

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 1) 2005
APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO. 2) 2005

Cognate Debate

On motion by **Hon Kim Chance (Leader of the House)**, resolved -

That leave be granted for orders of the day 76 and 77 to be dealt with cognately.

Second Reading - Cognate Debate

Resumed from 22 June.

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan) [5.50 pm]: As members will be aware, Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 1) 2005 is a bill to grant supply and to appropriate and apply out of the consolidated fund certain sums for the recurrent services and purposes of the year ending 30 June 2006. Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No. 2) 2005 is a bill to grant supply and to appropriate and apply out of the consolidated fund certain sums for the capital purposes of the year ending 30 June 2006.

Last week I spoke on the motion for the consideration of the budget papers moved by the minister representing the Treasurer in this house; therefore, it is not necessary for me to speak again at that length. The purpose of my speaking at this stage is to summarise the bills on behalf of the opposition. I recognise that we are now debating those bills, and the motion for the consideration of tabled papers is likely to fall aside. The No 1 bill seeks the appropriation of \$10 963 668 000 for the financial year, and the schedule contains a breakdown of the particular elements that make up that amount of money. The No 2 bill, which is for capital purposes, seeks the appropriation of \$1 212 340 000. Again, the schedule sets out a breakdown of the various items that comprise that amount of funding.

I know that a number of other members want to speak on these bills, and I will try to finish my comments in the next few minutes so that after dinner other members can make their speeches. However, I will make a point about the accuracy and efficacy of the budget itself. It seems to me that, given a statement made by the Treasurer in the other place on 21 June this year - only a week ago - it is very possible that some of the funding that is allocated to particular capital budget items is already out of date. For instance, there is every indication by the Treasurer that the amount of funding in the budget for the Peel deviation, the indoor sports stadium project, the desalination plant and the Perth to Mandurah rail project will be insufficient to complete those programs and that additional amounts will be required to be set aside. I understand that the total cost of the Peel deviation project is in the order of \$340 million. The federal government is putting up about \$170 million and the state government another \$170 million. Engineers who are conversant with that project and who have spoken to me with great alarm have indicated that the cost blow-out for the Peel deviation is already known to the government and that that blow-out may be in the order of \$100 million on top of the \$340 million or thereabouts that the project is believed to cost. I understand that a lot of the potential blow-out relates to the cost of materials. Tomorrow during question time I will ask a question of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to try to ascertain the extent of the blow-out for the Peel deviation. If we are dealing with a budget that has not even been agreed to by the house - that is, it has not as yet been approved as an appropriated fund for both recurrent and capital expenditure - and we find that the figures are not necessarily accurate and that, in the case of the Peel deviation, they may have blown out by \$100 million, that matter should be raised in the responses by the minister representing the Treasurer in this house. I cannot see any contingency item in the legislation that points to that project blowing out in those terms. Obviously, under the Corporations Act, a company would be required to note in its financial statements an amount that it believes would be sufficient to cover the contingencies if those contingencies were known to the directors of the company. I do not see the government being any different from that. There is an obligation for the government to admit in certain terms how much some of its capital items have blown out by to date. I do not need to say any more at this stage about appropriation bills Nos 1 and 2. The opposition will support them. It will support the bills not because it thinks the government has done a good job in its financial planning, but because it believes the government is entitled to funding to carry out the required programs as stated in the bills. We will support the bills, but we have some questions about certain items.

I also indicate to the house that there is some ongoing discussion between the opposition and the government about the committee stage of these bills. I hope that that can be resolved in the next few hours so that members understand exactly when the committee stage will occur and which ministers will be the focus of attention. I say that because the system has been changed this year, and clearly only three ministers in this house can reply in direct terms about the matters that are under their control. With those comments, I indicate the opposition's support for appropriation bills Nos 1 and 2 for the next financial year.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon Kim Chance; Hon George Cash; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Nigel Hallett; President; Hon Barry House

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [7.30 pm]: I speak on these bills, which deal with the *Budget Statements* for 2005-06. I will make a few comments on the supply budget. Due to the resources boom, a large amount of capital funds has come to the state. I will comment on how certain issues in my electorate of the Mining and Pastoral Region have been affected.

One of the issues in my region is the rise in oil prices. Fuel prices have risen dramatically. That has caused huge increases in the cost of transport. It is a burden on tourism and airline services in the region. In other words, it is a burden on people living in the area and visiting the area. As of this morning, the price of unleaded fuel in towns like Exmouth is 135.9c a litre. Diesel was 144.8c a litre. At a roadhouse last week it was over 160c a litre. They are real disincentives for visitors to the area. As the price of fuel rises due to the increase in oil prices, there is a greater GST return to government. We need to ensure that some of the tax is returned to alleviate the cost of living and travelling in the region. Today's *The West Australian* carries an article titled "Petrol hits \$1.09 a litre as oil tipped to skyrocket". That is the fuel price for Perth. The article states, in part -

Increased instability in the Persian Gulf and in major African oil producer Nigeria prompted a leading minister from an OPEC nation at the weekend to warn that the price could hit \$US100.

The prediction was echoed on London's Daily Telegraph website, which reported that respected German forecaster IFW World Economics Institute had predicted an unforeseen crisis could spell \$US100 for a barrel of oil.

...

The Australian Automobile Association, representing major motoring groups including the Royal Automobile Club of WA, called for a review of the 38¢ excise duty on petrol.

That is a federal excise duty. That has not been subject to a CPI increase in the past four years. The article continues -

AAA executive director Lachlan McIntosh said the duty should be replaced by a fairer tax on petrol, which would be about 26¢ a litre, saving motorists at least 10¢ a litre.

He said State governments should be lobbied to provide more for motorists from the 10 per cent GST given to them from petrol sales.

"There's no commitment from the States to return that money to roads," Mr McIntosh said.

Every cent of GST on petrol returned \$300 million a year to the States.

The greatest percentage of that would probably be to Western Australia. One way to return some of the GST revenue through fuel prices would be to give additional money to some small towns in Western Australia. I refer members to the town of Denham, which has a population of 500 to 600 people. For those who do not know, it is the capital of Shark Bay. It is a World Heritage-listed town. That probably impedes its development a little bit as it is subject to another tier of bureaucracy. For members who do not know, Denham has a dual water supply. It has desalinated water and ordinary artesian water. There is a real issue of equity for the town of Denham because its charges on water are quite outlandish. I will refer to the Water Corporation charges in the north of the state. Water charges are split into five classes. Broome has class 1 charges. The first 150 kilolitres are charged at 45c a kilolitre. A town like Exmouth has class 2 charges. The charges rise accordingly. The classes are based on the difficulty of obtaining water. Denham is a class 3 town. Class 3 is based on saline water in the town, not water that we could enjoy from a tap when added to a whisky. Carnarvon has class 2 charges. The charge for desalinated water for Denham is that the first 35 kilolitres are charged at 45c a kilolitre. After that, the next five kilolitres cost \$3.30 a kilolitre. Over 40 kilolitres, the cost is \$10.30 a kilolitre. If a house contains an extra occupant, householders are given an allowance of 7c a kilolitre. Average household usage is 457 kilolitres. A person does not have to be a very bright mathematician to work out some of the water bills. When I was doorknocking in Denham in February, it was one of the biggest issues. Some people had moved to the town but had not realised the charges. They were using desalinated water like normal water. They soon had bills of over \$1 000 for a quarter. The government could spend money to alleviate the water problem in regional areas, particularly Denham. The artesian water is charged at class 3. There is very little vegetation in anyone's garden in Denham. People cannot enjoy the luxury of having freshwater for a garden. It is an issue that we in this house should follow through.

I refer to Nanga Bay, which is 55 kilometres south of Denham on the Freycinet Estuary. I am disappointed to see that the Minister for Fisheries is not here but I presume he is listening in his room. There is a small tourism operation in the bay. It is owned by two people although it was started by Mr Ted Sears. It involves a motel, chalets and a boat hire run. It was a very popular spot that included a caravan park. Due to fishing regulations, it has been virtually closed for a number of years. His turnover had been reduced to 35 per cent of normal

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turnover since the introduction of new regulations. Over the past year, a system was introduced that allowed tags for pink snapper fishing to be balloted. A total of 900 tags were issued at \$10 a tag. I must admit that I thought it was quite incredible that all those tags were taken up very readily, as Hon Kim Chance would remember.

Hon Kim Chance: We were a bit surprised also.

Hon KEN BASTON: I certainly was. There were also another 300 tags for professional fishermen to operate in that area, making a total of 1 200 pink snapper that were allowed to be caught in a year. The fish size was between 50 and 70 centimetres, and that still applies. One tag per person per month is allowed. This tag system was rorted by aunties, uncles and kids. When they arrived at the beach, they would wait to see whether a fisheries inspector was around before they decided whether they would put the tag on the snapper then or save it until the next catch. I believe this could be controlled in other ways. I might add that the possession limit of 20 kilograms still applies. If the government wants to preserve the area, as we mentioned when we were talking about the Ningaloo Reef, it could bring in the wilderness zoning there as well. At present the area is closed for spawning for six weeks, from 15 August to the end of September. I support that mechanism as a way of building up the stock in the Freycinet gulf.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the important things is the infrastructure that the early pioneers put in place in that area, which now has the resort, the hotel and motel area, the caravan park and the chalets. Some of the tags should be allocated to the person who operates that resort, so that he can offer tourism package deals. In other words, if people stay at the resort or in that area, a certain number of tags would go with that; that is, unless the ruling is changed, so that one pink snapper can be taken per person per day. It is, as I mentioned, the wilderness experience.

I will move a little further north to a town that I probably know a little better; that is, Carnarvon. Page 51 of budget paper No 3, *2005-06 Budget: Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, mentions what actually happened with the 2020 proposal. I am pleased to see from that page that funding of \$5.5 million has been provided from 2004-05 to 2006-07 for the Meedo horticulture precinct, the Brickhouse horticulture precinct, the Carnarvon artesian basin and the Quobba coast ecotourism precinct. I presume the \$1.35 million of federal funding is included in that \$5.5 million.

Hon Kim Chance: No.

Hon KEN BASTON: That is a win then.

Hon Kim Chance: The federal funding came before the budget decision, and the budget decision matches the federal funding. Therefore, the \$5.5 million does not include the commonwealth money.

Hon KEN BASTON: I thank the Leader of the House. That is excellent. I believe these are all very important projects, particularly the new horticulture projects. I commend the minister for allocating the funding to those projects, because these are areas that we are looking at pioneering - that is the term I would use. They will be used to grow crops that do not match the normal climate in the Carnarvon area; in other words, they need a greater chill factor. It would be quite exciting if we could get these projects up and running, as it would add to the investment in the region.

