

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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**TREASURER'S ADVANCE AUTHORISATION BILL 2009**

*Third Reading*

Resumed from 1 April.

**MR V.A. CATANIA (North West)** [10.07 am]: I will continue the remarks I was making when the debate was adjourned. I was speaking about how I believe that the Minister for Police is one of the most approachable ministers on issues relating to my electorate, and I commend him for that. Unfortunately he is not in the chamber. I am sure he is away on some urgent parliamentary business. During the consideration in detail stage of the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill, I raised with him the proposal to spend some of the money on Western Australia Police and on upgrading police stations as part of the Liberal Party's election commitments. The government has allocated \$7.6 million for that purpose. I asked the Treasurer how that allocation would affect my seat in the north west. We have quite a few issues about police stations, and none of those issues is bigger than that of the Carnarvon police and justice complex. That is a very contentious and hot topic in my electorate and in the town of Carnarvon. A commitment has been made to shift the police station and build a brand-new, multimillion-dollar, state-of-the-art police and courthouse there.

It is very contentious as we are shifting the police station off a very important piece of land—if anyone knows Carnarvon, the fascine—to create a focal point for people coming into Carnarvon. The majority of people in Carnarvon want to shift the police station off its current site. I asked the Treasurer whether the \$7.6 million allocated to build new police stations and to upgrade existing police stations included projects in Carnarvon; Mt Magnet, which also requires this much-needed piece of infrastructure; and Gascoyne Junction. During the election campaign the now Minister for Police promised to reopen six country police stations. It is becoming more and more obvious that rather than being brought to fruition, these promises are being broken.

As a result of the minister's response to my questions in this house, we know that the Gascoyne Junction police station and, amazingly, three other police stations that happen to be in Labor Party electorates will not reopen. However, police stations in the wheatbelt and in electorates with Liberal Party representatives will be opened.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** We did not open the Trayning one. That's in my electorate.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The Minister for Regional Development is in government and I think he should put some pressure on the Minister for Police about that, and while he is there he should ask about the Gascoyne Junction police station, which is a very important station. At the moment there is no police station between Carnarvon and Meekatharra. The Treasurer could not answer my questions on that \$7.6 million; in fact, when we asked questions of the Treasurer his response was "I do not know; ask the minister responsible". I am glad that the Minister for Regional Development is present in the chamber, and I encourage him to stand up and make some contribution to debate in this place. We have not heard members of the National Party speak about anything in this place. I am starting to be concerned, as are my constituents—they are not easily fooled—that the National Party is focussed solely on the royalties for regions program. That is a fantastic program, and I believe in royalties for regions.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** They have finally taken up a good Labor initiative.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** That is right. The Treasurer's advance allocated \$377 million to royalties for regions, but the Treasurer could not answer any questions on it. The Pilbara region is probably one of the best examples of the point I am making, and I am sure the member for Pilbara will agree with me. The Pilbara earns over \$1.4 billion worth of royalties for the state. When I compare that \$1.4 billion with the allocation of \$377 million in the Treasurer's advance—that will be distributed to the whole of regional WA—I do not know what the Pilbara is getting in return. I urge the leader of the National Party, the Minister for Regional Development, to look at the royalties for regions scheme and perhaps change it so that it is a weighted system. If the Pilbara earns \$1.4 billion for the state in royalties, perhaps that region should get a bigger slice of the action.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** Absolutely. I hope the leader of the National Party brings in a bill with that provision in it.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I cannot wait. I agree with the member for Pilbara.

*Point of Order*

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We are debating the Treasurer's advance, not royalties for regions.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for North West, please come back to the item.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Obviously the member for Riverton does not know that the royalties for regions program is part of this bill. This is the problem with the government; it does not know how that \$1.2 billion will be spent, and it will not tell us.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** They have not told their backbench either!

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** That is why I encourage the member for Central Wheatbelt to stand up and say something and make a contribution to this debate. During the election campaign members of the National Party were happy to spout on to public sector employees that if they elected the National Party it would increase the district allowance. I asked the Treasurer whether that \$337 million included an allocation to increase the district allowance.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** No.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Thank you, Minister for Regional Development. I am concerned about where that \$337 million is going. I am sure, in good time, once the budget is handed down, I will find that my electorate of North West will lose \$200 million worth of projects and will receive only \$10 million worth of projects. At a time when the Pilbara earns \$1.4 billion for this state, nothing will come back to the Pilbara. The Pilbara deserves something. It seems that all the money is going to the wheatbelt. It is of great concern to the people of my electorate. I cannot wait till the budget is handed down, because the Treasurer's reputation in the Pilbara, which is already bad, will become worse.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** Wait till the next election: so much political talent snuffed out so quickly!

