for Environment House upgrades and \$63 000 for equipment, are the sorts of things that really need forensic examination. That is all we are asking. As I said, if members opposite, who are opposing the motion, and the government are so comfortable in their skin with this program, that puts a question mark on this whole notion of what the Premier said. Do members remember what the Premier stated? I will repeat it. He said —

The public interest must come first, transparency must come first, openness must come first.

If members agree with that, they will enthusiastically embrace this committee and say, “Go and do your work. If there are ways in which we can improve as a government, so be it.”

Members opposite did not mind relentlessly throwing dirt over the Langouant report. Yes, these are the standards that we have to adhere to but it is a different story when it comes to their own backyard. It might be minuscule in comparison to the Langouant report but it is not. The Auditor General stated that any conflicts of interest must be adhered to. I am dealing with an issue at the moment with Carnegie. There is evident conflict of interest. If this is permeating through government already—in that instance, if that minister did not excuse herself when that decision was made in cabinet, that is absolutely inexcusable—this just reinforces the fact that if members opposite are going to adhere to the rolled-gold standards that the Premier suggested we need to and adhere to the recommendations of the Auditor General, they will enthusiastically support this motion. There is absolutely no reason not to. They have nothing to be afraid of. I have a list of pretty much every Labor member. They are members of boards of schools and patrons of hockey clubs and bowling clubs, as I am and as most of us are. Good luck to them. That is our job. But did members who are part of those clubs that received a grant from the government—to adhere to the standards that Hon Sue Ellery expressed—declare a conflict of interest? Did members declare being a board member or patron of that particular organisation? I would love to know. I really hope the committee looks into that. I would love to know that. I have said that if the government is dismissive of conflict of interest, it is already

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losing the plot. The government cannot be dismissive of conflict of interest. Members opposite can scoff at me about the questions I am asking on Carnegie—that is massive! It is exactly the same with this program.

I will reinforce what I have said. In these instances it may not have made any difference but, by design, a grants program says that there has to be an open and transparent application process. If one school gets it over another, and a board member of one of the schools was involved in the selection process, that is a clear conflict of interest. But this simply was not dealt with that way. This program was pork-barrelling in the extreme.

We also have some comments made by the Leader of the House during the last debate on this motion about whether there was any validity behind these programs. She took great delight in identifying some of the comments Hon Michael Mischin and Hon Tjorn Sibma made: “Isn’t it terrible that they put question marks over these programs.” As we keep on saying—I will stand here ad infinitum making these comments—it is not the programs themselves; they may be justified and valid. Our issue is the process adopted to get to the end product. I will keep on repeating this for members opposite: if they try to justify this, they are trying to defend the indefensible. The Auditor General has been quite clear on the process for a grants scheme. The Leader of the House stated quite unambiguously today that all these programs went through the various departments and their processes. If that is the case, the departments are now thumbing their noses at the recommendations of the Auditor General. I will repeat the recommendation. It reads —

All agencies that issue grants should:

...

2. appropriately advertise the availability of grants. This should include key details about application requirements and any deadlines for submission

It did not work that way.

Hon Sue Ellery went through all the processes and said how terrible it was that Hon Michael Mischin was so critical of Halidon Primary School getting its admin upgrade—not at all. On the shade cloth issue and admin blocks—ditto. As a former education minister, I know funds are sparse. Until this government was elected, a process existed by which schools got to the top of the rung to get an administration upgrade. The standards are now different. If schools go in under the Local Projects, Local Jobs program, they go to the top of the rung. That is the way it now is. There is no selection process or determination.

Hon Sue Ellery went on and said —

Other issues have been raised about the so-called absence of a business case. Hypocrisy writ large here! This is coming from the people who, when in government, did not meet the standard requirements that were spelt out so clearly in the Langoulant report.