Hon Kim Chance: It is significant - if Hon Ken Baston does not mind my interrupting - to note that all those outcomes from the Carnarvon 2020 program are a direct consequence of the Gascoyne-Murchison strategy, and arose out of our consideration of the strategy's finalisation.

Hon KEN BASTON: I thank Hon Kim Chance. I was aware of that, but I thank him for alluding to it. I will be pleased to see the artesian basin almost completed with that extra funding.

It is disappointing for the Carnarvon people that no funding has been provided for the Carnarvon police station-courthouse. This precinct sits right on the fascine development. It is a prime bit of land. Basically, Carnarvon needs a new police station. The current police station needs to be moved. The Shire of Carnarvon has already purchased land for the police station-courthouse complex to be moved to in the future. Perhaps some funding could be provided for the design and planning stage, which will take about a year to complete. I believe in the order of \$500 000 is needed for that, and the project will cost between \$12 million and \$15 million. That funding is needed not only for a new police station but also for the future aesthetics of Carnarvon if it is to develop as a major tourism town and as a gateway, as everyone keeps saying, to the Ningaloo Reef. Carnarvon and Exmouth are supposedly the two gateways to that reef.

I will move a little further afield to the nursing post at Mt Magnet. A new nursing post is desperately required. The building in which the nursing post is located was actually the old staff quarters for the Mt Magnet hospital, which closed in 1974. Mt Magnet is positioned on the North West Coastal Highway, and it is at a crossroads

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leading to Sandstone, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Newman. For those who are not aware of it, Mt Magnet is 121 kilometres from Sandstone, 365 kilometres from Geraldton, 550 kilometres from Perth and 200 kilometres from Meekatharra. The only one I have missed out, I think, is Paynes Find, but I do not really count that as a town; it is a kind of stop-off. Because of those distances and those crossroads, I believe Mt Magnet is a very important place in which to have an adequate nursing post to deal with the trauma of road accidents. It has an excellent airstrip, which means that the flying doctor can visit there. For that reason alone, it makes it a very centralised position. The amount of traffic that goes up there presents a safety hazard. Not only that; it needs a total revamp for the people who live there and for the visiting doctors and dentists. The main concerns expressed to me were that the nursing post is virtually unsafe, there is a privacy issue and it is cramped. It is a stressful environment. To sum it up reasonably, it is a very poor facility.

One of the reasons that people do not stay in the northern Mining and Pastoral Region into their later years is the issue of education. Tertiary education is a real problem for families in the area. Many of them purchase a second residence in the city for their children to live in while they are studying. Of course, one of the great things that parents can give their kids is an advanced education. Those residences come at a huge cost, because it is a second residence for those families. I make one suggestion: perhaps people who live in those regions and who have purchased properties such as that to put their children through their tertiary education could be given an incentive; they could be exempted from paying land tax.

Hon Peter Collier: And secondary education.

Hon KEN BASTON: Yes. I thank the member.

The other issue that always seems to be very dear to everyone's heart - I know there is no simple answer to this - is the old law and order question. It is becoming extremely difficult to get people to live in some of the smaller towns because of law and order issues. Meekatharra is one such town. Offenders do not go through the door or through the window; they actually go through the wall now. With a good hammer, they can make a hole in a fibro wall through which to enter. It is becoming difficult for government departments to keep staff in those areas. People just do not want to live there. I find that quite sad. I attended the two-day centenary event in Meekatharra last year. When people drive through the main street of Meekatharra, they realise that they could not find a nicer, neater town. The main street is superb and is a credit to the town. There is no easy answer, but we must continue to spend funds to work on the problem. We must also try to find things to occupy those who roam the streets and commit the break and enter offences. Given that there is a certain element in the schools, I was approached recently by a person who wanted to put his child into the Meekatharra School of the Air as a means of encouraging his child to stay in Meekatharra. We need to consider that option. It may start a run of people who want to do that, but we must consider ways of encouraging people to stay in these areas. The Meekatharra School of the Air is highly regarded and many parents are requesting that their children participate in it. For the benefit of those members who are not aware, people have to be a certain distance from the town centre before they can access the School of the Air.

I refer to transport market reform in the aviation industry on page 167 of the *Budget Statements*. It reads -

In April 2005, the Government announced that tenders would be sought for the regulated intrastate air routes servicing regional Western Australian communities. This follows a decision in 2002 (after the collapse of Ansett in 2001) to regulate non-jet routes in order to stabilise air services to regional centres.

The decision to invite applications from airlines for the licence rights to operate regulated routes satisfies the requirements of NCP, and was considered to strike the right balance between competition and stability in regional aviation.

The regulated routes will be tendered as two networks:

- a coastal network, comprising the regional airports of Albany, Esperance, Exmouth (Learmonth), Geraldton, Carnarvon, Kalbarri and Shark Bay; and
- a northern Goldfields network, comprising the airports of Leonora, Leinster, Laverton, Wiluna, Meekatharra and Mount Magnet . . .

The assessment of applications is expected to be completed by August 2005 . . .

Services will commence in December 2005. I have not seen the tenders, but I will try to find them. Air travel is important to people in the north - it is our bus and train service - and it is also important if tourism in the area is to advance. The conditions placed on the tender must cater for the need for wholesale seats for packaged tourism and must include the type of aircraft, such as a jet, particularly to larger towns; continuity of service; and affordable prices. I will watch those aspects carefully. I look forward to seeing who becomes the successful tenderer. All of us must realise the importance of the airline service in developing tourist towns such as Exmouth and Carnarvon.

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The next topic I will touch on is one with which I am a little more familiar; that is, rangeland tenure. I inform the house that I am the holder of a pastoral lease. Rangeland tenure is currently being reviewed. I believe that the proposal is for a 40-year rolling lease with five-yearly inspections and, at the end of 10 years, the lease will revert back to a 10-year lease. The minimum lease at any one time will be 30 years. However, every 20 years the government will have the right to make exclusions. In my opinion, that is not a bankable tenure. The type of lease needed is a multi-purpose lease with a tiered approach for rangeland uses that allows for the diversification of industries and, thus, capital investment in the region. The permit system we currently use does not allow for diversification on a pastoral lease. The permit system is not transferable and, therefore, people will not invest large sums of capital if, when they sell the lease, they cannot realise the capital asset they have built up. If we want more people to invest in the rangeland, we need a bankable title to allow that investment to occur and be realised. The diversification to which I referred could include tourism, horticulture, aquaculture, feedlot systems and, of course, agriculture, which was mentioned earlier.

I now refer to our dear old foe, the wild dog. The web site of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry reads, in part -

Australia's wild dogs include dingoes, introduced around 4000 years ago, feral domestic dogs and hybrids between the two.

It is the hybrids between the two that cause the problem. If pit bull terriers from Kalgoorlie were crossed with dingos, I cannot imagine what type of animal would be running around the rangelands. I urge the government to commit more funding not only to trapping wild dogs and putting people in the area to catch them, but also to researching better ways of controlling them. The other day I read about a new spray-on attractant. It will be interesting to see whether that works. They are the sorts of things we must consider. We must not take our eye off the ball. I was told that something like 2 000 dogs have been caught in the goldfields in the past couple of years. That is a huge number.

I refer to payroll taxes on page 202 of the *Budget Statements*. Payroll tax has been reduced from six per cent to 5.5 per cent, but it should be abolished. A tax on employing people is ridiculous, and it is a disincentive to increasing business growth in this state. I have outlined just a few of the more pressing issues I have observed that relate to my electorate. I have drawn them to the government's attention in the hope that they may be remedied in the future.

HON DONNA TAYLOR (East Metropolitan) [7.58 pm]: I rise tonight to speak to the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No.1) 2005 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No.2) 2005. As a new member for the East Metropolitan Region, I will raise some issues that affect my electorate. I will also refer to areas that relate to my shadow portfolio responsibility of youth affairs.

I note that the East Metropolitan Region has received funding commitments in the recent state budget, particularly through the Department of Education and Training's capital works program.

This includes funding to commence new high schools in Ellenbrook and Atwell, and a new primary school in Canning Vale; and funding in part for the completion of additions and improvements at the Cecil Andrews, Eastern Hills, Gosnells, Kelmscott and Bullsbrook District High Schools, and the Darlington, Mt Helena and Upper Swan Primary Schools. Although I acknowledge that there will always be maintenance needs at schools and that backlogs are inevitable, I remind the Council that if it were not for the efforts of the opposition, particularly the previous shadow Minister for Education and Training, the member for Darling Range, in highlighting the maintenance backlog, the funding allocation may not have been so high. Indeed, the former Minister for Education and Training, the member for the Willagee, said as much in the Legislative Assembly estimates committee hearing on 8 June when he outlined -

I have conceded, and probably said at this time last year on a couple of occasions, that I am grateful to the member for Darling Range for raising the issue of maintenance in government schools. That has allowed me to place internal pressure in government to get the money required to address the problem. I thank the member for that.

I also acknowledge some of the announcements made in relation to Main Roads, including funding for the construction of additional passing lanes on Toodyay Road in Gidgegannup at a cost of \$2.5 million. I found in the "Works in Progress" section in the *Budget Statements*, volume 2, a reference to the extension of Reid Highway between West Swan Road and the Great Northern Highway; namely, the section linking Middle Swan Road. Some members in the chamber may remember announcements by both the government and opposition during the state election campaign in relation to this road, and a commitment by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure of a \$27 million extension of the highway, as well as a new bridge across the Swan River. You may be aware, Mr President, that the number of vehicles using Middle Swan Road between 1987 and 1999 increased from around 7 900 a day to 25 000 a day. As at October last year, nearly 28 000 vehicles travelled on

the road each day, and this is continually increasing. Middle Swan Road is unsafe and dangerous; in fact, around 158 crashes were reported on this road between 2000 and 2004. I alert the house to the fact that this is reported crashes only, and I guess that the figure would be much larger if unreported crashes were included. I note also from the *Budget Statements* that the estimated total cost of the project remains at \$27 million. However, I draw members' attention to the fact that estimated expenditure in 2005-06 is only \$1.5 million. Middle Swan Road is clearly not designed to carry the volume of vehicles that uses it on a daily basis, and it must be upgraded as soon as possible. The congestion created by heavy haulage trucks, commercial vehicles, buses and everyday local traffic, particularly in peak periods, is a day-to-day tragedy waiting to happen. I appreciate that various approvals must be sought before the full commencement of the work; however, the government must make the upgrade a priority. I hope the targeted completion date can be made before 2008.

I now turn to some areas in the budget that touch on my shadow portfolio responsibility of youth affairs. Regarding education, I made reference in my maiden speech to some recent research titled "The Sufficiency of Resources for Australian Primary Schools". This research was funded by the commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training following an approach by the Australian Primary Principals Association with a request to examine whether primary schools had enough resources to meet the national goals of schooling. As I highlighted in my maiden speech, the report identified a number of areas for consideration.

