

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) RECURRENT 2009–10 (SUPPLEMENTARY) BILL 2010
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) CAPITAL 2009–10 (SUPPLEMENTARY) BILL 2010

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [5.02 pm]: Earlier in the debate I was making the case that this government has not invested in the basic infrastructure needed to keep Perth growing, and that some of the items that will come before us as part of these bills will reflect that. Since I have been in this place, I have noticed that one can always tell when a government realises it has failed in a particular area, has missed the boat and has not done the work it should have done; it is revealed in the nature of the answers it gives to questions. From time to time members in this house will ask a simple question to try to get some information, such as information that would ordinarily be held by a government department. I asked such a question on 10 November 2010. I wanted to get a sense of how the different intersections and roads in the Perth metropolitan area were performing. Main Roads has means by which it assesses and categorises roads to ascertain their performance in respect of congestion. The categories start at A and go through to F; category F roads are so congested that they are failing. I asked the then Minister for Transport to detail all sections of roads in the Perth metropolitan area that were categorised as D, E or F. I would have thought that it would be fairly easy for the department to pump that sort of information out, because I suspect it has a list of different roads, and it would have been able to produce that information for me. I also asked the minister to detail all sections of roads in the Perth metropolitan area that would be categorised as D, E or F in 2016 and 2031. Again, one would expect that the department could provide that sort of information. The answer I got was that the state government was undertaking the development of a congestion management response plan for Perth that would identify congested routes and that would be released in the second half of 2011.

My first problem with that is that just about every time line I have ever received from this government has never been met. Secondly, the government may well be carrying out a congestion management response plan for Perth, but I would have thought that if a government agency has that sort of information on roads, it should be made available to the public. The only possible reason for the government not making that information available to the public is that it has failed and it knows that the information will be embarrassing. That is why it is not prepared to make that information public. If the only reason we cannot have questions answered in this place is that they will cause embarrassment to the government —

Hon Simon O'Brien: That hasn't been established.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can the minister tell me why the question was not answered?

Hon Simon O'Brien: I would have to refer again to the agency for availability, but the point is that you're making an assumption, and you have no basis on which to make that assumption.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do; I have the form of the government. I suspect that if the minister had asked that question as shadow minister, he would be very upset if the government did not provide the information. That is basic information that should be available to members of Parliament to help inform them in their work. The government is hiding it because it knows it has a problem—it has not been making the necessary investments in roads or public transport. I also asked whether the minister could advise, for each financial year from 2009–10 to 2013–14, which asset investment projects would receive a contribution from the commonwealth government and how much money, in total, would be spent each year on the projects; how much the commonwealth government would contribute to the projects; how much the state would contribute to the projects; and, if the minister could not provide information for all the money listed on page 365 of the 2010–11 budget papers under the heading “Commonwealth Grants”, whether the minister could outline the purposes for the remainder of the money received. The minister replied by asking me to refer to the budget papers, and by saying that decisions on future investments would be made by government. I asked the question for the reason that the information was not made explicit in the budget papers. If it had appeared in the budget papers, I would not have asked the question. We know that is not the case. I did not ask about decisions on future investments; I was asking about the asset investment projects. I wanted to find out what the government currently had listed.

Hon Simon O'Brien: There may not have been state allocations in the out years for some of the things you were asking for.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: For all the complaints by the Barnett government about the financial relationship between the commonwealth and state governments, it is based on an agreement signed by Howard, Costello and Richard Court, at a time when Colin Barnett was a senior minister. This state continually got short shrift from the commonwealth government during the Howard years, unlike from the present federal government. The current Prime Minister is the first since that agreement was signed who has been prepared to even look at the issue.

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Western Australia is getting from the commonwealth a record amount of investment in public infrastructure. We heard in question time how much the commonwealth is investing in the Building the Education Revolution, and in road and transport infrastructure. This state is now receiving more money from the commonwealth than it has ever received. However, the record funding that we are getting from the commonwealth is masking the fact that the Barnett state government has slashed its capital appropriation for road, rail and public transport works. This government is proposing to spend \$1.5 billion less on new road and rail projects over the next four years than Labor spent in its last four years in office. That is the situation that we are facing. If we take the budget papers at face value, we do not immediately notice that. That is because for Main Roads, for example, the commonwealth money has been included in the total cost of services and the total asset investment program. In the East Metropolitan Region, both the Roe Highway–Great Eastern Highway overpass project, and the Great Eastern Highway upgrade from Kooyong Road to Tonkin Highway, are funded 80 per cent by the commonwealth. That is why I wanted to get a sense of how much money is coming into this state from the commonwealth government. Of course the Barnett government does not want to release that information, because it must be very embarrassing for this government that it is spending so little compared with how much the commonwealth is spending.

Hon Helen Morton: Should you not put that in perspective and look at the funds that are available to those two governments to spend on roads?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes. We have already had a debate in this chamber about how this government is receiving a record amount of revenue. In fact, the revenue for this government is well above what was estimated in the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement*.

Hon Helen Morton: What about the commonwealth government?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The commonwealth government is also receiving a healthy amount of revenue. Therefore, both those governments should be able to increase the funding that they are putting into roads.

One of the ways in which the government is funding its royalties for regions program—that program is great; no-one is questioning that—is by slashing road funding in regional Western Australia. It has been the case in Western Australia for many years that over 50 per cent of the total road funding has been spent in regional WA. That has been the history of road funding on both sides of politics. Therefore, if the government is cutting the total amount of road funding to fund the royalties for regions program, it is also cutting the road funding for regional Western Australia. That means that the people in regional Western Australia are no better off. However, the simple fact is that the government does not want us to know about that. The government wants to avoid having to highlight exactly how much of its budget is being propped up by commonwealth funding. I have given two examples of commonwealth funding for metropolitan roads. For the benefit of country members, a significant amount of commonwealth funding is also going into road projects in Karratha and Port Hedland.

I am not the only person who is saying that this government is cutting funding for roads. The same thing is being said by the RAC. I doubt that any member would not accept that the RAC is a very credible and effective organisation in advocating on behalf of its members. The RAC has some 720 000 members. Not many other organisations in Australia would have that level of penetration into the community. The RAC has pointed out that in the 2010–11 budget, the budget for Main Roads was cut by \$120 million. Even in the out years, the funding is still not back up to what it was in the 2008–09 budget of the Labor government.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Which was slightly inflated by the Forrest Highway project, of course.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: In any budget, we could always argue that something has been slightly inflated. The fact is that we did spend the money on the Forrest Highway project. The minister could say that the Labor government did not spend any money on rail, because the only money that we spent on rail was on the Mandurah railway line—in fact, it was not, but —

Hon Simon O'Brien: I am just inviting you to put it in context.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If we are spending money on a road project, we are spending money on roads. It is an extraordinary statement that just because we have spent money on Forrest Highway—the Perth–Bunbury highway—that somehow makes that expenditure less relevant than the expenditure on any other road.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I am just saying that that was an extraordinary amount of money to spend.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes. But, even allowing for that, this government is not spending the amount of money on roads that groups like the RAC would like this government to spend on roads. I agree with the Minister for Police that speed and red-light camera fines are a voluntary levy on the community. If people do not want to pay the fine, they should not speed and run red lights. However, this government expects to triple the amount of money that it will get from speed and red-light cameras. That money should be put into road safety. I think

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everyone in the community would agree that if the government does put in place speed and red-light cameras, and other road safety measures, it should use that not as a revenue-raising exercise, but as a deterrent, and put that money into road safety. One-third of the money that is raised from speed and red-light camera fines is put into the road trauma trust fund. The remainder of the money is put into consolidated revenue.

Another example is the funding for the black spot program. Funding for the black spot program first came in during the time of former transport minister Murray Criddle, in the 1990s, and good on him for doing that. That was at about the time that red-light and speed cameras came in. When Labor came into power, we increased the amount of funding for that program for four years. We then increased it again in our second term for four years. However, since the Barnett Liberal government was elected, the funding has remained the same. The funding has not increased since 2005. We are now six years on from that time, and no additional money has been put in by the state government for the black spot program. The funding for that program is still at the same level, even though a record amount of money is coming into this government from speed and red-light camera fines.

The RAC states in its submission for the 2011–12 state budget that the government needs to restore funding to the safer roads program. In the 2010–11 state budget, the funding for that program was devoted to bridge maintenance work. It should be noted that the funding for the safer roads program did not come from speed and red-light camera fines. Half of the funding came from the cancellation of a bridge project. The other half of the funding came from the bringing forward of underspends within the Department of Main Roads. That bringing forward of underspends is very interesting. The government expects that it will underspend on its budget, so it reallocates the money that it had expected to spend. The RAC is calling for an additional \$10 million in 2010–11 for the black spot program, increasing to \$20 million in 2012–13 and \$30 million in 2013–14. The RAC also lists a number of other programs on which it believes the government should spend money. Those are very worthy requests from the RAC. As I have said, a record amount of revenue is coming in for this government. But, no, the government's priority is a palace on the hill and new ministerial offices.

Over the weekend, the RAC launched its Risky Roads 2011 campaign. That campaign encourages people to nominate roads that they believe are risky. If people want to see a sign of the lack of investment on roads by the Barnett government over the past couple of years, they need look only at the response rate for that campaign. In 2008, when that campaign was last run, about 600 people nominated risky roads. In the most recent poll, on the weekend, that number was up around the 6 000 mark. Therefore, we went from 600 people to 6 000. That is a sign that the people of Perth are seeing the lack of investment in public transport and roads. It will not be any surprise to Hon Linda Savage what the number one intersection in the RAC's list of top 10 risky intersections is; I will even let her guess.

Hon Linda Savage: It is the intersection of Gnangara and Beechboro Roads.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member gets it spot-on without any hazard of a doubt! Why was I so confident that Hon Linda Savage would know? At a transport forum in Ellenbrook, we were inundated with complaints from local residents. I know that Hon Linda Savage has been out there listening to her community and would have already picked up that the RAC Risky Roads campaign indicated a major problem with that intersection. Having recently driven past the intersection in the middle of the afternoon, I found it extraordinary. When I drove out there on Saturday morning to do a media interview I made sure I came in a such a way that I did not have to turn across the intersection because there was no way that I would want to do that, it is just crazy. The reality is that Gnangara Road, which interestingly was also at the top the list of the top 10 risky roads—it got the daily double!—needs to be upgraded. The road needs a dual carriageway and that needs to be built as a matter of priority. When looking at the criteria for a main road in relation to Gnangara Road, there can be no other conclusion than Gnangara Road should be a main road. It should be a state road under the auspices of Main Roads, and Main Roads should fund it. There will continue to be a problem on the road unless the state government takes up its responsibility for that road and funds the building of a dual carriageway. That road's only purpose is to connect different parts of the city, which is one of the criteria for a main road. The fact that it runs past a pine plantation on one side and Whiteman Park on the other means that no rates base comes out of that road for the local council. If the council is required to wait for the money out of the local government road program, the improvements will never happen, because the funding will take forever. It is not a road that can be improved in sections and I would imagine that it would be fairly expensive because it would require significant funding as it sits across the top of the Gnangara Mound. It is interesting that the government wants to build more roads across the top of the Gnangara Mound even though it is Perth's main source of water and we are in difficult times with respect to water. I do not know how the government will manage the road it has planned in East Wanneroo as part of its plan for the area. The fact that this road is there shows that the Barnett government is arrogant and out of touch, that it is not addressing this issue, but people like Hon Linda Savage are very much in touch.

The other intersection on the list that jumped out at me was number 3, which is the Eelup roundabout just outside of Bunbury. It jumped out at me because I thought the Liberal Party had made an election commitment to put a

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flyover at the Eelup roundabout. I have personal experience of Eelup roundabout. Not that long ago I went to meet the member for Collie–Preston, Mick Murray, to meet different constituents of his in the Shire of Capel.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Did he take you to Merredin?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No, he did not, but fair enough. I could ask the minister if, when she goes on a trip with the Minister for Transport, they will speed to get there! If she wants to take cheap shots across the chamber she can feel free to start any time she likes, I am more than happy to follow her. I think that Mick Murray's votes went up as a result of that incident. He will probably very happy that the minister is pumping it out there.