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The Leader of the National Party will be shown up to people in the bush as someone who does not care for the people in the Pilbara, because all the money allocated to royalties for regions is going elsewhere. I encourage the Leader of the National Party to have a weighted system and to give back to the areas that produce the wealth.

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells)** [10.16 am]: The Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill is worth \$1.2 billion and it is not receiving the scrutiny that it needs. I have raised previously my particular concerns about the additional expenditure of \$2.1 million for the Department of Agriculture and Food. I have asked whether that is enough, given the election commitments that the department has to take on, especially in relation to the implementation of trials for genetically modified canola crops in the south west. Is that enough to properly monitor and evaluate those trials when there are so many issues at stake? The Treasurer's response was that there will be a reallocation of priorities within the Department of Agriculture and Food and that members in this place should wait until the budget estimates process to get the details. Unfortunately, the trials will be well underway before the budget is out. Farmers want to go ahead with seeding these canola crops this season. The seeding will be underway very soon.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** This month.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Since that seeding will soon be underway, we need to have in place the proper assessment processes so we can check that things like buffer zones will be adequate. How can we be sure that the department will have the staff capable of doing that? It is all very well for the government to claim a reallocation of priorities, but with all the other challenges and issues that the department is facing, like the impact of the carbon pollution reduction scheme on our farmers—something that the Minister for Agriculture and Food expressed a high degree of scepticism about—we need to know how that issue will be properly dealt with. That is something of the utmost urgency that needs to be dealt with before we get to the budget in May.

Similarly, we have issues around the assessment of the Ord River stage 2 development. The government tells us this is urgent, but does it have the capacity to assess whether the proposals are reasonable and to sift out those proposals that are highly unlikely to be successful? These things require additional resourcing and we should not take them lightly, hoping that the May budget will deal with them.

The bill provides for an additional amount of \$1.2 billion to be added to the budget. All of us can reflect on this with our personal budgeting. If we ask the bank for an increase in our mortgage, that is the very time we would expect to receive additional scrutiny about what the money will be used for. Yet that is not happening here. The claim is to give the government this money because it will get the government through until June. However, the amount of money needs additional scrutiny.

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** There may be justification for requiring more money, but the point is that we have to scrutinise all the additional amounts. We must be given good explanations for why money is being spent and,

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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indeed, for why money is not being spent in certain areas. I find some of the additional amounts that are required quite alarming, particularly for departments such as the Department of Fisheries. Given the issues that the fisheries sector is facing—we know that the western rock lobster fishery is facing serious declines in yields—we must ensure that programs are in place, or perhaps even compensation, to help the people in that industry to make adjustments and to see what their future is. We need to assess what will be the impacts of climate change on the western rock lobster fishery. However, there are no initiatives like those in place at this stage. These matters need to be dealt with urgently.

I was also very concerned to see the small amount that will be added to the budget of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia. There is probably an urgency to assess the state of our bushlands and forest areas.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** That could still be happening, member.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** We cannot wait. I do not think the Liberal Party understands the urgency of natural systems. The government cannot just leave things until May. Things need to be done now.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** This is about unders and overs.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Changes have happened. There is an urgency in dealing with the budget.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, Treasurer! The member for Warnbro is drowning out his own speaker.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** There is an urgency. These additional amounts need to be scrutinised properly. We need to be sure that the right information is going into policy development and on-ground research. Much of what I am talking about is the on-ground work that should be happening now. We need to ensure that that money is being properly spent.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Will the member for Gosnells please speak about what is in the bill, not what should be in the bill.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** The issue at hand is the scrutiny of this bill. We have been told to rely on the unders and overs system. That is not adequate. An additional amount of money of the magnitude of \$1.2 billion needs the utmost scrutiny.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Before you thought it was too much money; now you're saying that we should have more in there.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** The unders and overs accounting needs to be rigorously scrutinised. The Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill needs full examination.

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Clearly, the member for Gosnells is not inviting interjections but he is getting constant interjections from the Leader of the National Party, the Treasurer and the member for Riverton. I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to afford your protection to the member for Gosnells.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will afford the member for Gosnells my protection. Will the member please continue?