I will elaborate on one area in this speech; that is, the need to improve the support allocated to teachers with students who have special learning needs or who are disruptive. As I previously mentioned in this place, research indicates that around one in 10 children presents with some form of learning difficulty. The Department of Education and Training's annual report for 2003-04 also indicates that 20 per cent of government school students at some time in their schooling are at educational risk. I quote from the annual report -

... for one reason or another, there is a possibility that they will not be achieving the outcomes necessary to fulfil their potential in life.

The assumptions that an increase in resources, both fiscal and human, will correspondingly improve student outcomes without the need to look at other areas of the education system is, as the researchers suggested, problematic - certainly, it is not that straightforward. However, it is clear that the resource levels for specialist support staff in schools are low, and, as a result, additional pressure is being placed on teachers in the classroom. The rostering of support staff, such as school psychologists, across a number of schools means that at times it is difficult for schools to get the support services when they are most needed. When school psychologists, for example, are rostered to four or five different schools and are required to visit each school at least once a week, it is clear that they cannot give the individual attention that each school and, most importantly, each student deserves. The report mentioned this lack of support as a key area of concern to principals. The researchers noted -

Principals report extraordinary delays in acquiring assessments of students and in gaining support services, in some cases over a year. In the meantime such students are at serious risk of failure to learn. Student access to speech pathologists was cited by principals as a serious problem. Demand exceeds supply.

More specialist support services are clearly needed within the school system, and there is an urgent need to reduce, where possible, the waiting time for students to see specialists, especially in the area of speech and hearing, the waiting times for which, as I have already mentioned, can be up to a year. Parents and teachers have raised concerns with me about waiting lists. Although I appreciate that resources are always stretched across thousands of school students, consideration must be given to increasing, if possible, the number of support services available.

With regard to behaviour management and support more generally, I note the announcement in the budget of an additional \$7.6 million over four years to provide, among other things, \$1.4 million to double school chaplaincy services, which are offered as a support to both secondary and primary schools; \$1.1 million to extend the school volunteer adult mentor program; and \$400 000 for the anti-suicide agency Youth Focus. These initiatives are certainly commendable. I touch on a couple of areas a little further, particularly the adult mentor program and the additional funding to Youth Focus. In my maiden speech, I mentioned the need for greater use of mentoring programs. We live in a society characterised by ever-increasing family breakdown, violence, crime and isolation. The opportunity that such programs potentially provide to children and young people in need should be encouraged, to hopefully put them on the right path to a happy and productive life. With regard to Youth Focus, I note in *Budget Statements*, volume 1, that \$400 000 will be provided for the appointment of two full-time staff to provide more readily available expertise to schools in the area of suicide prevention and support. The tragedy of suicide cannot be underestimated. In 2002, the most current data available, a total of 246 people died by suicide in Western Australia. Suicide is an issue often not discussed or publicised widely. I can

understand this in many ways, because of the sensitive and often devastating emotions that it arouses. It is a sad fact, however, that many people in their lifetime will be touched by this tragedy. The death or even attempted suicide of a family member, friend or even acquaintance can have a profound effect on not only family and friends, but also the local community, and, in the case of adolescents, the school community. Statistics indicate that youth suicide is the leading cause of death among older adolescents. The Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention reported that 759 young people aged between 15 and 24 years committed suicide in Western Australia between 1986 and 2002. Of the 759 deaths, 116 were young women, at a rate of 5.3 per cent per 100 000 population; and, disturbingly, 643 were young men, at a rate of 28.1 per cent per 100 000 population. According to the report, irrespective of age, male suicide in rural and remote areas, particularly among young men, increased over that period, and female suicide rates were the highest in the Perth metropolitan area, particularly the east metropolitan area, my electorate. The rate in this case was nearly 1.2 times higher than the state figure. Tragically, suicide is part of wider social and health - often mental health - issues. According to the ministerial council, nearly one-third of males and almost two-thirds of females who committed suicide were found to have suffered from a diagnosed psychiatric disorder in the 12 months prior to their death, including depression and substance misuse. Indeed, in relation to the latter, the council found that 29 per cent of males and 21 per cent of females participated in harmful substance use within the three months prior to their death.

With reports showing an increasing number of young people showing evidence of depression and other mental health problems, the issue of youth suicide must never be swept under the carpet. Indeed, if we were to look at the issue of mental health more closely, we would find statistics showing that around 75 per cent of mental illness onsets before the age of 25 years. A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity, along with my colleagues Hon Ray Halligan and Hon Robyn McSweeney to attend a Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia forum on accommodation issues for young people with a mental illness. This forum provided an opportunity to hear first hand the issues being faced by this sector, ranging from accommodation issues, bed shortages, the need for better discharge planning and greater respite and support for young carers. It is important that we recognise mental health is a tragic issue and make it a top priority, particularly in relation to children and adolescents.

I now turn to another issue that is affecting the lives of many young Australians and their families, that being illicit drugs. The 2004 national drug strategy household survey was released two weeks ago. This survey, conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, is the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken in Australia concerning both licit and illicit drug use. While the survey noted a decline in the past 12 months in the proportion of the Australian population using illicit drugs, the fact remains that usage is still too high. I would like to draw the Council's attention to some worrying statistics: in 2004, almost two million Australians aged 14 years and over had recently used cannabis; approximately one in 20 12-to-15 years old, one in five 16-to-17 years olds and one-quarter of 18 and 19 years olds had used cannabis in the previous 12 months; one in 10 persons aged 20 to 29 years had used methamphetamines in the past 12 months; and disturbingly, one in eight persons aged 20 to 29 years and one in 20 teenagers had used ecstasy in the past 12 months. The survey also concluded that Western Australians self-reported using more cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy than most other Australians. This is a statistic that Western Australians should not be proud of. Illicit drugs clearly impact on crime, health, homelessness and a host of other social issues. Daily we are seeing reports in the newspapers and on television of international research linking marijuana to mental illness and to marijuana being a gateway to harder drugs. Indeed, as I have previously mentioned in this place, research suggests that for those who are vulnerable, cannabis use can lead to mental illness, paranoia, suicide and distress and that can be exacerbated if the user starts early in life.

More generally, the 2004 drug use monitoring in Australia - DUMA - project recently released by the Australian Institute of Criminology certainly illustrates the impact of illicit drugs from a law and order perspective. The DUMA report found that almost half the police detainees interviewed in targeted lockups across Australia, including East Perth, reported using drugs just prior to their arrest. Disturbingly, 83 per cent of those charged with a property offence tested positive to an illicit drug and 65 per cent of those charged with a violent offence also tested positive.

I note in the budget statements some general references to drug and alcohol strategy coordination, prevention and treatment services. There is little detail, however, on the strategies that are being funded and no reference that I can see to the school drug education program. It refers to funding and support for services in the not-for-profit sector, but this is not detailed and we know that funding was certainly cut a couple of years ago to some very worthwhile organisations. Life education certainly comes to mind.

Some might say that illicit drugs are but a small part of the priorities of a government, but when we look at the damage that illicit drugs cause to the user, his or her family and the wider community - I reiterate the figures highlighted in the DUMA report, with respect to the link between drugs and crime - it is critical that we address

this scourge. Governments must ensure that strategies are properly funded, that non-government organisations are supported, particularly those that work with children and young people, and that relaxed drug laws are tightened.

I briefly touch on the area of apprenticeships. I note that the government has announced a \$21.4 million package to tackle skills shortages in Western Australia. I certainly support any initiative that promotes a stronger vocational education sector such as school-based apprenticeships or traineeships that provide a seamless transition for students from school to work. I believe there is a need to look at increasing flexibility in apprenticeships, perhaps by shortening their duration through competency-based training, increasing incentives to young people by increasing the number of training options available, and reducing barriers to entry. However, quality should not be compromised in any reform.

I note that the Minister for Education and Training made some positive comments on more flexible training and apprenticeships over the weekend. I also see that the recent Council of Australian Governments' meeting agreed to establish a joint state-commonwealth working group to address the barriers across the vocational education and training system. The working group will examine, among other things - I quote from part of the communique: the effective implementation of full mutual recognition of skills qualifications across Australia; shortening the duration of apprenticeships where competencies are demonstrated and enabling school-based apprenticeships; ensuring maximum flexibility in training for employers and apprentices; and allowing intermediate or specialised qualifications as well as full apprenticeships.

I believe that in the current climate we must look at these issues more closely. We must be forward thinking and flexible in approach. Governments must not only respond to the current skills shortage, but also ensure where possible that young people, particularly those 70 per cent who do not go straight to university, are provided with the best possible opportunities in their working lives.

In conclusion, this budget does have some gains for the Western Australian community; however, there remain many shortfalls. I remain deeply concerned about many policies that this government is promoting and will continue to pursue the government on these issues throughout my time in this place.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [8.19 pm]: I intend to comment on a few of the issues that Hon Donna Taylor has already commented on this evening. I make no apology for that, because I believe that the issues I address are extremely pertinent in today's society. They relate to the youth of the North Metropolitan Region in particular but also to youth in general and specifically to the scourge of drugs. I endorse Hon Donna Taylor's comments on the lack of clarity with the funding of the school drug education program. It seems to have vanished from the radar in the budget. It is an issue that confronts society today. Virtually every one of us has either been affected by, or knows someone who has been affected by, drug use and abuse. I will comment on the negative impact of cannabis in particular. I will also talk about the problems associated with the Labor government's 2002 amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act, and the message those changes send to our youth. I will also talk about the implications of drug use for suicide and self-harm, and about drug education programs.

In the recent three-week break from Parliament, I spent some time in the Joondalup area and met with Superintendent George Loverock. He is a terrific chap. He is a Kalgoorlie boy, so he comes from quality stock. We had a very fruitful and enlightening conversation. We talked about some of the issues within the Joondalup electorate in particular and the northern suburbs in general. We got around to talking about the problems associated with youth in contemporary society. One issue is the image of youth in the eyes of the community and how they perceive themselves. Unfortunately, many members of the community have a negative image of youths. A lot of that stems from the activities of youths, particularly on the weekends when they go to parties where, more often than not, they engage in binge drinking, cannabis use and other illicit drug use. Youths tend to be portrayed in a negative light. When talking to George I said that that was not representative of the youth of our community. Essentially, the vast majority of our youth are productive, energetic and professional members of the community. It is a shame that they are seen in such a negative light.