The government was going to fix the Eelup roundabout as an election commitment, and we have seen a lot of posturing, a lot of talk, but nothing actually happening on the ground. As I came into Bunbury on the morning that I went to catch up with Mick Murray in the Shire of Capel, before I even got to the turnoff where the Old Coast Road comes back in onto the Australind bypass, the traffic was banked up and I thought, "This is interesting." We kept moving very, very slowly past the Shell service station and I had been well ahead of schedule, but by this stage I started to panic that I would be late for my meeting—I do not like to be late. I thought that there must have been an accident. Of course there had not been one, it was just the usual congestion at the Eelup roundabout that is now occurring. The most extraordinary thing about that incident is that we are now two and half years into this government's term and we are not seeing the money that it promised. It said that it would put the flyover at the roundabout during this term in government, but it is not there; the government has not started it. It is interesting to note that the government is now trying to come up with all the excuses under the sun about why it should try to modify the intersection rather than build the flyover that was promised. It is not just the Labor Party making these points; it is organisations such as the RAC.

This government is quite happy to dip its hands into the pockets of the Western Australian public and pick out any spare change or loose notes, and, if that does not work, grab their credit cards, to fund the government's insatiable appetite for the luxuries of life that it likes to spend its money on. Another area of concern, again going back to the time that this money was included, is the massive increase that the government placed on the Perth parking levy. It gets about \$29 million per annum from that fund and it is not spending anywhere near that amount. I think there is something like \$17 million per annum collecting in the Perth parking trust account and nowhere is that the identified in the budget papers for expenditure. It is worth noting again that the RAC is calling on the state government to do two things about this issue. The first is to reveal the investment plan for the Perth parking levy funds and the second is to expand the Central Area Transit service. I agree with the RAC about the CAT bus service. I note that the service was expanded last year, but in my view that is still not enough. When the government has the money sitting in the account, there is no excuse for not spending it on those CAT buses. I have seen, in a number of commentaries from business organisations, a campaign starting against the Perth parking levy. The Perth parking levy was an initiative put in place by the Court government back in the day, and he actually had a half-capable ministry around him. Today we see Colin Barnett leading a weak team, but back in the day when Court had a half-competent team, his government put the Perth parking levy in place and it had, and maintained, bipartisan support. Now, because of the politicisation and abuse of that fund —

Point of Order

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: It is all very well standing here and listening to Hon Ken Travers give us a travelogue of his trip to Collie and raise his concerns about the Perth parking levy, but standing order 98 states that debates should be confined to the question at hand.

Hon JON FORD: There is no point of order. When debating an appropriation bill, any member can talk about a whole range of issues.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis): There is no point of order as long as the member ties his comments back to the debate. Some of his comments must be relevant and they must be tied back to the debate on the bill.

Debate Resumed

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I find it extraordinary that the member wanted to raise a point of order. Even though we have very broad-ranging debates on money bills and appropriation bills, I was talking specifically about when the government collected the same amount of money in 2009–10 that I am talking about today. That money is accumulating. In 2009–10 the government increased the Perth parking levy by some 200 per cent. That is now causing many people to question the levy, which I think is a great shame, because the government has misused the money it has raised from the Perth parking levy. The government has done that because it is artificially deflating the total amount of state debt. That is why it is collecting the money but is not allocating it for expenditure. The money sits on the books to make it look like the government has cash, but we know that the government does not have that cash because it must be spent on a specific purpose and must remain on the books until it is expended for the purpose of meeting certain specific criteria. By my most recent calculations, the

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government will accumulate \$65 million in that account over the next four years. That means total state debt will be reduced by \$65 million until the expenditure is brought to book. That is not the only example. Racing and Wagering Western Australia appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations and pointed out that Treasury made it very clear that RWWA could not spend the money in its account on upgrading the state's betting terminals. The state government does not want that money spent because it wants it sitting in the books to make the state's finances look healthier than they are. That is artificial. I am sure that if Hon Max Trenorden was placing a bet for someone else, he would walk in here and impress members with the amount of money that he had in his wallet even though it was not really his money!

The government has not been making the necessary investment to keep up with the transport demands placed on the state. It has now decided to close Riverside Drive because of the Perth Waterfront project. That will have a dramatic impact on the traffic in and around Perth and exacerbate the government's lack of investment in roads over the past few years. The government will not even tell the people what the implications of closing Riverside Drive will be. That decision will add to the traffic congestion problems we are currently experiencing in Perth. The government's solution, which I believe was cobbled together pretty quickly, is to put a third lane on the Graham Farmer Freeway, but the government will not tell us what impact that will have on the total traffic modelling. I find it extraordinary that the government will not make that information available. I can only conclude that the reason it does not want to make that information available is that it will show that it is a disaster and that the government is scrambling to find a solution for how to proceed with the foreshore development. I note for the benefit of members that the lanes on in the freeway tunnel—I drove through it again this morning—will become narrower than they currently are, although not by a huge amount. I believe it must be an optical illusion because the government is suggesting that the three lanes will fit but the emergency lane will be lost. I looked at the emergency lane, which looks narrower than the other lanes. The gap between the lane and the wall will be narrowed. I wonder whether the government has done a comparative safety analysis on the impact of that.

As I said earlier, there are many road projects. I urge the government to take responsibility for and support the duplication of Gnangara Road. Whenever I have asked the minister questions about that in this place, he has fobbed them off. I congratulate the City of Swan for pursuing this matter for some time. It has amassed a lot of good information about the funding because it understands the issues. The north-eastern corridor of Perth is starting to feel the pinch. I will talk in a minute about the northern corridor, where there are also issues. Reid Highway between Beechboro Road and West Swan Road needs to be made into a dual road. The government is getting on with the Mirrabooka Avenue overpass but we must look also at the Malaga Drive overpass on Reid Highway. Numerous intersections need traffic lights, including at Lord Street and Reid Highway. Each of those projects would make a quantifiable difference to the people who live in that corridor and would make a far greater improvement to traffic management in Perth than the Roe Highway extension that this government has made its priority. The government should help the City of Swan with the Lord Street underpass and the extension of Abernethy Road. The government will build a hospital out there, and I would have thought that an underpass would be an absolutely essential part of the hospital's construction.

Another sign that this government is aware of and embarrassed by all of this is the Minister for Transport's recent announcement about widening Kwinana Freeway between Leach Highway and Roe Highway. The Minister for Transport told me in an answer to a question some time ago that the work would commence in the 2010–11 financial year, and an announcement was made in March that the work would start in May or June of the 2010–11 financial year. I do not know how the government can have the audacity to spin that into meaning that it has brought the project forward. The funding for that road was allocated by the federal government in 2008 in a deal done between the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alannah MacTiernan, and the incoming federal Labor government. The only reason the government would do that is that it is embarrassed by its lack of investment in roads. The government must try to turn whatever it has done into something more positive than it actually is in order to pretend that it is on top of its game. We can debate whether the government is even getting that project right. The City of Melville has pointed out that a range of other work needs to be done as part of that widening, but I will explore that in another debate on another day.

I have covered the bus and train issues and the fact that government has not made the necessary investment in new railcars and buses to keep up with demand. Much commentary has occurred on this matter over the past couple of weeks. I have pursued and raised the point with the Minister for Transport and predicted, for some considerable time, that if we did not order extra buses and trains, we would face a problem. The level of this government's denial is extraordinary. On 13 August last year, the then Minister for Transport was asked a question on notice that was submitted through the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations about when the government expected the existing rolling stock on the Perth urban passenger network to reach full capacity. The answer the minister gave was that the government did not expect the network to reach full capacity at the height of peak periods until about 2014 for all lines except the Armadale–Thornlie line, which was expected to reach full capacity in peak periods by 2016. That information was based on an annual increase

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in patronage of four per cent. As I understand, patronage has been around the four per cent mark, so that is about right. It will be interesting to see the current figures for the past 12 months. An argument was put today that petrol prices do not have an impact on patronage use.

Hon Simon O'Brien: They do.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: An officer of the Public Transport Authority—I do not want to name him and get into an argument with him—said there was not a strong link between petrol prices and public transport patronage, which I found extraordinary. Small fluctuations do not have an impact, but when there are constant increases, they definitely have an impact. Maybe the PTA officer was trying to say that subtle variations do not have an impact, but a sustained spike does. It will be interesting to go back and read the transcript. Although I found it a little extraordinary, I did not get into a debate with him on the radio because I do not think it is appropriate to have an argument with a public servant. I would prefer to have that argument with the Minister for Transport, but I note that during the current crisis the Minister for Transport is hiding and leaving it to the public servants to defend, effectively, the actions of the government, because it is the policy decision two and a half years ago to not buy that additional rolling stock that has caused this problem. The Minister for Transport should be running the defence, not the bureaucrats who have to carry the can for that decision.

My point exactly is that there was a spike in petrol prices in 2008 when, I think, they peaked at just short of \$1.70. They were certainly up around \$1.60 for a while. Petrol prices are currently not far off the \$1.50 mark. I do not know whether some of the ministers in this place have filled up their cars recently, but the price of petrol is around the \$1.50 mark at a lot of service stations these days. I think that we will see that kind of increase again. In 2008 the Mandurah line was coming on, so we actually had about a 29 per cent increase in total patronage numbers on the Perth urban passenger network, but the underlying increase—these are not my figures; these are the Public Transport Authority's figures—was around 10 per cent across the network. That is why the PTA advised the previous government and the current government that we needed to order new rolling stock. In 2006, when we ordered 45 carriages for the Joondalup line extension to Butler, which was to open in 2012, that was seen as sufficient. However, we had that big spike in 2008, which meant that that was not going to be a sufficient number of carriages, and we needed to get on and order new carriages because of the long lead times. I have been calling for at least 30 carriages. I suspect that once they start rolling out, the government will need to reassess whether it needs to continue beyond that 30, but we need to get at least 30 carriages underway.

I am certainly interested in the PTA's current estimation of what we need. I cannot believe that in his answer to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations the minister argued that we would not reach capacity until 2014. Last week people were left on railway platforms and given late notes because they could not get onto trains. Clearly, we had exceeded capacity. What was the government's response? It argued, "Oh, it's because the passengers aren't moving down the train." The problem with that argument was that a lot of journoes were on the trains that day and witnessed what happened. I find it a bit interesting that, if my memory serves me correctly, the government uses a figure of about six people a square metre to calculate the number of people who can fit onto a train at its full capacity. I suggest that people try this only with their friends: draw one square metre on the ground and try to get six people to stand within it. They will have to get pretty comfortable and cosy to try to fit six people into one square metre. There are six members opposite—they should quickly stand and try to squeeze into one square metre and see how cosy it is. I hope that they have all put their deodorant on for the day!

Hon Robyn McSweeney: What about six of yours?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: We could try to fit six of our members into one square metre. I am with Hon Robyn McSweeney, if that is right, if that is what the government has determined is full capacity; it is squeezing people in like sardines. Seriously, we should have a good quality public transport system that, yes, at peak times is full and people have to move down the carriage to fit everyone in, but if we try to squeeze them in like sardines, how will that go? Will we get in the Japanese pushers to push passengers into the carriages?

Anyway, it is extraordinary that in August last year the government said that we have until 2014 to reach capacity. Last week the government was still in denial mode saying that it is just because people will not move down the trains, then it suddenly found four carriages at the back of the yard and put them into service. By its own admission the government acknowledged that what it had said was wrong and the trains had reached capacity. The reality is that everybody knew the trains had reached capacity except for the arrogant and out-of-touch Barnett government. I find it interesting to go back to that theme of how we can tell the government is worried and nervous about its incompetence from the answers that it gives. On 24 March I asked —

- (1) Has the Public Transport Authority ever provided any advice to the Barnett government that it should order additional trains?
- (2) If yes to (1), when and why was this advice not acted upon?
- (3) If a train were ordered today, what is the earliest date ...

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I asked a further couple of questions about whether the government still held the view that capacity would not be reached until 2014. The answer I got was —

- (1)–(5) Issues relating to rail, bus and other transport options are being considered as part of the budget process and deliberations around the public transport plan 2031.

Apart from the fact that at the rate the government is going it will be past 2031 before the public transport master plan is actually released, the second issue in all this is that the government could still have told us whether it had ever received that advice. Of course, the government does not want to tell us whether it has, but we know what the answer is; namely, yes, the government did receive that advice and it did not accept it. The government looks even more ridiculous when it avoids answering those sorts of questions because it is obvious that the government got that advice and simply sought to ignore it.

