

**SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES AMENDMENT (DEBT AND DEFICIT REMEDIATION) BILL 2017**

*Declaration as Urgent*

**MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Minister for Public Sector Management)** [12.03 pm]: In accordance with standing order 168(2), I move —

That the bill be considered an urgent bill.

I will speak briefly on the urgency motion to explain the why, from the government's point of view, the Salaries and Allowances Amendment (Debt and Deficit Remediation) Bill 2017 is an urgent bill. This matter was the subject of some discussion in question time yesterday. The bill essentially freezes the salaries of members of Parliament, ministers, judicial officers, senior public servants and heads of government trading enterprises for a period until the middle of 2021, and contains a direction, if you like, by the Parliament to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal over that time. We know the reasons for it. It is unpleasant, but the state's finances are in such a state that we need to show leadership in this place and elsewhere in respect of the determinations of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. That is the purpose of the bill. I think it is very straightforward, and I think most members would understand the reason it is urgent.

So members are aware, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal is required to make a ruling for members of Parliament by 30 November this year—that is the end of next month. The tribunal can make a ruling at any point in time between now and then, but 30 November is the final date on which it must issue a ruling. Any time between now and then, the SAT can make a ruling. It can ignore the government's point of view on these issues, so it is important that we deal with this legislation prior to that time. In addition, in any given year the tribunal makes around 40 variations to salaries, allowances and the like in the categories that it covers. At any given point in time the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal has the opportunity to make a ruling.

The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal does a good job; we all understand its purpose. It has been managing these issues for around 30 years, but the financial situation that confronts the state is unprecedented and that is why this bill is required. It will set a good example for the remainder of the public sector. I repeat, for members' knowledge, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal is required to make a ruling in relation to public servants by 30 November. Therefore, we want to deal with this legislation as soon as possible to ensure that that matter is dealt with. On top of that, the SAT makes up to 40 variations each year on issues that relate to people's salaries and allowances. At any given point in time, determinations can be made. That is why the bill must be dealt with urgently. It is nothing more sinister than that. We think it is a simple and straightforward matter for this Parliament to deal with.

**DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.07 pm]: This declaration of urgency motion is a cheap political stunt by the Premier. There is no reason whatsoever for this bill to be dealt with urgently. First, in June this year the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal froze public servants' wages for one year. The SAT made a determination for parliamentarians in December last year, which was brought into effect on 12 March this year, that froze parliamentary allowances and wages for a year. By the way, that was the second year in a row that the SAT froze parliamentary wages and allowances. The SAT is required to accept, and has had a long history of accepting, the wages policy of the government. Indeed, it has gone beyond that by restraining senior public sector wages. The Premier's argument that this bill is urgent is vacuous. It is a stunt.

This is a serious issue. The Premier is taking personal responsibility for the determination of all wages of the judiciary, parliamentarians and senior executives in the public sector—overriding the SAT. I might add that we had a briefing yesterday, and the public servants who briefed us could not answer the majority of the questions about the detail and the conditions upon which certain issues were excluded from the bill. There is a raft of exclusions from the bill and they could not explain the rationale for those exclusions and the importance of them. Also, when the bill's policy was first mooted in May this year, it included senior executives and chief executive officers of local government. Now that is out, and there has been no explanation provided. This bill is not urgent. The Premier is concocting a story to override the SAT and to freeze wages that are already frozen. He could go through the normal process, brief Parliament as appropriate, and proceed with the bill, but he is bringing this bill on as a cheap political stunt.