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have just about finished my comments. Essentially, there is a need to apply to the state's budget the same sort of scrutiny that any of us would apply to our household budgets.

**MR T.G. STEPHENS (Pilbara)** [10.23 am]: The consideration of the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill in detail has not left me with the comfort to encourage the house to support the third reading of the bill without some response from the Treasurer on the issue that I am about to raise. If this bill had been referred to the Public Accounts Committee for consideration, there would have been an opportunity to probe areas of government expenditure and the need for no cuts in government expenditure but, rather, increases in some areas of government expenditure—for instance, in the mines safety area. One of the reasons that I am not comfortable with the passage of this bill at this time is that I am yet to see the amount of the allocation of financial resources from Treasury during this period of particular focus on safety issues that have arisen in the Pilbara. I am left with the impression that the mines inspectors deployed by the Department of Mines and Petroleum to oversee the

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mining operations in the Pilbara have now largely been constrained to activities and locations in Collie. The major operations in the Pilbara, where there are great safety concerns, are not receiving visits from mines safety inspectors. This is and should be of great concern to the people I represent. I know it is of concern to members on both sides of the house. However, with the pressure that the Treasurer has applied to agencies to cut their budgets with a three per cent efficiency dividend, I would have felt more comfortable with the passage of this bill if there had been an assurance that at this time of critical safety concerns and the tragic loss of life in the Pilbara region, extra funds had been allocated for which this Treasurer's advance was needed to lift —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Can the member for Pilbara tell me where his comments fit into the appropriations?

**Mr T.G. STEPHENS:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for that invitation. I am referring to the consideration in detail of clause 3. During the consideration in detail stage, it became clear that missing from the Treasurer's advance was any specific allocation or increased effort for this mines safety approach.

I will finish by simply saying that I would love the Treasurer to assure the house before this legislation is passed that I have missed something in the consideration of this bill and that what should have been in the bill is in fact somewhere in the detail of the bill or in the notes that should have been circulated but simply were not circulated at the time. I hope the Treasurer will respond.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Before we continue with the debate, I draw the attention of members to the fact that they must limit their comments to the matters before us and not go off on extraneous matters.

**MR A.J. WADDELL (Forrestfield)** [10.27 am]: The Premier is a wonderful chap. He has given someone like me, who has been in this place for only six months, many great pearls of wisdom. During debate on this bill, he again told us —

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** He was very nice at your breakfast this morning.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** I thank the Treasurer very much; I will talk about him later.

The Premier has talked about us so-called newbies and how we have not been through a full estimates process. He said that perhaps we on the Labor side had been trying to apply a level of scrutiny to this bill that should more appropriately be applied during a full estimates process, and that we will have the opportunity to do so in six weeks when the budget is brought down. I understand that the budget that will be scrutinised in six or eight weeks will be for the forthcoming year.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** No.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** I would like to think that the budget will be about what we will do in the forthcoming year, as opposed to what we have done in the past. We need to apply a level of scrutiny to this absolutely enormous amount of money of \$1.2 billion. I will put the \$1.2 billion that has been asked for in context. The total state budget is about \$20 billion, so the Treasurer is asking for an additional approximately six per cent of the state's budget three months out from the budget. If we multiply that six per cent three months out from the budget by four, that is 24 per cent. Essentially, we are talking about a variation over a year that is equivalent to one-quarter of the state's budget.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** It is actually two months out, not three.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** So it would be even higher, then.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** No; you're talking about the budget. The budget will come down on 14 May and you'll have an opportunity then.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** The point is that this is for this financial year.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** It is also to fund commitments since the election, not for the next two months.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** I understand that. The point I am trying to make is that we are dealing with an enormous amount of money. If we looked at it in the context of a year, we would see that it is a large percentage of the state budget, yet I have not been presented with the opportunity to go through the amount at a line-by-line estimates level.

I am somebody who, now aged 42, watched this state go through some tremendous turmoil through the WA Inc years. I formed a lot of my opinions on what I saw through those processes and the actions of governments that followed. The lesson we should have learnt is that this place must be transparent. We need to send a message to the community that we are careful with its money; that we will look after its money; and we will not ride roughshod over them, with the executive being the cowboys. I am afraid that what I am seeing are echoes of that time.