I have said on numerous occasions that the Langoulant report was quite clear about the established protocols for the determination of a project. Hon Sue Ellery’s defence was that it applied to projects worth over \$1 million, so those standards do not have to be adhered to for anything below that amount. Let us look at some of the recommendations of the special inquirer. There are a pile, and I will read a few. They include —

- provide information about major projects in an accessible and transparent way to the public;
- ...
- simplify and strengthen procurement practices;
- increase Government’s oversight of contract development and contract management;
- ...
- improve transparency on the progress with major projects by requiring continuous disclosure;
- ...
- setting and achieving financial targets;
- applying risk management principles and actions in major projects and public works procurement;
- ...
- enhancing data and records management practices so that agencies have the ability to inform decision makers of key facts relating to their agency’s activities.

If we were to apply those recommendations to this program, they would be wanting on every front. We now have the Leader of the House holding this up as the bastion of transparency, openness and standards for a government, but that is only for projects worth above \$1 million; anything below \$1 million does not count. Again, we could

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Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; President; Hon Martin Pritchard; Acting President; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Colin Tincknell

throw a Mack truck through that case. It is convenient because it suits the fact that members opposite went to the election with these massive commitments that almost trebled after the election. They realised they did not have enough money, so they cut education and doubled the cost of this program.

Let us look at a couple of others. This was on Gareth Parker's show—this was a pearler. This is back to the Melville athletics club. My notes state —

- The Palmyra and Melville junior clubs are in the Labor target seat of Bicton, won by Lisa O'Malley from the Liberals, and were the recipients of \$6000 each. The Bateman, Leeming and Brentwood clubs, in the Member for Bateman's neighbouring seat, received nothing.
- All five clubs compete together at Len Shearer Reserve in Booragoon, and as such the club tried to have the money spent for the benefit of the entire membership of the centre, on a new high jump mat. The request was rejected and instead a committee member has stated "We all compete at the same ground and use the same facilities—yet two clubs are wearing better shirts this season, and three clubs get nothing".
- Likewise, an ABC radio caller named Kirsten had another story. She said: "I'm a member of an inner-city playgroup. We're 3km from the CBD, we received \$20,000. We gratefully accepted the money, and it will be spent somewhere. "But there was no project in the pipeline, we have absolutely perfect facilities, plenty of toys. It just felt like it was given to us with no real reason."

This goes on and on and on. This is the point of the exercise. We are not doing it to be bloody-minded. I have said that it is all well and good for members opposite to talk about the Langouant report as the new standard for government, but it is only the new standard for government according to members opposite when it is for projects above \$1 million. Below \$1 million, the government can absolutely do what it likes. All we are asking now is for the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations to look at this project and ideally come out with some recommendations. We want a parliamentary budget office. When members opposite were in opposition they were desperate to get a parliamentary budget office—all of a sudden they have gone weak at the knees and do not believe that it is such a good idea when they are in government. This might just help them. If they are not prepared to establish a parliamentary budget office into which all parties can put their election commitments, the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations does an excellent job and will be able to provide the government with some recommendations on how it can actually do things in an open and transparent fashion. That is all we are asking for.

Let us look at job creation. These are just a few questions. Let us see how many jobs were created with the sponsoring of the Armadale City Concert Band for an interstate trip. How many jobs were created by a new online booking system for Bassendean Tennis Club? How many jobs were created from new toys in a toy library? How many jobs were created from the purchase of new bedding items and some kitchenware? How many jobs were created from the purchase of DVD players, vacuum cleaners and home starter packs? These were all from this program. How many jobs from the purchase of a new sea container? How many jobs for the purchase of a pool table and an Xbox? How many jobs were created from supporting high-quality local programming for a radio station? How many jobs were created from a barbecue at Riverside Gardens? How many jobs were created from the purchase of a water pump? How many jobs were created for the undertaking of a basketball business case? How many jobs for a new car? How many jobs for the Bunbury Masters Swimming Club carnival?

That sounds flippant, but it is not. The program is Local Projects, Local Jobs, but in most instances, they are not local jobs. If, as the Leader of the House said, it is done through special grants from departments, the departments have their own workers. Building Management and Works will go off and do the work for the Department of Education and all the government areas. I tell members that they will not be local workers.