Those comments about the negative image of youth and how they perceive themselves were endorsed by youth consultation workshops, which were a terrific initiative of the Court government in the 1990s. I was a member of the Youth Advisory Council of WA at that time and was directly involved in the youth consultation workshops. Thirty-six regions were involved, from the Kimberley to the Pilbara, the goldfields, Albany, Bunbury, Esperance and five regions in the metropolitan area. Youths were asked what concerned them in contemporary society. We actually listened to youths. We gave them a voice. We asked them. We did not talk; we listened. Their responses were terrific and enlightening. There were some positive aspects to the responses, but there were also some negative aspects. There were two issues of particular concern to the Youth Advisory Council. The first was the rampant acceptance of drug use by adolescents. It was almost the norm - everyone

indulged in it, so it was not so bad. It was an accepted practice among many youths. The second was the view that society as a whole had a negative impression of them. That was very disappointing. Having reviewed the report that emanated from those consultation workshops, I must say that it saddened me somewhat. I will quote a few impressions that were raised in the consultation workshops. The respondents felt - these responses came from a variety of workshops - that society in general regarded them as juveniles, slackers, annoying, rebels, troublemakers, vandals, dole bludgers, useless layabouts, being guilty before proven innocent, drug addicts, no-hopers, thieves, robbers, bogans, useless - again - hooligans, rebellious, shoplifters, taggers, degenerates, alcoholics, irresponsible, junkies, louts etc. That is how youths felt society perceived them, which is a real shame. Of course, that is not accurate. Youths have a very cynical view of the media in particular. That came through in the report. They felt that the media portrayed them in this light, which is a shame. They felt that the actions of a minority reflected very badly on them as a whole. As I have said, also to come out of the youth consultation workshops was that most youths were energetic, positive and keen to pursue healthy, active, vibrant lives that contributed to society. That was the most heartening thing.

My emphasis this evening is on drug use, abuse and dependency. I am concerned with the ever-increasing number of youths, in particular, who are choosing to indulge in cannabis use as a natural component of their recreation. Why am I concerned about this? I am concerned because I feel that the Labor government's changes to the Misuse of Drugs Act in 2002 basically sent the wrong message to our youth. In essence, the changes amount to nothing more than a slap on the wrist for the growing of up to two cannabis plants at the grower's principal place of residence for his or her personal use and for the possession of up to 30 grams of cannabis for personal use. Members should be mindful of the fact that one plant produces up to 250 grams of cannabis, which is almost eight months' supply at a consumption rate of one gram a day. Some have thought to interpret this new mechanism as applying only to people over the age of 18, because section 20 of the Cannabis Control Act states that the Young Offenders Act is unaffected. However, part 5 of the Young Offenders Act provides a similar mechanism to decriminalise the offences contained in the new legislation. The message from these changes is transparent; that is, it is fine to smoke cannabis. I am not sure why the government made these changes, and I implore it to reverse them. The message to our youth is clear: it is fine to smoke cannabis.

In a media statement of 26 May 2002, when these changes occurred, the then health minister, Bob Kucera, said that there would be great opportunities for educating offenders. Basically, that is putting the cart before the horse, and the horse has bolted. We must put much more emphasis on educating our youth before they reach that level, and we also need to send the message that it is not all right to indulge in drug use. We should not be looking after the offenders; we should be dealing with this issue five or 10 years prior to that point, to ensure that people do not indulge in the drug culture in the first place. That is an essential component of my argument against the changes to the Misuse of Drugs Act.

In the same media statement, the then WA police commissioner, Barry Matthews, said that the changes would free up police time and resources to deal with serious drug dealers and traffickers. Quite frankly, if we need to employ another 100 or 200 policemen to stop the scourge of drugs, we should do it. We should not amend the act to free up police to chase the traffickers. That is not the point.

I am convinced that these changes will lead to a higher incidence of cannabis use; more people will use cannabis, which will lead to a greater need for social and health care. Problems associated with cannabis use include a feeling of dislocation, long-term youth unemployment and delinquency. There is also a growing association between cannabis use and mental health issues. Members should not take my word for it. That is my opinion. I cannot for a moment suggest that what I am saying is correct. Members could take the word of Dr Greg Cheshier who, ironically, is one of Australia's most pro-legalisation lobbyists. A pamphlet that he wrote, headed "The Use of Non Prescribed Drugs" and published by the University of Sydney in 1985, was quoted in *The Cruel Hoax: Street Drugs in Australia*, by Elaine Walters, and states -

"It is indeed true that the legalisation of marijuana would be followed by an increase in its use. Both the availability of the drug and peer-group pressure for its use would increase. The number of adverse reactions, including motor accidents with drug involvement would increase. We know that alcohol and marijuana are now being consumed concurrently (a practice which legalisation would increase) and that the effects of the two drugs together are at least addictive."

I agree wholeheartedly. *The Cruel Hoax* also contains an extract from a 1991 report of the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board on the moral indefensibility of legalisation, which states -

The board wishes once more to reject emphatically the view which continues to be voiced advocating the legalisation of the possession and use of some or all drugs for non-medical purposes. Such an approach would undoubtedly be interpreted by potential abusers as sanctioning drug use and can be expected to lead to exploding abuse, attended by an increase in drug-related deaths, soaring health care

costs, the destruction of families and the erosion of basic values. Moreover, any slackening of controls not only constitutes non-compliance with treaty obligations but is morally indefensible.

If that is not enough, I will give the house a bit more. Let us look at the editorial in today's *The West Australian*, which reads -

Sooner or later, the realisation must dawn on the State Government that its cannabis laws reflect neither the harm caused by the drug nor community sentiment.

The message sent by the soft laws is that cannabis use is a minor indiscretion.

At the same time, research increasingly points to the links between cannabis use and mental illness and hard drugs.

As a result, community views will harden against cannabis use and the Government will have a burgeoning political problem unless it toughens the laws.

Quite frankly, I could not have written it better. It was an excellent editorial and I completely endorse it. Let us just look at the current situation with cannabis and determine whether we should be sending out the message that cannabis use is okay. Hon Donna Taylor gave us some pertinent facts in this regard and I will repeat a few of them. Cannabis is, of course, the most commonly used illegal drug in Australia. Approximately 18 per cent of the 14 to 19-year-old demographic use cannabis regularly; that is a shame. Almost a quarter of that demographic have used it in their lifetime and, most alarmingly, according to the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, Western Australians' use of cannabis is 2.4 per cent more than the national average. Liberalising cannabis laws has, of course, been tried before; there was the disaster in South Australia with adverse impacts. The Labor government of that state decriminalised cannabis in 1987, without considering the social implications for the youth of that state. As a result, the consequences have been -

Hon Simon O'Brien: Ten plants and you can get an on-the-spot fine.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Spot on, Hon Simon O'Brien! The consequences have been a significant increase in the use of hydroponics in South Australia; more potent strains of cannabis being produced in that state; the advent of cannabis syndicates in which organised crime groups provide hydroponic equipment for individuals to grow the expiable number of plants in their separate residences; increased organised crime involvement, particularly motorcycle gangs, in marijuana dealing; and an increase in the exportation of harvested cannabis interstate. In addition, there have been other related implications: armed home invasions doubled between 1990 and 2000, of which a significant proportion were drug related, according to the South Australian police; a decrease in the price of cannabis and an increase in the availability of cannabis; and, according to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey, cannabis use in South Australia was well above the national average. In the 14 to 19-year-old age group, 46 per cent of those surveyed had used cannabis recently compared with the national average of 35 per cent, and 24 per cent used it weekly in this age group compared with the national average of 21 per cent. Is there a pattern emerging here? I think so. Of course, that is just the start of the adverse implications of cannabis use. There is overwhelming evidence that prolonged cannabis use has an adverse impact on mental health. For example, Professor George Patton, Director of the Centre of Adolescent Health, commented in February 2002 that results of a study by the hospital had revealed -

... the best evidence yet that ... cannabis is bad for your mental health and does cause higher rates of depression and anxiety problems ... There was a very strong association between cannabis use ... and mental health problems ...

Also, the British Journal of Psychiatry found -

... a strong relationship between adolescent drug use and the experience of emotional distress, depression and lack of a sense of purpose in life.

Also, the detrimental side effects of cannabis cited by the United Nations International Control Board in a recent report are as follows -

... changes in perception of time and space, impaired co-ordination, judgement and memory ... conjunctivitis ... bronchitis ... illusions, delusions, depression, confusion, alienation and hallucinations ...

I do not know how they have time to sit and smoke it, quite frankly. The report continues -

Sometimes these may resemble a psychotic episode marked by fear and aggression.

The report also continues -

... prolonged use of cannabis may impair psychomotor, cognitive and endocrine functions, reduce immunity and lower resistance to infection.

Also a recent survey by Professor Yasmin Hurd of the Karolinska Institute said that chronic use of cannabis could interfere with brain development.

Finally, the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy has warned -

. . . teenagers were trying cannabis use at younger ages and were more likely to develop addiction and serious mental illness later in life.

The US study found -

. . . one in eight cannabis users aged 18 or older were classified as having a serious mental illness.

In addition, the office said -

Teenage cannabis use could lead to depression, thoughts of suicide and schizophrenia.

Adults that used cannabis before the age of 12 were twice as likely to have a serious mental health problem than those that were 18 before they first used cannabis.

That should not act as a motivation to take up cannabis use at the age of 18; I am just saying that these are the effects.

Also, according to the Drug Advisory Council of Australia, medical research has shown a link between cannabis use and the adverse health of children of cannabis users. Among other negative impacts are: regular cannabis use before and during pregnancy is associated with a reduction in neonatal light response and an increase in startle and tremor in babies; by age one, cannabis exposure via maternal breast milk was shown to have a negative effect on motor skills; by age three, children of cannabis users showed increased fearfulness, poorer motor skills and shorter lengths of play; by age four, children of cannabis users had negative verbal and memory outcomes; and cannabis-using fathers can inflict Turner and Down syndrome on their children by altering the chromosomes. Of course, this evidence is minute in detail. There is simply no good argument for indulging in cannabis use. I think virtually everyone would agree with that, or I hope they would.

Recreational drug use may not lead to addiction, but it is often how more regular use and addiction begins; that is, all of those who indulge in cannabis use at a younger age do not necessarily move on to higher order illicit drug usage. However, those who do indulge in higher order illicit drug usage almost always commenced their habit with cannabis.

That brings me, unfortunately, to an area that is increasingly being associated with cannabis use, to which Hon Donna Taylor alluded; that is, youth suicide. Basically, as we all know, youth suicide can be the result of a range of issues: the characteristics of the individual, be it a mental illness or something of the kind; family problems - that is, marriage breakdowns, remarriage or any number of issues with regard to abuse or parenting; social disadvantage - that is, socioeconomic background, cultural, race or gender issues, rural disadvantage and certainly issues with regard to indigenous youth; personal stress - that is, interpersonal conflicts, relationship breakdowns, work or social problems. However, with regard to youth suicide and self-harm we come more and more back to drug abuse or drug-related issues; that is of concern. According to the National Action Plan for Suicide Prevention, by far the most common method of attempted and completed suicide among both men and women is drug overdose; as adolescents drift into depression, stress or anxiety, they seek solace from drugs or alcohol; and cannabis use and alcohol dramatically increase suicide risk and self-harm.