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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Normally the Premier offers wonderful advice to the house, but I saw in his performance a man who did not seem to be on top of the topic. He suggested to the house that the amount the government is seeking is a ballpark figure and that it is not associated with any particular line items—it is just \$1.2 billion. In effect he was saying, “Give it to us and we will take care of it.” I am not prepared to do that. I not prepared to be part of a Parliament that does not look after the state’s money.

Unfortunately the Treasurer is not in the chamber, but he gave us more detail. He presented members with a four-page document that lists 30 or 40 items to which that money will go. We had some opportunity to go through it when we dealt with the bill in consideration in detail. Unfortunately we did not get through the list, because the government chose to gag the debate. A number of issues were not raised at that time. These are the things that members, as representatives of the people, need to scrutinise. We need to ask how we can have a process in which the GA4 agreement is an unknown quantity. How can one department have a massive blow-out and require in the order of six per cent of its wages budget to be supplemented, when other departments require nothing? I would like to know where the incompetence lies. I would like to know where these departments get off by saying, “Gee, we mucked up. We need more money now. You know the three per cent efficiency dividend—you can have it, but we need an additional four per cent because we forgot that we needed it.” They are pulling the wool over the government’s eyes. Departments will do that unless we scrutinise them properly. We are not being availed that opportunity.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Do you think the departments should come in as part of the process?

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** Yes.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Even though it has never happened in the past and your government would never have allowed that to happen when it was on this side.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** I do.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** And that is the case, even though in six weeks they will be here answering the questions asked in the estimates committees?

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** It will be a different set of questions because it will be a different set of numbers.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** It is important that members understand this, and it relates to the member for Warnbro’s issue around royalties for regions: when the budget is handed down it will include a full list of this year’s expenses, in which these figures will be included. It will show estimated outruns. When estimates are debated, you can ask questions on any figures in the budget document, which includes this year’s estimated actuals.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** What are you trying to hide?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I am not hiding anything. I am telling you the situation.

**Mr P. Papalia:** The government has not identified where that money will go. What we will get at estimates is, “I can’t tell you that because I don’t know the details.”

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** No. You will have the agency staff here and you can go through the figures then.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** I appreciate the Treasurer’s comments.

I will reflect on what the member for Gosnells said; that is, that government members should take as a comparison how they run their home budget. I can tell the Treasurer that when my wife comes home and tells me that she would like to spend a certain amount of money on a new pair of shoes, my reaction will be quite different to when she comes home and says that she has spent this amount of money on a new pair of shoes. In one instance I can have an impact, but in the other I cannot have an impact. We are being told that the opposition can have full scrutiny after the money has been spent. There is not a lot we can do about it then. There cannot be community outcry about \$300 million being thrown away on a particular project when it has already happened. It is then too late; the horse has bolted.

In this process we have learnt that the expenditure is required for some great projects. For example, \$1.7 million will be allocated to the Square Kilometre Array project. The Treasurer and I attended a breakfast this morning at which speakers talked about the SKA project and how important it will be to Western Australia. It is a terrific project. We had the opportunity to listen to former member of Parliament Mal Bryce, who talked about the need for the government to invest in education to motivate people. He suggested a similar model to that which is used for elite sport and elite science if we are to get the SKA project up to continue to move forward.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** When is decision time for the SKA?

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** It is up in the air. It could be 2010.

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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**Mr T.G. Stephens:** The member would be pleased to know that it was a Labor government, through the portfolio for which I was responsible, that first funded it.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** I congratulate the member for his visionary views on that point.

I would like to see in the next budget, because it is certainly not in this budget, money allocated to elite education. We have very little in the way of money to the Department of Education and Training other than for some capital works. Hopefully, that will be considered.

We have learnt that with the movement in oil prices probably \$50 million of this money will not be needed. That is wonderful. I assume that money will flow into the contingency fund, which currently is \$149.3 million. With the additional \$50 million, it will be \$200 million. There will be a \$200 million contingency fund over the next three months. That is walking-around change; it is pocket money. This is what we have in the back pocket in case something comes up. This is the stuff I walk around with in my wallet—\$200 million. That represents one per cent of the state's budget—just-in-case money. If we multiply that by four to represent the four quarters, it would be four per cent. This bill is needed automatically to authorise overexpenditure of more than three per cent of the budget. We are asking for a contingency that is greater than the amount that automatically triggers a bill like this. It is beyond belief that we would expect the people of Western Australia to trust us on that amount of money.