I want to ensure that people realise that I am a great believer in a balanced transportation system. We need to have our roads fixed, we need to use the rail system to deliver as much of our heavy freight as we possibly can, we need to have our public transport system working, and we need—this is another area where the government can make significant differences—cycling infrastructure. Again, Labor can be very proud of its history in doing projects such as the grade separation of Leach Highway and South Street for the principal shared path, or the main cycle path, heading south of the city, which was part of the extension and the works at the railway stations in the building of the Mandurah line. With the exception of Cranford Avenue, which is a busy street but not hugely busy, and a couple of backstreets, people can now get on the bike path out the front of Parliament House—we also built a cycleway alongside the extension of the freeway—and cycle without having to cross a major road all the way down to, basically, Mandurah. That is an extraordinary piece of infrastructure built by Labor with significant investment. The result of that piece of infrastructure is that since that time there has been growth in the number of cyclists coming from the southern suburbs into the city, and we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of cyclists. Heading east from the city we extended the cycleway from Maylands out to Tonkin Highway. Again, that is a significant piece of infrastructure, and these are just two highlights of the cycleways that we built over the years we were in government. There were many more—some \$80-odd million worth, I think, of cycling infrastructure. The end result is that we are now getting a significant increase, something like 13 per cent, in the number of cyclists coming along that path from the eastern corridor of Perth. However, heading north of the city, the next couple of projects that were listed in the original Perth bicycle network review that needed to be done—namely, the grade separation at Hutton Street, Cedric Street and Karrinyup Road—simply have not occurred. I urge the government to get on and ensure that those projects in the north of the city are funded because I think the figures clearly show that where that investment is made, there is an increase in the uptake of cycling. That is good for the roads, the environment and the health of individuals. I think that if we can dramatically increase the number of cyclists, we should, because every cyclist is one less car or one less passenger on public transport, which is also a saving for the government. The areas where we built quality bike paths have experienced a dramatic increase in the number of cyclists compared with the areas where we did not. The northern corridor was to have been the next major area to have that cycling infrastructure. This government has ummed and ahed about it and it needs to get on with it. The government also needs to release the Perth bicycle network review, consultation on which finished in December 2007. It is now April 2011. The government really should have released that review earlier.

I find the figures relating to the Fremantle rail service extraordinary. This government has allowed all the good work to go out the door. It was interesting to listen to the question asked by Hon Lynn MacLaren during question time. I want to talk briefly about some of the regional projects and issues that we are facing that this government has been getting wrong over the past couple of years with respect to funding. Hon Lynn MacLaren asked some questions about the grain rail freight network. Her question was a little behind the question that Hon Sally Talbot asked last sitting week about the roads that will be upgraded and whether their conservation value was rated low, medium low, medium high or high. The interesting thing is that the answer she got from the minister representing the Minister for Transport highlighted that a couple of roads Main Roads intends to upgrade have vegetation that is classified as medium high. One wonders what impact that will have—I am sure Hon Sally Talbot understands this better than I—on the time it will take to fix the roads to replace the rail lines that this government is closing. That is another example of the Liberals' complete dislike of rail, although I note that there have been some positive signs in recent weeks. A couple of pieces of information have come before me, including a recent *Local Government News* article from the Western Australian Local Government Association that suggests that the government is revisiting this issue and is prepared to reconsider reopening some of those lines as a result of the business case coming forward from Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd and Watco.

The other interesting thing coming out is that the government is finally acknowledging that roads that it did not include in its upgrade program need to be upgraded if it closes the tier 3 lines. I am pleased that it seems that the government will look at this again. I hope it gets on and does something about it. Credit should be given to some of the National Party members in the chamber tonight.

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Hon Max Trenorden: You're wrong; there should be a great deal of credit given.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If the member wants me to bloat his ego a bit, I make it very clear that the work of Hon Philip Gardiner has been extraordinary on this issue. It is an issue that I have felt passionately about. I have my role to play in this, and the National Party members as government backbenchers, have their role to play in this. I have backed off it in recent weeks because I got the sense that there were positive signs. I hope tonight is not a kiss of death! I backed off to create a bit of a lull. Hopefully, the government can fix the problem and say that it realises its original decision was wrong because those lines are viable and that it got it wrong because it did not get the roads right that it needed to spend money on.

Hon Col Holt: You were going so well.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am sorry but that is the case. I am happy to examine this in detail. I think the government now accepts that the Narembeen–Merredin road was not included as part of the original package and it cannot close those lines. We do not have to look too hard on the map to see that if the Quairading–York line is closed and grain is transported out of Quairading up to Cunderdin, the Mawson bin is not dealt with, which is still used as far as I am aware. How do we get grain out of the Mawson bin if the York–Quairading road has not been updated, at least to Mawson? There are all these little problems. Even though people were highlighting them at the time, they were not addressed. I will give credit where it is due. I say to Hon Max Trenorden that I acknowledge the work of Hon Philip Gardiner. I hope that we see a change in that policy. The problem with closing rail lines is that once we close them, we never get a chance to bring them back.

In all fairness, the other people who deserve credit in this debate are the local community members who took up the challenge and started the debate. It has been very difficult for a lot of those people because they have allegiances to the political parties that are in government. It was not easy to take on people who they were quite close to and, I suspect, whom they considered personal friends. I admire people such as that who stand up and take up the fight for an issue they believe in so passionately and try to make a difference because they know it is important to their community. That is why I was prepared to support them. I am not sure that there is any political advantage in me running around campaigning for the rail lines, but I passionately believe that it is the right thing to do for the state. I will always support people who I think are standing up for their communities, despite it being very difficult within their communities, within their friendships and within their relationships. I hope I am not being pre-emptive because I do get a positive vibe that there are about to be some changes.

Hon Max Trenorden: And you have good reason to get positive vibes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I hope that is the case. All the written material that I have seen seems to suggest that there is a rethinking.

Hon Max Trenorden: A new map has been put out by the committee, which is the overall committee, that has a picture of the roads, and you might like to look at that. I told Hon Lynn MacLaren also that that map is out, and you might be interested in it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will look at that. As I said, I hope that we see those tier 3 lines open and the money taken back out and put into the tier 3 lines. One of the leading community members is Kevin Jones. I do not know if I have formally met Kevin. I have spoken to him a number of times. He recently got an award. That is a worthy tribute to him for the work that he has done.

The other area in which there are rail issues is in the south west of the state. We are waiting for the government to tell us what is happening with the Perth–Brunswick Junction line. Another election commitment that has been dropped is the Greenbushes–Bunbury line. That little south west corner is under immense pressure with the growth in Bunbury and Collie. I have visited the Collie Coalfields highway a number of times. The government is not getting on with its election commitment to fund it. I asked some questions the other day about where it was going. It sounds to me as though the government is really dragging its feet. It has no money in the budget at the moment to fund the next stage of the upgrade. I cannot see why the government cannot get on and fix the Collie Coalfields highway.

Hon Simon O'Brien: There's a lot of work going on right now. It was your government that took the Court government's money out of the Coalfields highway.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Two and a half years ago the government made an election commitment to put \$25 million into the budget for the upgrade of the Collie Coalfields highway. Has it done that? No. It has allocated \$11 million for a section on which it was recently quoted there has not been an accident for some time, but the government still has not funded the other sections on which there have been accidents in recent times. It is dragging behind.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

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Hon KEN TRAVERS: The minister can be as indignant as he likes about this. I know why the minister is getting indignant about this. It is because he was the minister who presided over it, and he did nothing. He allocated the money and he watched it get taken out of his budget and he was not able to stop it. That is probably why he is not the Minister for Transport today—because he was not able to get the results he needed to deliver on his election commitments.

I could just keep going on and on. There are so many issues concerning this government that need to be dealt with. So that I get a big crowd when we come back, the next issue that I wanted to talk about is an issue that has floated around for a while. A couple of weeks ago Hon Liz Behjat raised the issue of a swimming pool in the City of Stirling. Even the member for Scarborough has been talking about this issue. She has been writing to people in her electorate, telling them that the City of Stirling councillors have been promising a swimming pool. I want to recount a bit of the history of the swimming pool for the western side of the City of Stirling. The first person who made a commitment for a swimming pool for the people of the Scarborough area was the Premier, Colin Barnett, when he was Minister for Education. The swimming pool previously existed at Scarborough Senior High School, which I know has a very proud record of producing at least three members of this Parliament. Two of them attended for their entire high school education and I think one of them spent one year at Scarborough Senior High School. The member for Nollamara did all her schooling at Scarborough Senior High School, as did Hon Michael Mischin. They would know the swimming pool at Scarborough Senior High School well, as does my partner, who is also a former student of the high school.

Hon Simon O'Brien: A glittering alumni.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is a very strong alumni.

The Premier, the then Minister for Education, Colin Barnett, promised that the land for community use would include the land containing the hall, gymnasium and the swimming pool.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Before the dinner break I touched upon a previous debate in this house, and in the public domain, about an argument which had been put for eight years and on which local government councillors have been elected and re-elected—that is, the promise of a new swimming pool for the coastal areas of the City of Stirling. That was in a letter that Liza Harvey, the member for Scarborough, sent to a number of people.

Hon Liz Behjat: A very hardworking local member.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am glad the member interjected in that way. If the member is of that view, please come into this house and produce at some point in the future evidence of a local government councillor being elected or re-elected on the promise of a new swimming pool for the coastal areas of the City of Stirling. I know of one person who has promised a swimming pool for the people in the coastal areas of the City of Stirling. There used to be a swimming pool at the old Scarborough Senior High School site. In a letter to the Mayor of the City of Stirling back in 1998, the then Minister for Education, Colin Barnett, promised that the land for community use will include the land containing a hall, gymnasium and swimming pool, which was a 25-metre pool, if I remember correctly. I think Hon Ed Dermer followed this issue even more closely than I did at the time.

Hon Ed Dermer: I have every confidence in your recollection, Hon Ken Travers.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If members want to come into this house and spread rumours by making stories up, I will come in and correct the record. We have members out there saying City of Stirling councillors have made promises. I have never seen them. I challenge members to produce evidence to show these promises being made.

Hon Liz Behjat: Just because you have never seen them does not mean they are not true—come on!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Bring in those commitments.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Max Trenorden): Hon Ken Travers, can I have your attention? This is a wide-ranging debate. The member on his feet can speak about whatever he likes. That is the convention of the house. People should not be interjecting to say anything else.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Liz Behjat said in this house on 24 February —

It is about time the City of Stirling stopped passing the buck and blaming previous Liberal or Labor state governments by saying it was their responsibility. It was not. It is the local government's responsibility and it should get on with building the pool.

Where is the evidence that local government councillors promised this pool? We have a letter from a former Minister for Education, the now Premier, promising that he would maintain the pool. What happened after he wrote that letter? When was Scarborough Senior High School bulldozed and the gymnasium and pool removed?

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That pool was knocked over in January 2000. It is the Premier of this state who has the responsibility to pay for and to deliver a pool for the people in the coastal areas of Stirling. The Premier should take up that responsibility. Members may sit here and say, “Hang on a minute, that’s a commitment he gave in 1998. Move on, get over it, forget about it.” Is that the way the Premier treats all local governments in Western Australia? The answer is no, because there is another dispute that has been going on since 1995 in the western suburbs of Perth. That relates to a thing called the Bold Park agreement. Members who have been around this chamber long enough may recall a report in *The West Australian* about a stand-up between the then Minister for Education and member for Cottesloe, and the then Minister for Lands and member for Alfred Cove, Doug Shave. There was an allegation they actually stood chest-to-chest having it off; having a good fight.

Several members interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Having a stand-off. That shows more about the minds of members opposite than what I have said!

The suggestion was they got very close and very physical in their reaction towards each other. It was alleged that it all related to a bill going through this house relating to the Bold Park agreement. There was an agreement with former City of Perth councillors on which land would be taken over by the government, the government would then develop and sell that land, and half the money would go back to the Town of Cambridge. There was an argument about what price that land should be valued at. It was always the argument put forward by Doug Shave, as I understand it, that the agreement had been met because LandCorp had bought the land at the value determined by the Valuer-General; they had paid that across to the government so that it could then be split 50 per cent to the Bold Park area for upgrades and 50 per cent to the Town of Cambridge. The Town of Cambridge never accepted that agreement even though the view at the time was that the deal had been done and resolved. There was no government announcement about this, I might add.

Interestingly, fast forward to the 2010 midyear review, included in the budget is a line item that says in a couple of years \$11.5 million will be given to the Town of Cambridge in settlement of the Bold Park agreement. Hon Liz Behjat was very keen to point out the financial state of the City of Stirling. I would suggest that the Town of Cambridge is a very wealthy council as well, and is about to pick up about \$50 million from the Perry Lakes redevelopment. When I asked some questions about this, I was told it relates to the Bold Park agreement. On 24 February 2011 I asked a question about the \$11.5 million that was included in the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*. I was told “it was determined in accordance with the 1995 agreement formula” even though we know that has been significantly disputed by people who were on the government benches at the time, including Doug Shave. He was always strongly of the view that the agreement had been met with respect to the value. I asked —

Is this payment different from the amount determined by the former Court government; and, if yes, why has it been changed?