Alcohol and cannabis are frequently and increasingly associated with suicidal behaviour. For example, in a finding by Dr Sven Silburn, Chairman of Western Australia's Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention, he said that suicide deaths as a result of drug use has soared. He said that in 2002, 43 per cent of males under 25 years of age and 14 per cent of women in the same age bracket who committed suicide had cannabis in their bloodstream, compared with 7 per cent for both groupings in 1987 - a rise of 600 per cent for males and 100 per cent for women. That is alarming, Mr President. These suicides can perhaps be attributed to either problems directly associated with alcohol and drug abuse or dependencies, or that the use of such substances are symptomatic of underlying psychosocial problems that need to be addressed successfully in order to reduce both the substance abuse and the propensity to self-harm. Where does that leave us? Cannabis use is bad for people. People do not need a PhD to work that out. As I said, I doubt whether any member of this chamber would suggest otherwise. It leads to dependency, mental health issues and, increasingly, to suicide. In the eyes of the community the Labor government has legalised, and therefore decriminalised, cannabis use. The message is quite transparent that it is okay to smoke cannabis. It is the drip effect; it is like a death from 1 000 cuts. The message is put into the community that cannabis use is not so bad. That is the message going to our youth; that is quite clear. Having been a teacher for 23 years and having worked in a pastoral capacity for the past 10 years, I came across the issue of cannabis and drug use on a regular basis with my students. I remember one tragic incident in which a former student died of a drug overdose. Whether he suicided, I am not sure. He indulged in

mild drug use and then moved to a higher order of drug use before dying of an overdose. It had a devastating impact on his family. The boy was an extremely good sportsman. He was academically gifted and very successful in life. It was a tragic circumstance. I vividly remember visiting his parents a week after the event. They were very damning of his drug use, and no matter what they said to him he was of the opinion that his drug use would do him no harm. Interestingly enough, I was speaking to a colleague the other day about this and she related the exact same story to me. I am sure that most members of this chamber would be able to tell a similar story of someone they know or are associated with. What steps can we take to reverse the problem; how can we significantly reverse the use of cannabis by our youth? Let us look at community attitudes and see how difficult they are to change. I will start with alcohol, which is the most abused drug in our community. Binge drinking is a big problem, particularly among teenagers. It is very common for teenagers to go out on weekends and even during the week and get absolutely plastered. Their sole purpose in going out is to binge drink and get drunk. They do not have a vintage bottle of red with their Hungry Jack's meal; they go out to get drunk. Unfortunately, it has become the norm in our community; it is accepted by parents and youth as a whole. Fortunately, the government and the community are taking steps to try to correct or alleviate the problems and change attitudes about binge drinking. Of course, there is a difference between alcohol use and cannabis. It is possible to indulge in alcohol consumption without becoming intoxicated but the sole purpose of smoking a joint is to get intoxicated, as it is with all other illicit drugs. Although there is no way of diminishing the negative impacts of excessive alcohol use, unlike cannabis use or other illicit drug use, in moderation, it does not impair intellectual function.

Peripheral problems with alcohol use are car accidents, death, violence and unsafe sex. The community is changing its attitudes about alcohol. Let us consider smoking which, fortunately, has become a social taboo. It has got to the point now at which smoking is very unfashionable and socially unacceptable. The reduction in the use of the weed since a comprehensive community and government approach has been taken has been very successful. I remember as a child that smoking was advertised on television, in newspapers and at movie theatres. It was accepted by the community at large. As I said, a holistic approach from the community has meant that that has changed. That is to the credit of the community at large. According to a recent survey, Western Australia now has the lowest level of smokers in the nation. It can be done. We can change community attitudes. If it can be done, I would like to offer some suggestions to the house about cannabis use. How can we change attitudes towards cannabis use? I refer firstly to drug education. There is a definite need to evaluate existing and planned drug education programs in order to prevent or delay cannabis or other drug use among secondary school students. Sweden has revised its drug education program and drug penalty policies. There has been a significant reduction in cannabis use by 15 to 16-year-olds to only seven per cent. In the Netherlands, where cannabis use is legal, the rate of use by 15 to 16-year-olds is 31 per cent. I would like to see an increased emphasis on abstinence in our drug education policies. There is no beating around the bush. There should be a straightforward abstinence; people should not indulge. Much like cigarette smoking, we need a holistic approach. The community needs to get involved. We started during the 1990s in the Court era with the School Drug Education Project. It is an excellent initiative and an excellent program. It is the envy of Australia. The program set up a series of principles of best practice, including the principle that drug education should address the values, attitudes and behaviours of society, its school community and the individual. It should incorporate strategies and processes that involve school staff, students, parents and the wider community. The program should be used to plan and implement school drug education programs. That is a holistic approach. I am very supportive of that. In addition, the School Drug Education Project is based on a health-promoting school framework. It intends to promote an environment that is safe, stimulating and satisfying and that complements classroom-based learning experiences. It provides a relevant drug education component in the school curriculum for all year levels, develops a school drug policy, makes effective use of student health services and makes drug education available to parents and caregivers. We cannot complain about that. It is good policy; it is a very good project. I support the School Drug Education Project, particularly as a former member of the project in its infancy. The project is currently in 428 primary and secondary schools, which is less than half of the education sector of the state. That is a worry. Other schools may have accessed the project at an earlier time and created their own programs. I do not have a problem with that, as long as there is some form of uniformity in the message being sent. In my opinion, all schools should adhere to the principles of the SDEP. I also endorse the mandatory use of drug education in our schools. I am extremely mindful of the enormous pressure that teachers are under at the moment. I am at pains to not put extra pressure on them with an additional responsibility. Regardless, this is vital and we need to consider it.

The School Drug Education Project is supported by the commonwealth government, which is providing for peer and community drug forums. That value adds the approach by the SDEP. It is a partnership between government and the broader community. It is a holistic approach. Like the approach taken to smoking, it is very important. All schools can access the commonwealth funding, which is available from July 2005. However,

parents and peers must be involved in the community forums. Schools can call on experts to assist with the forums and the promotion of best practice. The School Drug Education Project will coordinate the forums. The project and the Drug and Alcohol Office fully support the forums. It is a great opportunity for parents and the community to get involved. My concern is that currently the SDEP has only nine project officers in the central office and 5.5 project officers in the regions. That is an insufficient number of project officers to implement the program. It requires more money. The government has the money. The money should not be an issue. The government is flush with funds, and I ask the government to write a cheque. The incorporation of the Drug and Alcohol Office into the Department of Health creates uncertainty in the SDEP about its future. There is no security of tenure for the SDEP, which is something that needs to be rectified. The School Drug Education Project needs to have some clarity, and its security of tenure should be confirmed. There also needs to be much more emphasis on pre-service training. I would like the government to encourage tertiary institutions to incorporate pre-service training into their teacher training. Finally, I would like funding to be expanded in a much broader sense to indigenous youth, particularly in the regions, where substance abuse, suicide and self-harm are at an unacceptable level.

How do we shift community attitudes? It is very difficult, as I have said. However, we have seen that with alcohol and when we dealt with cigarette smoking. Therefore, I believe we can do it. The first thing I will do is call on the government to reverse the changes made to the Misuse of Drugs Act. I call on the government to take this step and to send a clear message to the community that drug use is unacceptable. As I said, I call on the government to reverse the amendments to the act and to not wait for five or 10 years when it will be too late. I do not want smoking of cannabis to be so entrenched within our community that it is accepted practice. It is basically getting to that point now. The problem is real, and the government needs to do something about it. In this chamber, we can take steps to do that. We can initiate changes to that act to make sure that they take place. As Elaine Walters stated in *The Cruel Hoax*, George Orwell wrote -

“Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it. -

And wiser than the one that comes after it -

This is an illusion . . . one ought to stick to one’s world view even at the price of seeming old fashioned . . . for that world view springs out of experience that the younger generation has not had and, to abandon it, is to kill ones intellectual roots.”

That is true. We basically have an obligation to our youth. We must not succumb to the whim of so-called progressive social policy regarding cannabis use. Our youth deserve more than that. It is our responsibility to provide them with more. It is our responsibility to provide guidance and support. To do this, we must reverse that legislation.

In conclusion, I would like to see the following: a reversal of the government’s amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act; increased spending on the SDEP to ensure that every school in Western Australia has access to qualified project officers to implement the program; a guarantee for the long-term future of the SDEP; and government intervention to promote the development of pre-service training for drug education at the tertiary level. If these things are implemented, I will be a happy man, but, more importantly, I believe that this place will be doing an enormous service to our society.

HON NIGEL HALLETT (South West) [8.52 pm]: It is indeed a pleasure to comment on the 2005-06 *Budget Statements*. It is interesting that Hon Ken Baston, Hon Donna Taylor and Hon Peter Collier all expressed concerns about specific areas of the budget. We are constantly bombarded with the government’s references to our state’s booming economy. However, it is paramount that we do not forget that this government is the highest taxing state government that Western Australians have ever had the misfortune to have in power. In fact, this government has the honour of being the second highest taxing state government in Australia, second only to New South Wales. One does not have to be a Rhodes scholar to work out that all this surplus revenue is a direct result of a highly motivated and competitive private sector. At 30 June 2001, there was a budget of \$10.55 billion. Today, there is a \$14 billion budget to play with. Again, this is a very simple mathematical exercise. It is a massive increase in revenue in such a short time. Again, we need to be reminded that the increase has come from the directives of a Premier who vowed and declared that he would not increase taxes, and a Premier who at one stage wanted to introduce a premium property tax. However, thankfully, that was not to be.

Currently, the budget surplus is in excess of \$520 million, and it has the potential to grow every time the price of oil increases. As reported in *The West Australian* of Saturday, 25 June, if oil remained at its recent high of \$60 a barrel for the next financial year, the government would pick up roughly another \$310 million in petroleum royalties.

Hon Kim Chance; Hon George Cash; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Nigel Hallett; President; Hon Barry House

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That would make my life easier.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: It would make the minister's life easier, and it should make the lives of Western Australians a lot easier too. If that figure was sustained over the four-year period of the budget, it would result in about \$1.42 billion in extra revenue, which is about the same cost as the original southern rail project. *The West Australian* has described this as a silver lining for Western Australia's finances. However, I think it is more like platinum. With these types of revenue increases and surpluses, surely the people of Western Australia, the victims of this state's excessive taxation, are entitled to some relief. I feel quite confident that all Western Australians would warmly welcome even a minuscule amount from these surpluses in the form of tax relief, or the development of some real infrastructure at the government's own initiative.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: What do you reckon the southern railway is?