I will quickly address a couple of points in the Treasurer's scant, but quite insightful, document. I took the time to count the number of words on the front page. There are about 100 words on it. If we multiply that over four pages, it would be 400 words. If we then divide that by \$1.2 billion, the result would be that it cost approximately \$3 million per word to produce this document. It is the most expensive writing ever! We have an allocation of \$4.3 million for the Western Australian Electoral Commission for state general election-referendum funding. I know we had an early election; I wish we had not, but we did. The state election was supposed to be this year, so I checked it out in the budget. I thought this allocation must be for the daylight saving referendum, but I realised that that was meant to happen this year as well. I thought the government must have known about that. The budget shows an allocation of \$20 million to the Electoral Commission budget. Why does it need another \$4.3 million? I questioned whether there had been any by-elections, and, of course, the answer was no. Where is the oversight on this? I ask this question: why did the commission blow its budget by 20 per cent? We know it was not an efficiently well run election; I can attest to that, given I had to wait forever for the results. The question is: when do we get to scrutinise these things, and why should the commission get \$4 million for doing a shabby job? I do not think the commission should get that money.

That leads me to one of my biggest beefs; namely, the GA4 agreement, which is an attempt by departments to bypass the government's three per cent productivity gain. I have been a public servant for a long time. I know how they think. I have been at meetings in which we have actively plotted against the executive of the day and tried to get around government programs and tried to protect our department's budgets. It is part of the game. It is what public servants do. I can hear echoes of those conversations in this document. I can hear people saying, "Oh! How are we going to find the money? Oh! Why not just say there has been a blow-out in wages?" This government has made a big deal about how many extra public servants the former government put on.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Can I make one point here? The money that you are talking about here was put into a Treasury account before the election, so it relates to decisions made by the former government. I have already explained this about 15 times. I know you are a smart fellow, and I know you would have picked up on it probably the first time, but I will explain it again very carefully. The money was put into a Treasury account, before the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement*, under the former government's watch. That money has now been transferred across from the Treasury account to agency accounts to pay those wages in relation to a wages decision that was made in February of last year. However, that transfer requires the money to show up in this bill. It has to be appropriated through the correct mechanism. That is all it is. It is nothing to do with a wages blow-out—and there have been plenty of those; the member is exactly right. That is why we have a new wages policy and a headcount for it. It is a simple mechanism of government. I think the former government did the right thing in doing that. That is how it should be done. This is just a mechanism of government. There probably is plotting. That probably does happen. I acknowledge that. But this is not that.

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** Yes, but there is a disparity in how one department is asking for additional money when others are not, and there is a question that needs to be asked. I thank the Treasurer for that explanation, but I wish he would have provided us with an equally clear explanation as to where the money is coming from.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I would have done that 17 times already! As I have said, I know you are an intelligent fellow. I would have thought you would have picked it up the first time—or the first half a dozen times!

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**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** We want to know where the money for the teachers—which the Treasurer has been very happy to tell this place about—is coming from. We tried 15 or 20 times, when we went through this bill in consideration in detail, to get an answer from the Treasurer as to where this money is coming from. Sometimes we were told that it is coming from part of the three per cent. Sometimes we were told it is coming from somewhere else. We were then told by the Premier that it is not coming from anywhere at all—the money is just going to fall out of the sky! The point is that we have not had the opportunity to scrutinise this bill properly.

An amount of \$6.1 million has been listed for “miscellaneous small items”.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said that anything under \$8.5 million flies under the radar! We do not need to worry about it! It is under the radar!

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** This government has spent a very small amount of time debating the situation of Dr O’Neil. Dr O’Neil has asked for \$3 million—\$3 million to save lives; \$3 million to reduce crime in our community—yet this government cannot find that money. This government cannot put that money in this bill, but it can find \$6.1 million for miscellaneous small items. The government can find the money for those items, but it cannot take the time to write down on a piece of paper exactly what those items are. That is an absolute outrage. That is the problem, Treasurer! This government is very much trying to slip things under the radar. We are trying to scrutinise. I was not part of the previous government, and I am not going to defend the previous government; however, I have heard many good bits of advice from this side on how to run government. In fact, the thing that I hear over and over and over again is, “We are doing this because you did it when you were last in government.” The member for Jandakot interjected yesterday and said that he would much prefer to be standing next to a Premier with a 60 per cent approval rating than a leader who had an approval rating of only 13 per cent. I would like to remind the member for Jandakot that somebody told me that 12 months ago, and we are now on this side of the house! If this government could only aspire —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members, please!