**Mr A. Krsticevic:** Another one.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** It is another one, and it brings us to the heart of this government: this government has broken every convention that can be imagined.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** The government has broken every convention that members can imagine.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** It has stacked the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. Ministers have been refusing to answer questions in Parliament. In fact, the Minister for Mines and Petroleum yesterday said that he did not want to answer questions on notice. He said that he did not have to. He has not answered them. He had a whole range of them. He said that he was above Parliament to answer those questions. That is what he said. The government and the Premier are setting the standards in this place, and they are as low as they can go. This is just another step in undermining the Parliament, undermining the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal and undermining the processes of government. The Premier is taking over the responsibilities for the wages and conditions of the judiciary. He just said, "Do it urgently! Don't debate it! Don't be briefed on it! Don't see the ramifications of it!" In fact, our colleagues in the National Party have not even been briefed on this bill. The Premier is demanding that we support it. This is a cheap political stunt by a Premier who is nothing but a man of cheap political stunts. We do not have the numbers in this house. The government won in a landslide, but it will be held accountable for this one. This bill has all sorts of anomalies in it. We will debate these anomalies. There are certain exclusions that are clearly designed to benefit the other side.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Like what?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We will go through them—do not worry about that! The member for Bassendean can just relax. We are going to go through this, but there is no urgency in this bill whatsoever. It is a cheap political stunt by a cheap Premier.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [12.11 pm]: I, too, rise to speak on the urgency motion. It is a complete sham that the Salaries and Allowances Amendment (Debt and Deficit Remediation) Bill 2017 is urgent. The Premier said that the next determination of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal will be on 30 November. That is 15 sitting days away, or seven weeks. The Premier announced this initiative back in May. How many months ago was May? It was a long time ago. The Premier has shown absolute arrogance and contempt for this Parliament by coming into this place and giving us a briefing on legislation that he wants us to pass through here and rubberstamp as urgent. This legislation will freeze salaries, which sounds like a great concept. We had a briefing but they did not even give us the legislation. We got a two-page briefing note on legislation that that man says is so urgent that we have to suspend standing orders and get it through this place. It is utterly ridiculous!

Let us go back to the last thing that this Premier said was urgent. Let us go back to the last bill that was declared urgent by this Premier. It had to go through the house on the last day of sitting of the week of the budget. All the new members of Parliament over there had to put aside their carefully prepared budget reply speeches because we absolutely had to get the dangerous sexual offenders legislation through. So we did. We sat late. We worked on that dangerous sexual offenders legislation. We put it through, we interrogated it, we did our job as an opposition, and then what happened? It went to the Legislative Council. Where is it? Has it been debated? Is it urgent in there? No. Once again, the declaration of the DSO legislation as an urgent bill was a complete political stunt to get the Attorney General's backside out of a sling, because DAL was about to be released. Contrary to the Attorney General's rhetoric in opposition, he did not direct the Director of Public Prosecutions to keep DAL behind bars. He did not take an action to cause DAL to stay behind bars. His rhetoric in opposition was completely different from his actions as Attorney General. Every member of this place was inconvenienced by having their budget reply speeches truncated so that we could get that man's backside out of a sling. Where is the DSO legislation? It is languishing in the Legislative Council while they try to work out what to do with their time. Now we have 15 days of Parliament left. We could have had seven weeks to appropriately deliberate on this legislation. Instead, we get treated with contempt by an arrogant Premier who has absolutely no regard for the proper processes of this Parliament. Our partners in opposition, the Nationals, have not even been given a briefing on this urgent and important legislation. The people who need to scrutinise the bill have not even had it explained to them. We had public servants sitting down with us and saying that they did not understand why it is urgent either. They could not explain why it is urgent.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr M.D. Nahan** interjected.

**Mr B. Urban** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Darling Range and member for Riverton! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Once again, the Premier still thinks he is an opposition leader. He is operating like an opposition leader's stuntman with the ridiculous things that he is pulling. If the Premier wanted proper process, if he really wanted this bill to be rushed through and for us to agree to it, why did he not bring the legislation to us before yesterday so that we could scrutinise it and afford it passage through this Parliament? He did not do that. He did not commence the drafting of the legislation back in May when he said it was really important that this happen. Now this Parliament, which the Premier has treated with contempt, is expected to rubberstamp this bill through. We do not have the numbers. We do not have the power to block this in the Assembly. We have to rely on the Legislative Council to perhaps have the time to examine and interrogate this rushed piece of legislation that the Premier has brought to this place with an urgency motion. The Premier knows that it is not urgent, we know that it is not urgent and the media knows that it is a cheap political stunt.

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the National Party)** [12.17 pm]: I also rise to question whether the Salaries and Allowances Amendment (Debt and Deficit Remediation) Bill 2017 is urgent. Given that Labor has now been in government for seven months and that this was one of the positions it had articulated well going into the election campaign, why has the government had the discourtesy to bring the bill before the house with only half a day for anyone to even think about it? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was absolutely correct: the utter contempt that the Premier and the Premier's office have shown the Nationals is mind-boggling. There was not one offer of a briefing. Do members know what the Premier's office said? It said, "We briefed the Liberal Party, so we don't think we need to brief you. You should have been invited to their briefing." I tell the Premier now that every one of his other ministers has the courtesy to contact my office and offer a briefing. The Premier is arrogant. He has not offered us the opportunity to understand what is so urgent about this bill.