The answer was —

Yes. It is different because property values have changed. The formula is the same, but applied to different property values.

One of the key questions was always: at what point do you take the valuation? The view at the time was the valuation was done and the correct amount of money was paid. I should say this \$11.5 million, as far as I understand, is over and above the money that had already been paid to settle this agreement. I also asked —

Is the Bold Park agreement a formal written agreement; and, if yes, will the Treasurer and the Minister for Lands table it?

The answer I got was —

The Bold Park agreement is being updated and when it is finalised, the Treasurer will take a decision on tabling.

What an extraordinary answer. Either there is a written agreement or there is not. I would have thought that the government should be able to table that agreement if it was there.

It is interesting and fascinating to look at why the government, after all this time, is planning to provide \$11.5 million to the Town of Cambridge. Good luck to the Town of Cambridge if it can convince the government to do that, although I am sure that a lot of councils across the state of Western Australia that are in far worse financial positions will be wondering why the Town of Cambridge has this fantastic ability to have an agreement that relates back to the mid-1990s sorted out by the now Premier. How can that be done, yet the Premier cannot resolve and deliver on the promise that he made to the people around the Scarborough Senior High School that he would keep their pool? The now Premier was the bloke who bulldozed and got rid of the pool. He is the bloke who deserves to give the pool back to them!

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I get really angry when I hear members of the Liberal Party try to beat up on the City of Stirling for a completely political agenda. There is no doubt in my mind that that is what this is about. The government has been trotting out these mischievous lines, saying that there will be pay parking at the beaches when that was never the case. Government members were the ones who increased the Perth parking levy by 200 per cent. Now the government is starting to say that it is all the City of Stirling's fault that there is not a pool in the coastal suburbs and that the City of Stirling has the responsibility to fix it. No, the Premier has the responsibility to fix it! If the Premier can fix the problems in the Town of Cambridge, he can fix the problems in the City of Stirling. If he can find the \$11.5 million for the Town of Cambridge, he can find the money for the City for Stirling. I will tell members something: if he gave the City of Stirling half that amount, I reckon it would probably get on with it and build the pool. The council would probably build the pool if it was given half that amount and the box of land that was reserved by the last Labor government to try to facilitate the construction of a pool in that area. If the government was prepared to go back and renegotiate and redefine the 1995 Bold Park agreement, it can go back and honour the commitment that the Premier made to the people of Scarborough in 1998 to keep a pool for them. The fact that that area does not have a pool today rests solely on the shoulders of the then Minister for Education, who not only promised to keep the pool, but also arranged for the school to be bulldozed before the election. The government has the responsibility.

I say to government members in this place that if they want to come into this chamber and try to argue the case and for some political reason attack the City of Stirling, they should make sure they get their facts right and understand the issues and the history of this matter. Government members should understand that it was their Premier who gave that commitment. Over the last eight years, I am not aware of any City of Stirling councillor ever giving that commitment. In fact, the councillors have been consistent. All the City of Stirling councillors I know of say, "Yes, we would love to have a pool. Yes, we are prepared to negotiate and work with the government, but we want it on better financial terms than have been provided to date by the government." Therefore, if the Liberal Party wants to make an issue of a pool in Scarborough, it should feel free, but rest assured that the responsibility is on the shoulders of the man who signed this letter, one Colin Barnett, Minister for Education, on 22 October 1998, in which he said that he would ensure that the land for community use would include the swimming pool. That is where the focus of this chamber should be. Government members should stop trying to attack and play politics with the City of Stirling and its hardworking councillors. Some councillors are in the Liberal Party, some are in the Labor Party and some are non-aligned, but my view is that they are all hardworking.

I work very closely with the City of Joondalup. I would never stoop to the sort of tactics that have been stooped to here to try to create a straw man out of the City of Joondalup. Even though the Mayor of Joondalup and I are of completely different political persuasions, I would sit and work through those issues. I would not put out letters that are false and I would not try to blame the City of Stirling for something that was my responsibility if I were a former Labor education minister who is now the Premier. I put that on the record. I feel very, very strongly about it. I challenge members to come into this house and provide a letter as clear as the letter from which I have quoted tonight from the Minister for Education in 1998, Colin Barnett, which clearly states that the City of Stirling councillors promised the pool. This is a sad and sorry issue, and it all goes back to the closure of Scarborough Senior High School by one Colin Barnett. Interestingly, it will probably be one of the lasting memories of Ed Dermer and me of our time as members for the North Metropolitan Region that an issue such as this could last for so long and still not be resolved. I must say that I find it fascinating and I am intrigued. I will continue to pursue the reason why this government is providing financial support to the Town of Cambridge at the expense of all others.

We have had debates in this chamber about council amalgamations. We have made our position clear that we do not support council amalgamations. We support voluntary amalgamations; we do not support compulsory council amalgamations. The other side came out and said it wanted compulsory amalgamations of councils. The Town of Peppermint Grove was immediately exempted, and it became the principality of Western Australia, the Monaco of WA, and the Premier said it would never be touched. Although it was never explicitly mentioned, the other council that will never be touched seems to be the Town of Cambridge. There has never been any pushing by the Liberal Party for the Town of Cambridge to amalgamate. I do not know why the Town of Cambridge is able to get an \$11.5 million handout to sort out an agreement when a further agreement was sorted out and agreed to by its own Liberal members 10 years ago. What amazes me more is that this council will get \$50 million out of the Perry Lakes agreement, and it is entitled to that.

It will also be fascinating to see whether this government gets a final agreement on the state netball centre. The state netball centre should have been located at Challenge Stadium. The major women's participation sport in this state should have been given the same prominence that was given to basketball, rugby, cricket, swimming, athletics and a range of other sports by being located at the premier sport and recreation facility in Western Australia. However, for some unknown reason this government chose to treat women's netball as a second-rate

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sport and move the proposed netball centre away from Challenge Stadium to Matthews Netball Centre. The argument the government gave at the time was that it was cheaper to build the centre at Matthews because a car park would have to be built at Challenge Stadium. Firstly, I think we should have done more to put the heat on the University of Western Australia to have deck parking, which would have reduced the costs. If we take away the depreciation on the capital asset and look at the day-to-day running costs, it is cheaper to run the state women's netball centre at Challenge Stadium than at Matthews. We were told it would be cheaper to build at Matthews. However, if members look at the recent negotiations and what the Town of Cambridge is demanding from the state government to allow the state netball centre to be built at Matthews, they will see that we will now end up giving the Town of Cambridge, for the cost of that development, far more money than if it had been built at Challenge Stadium. We are going to pay for a redevelopment of the Matthews Netball Centre for the Town of Cambridge, which, as I have said, is a very wealthy council. In my view, it is an extraordinary situation. The City of Wanneroo is one of those councils that are struggling to keep up with the demands placed on it as a result of the growth in its area, whilst at the same time dealing with ageing infrastructure at places such as Kingsley. I know that the City of Wanneroo would have loved to have a similar deal to the one the government is heading towards in its negotiations on the Matthews Netball Centre.

If we end up in a situation in which the Matthews Netball Centre costs the government more than it would have cost if the centre had been at Challenge Stadium, I for one will want to know why this council is getting such preferential treatment from this government. Why are the people of the western suburbs and the mates of the Premier getting looked after so well when the ratepayers of the City of Wanneroo are required to make their own investments in their netball centre? The City of Wanneroo is a council that does not have the assets and the resources of the Town of Cambridge. I do not want to suggest in any way that I am having a go at the hardworking councillors of the Town of Cambridge, because I have a lot of respect for those people; my view is good luck to them if they can get that deal out of the government. My attack tonight is on the government for being so willing to do this deal. For the Town of Cambridge, it is not just the cost of the construction and the redevelopment of the Matthews Netball Centre; there are other side deals, as I can see from the agreements on the web for the current negotiations. For instance, there is the old nursery site, and the government will provide funds to the Town of Cambridge as a result of that redevelopment.

They have also been included so that the Town of Cambridge will get significant benefit over what has previously been on the table as part of the negotiations to try to sweetheart the deal through at the Matthews Netball Centre. I look at all of that and I wonder why: why is the Town of Cambridge getting this \$11.5 million; why is the Matthews Netball Centre being rebuilt; and why is the Town of Cambridge getting the money out of the nursery when the City of Wanneroo, the City of Joondalup and the City of Stirling do not get it? Members of Parliament come into this chamber and tell us that somehow the City of Stirling is responsible for honouring the promises made back in 1998 by the then Minister for Education and now Premier. If he can go back and fix a deal made in 1995, he can honour his commitment of 1998. I will continue to pursue that issue with vigour.

Another issue with this government is the cost of living for families. It seems to look after those in the western suburbs, who probably least need financial support, while families in the northern corridor are struggling to pay mortgages. This government not only is not supporting its local councils but also imposing savage increases in electricity and, generally, in fees and charges. A couple of weeks ago I asked a range of questions. In asking them I was looking more at the government's commitment to the 10 per cent reduction and I was seeking detail around the government costs and what was driving government savings—whether it was vehicles or costs et cetera. But the answers were really interesting. I was told to read question on notice 3075 for most of the answers, which was a generic answer from the parliamentary secretary representing the Treasurer. The information I got was in the form of general, broad-brush statements about costs. In my view, they did not give the level of detail I had been asking for and suggested that, over the next four years, there would be no changes in costs such as registration fees for vehicles, fuel, maintenance and insurance. The answer was a standard reply of \$7 million this year for insurance, \$7 million next year, \$7 million the year after and \$7 million the year after that. Fuel costs are to fluctuate a bit and registration will stay at \$3 million over the forward estimates. It struck me as a bit of a nonsense to think insurance or finance costs will not change over the life of the forward estimates of this government. That was the very bland answer I was supposed to get. The interesting thing is the government is talking about a 10 per cent reduction in its vehicle fleet. It shows that this year it expects to have 5 600 passenger vehicles; next year, 5 400; and the year after, 5 400, but, interestingly, the number goes up to 5 500 and then back up to 5 600. Therefore, although there will be a 10 per cent reduction in the vehicle fleet, the number will quickly go back up to where it was previously.

Thankfully, one minister was prepared to give the true figures within his agency in the increases it was expecting. That was the Minister for Transport, and I thank the minister representing the Minister for Transport for tabling that answer. It was enlightening. It shows that agency is expecting the cost of vehicle registration to increase by 4.5 per cent, 4.3 per cent and 4.2 per cent over the next three years—well above the inflation rate. I

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found that very interesting. If we would expect one agency to know the expected increase in registration fees, it is the Department of Transport because it administers those fees. Even the PTA expects its registration costs to increase by 12.3 per cent. I am fascinated to know from the government why those agencies are budgeting amounts well above the inflation rates in the budget. Why are those agencies including that internal budgeting for motor vehicles in their forward estimates? I hope that by getting it out there, we have embarrassed the government and we might find that the increases stay below the inflation rate. We have got on the front foot and highlighted that that is what that agency's internal documents are showing. We will see how things go.

There are very many examples of where this government is not investing in basic infrastructure. I want to touch on some of those issues for the north metropolitan region. There is the widening and extension of the Mitchell Freeway, another promise from local Liberal Party members in seats such as Ocean Reef in particular and Wanneroo. Those members said the government would get on with the planning and design of the extension of the Ocean Reef section of the freeway. They clearly indicated to their electors that the freeway would be both widened and extended if they were elected. We have seen nothing in two and a half years. It will not be considered good enough if this government expects that at the very last moment before the next election they throw around a few dollars and say, "Well, we're doing a bit of design work now for the extension." The government needs to include in this coming budget the cost of widening and extension the freeway, not just for the design work but also the construction work. To fund the design work will mean one of two things: it either does not intend to do it or it is hoping state finances will improve to enable it to afford the construction side. It is a way of hiding the true debt: Even though we have a process of working out how to predict income over future years, we ignore that and do it another way or there is a risk that we will spend the money on design and never deliver on the final product, and we will have wasted it. In many respects, I hope it will be the case. It is a shame to waste the money, but I hope stage 8 of Roe Highway never reaches the construction stage and that the money is redirected to more important projects such as the freeway widening and extension.