**Mr A.J. WADDELL:** If this government could only aspire to meet at the very least what the former government did, it will be condemned to a loss as well.

**MR J.N. HYDE (Perth)** [10.44 am]: The Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill 2009 is a very important bill, and a number of members on this side have not yet had a chance to speak on it. Hopefully, if the Treasurer does not interject —

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** Blue suits you!

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Thank you very much, member for South Perth.

We on this side have some very important comments to make in this third reading debate. We hope the Treasurer will listen and take these issues on board.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You are one of those members who went home early on Tuesday night!

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** No. The Leader of the House is probably confusing me with the member for Roe.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** No. It was the member for Roe.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** No. You were not here, my friend. You went home early.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** I am hoping that we can finish this debate by midnight tonight, but if the Leader of the House keeps interjecting on us, we will not be going home until after midnight tonight.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** I know where I will be at midnight tonight.

The issue here is: why has the Treasurer come up with this figure of \$2.4 billion? That is what this Treasurer’s advance debate is about today. It is how and why the Treasurer needs this \$2.4 billion. We still do not have the answer to that question. Sorry—\$1.2 billion. If the Treasurer did actually need \$2.4 billion, or even \$3.4 billion, we might be prepared to give it to him. However, the Treasurer has not provided us with the rationale for that, and, more importantly, the detail, so that we can do the scrutiny that is required of that Treasurer’s advance. That is why we are still requesting that information.

During one of the Treasurer’s sojourns out of this house, I was trying to obtain the figure for the price of a barrel of oil. I asked that question because in order for the Treasurer to come to this figure of \$1.2 billion, he must have

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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some indication of the royalty income that will be coming in for the government. I have been trying to get from the Treasurer the actual figure that he is relying on for the price of a barrel of oil. The Leader of the House is a member of cabinet, so he might be able to tell me. What is the price of a barrel of oil that the current figures in the Treasurer's advance are based upon? That is a very important figure.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Why didn't you ask that question on Tuesday night rather than go home early? If you had stayed here instead of going home early —

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** I did ask that question. I asked that question when the Treasurer was out of the house.

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

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Sidekick Mal!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Mal Content!

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** No, not Mal Content. Krusty the Clown's sidekick, Sidekick Bob!

Tell us, Treasurer: what is the price of a barrel of oil that the Treasurer is using in his premise for this budget?

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** This is not the consideration in detail debate. This is the third reading debate. This is not question time.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** I thought the Treasurer said that the figure was \$97 a barrel, but surely that was a mistake.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** My understanding is that the oil price that was used as the basis for the budget that was handed down in May last year was around \$97. The oil price used in the PFPS was significantly higher than that—\$150, or something. I did not see Kochie this morning, but I think the oil price today is about \$50.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** In order for the Treasurer to determine that he needs a Treasurer's advance of \$1.2 billion, surely he has received advice about the cash flow that he can expect from royalties in the coming two months.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** This is not the budget, but we have discussed this issue, and it was pointed out that there are two line items in there that, on the balance of probabilities, will not be realised.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** The point is that the Treasurer is asking for \$1.2 billion, not \$2 billion or \$2.4 billion.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** In any one year the total amount of the Treasurer's advance is not necessarily spent. Last year the Treasurer's advance was \$750 million. The government drew down around \$680 million.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** That is the whole issue that we are debating here. The reason we are going through this bill is that the Treasurer has come up with this incredible figure of \$1.2 billion. We want some justification for it. The Treasurer is fudging on the supply side, so it very much seems that this is either whiteboard mumbo jumbo or back-of-the-envelope adding up that has led to the Treasurer's coming up with this figure. It does not give the people of Western Australia much comfort at all.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I have not had many people in my electorate office looking uncomfortable about it, to be honest with you.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** If the Treasurer is delaying my speaking, let alone the other 13 members who need to speak after me, we will be here long after 1.00 am.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Was it the speeding list?

Another issue is the government's policy on salary increases for members of Parliament. According to *The West Australian*, any wage rise will be based on the consumer price index. We need to know the Treasurer's view on a wage rise for MPs.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** A wage rise for members of Parliament, as you well know, is determined by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Perth, where does the wage rise for MPs come into this?

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** It is in the list of contingency plans and all other items, so it is on page 4 of the document.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** It is not in there at all. Don't mislead the house. It is not a contingency.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Clearly, if there is not a line item, then MPs are continuing to be paid and so are the staff in Parliament House.