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The Leader of the National Party of the state of Western Australia should be afforded some respect.

Several members interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** There is an absolute rabble interjecting on the member.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy):** Members! Please allow me to hear the point of order. Can the manager of opposition business please say that again.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The point of order is that I cannot hear the Leader of the National Party because of the amount of noise from members opposite.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, thank you. The Leader of the National Party will be heard in silence, please.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I was articulating the fact we have not even been shown the courtesy of being offered a briefing, let alone given a briefing note. In our time in government, if we offered a briefing to the opposition, there was usually the courtesy of the minister being available but certainly there was an appropriate amount of time for the opposition to consider that. This is not urgent. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition have articulated that the government has brought on other bills as urgent and they are now languishing in the upper house. The Premier clearly has no courage of his convictions in that regard. He is now asking us to debate something that is important. The National Party is not saying that we do not want to debate this very important issue. We think it is something that should be canvassed in this Parliament, but the fact that the Premier is declaring it urgent means that he either cannot manage his own business in the house or that he is so arrogant that he does not think that this important issue deserves the criticism and critique of the opposition of the day. I say to the Premier's office that the explanation that we were given was substandard and arrogant, and that comes from the person who leads that office. I point out that without that briefing we are unable to do our job and scrutinise exactly what the Premier is saying he wants to bring forward. That is the job of the opposition. How do we do that without seeing the legislation and being offered a briefing to ask the questions? Clearly, even the public servants were put in a very awkward position. They were at least given an opportunity to respond to questions, but from all accounts they could not answer them. It is completely unacceptable. We are very happy to debate this very important issue. We understand that there is concern in the community and we are happy to have that debate in this house. We are not happy about the Premier not managing the business of the house appropriately and not showing us the courtesy of even offering us a briefing so that we can form an opinion appropriately and do the job that the opposition is supposed to do. The government will get it through this house after this debate. The government will rubberstamp it and shove it up to the upper house, which is not a house that the Premier has control over. He should learn some lessons from hung Parliaments in the past and do some work with the

crossbench and the members of the opposition to make sure that these very important issues, which the Premier says are incredibly urgent, can have the passage through Parliament that he so desires.

The last four times the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal has met, it made no changes to our salaries or there was an increase in line with the government's wages policy. Determination 2 of 2016, with effect from 12 March, made no change to salary and electorate allowances. Determination 1 of 2016 made a 1.5 per cent increase to the basic salaries of members of Parliament, which was in line with the government's wages policy of the time. The other two were exactly the same. The SAT, as an independent body, takes the current circumstances into consideration. It considers the financial circumstances and what is happening in the economy and makes a determination. We are happy to have that discussion during debate on this bill, but it is not urgent. This is a farce and it is a demonstration that the Premier has no control or understanding of how to manage the business of this house and, clearly, the other house, where the government needs to talk to the crossbench to get the legislation through if it is as important as the Premier says it is. It is completely in contempt of the opposition. The Premier's office is an absolute disgrace and that comes from him.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Water, I am on my feet. I call you to order for the first time.

Question put and passed.

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 11 October.

**DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.23 pm]: Let us be clear that there was no case to bring on urgently the Salaries and Allowances Amendment (Debt and Deficit Remediation) Bill 2017. This is just a cheap political stunt by a Premier and a party who specialises in them. Let it be clear to everybody that for the last 40 years the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, or something equivalent, has determined the wages of parliamentarians, the judiciary and senior public servants. All parties agreed that its determinations would be independent of the political process and not made by the Premier of the day. This bill will rescind that for four years. It will give the powers to freeze and also excise from that freeze a whole range of conditions that I will go through. The government proposed this in May of this year and it is consistent with its election commitments. It has taken some time. Obviously, the policy has been altered somewhat along the way. I mentioned that earlier statements indicated that it would include the CEOs of local governments but it does not. There has been some alteration of policies along the way.

Is this a significant change? This is a significant change that gives the Premier of the day the power to determine the wage rates of the judiciary and other senior public servants. It sets a precedent. Why can the government not do this for the Industrial Relations Commission and public servants across the board? If it is going to do it for people covered by SAT, why does it not do it for the rest? Why does it not override the Industrial Relations Commission? By the way, this is being done by a Labor Party, which I thought, as part of its DNA, supported independent negotiations and arbitrations through the IRC. Obviously it does not care. This will set a precedent for future governments to look at overriding—at least for public servants paid by the state—independent assessments of wages and conditions. Note that precedent; it was done by a so-called Labor government.