I have talked about train overcrowding. There is a desperate need for a better bus service from the east Wanneroo area, including Tapping, Carramar, Ashby and Banksia Grove, both down into the city and across to the railway line. We needed 20 new buses a year, and we now probably need 40 buses to catch up to the number we should have, and 20 buses a year for every year thereafter. Many of the suburbs that I indicated earlier had inadequate bus services were on the list the Minister for Transport provided to the committee. People in new subdivisions should not have to put up with inadequate bus services. In my first speech I referred to a study done in the 1960s that showed that if a full bus service is established at the time a new subdivision is built, the number of people who get involved in patronage will increase.

I will not bore members with a long list of items, but the City of Wanneroo is very good at identifying all its infrastructure issues because it deals on a daily basis with those things that need to be done across the northern suburbs. The extension of the Mitchell Freeway needs to include the connection from the freeway through to the Neerabup industrial area. There is now a logjam of building projects that need to be continually funded across the north metropolitan region to keep up with the growth in population. There is a long list, and other members of the North Metropolitan Region will have received the same documents as I have received.

As I said at the very beginning, I could have gone on for hours and hours and probably stayed here for the next three months going through the many areas in which this government is failing. I have not touched on the approach to the east Wanneroo structure plan about which the local member is saying everything has been solved now. In fact, the government's approach will not answer or solve any of the problems. There is a lack of investment in roads around the airport. The government has the money in the budget but it is not getting on and progressing any of the roads there at this stage. The government could fix them and relieve some of the congestion around the airport, but it is not doing that.

The government promised a railway station at South Perth, and we have talked about that before in the house. Where is it? When is the government going to get on with it?

I refer to the taxi industry. The former Minister for Transport, as shadow spokesperson, promised the world to the taxi industry. He promised both to passengers and to drivers and other participants in the industry that all the problems in the industry would be fixed on his watch. This government is two and a half years in and nothing has happened. It has gotten worse. The vast majority of drivers are good, but there is a small pocket of drivers that are bringing the industry into disrepute. This government is doing nothing to fix it. We have constantly offered positive suggestions to help the government, as has the Taxi Council of WA, yet the government has done nothing but sit there. Probably one of the reasons why the Minister for Finance is now no longer the Minister for Transport is that he just did not get on with it.

There is the issue of the way in which new government offices has been handled. As I understand it, we are going to end up with a merry-go-round of shifting departments for a short while and then shifting them back to another location. There will be apparently another couple of office towers built across from Parliament House as

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part of the Premier's palace and the greater compound for ministers and their associated departments—money that could be better spent on the basic infrastructure required in the suburbs of Perth, rather than on luxuries for the government.

A member interjected on me earlier suggesting that this is my thirty-fourth speech. I must say that some key projects are running, including some I predicted earlier, but I never thought they would be as bad as they are under this government. I will continue to raise these issues because I believe they are the issues that the people of Western Australia want this Parliament and this government to address and because this government is missing in action on very many issues.

This government is allowing problems to build up that will create a great deal of trouble for our community in its ability to operate and continue to function. We are a very rich state. I am happy to engage in the debate about getting a better deal out of Canberra. We are entitled to that because we are producing the wealth from the minerals that belong to the state of Western Australia. I understand all of those arguments, but we are still a very rich state and we can do better than we are currently doing and we have got to get the priorities right. We have got to manage those issues that need to be dealt with on a daily basis. It comes down to the fact that the government has to be out there listening to the community. We have a Premier who is out of touch and who has a weak team around him.

I have to say that it was great to be at the railway stations in the last couple of days, because it reminded me that what I have been saying in my speech 34, as some call it, is resonating with the people out there in Western Australia. They are the issues they want us to address. It is interesting to note that often people will turn up their nose when they are asked to sign a petition. They often put their head down and walk past, clearly not wanting to make eye contact. I have never seen a situation like I saw recently. As people walked past me with their head down, they suddenly stopped when I said, "Would you like to sign a petition to get more trains on the Midland line or the Joondalup line?" I felt like I was in a John Hughes commercial—seriously—because they turned around and said, "Absolutely!" That was the sort of response I was getting. About 95 per cent of the people I approached said, "Good on you for doing it. We need them." It was fantastic to know that I was actually standing up and fighting for the things that are important. It was not just me running out there and re-justifying my speech 34; this is actually what the people out there want. Mothers told me stories about how they worry when they sit at Perth station wondering whether they are going to get on the train to get home. If they do not get on the train and they are late when they get to their childcare centre, they have to pay a penalty for picking up their kids late. These are families that are already struggling under the Barnett government's savage fees and charges. Now they will be hit with another penalty at their childcare centre because the government has not bought enough railcarriages. That is the nature of this government. That is the heartlessness with which this government treats the hardworking people of Western Australia. Those were the great stories that I heard out there today. They reinforced the grief that these savage increases are causing people. They reinforced that the Premier will say anything but when it comes to the important issues he does nothing.

Our hospitals and our schools need to be fully funded, and they need to be first class. We need to make sure, as I said the other day when I started this speech, that the benefits of the boom will be shared. We need to argue with the eastern states that those benefits need to come back to WA to help build the state that is providing the benefits for the rest of the country. But we also need to make sure that we share them with all members of the community. If we do not, we will create massive division in our community and we will all suffer for it ultimately. We need to make sure that all Western Australians are getting the benefit of the boom.

We will see over the next day or so, as we debate the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2009–10 (Supplementary) Bill 2010 and the similar bill for capital for 2009–10, that these issues are just a microcosm of the problems of the Barnett government not delivering for Western Australian families and not getting it right. Government members are out there with their crusades on the privatisation of schools, hospitals and anything else they can find to privatise. Even if they cost more money, the government does not care; it just privatises because that is what it likes to do. We have to get the focus back. This opposition will keep the pressure on this government to get the focus back on the real issues that are important to the people of Western Australia. That means good schools, fully funded and first class; good hospitals, fully funded and first class; and a world-class public transport system. That is what this government inherited. It is running down those systems and it must put money back in to maintain them at the decent, world-class level they were at. These bills give us a microcosm of a government that has its priorities wrong, because it regards a palace on the hill for the emperor as its priority, not the basic infrastructure that families need.

HON HELEN BULLOCK (Mining and Pastoral) [8.07 pm]: As members know, it is not often that we have a chance to talk about the state's financial management, so this is an opportunity that certainly should not be missed.

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Each year the government has to put some effort into balancing its books. There are two sides of the story to balancing the books: the revenue side and the spending side. A big chunk of the government's revenue in our state is generated through mining royalties from the resources sector, of which iron ore mines are the major contributors. From the message delivered by the Minister for Mines and Petroleum on the opening day of Paydirt's Gold Conference 2011 in Perth a few days ago, we know that the value of Western Australia's mineral and petroleum industry reached a record \$91.6 billion in 2010. Iron ore remained the state's most valuable resource in 2010, accounting for \$48.5 billion, or 53 per cent, of all mineral and petroleum sales. What does that mean? It means that the royalty revenue reached a record high in 2010. That is how I read it between the lines.

Royalty revenue is different from other sources of government revenue, such as land tax. Land tax is a tax over and over again on a piece of land. It is the same as registration fees on cars, which is revenue generated on taxing the same cars over and over again. As the royalty revenue is generated from our natural resource reserves, it is a tax on the reduction of the reserves. When the reserves run out, this revenue will cease to exist, meaning that we can only generate this kind of revenue once. This natural resources revenue belongs to the people of this state—not only our generation but also future generations—and the future of Western Australia. It is the state government's responsibility to ensure the revenue generated from natural resources benefits not only us but also future generations.

The royalty revenue is very volatile; it fluctuates depending on the demands for our resources, the exchange rate at the time and the prices for the resources. The prices are not set by us; they are set by the international trade market. We had a good run in the past; however, due to the impact of the global financial crisis, the government experienced some difficulties in balancing the 2008–09 budget, as we all know, for the simple reason that our dollar fell 20 cents against the greenback at that time. It was not lack of demand, and it was not because the price for our resources lowered. As a consequence of this 20-cent drop in the exchange rate, the budget surplus fell from \$2.5 billion in 2007–08 to \$318 million in 2008–09. The financial crisis was blamed for everything. I accept that the exchange rate was to blame, but I think this government knew very well that it was spending like there was no tomorrow.

Moving on, 2009 was an interesting year. It was a wait-and-see year for the government as it held its breath nervously, waiting to see whether the situation would improve. If the situation did not improve, the spending side of the balance would be affected, meaning major spending cuts would need to take place in future years' budgets. It was a great relief for the government when that situation turned around very quickly within that year. The situation did not get any worse. Our dollar value not only climbed back but also climbed higher than ever before. It generated a great amount of revenue to this state. Along with the hundreds of millions of dollars the state government robbed from ordinary families, at the moment the state government's coffers should be overflowing. But the government still cannot balance its books. At this moment our current debt level is \$14 billion compared with that of 2007–08. It is four times higher in three years. How could that have happened? Our revenue is at a record high as well. It is projected that by 2014 the debt level will reach as high as \$20 billion.

This is our current situation: 40 years since starting exploring our natural resources, we do not have our own resource-related manufacturing, value-adding and downstream processing industry that would underpin our economy during the downturn. We do not have any savings put aside for rainy days. We do not have any investment that we could sell to bail us out during the bad times. We have not been investing in high-tech industry so that in future, if necessary, we could change our economic focus. We do not have any of those things. What we know best is spending, borrowing and spending more.

Mr Deputy President, you will probably ask me what is my solution to make the one-off revenue from our resources last, to counter the effects of the future decline in income and to smooth out the fluctuating effects of iron ore prices. It is time to open our eyes and learn from others. We are not the only country blessed with such natural resources. Norway, for example, is one of many countries that have been equally blessed with abundant natural resources such as oil and gas. In 1969, while we were in the initial phase of developing a market for our iron ore, oil was discovered in chalk of Danian age in Ekofisk in Norwegian waters in the central North Sea. Oil production started in Norway in 1971.

Let me summarise some of the information I have extracted from Wikipedia about Norway's economic structure and sustained growth. The emergence of Norway as an oil exporting country has raised a number of issues for Norwegian economic policy. Concerns have been raised that much of Norway's human capital investment has been concentrated in petroleum-related industries. Critics have pointed out that Norway's economic structure is highly dependent on natural resources that do not require skilled labour, making economic growth highly vulnerable to fluctuations in the demand and pricing for these natural resources. This is exactly the same situation as ours. However, unlike the Western Australian government, the Norwegian government realised that the proceeds of oil revenue should not be used to fuel private and public consumption if Norway were to sustain its prosperity when oil reserves run out. In 1990, Norway's Parliament passed a law to establish the government

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petroleum fund. The plan was to regularly transfer capital from the government's petroleum revenue to the fund. The fund's purpose is to support the government's long-term management of petroleum revenue. The fund is part of several efforts to hedge against dependence on petroleum revenue. It is a fund into which the surplus wealth produced by Norwegian petroleum income is deposited. In 2006 the fund changed its name to the pension fund. As at the valuation in June 2007, it was the largest pension fund in Europe and the fourth-largest in the world. However, it is not actually a pension fund, as it derives its financial backing from oil profits and not pension contributions. As at 19 October 2010, its total value was three trillion Norwegian krone, which equals \$US512 billion, holding one per cent of global equity markets. With 1.78 per cent of European stocks, it is said to be the largest stock owner in Europe.

The purpose of the petroleum fund is to invest parts of the large surplus generated by the Norwegian petroleum sector. This surplus is generated not only from taxing companies, but also from payments for licences to explore and from the state's direct financial interest in and dividends from partly state-owned Statoil. Current revenue from the petroleum sector is estimated to be at its peak and to decline over the next decade. The petroleum fund was established in an effort to counter the effects of the forthcoming decline in income and to smooth out the disrupting effects of highly fluctuating oil prices. This is an example of how another country manages the revenue that is generated from its natural resources.

I think that by now members will have got my point. My point is that the royalty revenue generated from our natural resources is for not only us, but also future generations and the future of this state. This government does not have a right to spend it all. This government should learn something from other countries. It should open its eyes and look at putting aside for the future some income generated from this one-off revenue. Perhaps this is a very sudden suggestion, so I will give members some time to reflect on it. I think we all need time to reflect on the idea. But I will talk more about it in June, after we come back from the Easter recess and after members have had a good reflection on it.

HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan) [8.22 pm]: I welcome the opportunity to make some comments on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2009–10 (Supplementary) Bill and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2009–10 (Supplementary) Bill 2010. I must admit that I found interesting some of the information in the schedules that were provided with the bills. I do not intend to comment on each and every line item in the schedules, but one in particular struck me—that is, the WA suicide prevention strategy and the saving of some \$6.25 million. I will explore some of the issues surrounding what is happening in the mental health sector and why I find it quite offensive that this saving should be made from a limited \$13 million suicide strategy. Since taking on shadow responsibility for the mental health portfolio, I have been very surprised at the interest from consumers and sector participants in what is happening in the mental health sector. In particular, I have been shocked by the view held by many in the sector that not as much is happening as was expected to have happened by this point in the electoral cycle. Members will remember that this government went to the election with a very strong policy on mental health. It was a very simple policy. All its policies were short, sharp and simple; there was virtually no detail. Because of the brevity, there was some clarity and people clearly understood what they could expect. I am now very surprised at the lack of progress of the mental health policy that was taken by the government to the last election.

I will quickly explore the policy, because I think it is very important to put this within a framework. First of all, the policy makes the point that in Western Australia 250 people choose to end their lives each year. The sad fact is that Western Australia's annual suicide toll is higher than our appalling road toll. I agree with that. I do not know the current road toll figures, but I understand that, as a general rule, the road toll tends to be lower than the suicide rate. The policy also indicates that the Labor government did nothing to stem the high rate of suicide and had simply failed to deliver a Western Australian state suicide prevention strategy. That is an interesting comment—the Labor government did nothing to stem the high rate of suicide. I have continually asked questions in this place about how the current suicide figure compares with the suicide figure of 250 people in 2008. I have asked time and again in this place what is the suicide rate —

Hon Helen Morton: You never once asked that question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I think the minister is being cute. One would have thought that, as the government has set up the Mental Health Commission, we could ask a question of the minister and she would direct us to the appropriate source for the answer. I will tell the minister what is happening out there. There is confusion. I cannot ask the minister a question. If I want to ask a question, I have to go to either the Department of Health or the Office of the State Coroner via the Department of the Attorney General—or somewhere else. From what I have seen so far, this one-stop Mental Health Commission does nothing but cause confusion and add another layer of bureaucracy. I will get into some of the detail. I have asked time and again—it may not have been a perfectly symmetrical question —

Hon Helen Morton: Thank you.

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Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, it may not have been, but the minister's lack of preparedness and lack of will to assist can only lead me to conclude that she is trying to hide something. She would be trying to hide something only if there were something to hide. That is the only conclusion I can come to.

Hon Helen Morton: Did I offer you a private briefing?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The simple fact is that I was told that the information was not available in one form, and then I was told that it was not available in another form, and then I was told that it could not be collated because there needed to be a two-year time lag. I went to a conference on suicide prevention and the State Coroner, who, I was very pleased to see, was at the conference, stood to give his presentation and matter-of-factly said that there were 290 suicides last year. I have been told now—it was corrected by the Attorney General's department—that the figure is 260.

The figure that appeared in the newspaper had nothing to do with me; that was between the paper and whatever the reporter heard at that conference or wherever they got that information from. I have to say that the coroner had no problem whatsoever in putting that figure on the public record.

Hon Helen Morton: At no time did you ask that question of me. You wanted to know the number for the last three months by region, and that is what you weren't going to get.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister knows that she has not been helpful. I am not surprised that she is not helpful, because we do not have to scratch too far to know that she is facing some serious problems. I will keep going because I will not allow the minister to interfere with my time.

The suicide rate is now higher than it was when this government took office. The figure for 2010 was 260. We could add to that a proportion of the 73 open verdicts; that is, where the cause of death was inconclusive and it could not be determined whether it was the result of suicide. We would have to say that a number of those 73 deaths were the result of suicide. If we added 50 per cent or 25 per cent of those deaths to the figure of 260, the statistic for whether there has been a real reduction in the suicide rate in Western Australia under this government would look pretty poor. The government first made an allegation that the previous government did not do enough to prevent suicide. Then, by implication, it made the promise that it would reduce those figures. The suicide rate is now at a record high. That is disgraceful.

The lack of cooperation or spirit of cooperation shown by this minister to me as the opposition spokesperson is absolutely appalling. She got up in this place during an adjournment debate one night and went on and on about how she wanted to work in a spirit of cooperation. I remember that. Everybody is nodding. Everyone remembers that. Yep, the honourable member over there remembers it. She said that she wanted to work in a spirit of cooperation. I took that in good faith. I asked the minister a straightforward question. She knew the intent of the question; she knew that all I was asking for was some figures. She could have provided me with what she had. She could have given me some indication that would have assisted me in getting what was required. She chose not to. I am not going to labour that point because I have other things to say. We also asked the minister a very, very simple question during a hearing of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations on the number of vacancies in mental health across the state in June 2010. The number was 198. That is a good thing to know. We also asked how many vacancies there were in the Mental Health Commission. It is only a small agency. We found out that there were 11. It is reasonable to want to get an update on something so simple. They were the figures in June 2010. I asked the same questions on 22 February 2011 because I am very keen to see —

Hon Helen Morton: Did you put it on notice?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, I have not put it on notice.

Hon Helen Morton: There are 78 organisations with which it contracts and you wanted the answer back in three hours. Is that ridiculous or is that ridiculous?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I asked the questions again. I would have thought that the new commission would have been able to provide that information, but the minister was not able to do so. I do not think that is very good. The minister knows exactly what she is doing; she is lengthening the accountability chain. What one does is to throw it all out there. Then, when the minister is asked a question and to report to Parliament and, through Parliament, to the people of Western Australia—the taxpayers—she cannot provide it. Not only can she not provide the answer, but also she insults me by calling me ridiculous. The minister is intentionally lengthening the accountability chain.

Hon Helen Morton: You are ridiculous.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is what she is doing. It is very concerning.

I will quickly go back to the suicide prevention strategies, because I want to move on to other areas. Another part of this government's election commitments—I go back to the mental health policy because it is such a good

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document—was its firm commitment to appoint Western Australia’s first Minister for Mental Health. I have put on the public record before and I will say again that this government has had two so far. Most people I speak to say that the first Minister for Mental Health was an absolute shocker. He simply could not make a decision. I do not know whether that is true, but given the lack of progress on the implementation of this policy, there is something very, very seriously wrong. The second clear promise was to —

Appoint an independent **WA Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioner** to conduct a **comprehensive review into the adequacy of current mental health services in Western Australia**, and to recommend how the mental health system can be reformed to develop a mental health safety net of services which meets the needs of patients and their support networks.

We are going to look at how well that has been met, because in the not-too-distant future we will look at the self-assessments of the non-government organisations, which are very, very revealing on the extent to which the needs of patients and their support networks are being met.

The third major election commitment in mental health was to —

Spend \$13 million in the first two years of government to develop a comprehensive WA State Suicide Prevention Strategy with a particular emphasis on young people, young men Aboriginal people and people who live in rural and regional Western Australia.

That is very clear. That is the third of five commitments. My reason for talking about the \$13 million suicide prevention strategy in particular is heightened by the fact that not only was it a clear election commitment, but also there has been a spate of suicides in the Kimberley. There have been 11 suicides, most of them of young people.

Hon Helen Morton: Thirteen.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister is telling me that the figure is now 13. We would have to be concerned. I am told by people from other areas of the state that this is happening not just in the Kimberley. People are taking their lives in other regional and rural areas throughout the state. Naturally, as the opposition shadow spokesperson and a concerned citizen of this state, I am interested to find out how widespread this problem is; hence, my series of questions about the rate of suicides. I received such a bad non-response from the minister that one can only conclude that the minister is intentionally trying to avoid not only the scrutiny of the Parliament, but also being held accountable, through the Parliament, to the people of this state. I asked the minister how much of the \$13 million statewide suicide prevention strategy funding had been spent in the Kimberley since it was announced in May 2009. I asked that question in February 2011, nearly two years after the funding was announced. I was quite shocked by her reply because at that time only \$500 000 had been spent. It was some very, very minuscule amount.

Hon Helen Morton: Just read the election commitment again. It says we will develop the \$13 million program over two years and that it will be rolled out after that development has taken place. Get that word “development” in there.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Let me repeat that again: to spend \$13 million in the first two years of government to develop a comprehensive ...

Hon Helen Morton: To develop it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: You have developed 11 communities—to develop a comprehensive WA suicide prevention strategy with a particular emphasis on young people, young men, Aboriginal people, and people who live in rural and regional Western Australia.

Quite frankly, that is \$13 million on an issue for which the minister should be on red alert.

Hon Michael Mischin: Like you mob were.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Members opposite might think it funny, but I would not be laughing.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Max Trenorden): Order, members! I have been allowing a bit of chitchat because the member on her feet has been doing a bit of leading, but this has gone too far. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has the floor.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

We would have thought that there would have been be more progress in the two years than we were finally advised there had been; namely, the spending of some \$500 000. I think that progress had been made on 11 out of the 50 community suicide development plans, as I think they are called. We are already 2.5 years into this government’s term. There are only another 39 communities in which these plans are to be implemented and we

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have \$12.5 million with which to implement them. In response to the minister's answer, I put out a press release on the strength that the minister was allocated \$13 million but had spent only \$500 000.

The Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2009–10 (Supplementary) Bill 2010 details the recurrent expenditure excesses and the new items for the 2009–10 financial year. Under the WA Health contribution to the hospital fund, there were pre-risk cover—medico-legal—savings of some \$450 000; a national partnership agreement for Indigenous economic participation of \$586 000; a national health care agreement of \$275 000; and an activity and cost growth of \$210.036 million, offset by the WA suicide prevention strategy saving of \$6.25 million. That is money that this minister is saying she cannot spend. She cannot spend this money; she can spend only \$500 000. She cannot spend this money; she is going to give it back to Treasury. In response to that, I put out a press release on 28 March 2011, titled, “Minister hands back millions of unspent mental health funding”. The press release stated —

Minister Helen Morton has handed back to Treasury almost half of the \$13million the Barnett Government promised to spend on a Suicide Prevention Strategy, ...

... the Barnett Government made an election promise to spend \$13million on the Strategy in the first two years of Government but instead, \$6.2million has been sent back to Treasury.

“Breaking an election promise is bad enough but when it involves such a tragic issue, it is an indictment on an incompetent Government,” ...

“Minister Morton admitted in Parliament the underspending was a result of delays.

I do not want to read the whole press release, but I have to say that it is a pretty good press release. I released that on 28 March 2011 and on Tuesday, 29 March, the minister, in response to my press release put out her own press release in which she made a call to action. The minister is calling —

... to action on suicide prevention in Western Australia

It is good to make a call to action; the only problem is that the minister is about two years too late. She is calling to action on 29 March 2011, almost 2.5 years after being elected. The media release states —

Mental Health Minister Helen Morton has reiterated her commitment to spend \$13million on WA's first Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Mrs Morton said the funds were safe guarded and the entire \$13million had been preserved within the Mental Health Commission budget.

“In this term of Government, we have committed to spend the entire amount of \$13million on community action plans ... across 50 communities in Western Australia that want to make their communities suicide-proof,” she said.

“If 50 communities and 50 companies or organisations commit to talking, thinking, breathing and championing suicide prevention in our State, we can collectively create an attitudinal shift about how we talk about and prevent suicide.

“If any community wants to get on board ...

It is open slather! Don't worry about the needs base. Don't worry about analysis. Don't worry about anything else!

“If any community wants to get on board, we want to hear from you.”

The clarification comes after Labor unnecessarily created panic and confusion within WA communities when shadow spokeswoman for mental health Ljiljanna Ravlich released false information about the State Government's commitment to spend \$13million on WA's first Suicide Prevention Strategy.

I do not know what that demonstrates. I really do not know what it takes. The minister breaks her own election commitment, does not deliver and has only 11 out of 50 communities involved in doing a plan. The sum of \$6.2 million has been returned to Treasury, and the minister is telling me she is doing something positive. I say to the minister that I think she is kidding herself. She is certainly causing a great deal of concern in the community. People are very concerned about the lack of progress in the area of mental health. They feel as though they are being let down by the minister and this government. People feel the actions do not match the rhetoric, and I agree with them.

Let us take the new Mental Health Act, shall we, minister. Much has been said about the rewrite of the Mental Health Act. People in the sector could have rightly expected that two and a half years into this government's term there might have been a new Mental Health Act. I, for one, certainly would not have thought that the rewriting of the 1996 Mental Health Act would take two and a half years. I would have thought that, if this was a priority for government, its drafting status would have been elevated, it would have gone to the appropriate

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parliamentary draftspeople and, following consultation with the sector and all the stakeholders, it would have come into this place by now. In fact we do not see the new Mental Health Act. We were recently advised that we will not see it for quite some time. I understand that only a very small number of people have seen it. I think in large part it has probably been drafted. The only problem is they forgot to include in the act the Mental Health Commission. They forgot to work out how some of the other component parts of the mental health system would come together. At the moment we have a tender out for the development of a comprehensive and coordinated quality framework for mental health in Western Australia. I am no rocket scientist, that is for sure, but —

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I could be wrong, but I would have thought that the minister might have actually done this before she did the amendments to the bill.