Hon Darren West: How do you know?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Because I was the Minister for Education, mate! I can tell you right now, BMW does the work for the education department. Harry's Hardware will not be coming down to put up a shade cloth. It will be done through the department. A local job will not come from \$20 000 being spent at the local primary school. It makes a lie of it. It is not Local Projects, Local Jobs.

I will get back to whether this was pork-barrelling. Was it pork-barrelling? Without a doubt! Hon Tjorn Sibma has been through this as well but I am going to reinforce it. In Labor-held seats, this program contributed \$454 189 per seat. In seats that Labor gained from the coalition, it spent \$540 636. That is around half a million dollars for both. In Liberal and Nationals seats, it spent \$84 833. In 16 of those Liberal or Nationals seats, they got nothing. They got zero!

In my last contribution I said that I visited schools all over the state. One school in my electorate, Mosman Park Primary School, was in desperate need of repair. It was desperate for money and would have given anything for a shade cloth.

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Hon Darren West: Why didn't you do it?

Hon PETER COLLIER: They did apply but they did not get it. Why do I not get it? I say to the honourable member: because I am not a member of the Labor Party and that is not how we do things. I would never ever take a nudge and a wink to give a grant to a school because it happened to be in a Liberal seat—never! I was the Minister for Education for all 800 of our schools.

Hon Stephen Dawson: So you've never made an election commitment?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, I have made election commitments. That is not what we are talking about!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! The Leader of the Opposition indicated that he was not going to invite interjections. He has only six and a half minutes remaining in a time-limited debate, so I ask members to cease interjecting.

Hon PETER COLLIER: A very good point was raised about whether we made election commitments. We did, but this is not an election commitment. This is a pool of funds of which \$19 000 is lost in the ether. We do not know where it came from. The government went into the election with \$22 million and came out with \$39 million. There was no methodology whatsoever to ascertain where that money went. It was a slush fund. Labor's new member for Bicton, new member for Kingsley, new member for Joondalup or new member for Burns Beach could be told, "We need a new shade cloth at such and such", and they would say, "That's okay. We'll do it through Local Projects, Local Jobs." Do not take my word for it! Members can see it on the Department of Education website. I showed members one earlier from a primary school. It says, "You have been granted money for a shade cloth through the Local Projects, Local Jobs program." That is how you guys are going to operate! That is a seismic shift in how the government grants process is now operated. This is the new McGowan standard. We no longer have a standard, as the Auditor General stated, that should —

appropriately advertise the availability of grants. This should include key details about application requirements and any deadlines for submission

Now that is not the standard. That is what the Auditor General said, but under the McGowan standard the principal will get a letter saying, "I am pleased to inform you of the details of the grants allocated to your school outlined below." That is how they do it. That is the new standard. We do not have the standard that is age-old and has been held in government for decades. There is a new standard called the McGowan standard.

These seats show a bias quite unambiguously. All we want to know is whether the candidates for those seats made those commitments before the election. We have tried to ask that, but the Leader of the House conveniently ignored that. Were they election commitments or, after the election, did they just get wrapped up and it became a direct rule? It must have! Otherwise, why did this program go from \$22.2 million to \$39 million? It cannot be justified. That would be defending the indefensible. If Labor had gone in with those election commitments, so be it. Quite frankly, it would still have been pork-barrelling. However, the cost for the program doubled after the election without any justification whatsoever. That is why this committee needs to be established to look at the processes of government. If not, you guys are setting a very dangerous standard and precedent! The age-old acceptance that departments have an unblemished record on determination of grants is gone. It has gone out the window! All of a sudden it is a nudge and a wink from the minister and a nudge and a wink from the local member. That is the new standard—the McGowan standard.