What is the need for this? For some time the SAT has operated with recognition of the wages policy of the government of the day. I will go back to a December 2016 ruling about remuneration and conditions of parliamentarians. In that ruling, the SAT took into consideration the public sector wages policy statement of 2016 and the financial position and fiscal strategy of the state as per the budget and other statements. In other words, it took into consideration the requirements, the fiscal policy, the wages policy and the condition of the state. For the second year in a row it froze for the next year all wages for parliamentarians from 12 March 2017. At least through to March of next year, this bill is redundant because salaries have already been frozen. An important issue is that SAT also determined some changes to car allowances. That decision was made by SAT in December, during the term of the previous government. It did not come into effect until 12 March, which was after the state election. As members well know, in the past, parliamentarians had the choice of a car or money in lieu. The determination took away the right to a car from the government and gave money in lieu, but it allowed those parliamentarians who were returning to Parliament with a lease that was long outstanding to retain the car for the remaining term of the lease. When the lease expired, they had to take money in lieu. One important point that I will come back to later is that it did not deal with the allowances and rights of members of cabinet and parliamentary secretaries. It came into effect on 12 March. On the double dipping ministers, the Premier said, in his usual manner of using weasel words, that it was all done on our watch. That is false. He has been seriously misleading Parliament and the public on this for months. I will come back to that repeatedly. This is supposedly about wage restraint.

In June of this year, the SAT made a ruling on the wages and allowances of senior public servants and the judiciary. Again, after taking into consideration the new government's wages policy and the fiscal position, it froze the wages

of senior public servants and the judiciary for another year. The wages of various types of employees such as parliamentarians, Clerks of Parliament, the judiciary and senior public servants are already frozen. It was done by the SAT. What is the purpose of this legislation now? It has been brought on urgently, but what for? The wages are already frozen. That is why in the debate about the suspension of standing orders to bring on urgently the Salaries and Allowances Amendment (Debt and Deficit Remediation) Bill 2017, we pointed it out quite clearly. At the time members could see by the look on the Premier's face that he knew he had been caught out with a cheap, political stunt on a very serious issue. He is setting a precedent, and I will go back to that precedent because it is very important. He is setting a precedent that if the government of the day believes it has the fiscal need to do so, it can override independent tribunals that rule on wages and conditions of public servants. Members should note that that is what this government is doing; it is setting a precedent and we will not forget it. This issue will come up again. The Premier, in earlier statements on implementing his policy to increase wages by only \$1 000, indicated that he wants to get that policy through enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations or the Industrial Relations Commission. I believe that Western Australia Police is dealing with the Industrial Relations Commission now. The government has failed to get the police negotiations through because it did the dirty on the police. It made an offer to the police and had it accepted, but then the government reneged. The government did not do the same for the fires and their mates because they donate to the Labor Party.

**Mr B. Urban:** The police are our friends too.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** No, they are not.

**Mr B. Urban** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes, I have heard from the same people. If the member thinks that the police support his government's condition of \$1 000 rather than 1.5 per cent, as offered, then he is dreaming.

Anyway, I get back to the issue. The Premier said that if he does not get his policy through these EBAs, and tens of thousands of public servants are covered under EBAs that are coming up for negotiation, he will bring in similar legislation to override the Industrial Relations Commission and all EBAs; he will legislate to override EBAs. This is the first step along the line if he does not get his way—note that. There is no need for this to happen. The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal is an institution that has for decades been reasonable when looking at wages policy, the budgetary position of the state and the labour market generally, and it has come down with conservative decisions on wages, remunerations and conditions. It has been very open to advice from the Premier's office—we know that. This legislation is not needed at all. In fact, if SAT acted oddly against the needs of the community and the government and did offer conditions above the wages policy—that is, a freeze for the people under consideration here—then the government should override it at that time, not pre-emptively, because basically it is overriding a major institution. What is our position on this?