Hon Helen Morton: What amendments are you talking about?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Before the minister did the rewrite of the bill, I would have thought she might have —

Hon Helen Morton: Why do you think the bill has been rewritten?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is this government's election commitment, apart from anything else, to introduce a new act.

Hon Helen Morton: The election commitment was to bring it in during this term of government, and it will be. It will be brought in during this term of government, which was exactly our commitment.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister knows for a fact she got it wrong again. She should have —

Hon Helen Morton: There is nothing wrong. It is working perfectly. You are the only thing that has got it wrong!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: All right, so it is working perfectly. Do not raise your voice if it is working perfectly! Keep it calm; keep it cool!

Hon Helen Morton: The process is working perfectly.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Hey, look, you're doing my head in. Keep it calm; calm down!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Michael Mischin): Order, members! It is starting to turn into an argument across the benches rather than an address through the Chair.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has the call.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I do not really want to have to go and find the answer to a question that I asked about why the Mental Health Act is taking so long and has been delayed and the minister's precise words. When I meet with stakeholders and representative groups and advise them the bill is unlikely to come into this place until the middle of next year—which is what I was told and what this house was told only in the last week or two—they say to me, "That's a surprise." The implication of course is that it is a surprise because they do not know. If the minister did not think there was anything wrong with it, and if the minister had advised the sector that the bill will not be coming into this place for at least the next 12 months, they would not be surprised. They would understand why the bill will not be here for another year. The reason they will not get it for another year is we now have a tender out —

Hon Helen Morton: No; the tender has finished. They have been appointed.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The tender is finished; it would have finished about a week and a half ago. We now have a tender out. The tender is for the work to develop a comprehensive coordinated quality framework for mental health in Western Australia. I could go through the time frames for when we expect that work to be finished. When that work is finished, the framework will then, I assume, form the basis of further work to the act. We will have an act that includes a framework or —

Hon Helen Morton: For quality assurance.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: For quality assurance; whatever.

Hon Helen Morton: You do not want it left out, do you? I am sure you want it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is what we expect anyway.

Hon Helen Morton: Do you want a quality framework built into the act?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has the call.

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Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Thank you. This quality assurance framework is a very interesting document in itself, I must say.

I want to raise another issue of concern to me—that is, the issue of the role of the Chief Psychiatrist. It is of interest to me because the role of the Chief Psychiatrist is pretty important for people who have mental health issues. The approach taken by this government for the delivery of mental health services seems to be very interesting. What is particularly interesting is the extent to which the services are being provided by independent service providers funded by the state government. They are funded to deliver a range of services to people with mental issues—the consumers, if we like, of mental health. The Chief Psychiatrist has put in place a self-assessment system, as I understand, for the meeting of standards by organisations funded to deliver services to consumers. The Chief Psychiatrist’s monitoring of service standards for non-government providers of community services, and the report for 2009, is indeed a very interesting read. A timetable is already on the public record. The time line identifies which non-government providers of community mental health services will be monitored. I understand that last year some 55 non-government providers of mental health services were funded by the government. I understand that is now in the order of 70 plus, so it is growing all the time, which is probably a good thing.

Hon Helen Morton: Do you agree with that?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Certainly, the Chief Psychiatrist’s non-government organisation standards monitoring program, and the self-assessment that was applied to the evaluation of the standards, is something I have concern with. We need only look at the results of this report to know that we should be concerned about what is happening here. First of all, the self-assessment, I have to say, is of some concern. I understand that self-assessment can work effectively in some cases, but we need to question the results such as those in this report. Overall, 53 of the 54 non-government organisations completed the self-assessment process in 2009. The self-assessment data was reported by these agencies, but one non-government organisation did not complete its self-assessment due to staff resource constraints. We would have to say that that is a bit of a black mark. Fancy not even having the resources to be able to complete its own self-assessment to provide feedback.

Hon Helen Morton interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member might think it is funny.

Hon Helen Morton: I do not think it’s funny; I think you’re losing your voice and you have 21 minutes to go, so I don’t know what’s going to happen.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member should never worry about me losing my voice. I will lose a lot of things before I lose my voice. My hands might drop off or my kneecaps might shoot somewhere, but I will not lose my voice; the minister can be assured of that!

Hon Robyn McSweeney: That is very sad to hear.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes. The Chief Psychiatrist has responsibility under the Mental Health Act for monitoring the standards of psychiatric care provided in community mental health facilities for the non-government sector. This responsibility is exercised through a program of monitoring based on the service standards for non-government providers. There are eight key standards for this. When we look at the self-assessment data for 2009, we find big gaps. The NGOs assessed themselves. I have to say to the minister that, at the very least, she should be very concerned about this.

Hon Helen Morton: I just announced \$1.6 million today to help them.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister may have, but that is to help them now. This happened in 2009, and by her own argument it means she has done nothing from 2009 until now, which is 2011.

Hon Helen Morton: Try to get with the times.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: By her own admission, the minister has a problem.

Hon Helen Morton: That was 2009 and it is now 2011.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: By their self-assessment, a lot of these organisations are falling short in meeting these standards. The first standard is rights and responsibility. We are looking at the percentage of standard rated as being met. It deals with issues such as the organisation having an awareness of consumer rights and an awareness and understanding of guardianship orders; codes of conduct for staff, volunteers and student placement; processes to resolve complaints and disputes—all very, very important issues—analysis of complaints to improve service delivery; and so forth. Only 75 per cent met the standard, which means by implication, and by their own assessment, 25 per cent did not meet the standard.

[Quorum formed.]

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Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The second standard is safety, which is a very important standard, irrespective of where it is applied; it is a pretty critical standard. When we talk about safety, we are talking about the safety standards, compliance with legislation, compliance with local authority by-laws and fire safety regulations, written staff safety policies and procedures, vehicles and equipment maintenance schedules et cetera. The percentage of standard rated as being met was 84 per cent. Once again, by implication, this means that 16 per cent did not meet the standard. I now go to privacy and confidentiality, which in this area is also very important. There must be an understanding by the NGO of the privacy and confidentiality policies and procedures, the issue of informed consent and limitations, its obligations in terms of involvement of others in care, and the issues surrounding client confidentiality, personal information and documentation et cetera. Once again only 88 per cent met the standard, which means that 12 per cent did not meet their standard. The one thing I have been told time and again about the area of mental health is that the way consumers are treated is absolutely critical. They must be treated in a way that is dignified and must have an appropriate say and so forth. Clearly, the participation of consumers should be central because, at the end of the day, they are the consumers of the service. That should be of primary importance. When we look at the self-assessment result for the standard of consumer participation, we find once again that only 80 per cent met the standard, which means that 20 per cent did not meet it.

I refer to standard 5, the participation of carers and significant others. The minister would be aware of the importance of involving carers and significant others because, at the end of the day, people who have mental health issues need a strong support base around them. One of the ways in which we can strengthen that support framework around people who are in need of assistance is by making sure that the people who are closest to them are encouraged to participate and provide the much-needed support. When we look at the sorts of things that standard 5 requires, we see that it includes policies to support carers' involvement; structures and activities to support carers' involvement; carers' support linkages; and policies and processes to manage consumer-carer need conflicts. The percentage of standard rated as met is only 62 per cent; therefore, the standard is not met by 38 per cent. That would have to be concerning for the minister.

Hon Helen Morton: Why don't you ask us if we have done something about it?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am just saying what the results say.

Hon Helen Morton: In 2009!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am waiting because I assume the 2010 results will come out in only a matter of weeks in April this year. The minister can be assured that I have eyes like a hawk and I am waiting to see that document. The minister does not have to tell me; I know that this is 2009. Is the minister telling me that it does not matter because, even though the government expended all this money in 2009 and 2009 has been and gone and the results were so appalling, she will get a new batch of data for 2010 that in some way will negate the lack of progress of the minister and her government in meeting these standards? I find it incredible that the minister would suggest that these results do not mean anything because she is expecting a better set of figures for 2010. The fact is that across a range of NGOs that were funded with taxpayers' money, 38 per cent of standards were not met.

Hon Helen Morton: One standard. What is the standard? Just say the standard again because I can't remember what you said.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The standard is standard 5, the participation of carers and significant others. It is not only one standard.

Hon Helen Morton: Thirty-eight per cent.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, 38 per cent were not met. It is not as though I am dealing with one standard that is deficient.

Hon Helen Morton: Deficient by 38 per cent.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes. I am dealing with all eight standards in the "Service Standards for Non-Government Providers of Community Mental Health Services". There is a major deficiency in those standards being met across the board—some more, some less.

Hon Helen Morton: Do you agree that the self-assessment process is pretty good then?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, I do not. I agree that there needs to be more than just a self-assessment process, quite frankly. The minister is claiming that this will be as great as it is in aged care. I have to tell the minister that many people have very grave concerns about the quality of service delivery in aged care, whether she likes it or not. I do not really want to engage with the minister. If the minister wants to engage me in

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chitchat, she can do it at coffee time or some other time. I do not really want to do the chitchat here because I am here to bring my concerns to this place.

I bring this issue to the attention of the house because I think it is indeed very serious. Many, many other issues concern me in the area of mental health. The more I look at this portfolio, the more grave concerns that I have. For example, we have only to look at the incarceration of people with mental illness in the prison system and the number of suicides in the prison system. I was reading the annual report of the Department of Corrective Services and I noted with some interest that there were eight deaths in the prison system last year. Five of those deaths were suicides. That has to be of concern. There are many, many reasons for this issue, and it will not go away. This is a major challenge for the community as a whole.

Hon Helen Morton: Are you saying that we can't reduce suicides?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am saying the government has not. We only have to look at the figures to see that.

Hon Helen Morton: Do you agree that they can be prevented? Can they be prevented? Can we do something about it as a state?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Michael Mischin): Hon Ljiljana Ravlich, are you taking interjections?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, I am not.

The only point I would make is that I am not saying suicides cannot be reduced. I am saying that the answers that I have received in this place today clearly show that suicides have not been reduced by this government even though it went to the election with the undertaking that it would bring those rates down. This minister has hid time and again behind the answer that the questions that have been posed by me to her on the rates of suicide were not precise enough for her to feel that she was obliged to give me the information that I sought. Nor did she have the good courtesy to pass my questions on to the relevant minister. Instead, I had to wait until I heard the coroner give the suicide figures for 2010 with no hesitation because he did not think that they should be a huge secret, unlike this minister. He was more than happy to provide that information and to put it on public record.

Hon Helen Morton: It was a single figure for the whole year. I doubt very much he would give you the last three months by region. I doubt that very much.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is quite clear that the minister really has been asleep behind the wheel in the area of mental health. As we get further down the path and move into the second part of this term of government, the minister's handling of the portfolio signals that things are bad enough and reflects to me a lack of action, a blasé attitude towards this portfolio, no sense of urgency and a cavalier attitude towards the funding. When the minister can afford to throw \$6.2 million back towards Treasury and be so flippant as to say completion of 11 out of 50 community mental health plans is sufficient, I think something is drastically wrong.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [9.19 pm]: As Hon Ken Travers explained when he set the scene for the debate on these two bills—the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2009-10 (Supplementary) Bill 2010 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2009-10 (Supplementary) Bill 2010—we are engaged here in loop completion for the 2009–10 financial year. I will quote Hon Ken Travers —

We initially passed the 2009–10 budget towards the end of the 2008–09 financial year. Towards the end of the 2009–10 financial year we passed the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2010, because the government had exceeded the additional three per cent allocated under the Financial Management Act as an ongoing appropriation for the purposes of the Treasurer's advance. We are now finally appropriating the money that was spent in the 2009–10 financial year that was not appropriated earlier.

In the context of debating these two bills, I thought this was an unmissable opportunity to point out to two new ministers the measures they must take to achieve some success in managing the budget as we go along. As I said, we are rewinding the clock two years to talk about the content of these two bills, but there are some lessons to be learnt here. There are some indications in the data that goes along with these two bills on what the community of Western Australia should rightly expect from its government on sound budgetary management. Certainly the bills we are considering here tonight indicate that we have seen anything but sound budgetary management over the last couple of years. There is nothing that we on this side of the house have seen to indicate that anything has changed. However, there is a certain coming together of strands. We are now in April 2011—only one month away from the next budget—and we are still looking at numbers from 2009–10 that are, frankly, very disturbing. I will spend part of my time talking about the environment portfolio and then —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: You're not, are you?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I knew that would surprise Hon Robyn McSweeney. I may have a few things to say to do with things she is interested in too, so she should keep tuned in.

