

TECHNOLOGY PARK

**877. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Science and Innovation:**

I acknowledge the students from year 6 of Our Lady of Good Counsel School in my electorate who are in the gallery this evening—this afternoon.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** What time of day is it?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** It feels very late, member!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, members!

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I refer to Technology Park. I know the previous government spent a fair bit of money on Technology Park, and I believe the members for Cockburn and Victoria Park described it as some kind of “Silicon Valley with soul”. Can the minister please outline to the house how much money the previous government spent on Technology Park and the benefits to taxpayers?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:**

That is a very good question, member; thank you for asking it of me this morning!

I will start by saying that the member is right. On 2 April 2008, the then industry and enterprise minister, in conjunction with the member for Victoria Park, issued a press release that talked about investing \$8.55 million for initial infrastructure to develop a long-term project to create this new Technology Park that would be 314 hectares and would become “Australia’s Silicon Valley—but with soul”. Silicon Valley with soul! I can just see those members like Jake and Elwood out there cruising around Victoria Park in the bluesmobile singing a bit of an Aretha Franklin song out the window or something—the Silicon Valley with soul. I am interested in —

**Mr F.M. Logan:** You thought it was a good idea.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I most certainly do not! Let me explain why. In recent months as the budget situation has become tighter, we have been forced to look at a whole lot of things in government as to where we spend money. Occasionally, that means we have to drill down into things like the Silicon Valley with soul and understand what that means, what it delivers and what it will cost.

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, member!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** In drilling down into the member for Cockburn’s Silicon Valley with soul, I will tell the house what I found. The 314 hectares of Silicon Valley actually comprises a golf course, a university, two aged care villages, Canning College, Bentley TAFE campus, and some surplus land from the Department of Agriculture and Food—land already developed and owned by other people, which the member for Cockburn was going to develop into the Silicon Valley with soul. I also discovered, which the member did not mention, that Curtin University of Technology had been engaged in what can only be described as a parallel process. Therefore, the state government was spending millions and millions of dollars on a planning process while Curtin was going along at the same time knowing that ultimately like ships, or like the Blues Brothers’ bluesmobile and a lamppost, they would collide. Only one would survive! The third thing the former minister did not mention —

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I am happy to table the financial feasibility report, and what the member will find when he has a look is that he would spend all this money to move two roads —

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** —to create half a dozen lots. He did not face up to that when he was hallelujahing the Silicon Valley with soul, did he? What a waste of money! This is what we have discovered: \$5 million of that money has already been spent, as I said, on a series of consultants working out a way to move two roads to create six lots. Secondly, the former minister signed off on investing \$2.1 million to put in place a high-speed fibre optic network. There is only one problem: they did not ask anyone if they wanted to use it. Therefore, we now have a \$2.1 million fibre optic network with not one little bit of light going down it!

Several members interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** No, the previous minister did not ask anybody; he just signed a cheque and got the press release out the door. We are now in the situation where Curtin University of Technology has been progressing a plan that is now stymied. I just better quickly inform the house what we are doing. That project has stopped. We will now work with Curtin University so that it can develop its plan for Technology Park at almost no direct cost to the taxpayer—funny that! There is no empire building on this side—no Silicon Valley with soul—just getting things done on the ground. What else will we do? We will send the function centre to the market and we will sell a couple of the other footprints that the government owns at Technology Park. My view is that the government does not need to own a function centre —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** —and a technology park. The opposition should go out there and make muffins!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, take a seat. Member for Cockburn, I know that you are particularly interested in this and the minister has referred to you so I have given you some leniency, but I will not give leniency to anyone else on this particular issue. I hope the minister will complete his remarks fairly soon.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I will, Mr Speaker, I thank you for that.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** You're giving it away! You're giving the land away!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn! Take a seat, minister. Member for Cockburn, I gave you an opportunity but I am not going to give you an opportunity now. I formally call you for the first time.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I am not giving the land away to anybody. All I am drawing to the house's attention is that the previous government put \$2 million worth of fibre in the ground that no-one wants to use and that it spent \$5 million trying to move two roads that no-one wants moved. The Silicon Valley with soul is like having the government's money flushed down the toilet and is a complete waste to the taxpayers of this state.