**Mr B. Urban:** Wreck it? At least you have admitted this.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I did not say anything. What is our position? It is quite clear: the Liberal opposition supports wage restraint. I go back to a document that was released—sneakily, I might add—by the Treasurer the other day. This document has been available for some time. It is a legislative requirement for this document to be released by the end of September. He released it after the budget and at a time early in the morning when the media was not around because he wanted to hide it. It is the 2016–17 *Annual Report on State Finances*, which is an assessment of the last year of the previous government. What does it show? There is some doctoring of data at the margin, but it shows that in the 2016–17 budget, revenue was in freefall. We had a catastrophic drop in revenue. It improved through the year, mainly from iron ore prices. However, it basically shows significant expenditure and wage restraint. Wages increases through the 2016–17 year averaged two per cent—the lowest in 30 years in this state. Even if this policy is put in place and the government adheres to it, especially in the forward estimates, which are just fabrications, do members know what the wages growth will be? It will be two per cent. The problem we have, of course, is that in 2017–18 the salary growth is 6.6 per cent, which is a massive increase in salaries next year. Some of that is in redundancies, but it is largely a large increase in employment numbers.

**Mr M. McGowan:** No.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes, it is. The government is hiring a bunch of educational assistants. The only year to pay any attention to is 2017–18; after that the rest are all complete fiction with slippages and other things moving around. In that year, the wages bill will go up by 6.6 per cent, a threefold increase on the previous year, and this government is saying that we are fiscal wreckers! How can salaries be increased threefold relative to us in the previous year, and relative to the policies in place, and we be called fiscal wreckers? It is a hallucination, but nonsense is what the government specialises in.

**Mr M. McGowan:** You said that you were going to tell us your position. What is your position?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I am talking. The Premier should just sit down and be quiet.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We showed wage restraint over the last few years by bringing it down. We did so by working with the institutions that we have. We argued a case through the Industrial Relations Commission and with SAT and we achieved our aims and targets—in fact, we overachieved. Yes, we had a 1.5 per cent policy, which is higher than the government's, but we achieved it. We also went through a rigorous process that identified in advance how it would be achieved. It was not just some study like, for example, the health sustainability study that this government was planning to achieve efficiencies with of over \$200 million. The minister is now tiptoeing through the hospital system saying, "Look at us. We are going to spend more money." Most of the government's expenditure policy or that upon which it is basing its reductions and expenses in the out year are not there; all they are is a study. We had a whole range of policies. We had 5 500 voluntary redundancies and we went in with a successive reduction in our wages policy, which we met.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** Next you will be telling us that you were great financial managers.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Members opposite have done —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P. Papalia:** You think you are so good that it was a mistake that you lost the election.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** It surely was a mistake putting a junior minister like the member in charge of some of the most important industries.

**Mr M. Hughes** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy):** Member for Kalamunda, I call you to order for the first time. Leader of the Opposition, you can talk to the Chair. Minister, you will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate, so please allow the member to speak.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We support wage restraint and we have a track record of doing so. This report that was issued two days ago shows that categorically. Even with these measures put in place, this government will not meet that policy—guaranteed. It was put into the budget, but when it comes to next year, watch for the blowouts—just watch. We have time, we are here for three and a half years; we are here for the long haul. But back to the point. We support wage restraint and we have a track record of doing so and achieving it. In particular, we support wage restraints for people who can most afford it, and the people covered by this proposal can afford it.

Very few people covered by this are earning less than \$100 000. Most parliamentarians have had wage restraints under us for the last two years, and we support the continuation of it. We support wage restraints across all the areas covered by this legislation, but we have some problems with the legislation itself.