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I will also be talking about the portfolio of Indigenous affairs because, as I said, in both cases a new minister has taken over and we have heard the new ministers make grand statements. They were a little more diplomatic than to talk about how they planned to do things better, but that was clearly the subtext. The bar for management of and achievement in both the environment and Indigenous affairs portfolios during the first two and a bit years of the Barnett government, frankly, was not set very high. That is just to set the context for the remarks that I will make in this debate.

A very good place to start for evaluating the information we are considering in these two bills is an article in *The West Australian* of Thursday, 24 February by Ben Harvey on the “Inside State” column called “A dirty little secret hangs over Barnett”. I will give honourable members a flavour of this piece in case they did not read it at the time. It is very important, when we look at some of the quite remarkable numbers in the schedule provided by Hon Simon O’Brien to Hon Ken Travers, to view them in the context of this bigger picture. I know that this has been something of a leitmotiv over the last month or so for Hon Simon O’Brien, who is very hot to come into this place and contest the statement made by Hon Ken Travers about this government being awash with money. This government is awash with money, yet we see that it is also one of the meanest, most uncaring governments that we have ever seen in this state. When Hon Ken Travers made his speech, members will have noted that he spoke for several hours in this place. I did not detect any degree of repetition or hesitation in his comments.

Hon Nick Goiran: You obviously weren’t listening very closely.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I was listening very intently to Hon Ken Travers’s speech. Members will have noted that most of that speech came under the heading of “Enough is enough”. He gave a very eloquent account during his speech of the way in which ordinary Western Australian families are suffering because this government is not prepared to put money back into the community that it is making as this boom picks up pace. This government is not prepared to guarantee that ordinary Western Australians will see the benefits of this boom. I will quote what the Ben Harvey article points out —

The Premier is spending like a drunken sailor. He has racked up \$10 billion in debt since he came to office, justifying the splurge by saying it is needed for the economic development of the State.

The reality is the spendathon is needed as much for the political survival of the Barnett Government.

He goes on to give some details about the breakdown of this debt and says —

Eight weeks before the Barnett Government won power in 2008, State debt was \$3.63 billion. On June 30, 2014, it will hit \$19.9 billion.

What sort of an increase is that?

Hon Adele Farina: Huge!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It is a huge increase. Only two months before the September 2008 election it was \$3.63 billion; and by 30 June 2014, just after the next election, it will hit nearly \$20 billion. His quote continues —

By that stage, the interest bill will be more than \$1 billion a year.

What does this mean?

Hon Adele Farina: How will we fund that?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: As Hon Adele Farina said, how will we fund that? I will tell members one thing that I and every member on this side of the house are absolutely certain of. The answer to that question is never going to be furnished by the Barnett government because it has absolutely no idea how it will fund it. By the time of the next election, the Barnett government will have been in power for four and a half years. That is an eternity to families who are faced with the kinds of increases with which this government is slugging them.

Hon Adele Farina: And future generations.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: And future generations. This will be an inheritance that the state will stagger around with for a very long time. Ben Harvey goes on —

By that stage, the interest bill will be more than \$1 billion a year.

I suppose if I were very cynical I would say that the government is contriving a very effective shackle on the incoming Labor government in March 2013. Certainly, the challenge will be there to handle an interest bill alone of \$1 billion compared with a total state debt of \$3.63 billion when the Barnett government took over. I continue with the quote from the Ben Harvey article —

Hon Simon O’Brien interjected.

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Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Simon O'Brien might want to listen to this, because I doubt that he reads this very often.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I make up my own speeches; I don't just get up and read something that someone else has written.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I think this is well worth putting on the record.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Something out of the daily newspaper! Yes, I have read it.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The minister is clearly very uncomfortable with this and he would much prefer that I did not put this on the record.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You don't bother me one little bit. Don't flatter yourself!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The minister does not bother me at all either, and I am going to keep quoting from this article entitled "A dirty little secret hangs over Barnett". It goes on to state —

The debt will be so big that even if our budget surpluses remain as big as they are now, and we used every cent of those surpluses to pay our lenders, it would be 2023 before we get the debt back to the level it was when Mr Barnett moved into the Premier's office.

Hon Adele Farina: And that's assuming they don't keep adding to it.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: As Hon Adele Farina said, that assumes that the government does not keep adding to it. It also assumes that the budget surpluses remain as big as they are now. I like the reference to when Mr Barnett moved into the Premier's office. Of course, by 2014, when we will be coping with a state debt that is nearly \$20 billion and repaying that debt at more than \$1 billion a year, the Premier will obviously be hoping that he will be able to pull up the drawbridge at the emperor's palace just across the way.

Hon Simon O'Brien has unfortunately found very urgent parliamentary business outside the chamber; nevertheless, he will be able to read this in *Hansard*. My final quote from the Ben Harvey article is —

Government debt, like business debt, is not always bad. Allowing Western Power to borrow money to build a transmission line which will service a new mine site is a good investment — the capital outlay will result in a business which will generate royalty income and payroll tax receipts.

He could almost have taken that word for word from some of the policies that the Labor government set out in its seven and a half years. He goes on —

But there is no economic return from projects such as the Perth waterfront development, City Link or a new children's hospital.

Debt accrued by politically expedient projects such as these, which are listed in the budget as the "general government" sector, is poised to jump 250 per cent by 2013–14, from \$1.4 billion to more than \$5 billion.

In the same period, the debt from the arms of government known as "public non-financial corporations" (or utilities), increased 40 per cent.

Electricity, gas and water infrastructure is fundamental to the economic foundation of the State — but the growth in spending in this area has been dwarfed by the money devoted to feelgood projects.

It is a long article. It is not necessarily in a place in *The West Australian* where most people would read it—it was on page 21. If I could send a message to the community of Western Australia, it would be through the reprint of that article, because it sums up the very significant extent of the problem that the Barnett government is shackling us with. I use that term advisedly. We are going to be hobbled by what the Barnett government is doing to us.

Members will note that the final quote from that article that I read into the record refers to feelgood projects. I wish that I could see some evidence of feelgood projects in the portfolios that I have shadow responsibility for. Unfortunately, I think the very opposite is true. Unfortunately, we have seen a remarkable absence of feelgood projects certainly in the environment and Indigenous affairs portfolios, and that is very surprising. We all know that being in government is complex. We all know that managing the state budget involves compromises and weighing up competing interests. But, quite frankly, there are environmental priorities in this state that should be very straightforward to implement. What perplexes me about the way that the government has handled the environment portfolio in the past two and a half years is that although it wanted to grab the easy headlines—it is rather like its law and order agenda; it wants to be seen to be tough on issues such as illegal dumping and it wants to be seen to be dancing to the tune being played by the Premier and the Minister for Mines and Petroleum about cutting red and green tape—there is no real substance to what it is doing. There is this whole raft of

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possibilities in front of it that it seems to be absolutely deaf and blind to. There is nowhere better in the environment portfolio to dip into than the issue of the operations of the Waste Authority.

Hon Donna Faragher interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is the member bored with this?

Hon Donna Faragher: We had about 25 hours of it last year! We've heard from you repeatedly on this matter.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: And why does the member think that is?

Hon Donna Faragher: And you've been factually wrong half the time.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Why does she think I have spent so much time talking about it?

Hon Donna Faragher: I am just saying to you that you have repeated the same speech time and again in here.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will have one more try and see whether the member can go to her successor and make some points to him. If I were the former Minister for Environment in this place, I would be keeping very quiet.

Hon Donna Faragher: Is that a threat or what?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: No, it is not a threat at all.

Hon Donna Faragher: I know that you miss me.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: There are just one or two issues on which I miss the member just the tiniest bit.

Hon Donna Faragher: Believe me, I don't miss you!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Michael Mischin): Order! Hon Sally Talbot has the call and she should direct her comments to the Chair.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you, Mr Deputy President. I intend to continue talking about this matter. I have not randomly chosen this as the first issue in the environment portfolio that I want to raise. I think May will be crunch time for the Waste Authority. I was very perplexed by an answer that I got from the new environment minister a couple of weeks ago when I asked why the new head of the Waste Authority had been given only a six-month contract. Hon Helen Morton will remember this very well because she delivered the message from the minister in the other place. It is absolutely unprecedented. Previous heads have had contracts of three years and five years. Obviously, the government had been looking for some time for somebody to replace Barry Carbon. Several months had gone by without a permanent head of the Waste Authority and finally the government found one and what did it give him? It gave him six months. I have to be perfectly honest. It is not my question; it is the question being asked by every stakeholder in the waste management industry and in local government and by all the stakeholders with an interest in waste management and recycling in this state. Every one of them is asking why Jim Malcolm got only six months. When I asked the minister for the explanation, the answer I got was that it was to bring his contract into line with that of every other member of the Waste Authority. I cannot understand how the minister could have thought that that was an adequate explanation. We have never before been worried about everybody coming up for reappointment at the same time. In fact, it is absolutely counter to any commonsense management principles to have a situation in which we could lose the whole of the Waste Authority if people decided not to seek another period of reappointment.

Hon Adele Farina: What about continuity?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: What about continuity? As I said, it is a basic principle of management. I am afraid that that satisfied nobody. It did not satisfy me, and it did not satisfy any of the stakeholders in the waste management field. All I can say is that there is a very sincere hope in the community that this does not presage some kind of intent on the part of the government to wind up the Waste Authority or to somehow alter its functions in a way that will make it less effective.

Hon Adele Farina: When is the six months up?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The six months is up in May, which is only one month away. That is very significant, because there were a couple of things that were sitting on the desk of Hon Donna Faragher when she was the minister and which sat on Hon Donna Faragher's desk for a couple of years. Give that —

Hon Donna Faragher: You were at my desk, were you?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am sorry, but the answers of Hon Donna Faragher, the previous Minister for Environment, indicated that to me. Over those couple of years when she was the minister, I managed to get her to put a couple of things on record, and one of them was when she received things like the draft state waste

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strategy, so I know exactly how long it had been on her desk. She might not have known, because her in-tray must have been about two kilometres high. I started asking many months ago where the draft waste strategy was. The first time I asked the minister she said that it was in process. I can see Hon Norman Moore is getting a bit bored with this topic, too. I suggest that at the next cabinet meeting he should just thump his fist on the table and say, “For God’s sake, release it now.”

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I said fist on the table, not head. It might have been a little Freudian slip.

I have been asking questions about this for more than a year now. Let me remind honourable members of the answer that I got. I tested the former minister on two consecutive days back in September. On the first day, I asked why there had been a delay in releasing the state waste strategy. The answer was, “There hasn’t been a delay. It is going to be released very soon, but we cannot actually release it until we have the Waste Authority business plan.” The next day I stood and asked, “Why has there been such a delay in releasing the Waste Authority’s business plan?”, and she said, “We cannot release the business plan until we have released the waste strategy”.

Hon Adele Farina: I remember that.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Adele Farina remembers that. It was a remarkable moment, was it not?

Hon Donna Faragher: You are remarkable in the most negative way. It is frightening. You are so negative. You are chief of the fun police. It is frightening.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I thought it was extraordinarily negative. I did think it was a real low point, I must admit.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Let us continue. Appropriation debates are wide-ranging debates, but I think there should be a bit of substance to the issues. I am sure Hon Sally Talbot is about to explain the substance behind the waste management issues.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: As Hon Donna Faragher has observed, one can only take a very negative pleasure out of getting two answers like that on consecutive days. If one listened carefully, one could hear the collective groan of all the stakeholders as they had confirmed for themselves, through my questions, that the government was engaged in the most remarkable process. I do not know whether it can be called spin. If it was spin, it did what things that spin do and disappeared into itself. That was the sad story about the relationship between the state waste strategy and the business plan.

This is directly related to the bills that we have in front of us. If honourable members have had a chance to look through the schedule that goes with these bills, they would have noticed that under the list relating to environment and conservation on page 9, we have a total figure of \$39 402 000 that had to be appropriated over and above the budget for that year. When one goes down the items that prove to be unexpected items of government expenditure or new programs requiring government expenditure, what is the very first item? Members will never guess what it is! This is the answer to Hon Donna Faragher’s question about why I keep banging on about the Waste Authority. The very first item is the landfill levy—\$33 885 800!

Debate adjourned, pursuant to temporary orders.