If members opposite want to prove me wrong and prove that it did not work that way, it is easy. I do not mind. They should be brave enough to say that they have seen the light and that what I am saying is correct. They have nothing to be afraid of! If they have nothing to be afraid of, why can they not support this motion? If they say that everything was open and transparent and that all the promises were made before the election, they should support this motion. In all conscience, how can they possibly oppose this motion? They should go back to their boss, the Premier of the state, as I keep saying and have said over and again. He stated —

The public interest must come first, transparency must come first, openness must come first.

Here is the mantra for Labor's leader, the Premier of Western Australia, and members opposite are trying to abuse that affirmation. They are saying, "Up you!" to the Premier! All we are doing is saying that if government members have nothing to be afraid of, they should have the courage of their convictions. They should not for a moment feel diminished as individuals to say, "Fair cop, we will support the motion." The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations will be able to go in with full confidence that the house believes in it, wants it to do a good job, and wants it to say that there is a problem with the process or that there were some issues because there are a pile of grants that were not promised before the election but were promised after the election. In that instance, you guys will hang your heads in shame. Members opposite will have to say that on one hand Labor did a lot more pork-barrelling after the election than before it, but at the same time it cut \$41 million from education. It made

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those cuts when it did not need to. Quite frankly, had Labor not done that and stuck with \$22 million, it would have had \$19 million in the kitty. It would have been able to keep Landsdale Farm School and Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre open and would not have had to go through all the issues with Moora Residential College. Labor would have had none of that.

I will finish where I started. We are not being unreasonable. As an opposition, our job is to make sure we have an open and accountable government and that we use the resources of this house appropriately; the way they should be used. We do not feel diminished, so if the Leader of the Government thinks that it is somehow inappropriate for us to go down this path, it is not. We are doing the job we should be doing. I say to members of the government that if they want the public, transparency and openness to come first, they should listen to the Premier—listen to their leader—and support this motion.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [2.59 pm]: In the available time I have this week I want to talk on this motion. Pauline Hanson's One Nation will be looking at this motion very closely and may even suggest a further amendment to the words of this motion to include "pork-barrelling", because it is a blight on the way governments conduct themselves. I am talking about current and previous governments, so we may suggest some changes to the Local Projects, Local Jobs original motion.

I want to go back to the main reason—four main reasons, really—we oppose what has been happening. There is budget mismanagement. The current government's handling of funds and the budget mismanagement for Western Australia in the current financial situation is very disappointing. We believe that the government has its priorities wrong. Since I have entered this house, there has been barely a day when the government has not talked about state debt and the previous government's role in that. Yet although it is operating with over a \$2.6 billion deficit in 2017–18, it has been able to find \$39 million to fund 750 local projects, of which few were considered essential. The public are struggling with raised energy and water prices. It is a major problem for the average low-income worker especially. We have seen funding cuts to education, especially in regional areas, some of which have been reversed, but only political pressure has changed that, not the budget situation. We have heard what the opposition has said about the difference between the \$22 million initially talked about and the \$39 million that we now find is funding these projects.

The second reason is pork-barrelling. This is a word maybe we can add to paragraph (2)(g) where it says "any other related matters". Maybe "pork-barrelling" would fit there or maybe we can add to paragraph (1) after Local Jobs, Local Projects, "pork-barrelling by both current and previous governments". I will consider that and we can look at those issues as we move forward.

The pork-barrelling is very obvious. When we see \$1 million being spent in Labor-held seats and \$84 000 to \$85 000 being spent in Liberal-held seats it is quite obvious. It is embarrassing. It is a low standard of behaviour of low morality and it is unethical. The public expect more. If this sort of behaviour continues by governments over the years, this crossbench will grow and grow, and we will be on that side of the chamber before we know it. The public are not supportive of this kind of behaviour. It is a matter of looking at the way we do business. The pork-barrelling is quite obvious to the public. They are not stupid; they see it.

The other point is jobs. We see very few jobs in this. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, there are a few jobs in the playground and maintenance areas, but there are very few jobs in this. When spending \$39 million, that is very disappointing.

The fourth point I want to talk about is the lack of transparency and accountability. As a member of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I can see how important that is.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.