I go back to point out that next year the McGowan government, even with this legislation, will see wages and salary growth at 6.6 per cent in 2017–18. It never got that high in the last term of the Barnett government. What the hell is going on? The government might have some explanation—I look forward to hearing it—but this is interesting. How is it possible to claim wage restraint and increased growth over the forward estimates by threefold in one year? It just shows that these guys are vacuous. We do not support the override of an independent statutory body like the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. It is a step back of 40 years. That a Labor government is doing that, and has mooted the idea of overriding the Industrial Relations Commission altogether if it does not get its own way is interesting, and sets a precedent that future Liberal–National Party governments will look at and take into consideration. The experience of the former government is that the SAT is a cooperative body that reflects the wages policy of the government of the day. We looked at the actions of the SAT over the last four years; that is verified. When the budget went into real trouble starting halfway through the 2013–14 year, the SAT started implementing restraint across all the agencies, not only in the wages rates and allowances. It never exceeded the wages policy of the government, and in most cases it went below it. This government, in a symbolism that will count for nothing because the SAT is already doing this, has come out and said that this freeze will save \$16 million, maybe \$20 million—I have heard both figures—over the forward estimates, but that is not true, because the wages and allowances of the judiciary, senior public servants and parliamentarians, the people covered, are already frozen for at least a year. The government counts that as a result of the budget, which is double counting. It makes no sense. This is a very dangerous path for the Premier, not just this one—the man is dicey, arrogant and one-sided. You are either with him or agin him. If you are with him, you are rewarded; if you are agin him, he will go at you. We have seen that. This is a government tightly controlled by a small cadre of unions.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** They are! It is a union movement that represents 7.3 per cent of the private sector workforce. They fund and elect members. Most government members come from them. They cannot comb their hair without the union's permission. Some of them do not need to do it! This is a government that put the policy of determining the salaries and conditions of public servants and the judiciary in the Premier's hands. That is what this legislation is going to do and that is what the government wants it to do. Just note, all backbenchers, that the Industrial Relations Commission will override enterprise bargaining agreements across the board next, if it does not cajole unions to support its wages policy. I suspect the police will be the first one off the line. To reiterate, the Liberal opposition supports wage restraints, particularly amongst those in the best position to pay, such as the people covered here. However, we have serious reservations about the mechanisms that are being adhered to; I will start going through some. The government has the numbers, 41 to 13, and the legislation will pass, but the precedent set will go on.

We have sat in this house, many times, over many bills, and I remember being a backbencher for four years. It is a difficult job because we come into Parliament to make a difference, represent our electorate and get involved with policy and important decisions, and our role is that we have to support the government of the day. The government of the day depends upon the marginality or otherwise of members' seat, and backbenchers often do not have very much to say or to do. This government's backbenchers have it particularly difficult, because the reality is that there are not too many goodies to give out, because there is not that much free cash. Every additional expenditure is borrowed.

**Ms A. Sanderson:** Thanks to you.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** No, no.

**Mr M. Hughes:** That is how you operate; it is about giving out goodies. We have a government.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes, yes. You people come from unions, but some come from the business sector, which is good. It is quite nice to see real businessmen in the Labor Party, but most come from a union background.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes. Most of them come from a union background.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Most of them come from a union background or are the agents of a union. We have heard them. We have listened to their inaugural speeches when they saluted their union boss.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** But the real issue is that this is attacking what I thought was a core value and institution of the Labor Party. It is your party if you want to do this. We do not. We think this is flawed in process, argument and need, but we are not going to block it. But you guys should because it is going to come back to haunt you.

What are some of the detailed issues with this bill? Again, as we mentioned in the slight debate about whether this is urgent or not—of course it is not—we got a briefing yesterday by a number of public servants. I will not mention their names; I do not want the member for Cannington to go at them. They were experienced people who knew the history of the issues and could answer most of the questions about the past. We did not get a draft legislation—they did not have it or were told not to give it to us, more likely. Imagine that: members of Parliament who are asked to urgently address an important money bill being refused to be given a draft or a copy of the legislation. Imagine it. This is the contempt the government holds for Parliament, and the Premier wants us to support him. Be it on his head. We went through a range of its raft of exemptions from this. A whole raft of them. Most of them they could not explain forward. There were complications, difficulties, not enough time, they did not know how to do it and they did not know why. That was the briefing we got on this bill. For instance, we asked a question of the Treasurer. We got the usual blustering and name-calling. We asked him whether the senior executives, the CEOs of the government business enterprises, were covered by this legislation. Are some of the highest paid public servants covered? For instance, the one I think he mentioned, or maybe it was the Premier—the head of Racing and Wagering Western Australia with a \$600 000 salary covered? Are the heads of Synergy, Western Power, Horizon Power and Water Corporation and others covered? He did not know; he just blustered, babbled and whatnot as usual. It was very colourful, but it lacked substance. We asked the public servant, "Why not?", and he said, "I don't know; it's complicated." Life is complicated; that is why they are public servants, but the government has not worked this thing through. As a reason for curtailing the wages of the senior level of the public service, the government highlights the case of the head of Racing and Wagering Western Australia, but he is not included. Why not? The government does not know; it is complicated. We want to know why not, and if it is complicated, solve the bloody complication. Tell us why it has not bothered to address the complication. The

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Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Liza Harvey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Sean L'Estrange

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minister did not know; he is not here. It is just more contempt. We asked the Minister for Local Government yesterday. When the Premier mentioned this measure earlier on, he said it would include the chief executive officers of local government authorities, but they are excluded. His explanation in the paper was that we do not pay for them.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 4750.]