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Was it not Premier Richard Court who initiated the southern railway and put it on the map? Anyway, I will continue. In addition to these already massive state revenues -

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Nigel Hallett has the call. I think it is perfectly reasonable for there to be the occasional interjection, but let us not have a debate between the interjectors, unless Hon Nigel Hallett wants to pause for a few moments. However, I give the call to Hon Nigel Hallett.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Thank you, Mr President. In addition to these already massive state revenues, the federal goods and services tax revenues are set to increase to approximately \$4 billion over the coming years. This high-taxing government is also a high-spending government, with net debt set to increase from \$4 billion to \$8 billion in 2008-09. That is an enormous blow-out in debt, with a projected surplus of \$500 million. Will the state's debt be larger than the federal government's? It appears so to me. Where is all this money being spent? I can assure members that it is not being spent in rural and regional areas. I will speak in more detail on this lack of funding for basic regional infrastructure soon. We need real expenditure, not constant rhetoric, and the rolling forward of moneys. We have in control of the state of Western Australia a government with record revenues. However, again the question must be asked: what have we got to show for it?

First cab off the rank is the southern railway line, which was supposed to be partly funded by the proceeds from the sale of AlintaGas. That project was initiated by the Court government, with little debt. However, its budget blow-outs are now steadily increasing on a daily basis. The Court government costed the project at approximately \$940 million, with some \$300 million contributed from the sale of AlintaGas. The cost of the project under this Labor government now stands at \$1.56 billion, and it is rising. Next is the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, which was another Court government initiative that the Labor Party vehemently opposed. The final example I will use is the complete lack of attention being given to the expedition of the Peel deviation. This is a project, with a substantial federal government contribution, that is languishing at the hands of an apathetic state government, with no commitment to the thousands of people who use that road on a daily basis, and with little regard for safety or thought for industry.

My focus in this address will be the regions and the way in which a lack of spending on key infrastructure is contributing to the massive depreciation of these areas. I take members back to Tuesday, 23 March 2004, when the then Leader of the Opposition, Hon Colin Barnett, sought to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion in the other house -

That this house condemns the Gallop Labor Government for its failure to deliver a real, long-term vision for the future of regional Western Australia.

Mr Barnett began by recounting some of the Labor government's policy promises on regional development contained in the document "A Fair Go for Regional Western Australia". At the time, Dr Gallop stated that no matter where people in Western Australia live, they have a right to expect equal access to quality education, police and health services. Further, he maintained that they have a right to expect that our roads will be adequately maintained, and so on. Hon Colin Barnett, as Leader of the Opposition, said that the reality under this government had been entirely different. He said that this government has not done what it promised to do in regional Western Australia. On 28 June 2005, the situation is no different.

Hon Barbara Scott: They do not care about the country.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: It shows.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Nigel Hallett wishes to continue.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Fifteen months after this issue was debated in the other place, the Labor government has continued to neglect the regions and has not done what it promised to do in regional Western Australia. Given that the state is awash with funds, should people in rural Western Australia expect equal access to the infrastructure and services that those in the metropolitan area enjoy? I think not, Mr President, and I will soon provide some examples to illustrate why people in our regions are not being given a fair go.

To put the regions in context, there are nine non-metropolitan regions in Western Australia. They are the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the Gascoyne, the mid-west, goldfields-Esperance, the wheatbelt, Peel, the great southern and the south west, which is the region that I represent. Regional Western Australia encompasses one-third of Australia's land area. Its half a million people represent approximately 2.7 per cent of Australia's population and 27 per cent of the state's population. The regions contribute 22 per cent of Australia's exports and 82 per cent of Western Australia's exports. I am sure that members would be aware that each of the regions has its own development commission, which is headed by the Regional Development Council. The council comprises a chairperson from the development commissions, two local government representatives and an independent chairperson. The development commissions' role is project management and program delivery, the coordination of community dialogue, strategic planning, promotion of investment opportunities, local government partnerships and ensuring that projects meet triple bottom line criteria. These roles directly tie into the government's pledge to regional Western Australia and its stated principles to support strong and vibrant regions. Its principles are to identify and enable fair and just outcomes for the regions and to maximise community consultation so that government can understand and appropriately respond to regional needs. Is that happening? Its principles are also to facilitate effective partnerships between government and regional communities, encourage and support local decision making, recognise, respect and work with the diversity of regional communities, improve the living standards of indigenous people in regional areas, invest in regional infrastructure to build and enhance regional strengths, support creative solutions to regional needs based on quality research and development, value and protect the environment and measure and report on the progress of regional development. The government cannot say that it is doing any of those things. The guiding principles look good on paper and on glossy policy booklets. However, unless they are put into practice, they are not worth the paper that they are written on. Government investment in regional infrastructure is the principle that underpins all others and it enables us to build and increase our regional strengths. The current government has delivered very little and has left its obligations unfulfilled. The guiding principles are very good. However, if they are not followed, and if the regional development commissions are not working effectively in their areas to assist in the promotion of investment opportunities, our regions will suffer and continue to get a raw deal from the government.

Let us consider some examples. Already regional Western Australia has seen first-hand the legacy of one vote, one value legislation with the recent loss of another 30 full-time equivalent jobs that are being centralised in Perth. The 30 positions will come from Western Australia's six regional colleges by the end of 2005 and will join the other 91.5 full-time employees lost from the regional health sector. While many of these positions will be relocated, the impact of their departure on country Western Australia seems to have been ignored. This is just the beginning of the Labor government's city-centric focus. Country Western Australians have already been disfranchised by one vote, one value legislation, and it now appears that we have begun to see the first of an insidious gutting of towns and a shift of people to the city. The relocation of these positions, which are often held by young people, will impact socially and economically on towns that often have much difficulty in attracting and retaining young people.

In the area of health, approximately 21.8 jobs will be lost in the south west, 15.9 in the wheatbelt, 13.4 in the goldfields, 11.4 in the Pilbara and Gascoyne, 10.8 in the great southern, 9.8 in the mid-west and 8.4 in the Kimberley. I ask: is that a fair and just outcome for the regions? Regional development is all about creating the necessary sustainable infrastructure to further enhance the regions and about the creation of new opportunities to facilitate this. It is all about working with and listening to the communities that live in our regions. It is all about hearing their ideas and initiatives for the way things can be improved. Importantly, it is also about listening to their concerns.

Some people living in towns in the South West Region, which I represent, have been affected by the increase in the number of heavy haulage vehicles on their roads. Trucks are carting massive tonnages of woodchips from blue gum plantations on road infrastructure that is unable to accommodate them. This substantial increase has been brought about by the deterioration and subsequent closure of the rail line from Manjimup to Bunbury, which, I acknowledge, was the fault of both this and the previous coalition government. This issue is currently affecting the safety and lifestyles of people in Bridgetown, Donnybrook, Balingup, Kirup, Mt Barker, Albany and numerous other towns. It is also creating a stressful and dangerous work environment for truck drivers because the roads are not equipped to carry such heavy traffic. This government has had two years' advance knowledge of the increase in the first of the blue gum plantations coming on stream. However, it chose to do

little about the majority of road and highway infrastructure in the South West Region that is under great pressure. That pressure will intensify with increased demands being placed on the region's road infrastructure due to the continued upward trend in population growth, local economies and tourism. This is reflected in the fact that the South West Region has a broad economic base that includes agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, mineral processing, manufacturing, fishing, tourism and retail. It is imperative that the government start to spend some of its bonus revenue, a large percentage of which has been generated in the regions, on good solid infrastructure, such as adequate transportation links, to adequately meet the needs of our regions. To its credit, the government has allocated \$2.2 million to improve the South Western Highway, which has posed a safety problem. Since the rail network closed, another 72 trucks a day carry woodchips and pulp on the highway, and some towns have 300 to 400 trucks a day passing through them. Bypasses and good roads are essential to the survival of many regional towns, particularly in relation to their status as a tourist town, and, most importantly, for the safety of all road users. However, little allocation has been made to the stretch of road from Manjimup to Mt Barker, commonly known as Muirs Highway. This road desperately needs to be upgraded to deal with the increase in heavy haulage vehicles travelling on it.

I raise another example of the lack of planning for suitable road infrastructure and transportation link concerns. Which services will link producers to the stockyards of Muchea? Producers east of Muchea must drive all the way down Greenmount Hill and out to Midland, and then drive to Muchea to access the saleyards. I see nothing in the budget for the infrastructure necessary to allow producers to access the site directly. In the same vein, if road trains will access the saleyards from the city, further facilities need to be put in place to accommodate them at least from a safety point of view. Here is another example of a major Western Australian industry investing in infrastructure to produce jobs and to boost our economy without the support of this government in the basic and necessary provision of a good, safe and adequate transportation link to the Muchea saleyards. This is relevant to the grain industry, which Hon Kim Chance knows very well. The grain yield in Western Australia doubles roughly every seven years. The government must ensure that adequate transportation links are provided to deal with the increase in road train traffic needed to shift these crops. Getting produce from regional areas to metropolitan areas and ports is becoming a serious issue. The government should be planning and building to accommodate the increases in demand for our regional road infrastructure. Cutting the Main Roads budget by approximately \$75 million, as was done in this budget, is not a good place to start, however.

Let us consider unemployment across the regions. It recently came to light that major regional centres across Western Australia have unemployment rates close to double the state average. This has been well documented in the "Small Labour Area Markets" report for the March quarter published by the federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The report states that the unemployment rate for the first two months of 2005 was 8.5 per cent in Denmark, 8.3 per cent in Mandurah, 7.6 per cent in Collie, 7.2 per cent in Geraldton, 7.1 per cent in Murray, 6.6 per cent in Albany, six per cent in Toodyay and 5.7 per cent in Bunbury. The Western Australian unemployment rate over the same period was 4.8 per cent, and Perth's rate was 4.9 per cent. Rather than investing in and promoting the infrastructure necessary to boost economic activity and to create employment opportunities, the government has applied a city-centric focus. These statistics highlight further its contempt for regional and rural Western Australia. It is yet another example of the second highest taxing government in Australia destabilising country Western Australia. It will get only worse after the next election following the application of the one vote, one value legislation. This government is taking not only the voice but also the jobs out of country areas. The regions need a sustainable injection of funds far above the \$80 million budgeted for in the regional investment fund. One must question the government's commitment to regional Western Australia with the RIF allocation increased by a mere \$5 million over the next four years, with some of it being unspent money from previous years. Considering that there are nine regional development commissions, one must question the government's regional infrastructure priorities. It is all good and well to loudly proclaim and celebrate the fact that the government has spent a lot of money. However, it is something entirely different to allocate it fairly in order to meet Western Australians' expectation of a right to equal access to quality infrastructure and services no matter where they live. It is then another thing to ensure that money is spent where it is allocated to provide good outcomes for the people of Western Australia. A decent rate of return on people's tax dollars, as former Premier Hon Richard Court termed it, is their "social dividend". For the incredibly high taxes they pay, the people of Western Australia need to see a fair and equitable budget document that gives everyone, particularly country people, a fair go. People have suffered from the lack of good, basic employment and the degeneration of infrastructure for too long. Thank you, Mr President.

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [9.17 pm]: It was an interesting budget this year because it was framed in the context of the state government swimming in money. The Labor government has been a very lucky government in that sense. Other members mentioned the record goods and services tax receipts. This government received over \$1 billion more than expected as a result of the GST. The government has received, as a result of its high-taxing regime, an enormous increase in property taxes across the board. It was rather

interesting and ironic that, in the last budget, its major initiative in that area was reducing land tax. That was a welcome initiative. However, the bottom line indicates that the government will receive more money from land tax in the next financial year than it did in the current financial year. Some sort of concession that turned out to be!

Of course, the resources boom throughout the nation is injecting enormous benefits and receipts into governments right throughout Australia, but particularly into the federal government and the Western Australian government. For all those reasons, the Western Australian state government can really claim that very little of this increased activity has been to its credit or due to its initiatives. In that sense, it has been a very lucky government. It has not faced the financial squeeze that many governments face from time to time, and it has not had to make the hard decisions. It is little surprise to see the record capital works program in this budget. That is to be welcomed, of course, for the Western Australian community. Maybe I have been around too long and I am a little cynical, but I cannot help see a little smoke and mirrors in all this process. We have come to understand the way Labor governments frame their budgets and the way in which they operate. In the first year of a four-year term, I will be extremely surprised if there are not massive surpluses in unspent money at the end of the financial year. The budget outlines a host of capital works, but at the end of the first couple of years of a four-year term of a Labor government, we find that the money has not been spent. However, the money still appears in the budget next year and it will appear in the budget the year after. The time line for many of these capital works projects gets pushed out further and further, but the impression is always given that the government is spending massive amounts on infrastructure when the reality is a little different. Of course, it is the standard tactic of the media-driven and stage-managed approach that the Labor government has become an expert at. In many cases projects are announced and re-announced seven or eight times before something materialises. I wonder how much notice we can take of the budget because of that factor and also because of the cost overruns that have been documented for the southern railway and the major sporting stadium, the cost of which has blown out from \$50 million to \$100 million, which does not sound much when it is said quickly, and the blow-out in the cost of the desalination plant.

Another interesting inclusion for me, as a member representing the South West Region, is the money for the extraction of water from the southern Yarragadee aquifer when the project has not yet been given approval. This confirms what we have always suspected, which is that the Water Corporation, driven by the Labor government of the day, has already made its decision. It made the decision about four years ago that it would go to the Yarragadee aquifer, extract water and bring it to the Perth metropolitan and goldfields water system. Of course, we have been through the process over the past few years of researching the aquifer, proving its volumes and recharges and examining the needs of the local area and the environmental aspects associated with all of that. That work has been valuable, and I do not deny that. The research has been valuable because it has enabled a far better understanding of the aquifer, just what is there and what it is capable of, but some serious questions need to be answered before any government goes to Yarragadee aquifer with big bores and starts pulling out 45 gegalitres the first year, 50 the next year, and then 100 gegalitres and so on. There is the potential for some serious consequences to arise out of that. I have mentioned this in the house before, and I am sure that former ministers have noted what I have said, although I do not know whether they have actioned it. The government is taking a rather dangerous and arrogant approach. It has allocated, I think, \$385 million in this year's budget for the extraction of water from the southern Yarragadee aquifer without any approvals being obtained at this point.

I will cover a few other matters in my electorate. Despite the record capital works budget, unfortunately we do not see many solutions to a number of the South West Region's pressing problems. Hon Robyn McSweeney and Hon Nigel Hallett, who have spoken previously in the debate and who represent the area, have mentioned some of these. The transport situation is critical. The Peel deviation has been mentioned many times in this house. There is a risk that the federal contribution might be docked by \$20 million if the government does not get off its backside and start some work in 2006. That surely is not too big an ask. It would be quite irresponsible of the state Labor government if it lost that \$20 million bonus, as it were, that is attached to the federal government's contribution. The South Western Highway has received a lot of attention, and it needs to do so. My colleague Hon Adele Farina outlined commitments to the South Western Highway at a meeting in Donnybrook last week. Unfortunately, I could not attend the meeting. She outlined that the financial commitments to the roadworks were \$2.4 million, plus \$1.5 million for emergency work, as well as \$10 million for the Bridgetown heavy haulage bypass. I contend that that is a totally inadequate commitment for the roadworks that are required for that road, because it is an extremely dangerous situation that is getting worse by the day. Bridgetown has always had problems of this nature, but the heavy haulage bypass presents an interesting situation. In many senses what is proposed is a Clayton's bypass. Taking heavy haulage traffic along the rail corridor 50 to 100 metres up the hill from the main street will certainly benefit Bridgetown's central business district, but it will push the heavy haulage, noise and amenity factors up the hill a little further. That has become available as an option only because the government has let the railway close and there is a real danger that that railway will not reopen.

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Hon Adele Farina: That is not quite right. The government has committed \$10.9 million to the revitalisation of the railway line, because your government privatised it.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: There is another factor here.

Hon Murray Criddle: We did not privatise the railway. When will you learn?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The railway has not been privatised.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Barry House has the call.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Thank you, Mr President. There are a couple of other factors to do with the railway. We know that there have been some absolutely irresponsible planning decisions or lack of planning decisions -

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Barry House is delivering a speech and there are interjections across the chamber. If members want to contribute to the debate, they can seek the call when Hon Barry House has finished.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The whole issue of transport in that area and around Bunbury port raises some very serious planning deficiencies. As it has evolved in the past four or five years, it has become a disaster. There has been an urgent need for the government to take a leadership role. Now more than ever before there is a need for the government to take a leadership role in resolving some of these issues. We are faced with South Western Highway being clogged with heavy traffic, which, mixed with school buses -

Hon Adele Farina: When the railway line is opened we will have -

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am coming to that. The heavy traffic on South Western Highway is mixed with tourist and general traffic. As a result of the rail closure, in the past six months there has been an increase of approximately 78 per cent in the volume of heavy traffic hauling primarily blue gum chip logs from that area and also woodchips from Diamond Mill, Manjimup. The lack of planning decisions has culminated in the situation surrounding the woodchip mills. WA Plantation Resources' woodchip mill has become something like a Blue Hills saga. It has been a very unfortunate saga which has still not been resolved. WAPRES has had a four or five-year battle to get a site for its woodchip mill. A site near Donnybrook was proposed and Kirup was also suggested. Now Bunbury port has been suggested. WAPRES must be totally frustrated with the whole project. I could not blame the people at WAPRES for throwing their hands up in the air and wondering exactly how they will get their woodchip mill up and running. WAPRES is now seeking approval for the woodchip mill to be located at Bunbury port, but that has been knocked back by Bunbury City Council.

Hon Adele Farina: Yet the council approved Hansol.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Yes, at a briefing on transport issues in the area, the powers that be did not even consult Hansol Australia about placing the mill somewhere along that corridor prior to its going into the Bunbury port. The Hansol mill suddenly appeared in the Bunbury port without -

Hon Adele Farina: It didn't suddenly appear. The City of Bunbury approved it.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Nothing suddenly appears, but it appeared without any obvious community consultation or objection from anybody. WA Plantation Resources must be wondering what Hansol has that it does not have. The refusal to allow the WAPRES mill at the port is interesting. I believe that WAPRES will appeal that decision and that the minister will, and should, play a role in the appeal. There has been vigorous and vocal opposition to the mill being allowed at the port, particularly by East Bunbury residents, and also on a range of other port issues. Another concern with the port is that coal exports are interfering with woodchip exports. There is the potential for a valuable export to be lost one way or the other. WAPRES will appeal. Tomorrow or the day after I will present a petition to the house. It is an interesting petition, because it is primarily from the residents of East Bunbury who are protesting against the mill being located at the Bunbury port. I will present that petition simply because they have asked me to do so. I am in two minds about the whole thing. To me, the best location for the mill is the Donnybrook to Kirup area. The real danger is that if WAPRES has been forced into this situation and does not get approval for its mill at the port, it will not contribute to the railway line. That will present a major problem for the future of that railway line, whether government money is available or not. Quite frankly, it would be a planning tragedy if that happened. I certainly hope that the government can take hold of this situation and that it will show a bit of leadership to resolve it. Of course, into that mix is the continuing and growing need for the Bunbury port access road. Roughly \$17 million is required for that project to come to fruition. It has been promised many times but it has not materialised. It needs to materialise, otherwise the situation will get worse and worse.

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I turn to a few other issues in my electorate. Sticking with transport and close to home - that is, my electorate office - there is a growing call for a perimeter road in Margaret River. The community does not want to call it a bypass road - it would be a perimeter road or heavy haulage route - because the lifeblood of the town is the main street and the tourism industry located along it. Unfortunately, the construction of a perimeter road is not on Main Roads' radar. I think that Main Roads would love it to be on its radar, but the government must fund it to be there. That road should be funded to give the community some certainty. I would like it to be part of a five or 10-year program. Let us get it onto a program and get something committed to resolve that situation, because the Margaret River town site is experiencing burgeoning growth, particularly to the east, where there is an aligned route for a perimeter road. Heavy transport is using the main street. A perimeter road is wanted because of safety issues, not only along the main street but also at the top of the hill, and virtually right outside my office. I shudder to think what might happen if a truck lost its brakes coming down the hill. There are two schools at the top of the hill - Margaret River Primary School and Margaret River High School. Added to that mix is the Centre for Wine Excellence on that campus. It is an alarming safety situation, with kids crossing the roads in both directions to catch school buses and to get to their schools and homes. There is unanimous support from the local community and the council for that proposal. I understand that council representatives met with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure a week or so ago. I hope that they got a very receptive hearing.

Hon Adele Farina: They did.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I hope the minister understands the need for the perimeter road.

Hon Adele Farina: They didn't push it as hard as you think they did.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I was not there. I was not invited. I was not even informed. The honourable member would not know about that, because she has not been in opposition. The rest of the Margaret River community - the chamber of commerce, the business community and the people who live and visit there - unanimously support this proposal.

The other issue I will briefly deal with is that of using treated waste water as a resource rather than it being just a waste material. There have been some outstanding examples throughout the state of the productive use of treated waste water from sewerage works. I refer to a time when we were in government and Hon Peter Foss was the Minister for Water Resources. I think my office was in Bunbury at the time. I recall attending a function with Hon Peter Foss in his capacity as the Minister for Water Resources, and all the Water Corporation personnel were nodding in agreement with what he was saying. The function was held to acknowledge the closure of the ocean outfall of treated waste water at Point Casuarina near Bunbury. That was a major thing. I recall the minister at the time saying that he could see a day in the very near future when there would be no ocean outfall from waste water treatment plants, and that we would move towards using treated waste water in a much more productive way. There has been a little progress in some places, but not as much as I would like to have seen. There has been very little action. The attitude of the Water Corporation is to blame to a large extent, because it has a conflict of interest between selling water and meeting its community obligations.

There have been some excellent local projects. For instance, the Manjimup and Busselton golf clubs are serviced very well by treated waste water, as are others around the state, such as in Broome, Kalgoorlie and so on. It is an outstanding way to use that resource productively and sensibly. I know about Busselton's case in particular, because I was involved a little in that process. The club had to jump through ridiculous hoops to meet the requirements of the Water Corporation to get that water. There are two other local projects that I would love to materialise in the time I have left as a representative in this place. One is for the treated waste water from the Gnarabup waste water treatment plant to be used more productively. At the moment, it is being allowed to seep into the dunes in a very inappropriate position close to a residential subdivision on the coast. That treated waste water must be used more productively on open space. There is a prime opportunity to use it on the Margaret River golf course. The golf club is willing to play its part. The golf course needs the water quite desperately because it gets very sandy, particularly in the summer months. It is not much fun using a sand wedge all day; we have to get out and use a few irons and drivers. The Margaret River Golf Club would welcome the injection of treated waste water on its course, as there is potential to lift the quality of that course enormously. I know this has been mentioned before, but five or six years ago a proposal was on the table but, unfortunately, the Water Corporation played too hard a ball and wanted too much, instead of being prepared to give the water away. It does not cost the Water Corporation anything because it is a wasted resource to it. The golf club and possibly other parties would come to the fore, including the council, which would readily grab at and use that resource on public open space.

I have a particular interest in the Dunsborough and Districts Country Club golf course because I am patron of the club, which incorporates bowls, tennis and golf. The old Dunsborough and Districts Country Club golf course is potentially a magnificent golf course. Currently it is extremely dry with no water being put on it and it has only

sand greens. However, for any members who have experienced it, I would recommend they walk around it as it includes some magnificent high ground above the residences in Dunsborough, where some members of this chamber live, with views right across Geographe Bay. It has the potential to be an outstanding country golf club. Treated waste water from the Dunsborough community is generated at Quindalup, about 12 to 15 kilometres away, and most of that treated waste water is put onto a wood lot and into a drain and then it goes into Geographe Bay. There is enormous scope and potential for that treated waste water to be used much more productively on the country club golf course at Dunsborough.

I now want to talk about education. The capital works budget in the budget papers was hard to fault; I am prepared to acknowledge that. Members will see in the budget that most of the commitments the government made during the election campaign have been met. However, I say that with the proviso that we want to see some action on the ground. We do not want to see these projects delayed year after year; we want to see them actually occur. In my local area particularly, money has been allocated to the Busselton region for the Vasse middle school, which is encouraging. There was a very vigorous community debate about the right sort of model to adopt for that school. It was the Liberal Party's preference that a joint senior school and TAFE facility be built at Vasse and that the Busselton campus should become a middle school, with a middle school being built at Dunsborough. However, the decision has been made and that is to be accepted. Now the Dunsborough community has been granted a local area education planning process. I think it is content with that process, knowing that the merits of its case for secondary schooling for Dunsborough either will or will not stack up. However, it leaves a couple of gaps, as the future of the Busselton Senior High School is paramount. Busselton Senior High School will become the senior school. It will operate as a senior high school for the time being, but it is one in a group of schools built in the late 1950s to early 1960s, the infrastructure of which has been bandaided for years. It desperately needs a massive upgrade. In fact, my colleague Troy Buswell and I met with some officers today from the Department of Education and Training to discuss some of those issues. There is a range of options. In our eyes a master plan needs to be developed for that education campus to incorporate the TAFE facility, which was put there only 10 to 12 years ago in prefabricated buildings as a temporary arrangement. It is still there and does not look as though it is moving; however, it has a permanence in terms of its presence. Something must be done to upgrade that TAFE facility. It appears that schooling in the area is taking the shape of a senior college with contributory middle schools. That needs to be formalised. There is the option of having a middle school and a senior school on the same campus there, or in a few years developing another middle school east of Busselton, where a lot of development is occurring at Yalyalup, and coming on a bit later with another Dunsborough middle school down the track. However, regardless of all that, some money must be injected into the Busselton Senior High School, but there is no provision in the budget for that. I know, from talking to the officers today, that there is the possibility of some money being provided for library upgrades that are needed. There is also the possibility, of course, for that school and every other school around the state to tap into the federal government's infrastructure facilities fund. That school, I am sure, is putting together a proposal to tap into the equivalent of up to \$150 000 from the federal government.

In the Bunbury region, once again the government has come up with a slightly different model from our proposal during the election campaign. A senior college is proposed on Robertson Drive in conjunction with the South West Regional College of TAFE - it will be called "Manea College" - which is a very welcome development. However, again, that leaves Newton Moore Senior High School, which is one of those schools from the same era, the 1950s, in desperate need of an injection of money for an upgrade. Other schools in the area, such as the Adam Road Primary School, are sorely in need of money for a touch-up of their administration centres. Then, of course, into that mix for the greater Bunbury region is the future of the new Eaton College and whether and when it will go to year 12. I was contacted recently by some very concerned people about what is happening at Harvey Senior High School, as all of these decisions impact on schools out as far as Harvey. There is a centralisation of education into the greater Bunbury area at schools such as Australind High School, the private Bunbury Catholic College, Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School and the other schools. However, the Harvey community is very concerned that it has already lost most of its tertiary entrance examination subjects. The current principal has reintroduced four or five TEE subjects into Harvey Senior High School. That has been very welcome in the community. However, the principal is on leave at the moment and there is real concern that the will of the school may change and those subjects will not be available, which will mean one of two things: the students will either bus into Australind or their parents will move closer to education facilities. That will contribute to an inland town suffering more consequences of centralisation. I make one point: if students from Harvey are required to bus into Australind, I would be very keen for them to be given the same funding option as students in the metropolitan area. I believe 50c a day has been offered to metropolitan students to catch public transport to any school they like in the education area. In the country regions, it is a bit more difficult. Firstly, public transport is not available in many cases; in most cases in fact. Some private operators in the south west, such as South West Coach Lines, operate some services and carry some students but, by and large, they are

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forced to pay very steeply for the privilege. There is a real possibility that if Harvey students are required to go to Australind Senior High School, on current indications it might cost them as much as \$3 000 a year for transport. That is very unfair and should be addressed. If it is good enough for the children in Perth, it is good enough for the children in the country. That is a fair motto, is it not? I know members will agree.

The major issue within education that I will spend some time on is the proposed curriculum changes to years 11 and 12. From memory, the budget papers carried an increase in funding from \$10 million to approximately \$14 million for implementation. That amount is probably inadequate. The major concern is whether the community is prepared to accept the merits of the proposed changes and the implementation. I do not believe it is on either account. I do not believe the case has been made. The Minister for Education and Training has become extremely dogmatic about this. I will quote her answer to a question I asked her last Thursday. I referred to the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia's directive to its members to not cooperate with the proposals.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That is the uncorrected copy of *Hansard*.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Yes, but I am sure the minister will let us know if her words have been corrected. My question was along the lines of, in light of the latest teachers' union directive, whether she was prepared to suspend the implementation of the post-compulsory review, as requested. She replied -

I have already placed on record that it is not my intention to postpone or delay the implementation of the changes to the years 11 and 12 curriculum, and I have stated that four new subjects will be implemented as of next year. I do not think it is too much to expect the education system to gear up for the implementation of four new subjects in years 11 and 12. I am told that teachers who have had professional development relating to new subjects to be implemented next year are satisfied with the professional development received. Undoubtedly, however, there is some anxiety among some teachers - I emphasise some teachers, as we are probably talking about a small number of teachers - in relation to the implementation of the next lot of 20 subjects. Some adjustment have already been made.

I then interjected -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You do not support outcomes-based education?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: No.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Very interesting.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I have come to that conclusion.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You were a member of the Liberal Party when the Curriculum Council Bill was introduced into the Parliament?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Yes. It has taken me a few years to realise what it is all about. Since I have had the shadow portfolio - the same amount of time that the member has been the minister - I have heard from a wide cross-section of the community that the changes are not popular. The Curriculum Council has not made a case for the changes. The implementation has gone off the rails.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Barry House was just about to refer to an interjection he made on an earlier occasion. Perhaps we should hear the interjection.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I interjected very rudely on the minister that I thought the minister was grossly underestimating the situation in the schools and the community. I suggested that about 90 per cent of teachers, rather than a small number as the minister claimed, were unhappy with the situation. Her answer continued -

Hang on. The next 30 subjects were to be implemented by 2007-08, but those 30 subjects will not be implemented; instead, we will roll out over the next 18 month for implementation in 2007-08 the next 20 subjects, not the 30. The final 20 subjects will be rolled out in 2008-09.

The simple fact is that reform is never easy. It would be highly improbable that a major reform would receive unanimity on every aspect.

I particularly want to quote the following words -

I recognise that some people simply do not like change - that is always the case. Such people were there when Hon Barry House was in the education system, as they were when I worked within the education system. Whatever was asked in terms of change produced a negative response from certain people. Luckily, that is not the case with the majority of teachers. I was in Port Hedland a couple of

weeks ago, and I have visited Newman schools and schools in the metropolitan area, and the feel in staffrooms is very positive - it is very good indeed.

Does the minister still maintain that the majority of teachers feel that way?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Absolutely.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: That is good to hear but I think the minister is wrong. I am sorry to say that. She has badly misjudged the community reaction. I advocate, as I have done for some time, that the minister extract herself from this situation and call for a delay in the implementation of the changes, if only for one year. I will go through a series of reasons the minister should. A moratorium should be called on the introduction of the changes right now. It is not too late. We are six months from the start of next year. This is the right time to do it.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Why should I listen to you? Your own party does not listen to you.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The Minister for Education and Training has become very arrogant in her position very quickly. I think she risks doing her reputation a lot of harm by refusing to listen. She is digging her own grave by not changing course.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I would rather dig my own grave than have you do it for me!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The proposal I have been putting and will continue to put is that, even if the merits of the changes stack up, they will fail unless they have the support of the schools and the teachers who will implement them. They have not got that support. The minister and I were in the education system, as were Hon Norman Moore and some other members. However, it has been a while for all of us. I am very keen to hear from more recent practitioners such as Hon Peter Collier and Hon Matthew Benson-Lidholm, who have recently left teaching to become members of this place. They have been operating under a system of outcomes-based education and they have worked with it in schools in the private and public sectors. I am very keen to hear from those members, if we have time over the next day and a half, what their perspective of it is. Despite what the minister thinks and obviously believes, there is growing opposition, concern, anxiety and confusion - I could come up with a lot of other words - about the proposed changes to years 11 and 12.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.