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Perth, I do not see this part of that particular item, so please confine your contribution to what is contained in this document.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** SAT, which is the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, determines MPs' salaries through an independent process. It recently handed down a ruling relating to industrial relations commissioners, and for a whole range of reasons, which I suggest you read, they determined there would be no wage rise. Tomorrow they hand down a ruling relating to senior executives in the public sector. My view is that there has been no change in the economic circumstances they refer to repeatedly in their judgement that they handed down a couple of weeks ago. I suspect that if there is no change, there will be no justification for any different outcome. I suspect therefore that our pay rises will be in line with those handed down to WA industrial relations commissioners, so there will be none. Ultimately, that is for the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal to decide.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** No, it is not. The government is a very important stakeholder in giving direction to SAT.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** We will make a submission.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Former governments and Premiers have given their strong views to SAT on government policy.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Perth and Treasurer, we have now digressed into salaries for parliamentarians and SAT. Can we please come back to what we are discussing, otherwise we will be here until 3.00 am.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** I apologise for being distracted by the interjection from the Treasurer.

We need to have a proper answer for the Treasurer's coming up with this figure of \$1.2 billion rather than \$200 million. The Treasurer has sitting in the bank the \$1.4 billion Fiona Stanley Hospital budget, which is prepaid because the Labor government paid for it. Money from the surplus is sitting there earning interest. What exactly is the Treasurer doing with that money? Why is he not bringing forward those elements? These issues have been discussed, and they are very important for our having faith that the Treasurer has come to a true and accurate figure of \$1.2 billion. As members of Parliament, should we be amending it to \$200 000? Is the Treasurer so inept that he needs more money because he is spending at a rate of knots? Perhaps he needs \$3.4 billion. Until the Treasurer is able to give us the proper details, we as a Parliament cannot make an informed decision. That is what the opposition's stance is all about, because the Treasurer has not provided the justification for this \$1.2 billion figure.

Other issues have been discussed in debate on this bill. The size of the prison population is very important. The Treasurer has arrived at a figure of \$16.6 million. If the government is eliminating the discretion of prison chief executive officers to bring forward a two-week release discretion for parole, it means that if a prison CEO knows that there are 37 Busselton footballers wearing Viking horns who will be going to Casuarina Prison on 1 September —

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Hagar the Horrible!

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Yes, and somebody on remand who will be released on parole on 10 September —

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** You had a Hagar the Horrible hat on.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Indeed, I was trying to give relevance to tell a story. I would be hoping that another issue being funded is the ongoing discussions regarding container deposit legislation. If the government signs off on container deposit legislation, drunks and others might not be placing beer cans on the horns of their Viking apparatus —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Sit down, member for Perth. We are having a lot of levity about beer cans and Viking horns. Come back to the matter before us.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. If container deposit legislation comes into effect in four weeks' time, it will have a huge impact on the amount of the Treasurer's advance. If it will not come into effect until 1 January or not for two years, that will have a huge impact.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** They should start saving up their cans.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Exactly. People would not be wasting them on Viking horns, which is the point I am making and which reflects on the other point about the prison population. If the CEO of Casuarina Prison knows that 17 Busselton footballers have been sentenced and will be arriving on 1 September to be locked up, and if he knows that five people are due for release on 10 September, that good prison manager would bring forward their release

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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by 10 days, so as not to have an overcrowding issue. These are very important budgetary considerations that are having an impact on framing the exact figure that the Treasurer's advance should be set at. We can go further and look at other policies, such as the policy for fine defaulters, who also impact on the prison population. If this government is taking action on perhaps a recalcitrant person who, fearing that his car is about to be crushed, hides the car in the bush or somewhere like that, and the government's only response is to jail the person, it will have an impact on the prison population.

Another issue that was itemised during the debate was education and training and the \$48.4 million for the school capital improvements program as part of the government's election commitments. Members will have read in the august *The West Australian* this morning that the wallet has been closed.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** April? That is not one of the member's better jokes. Somebody should raise a point of order on that. She usually sets a high standard with interjections, but that one fell well short.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** There should be a standing order relating to the quality of humour.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** There should. It is the twenty-first century. This is the sort of visionary leadership we are seeing from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Of course, we are looking at the budgetary impacts of the actions of this house of Parliament. Clearly, we need to know whether the Legislative Council is planning to install extra chairs, and what that would do to the Treasurer's advance. We also need to know what is happening in this chamber in terms of whether that is impacting on the Treasurer's advance.

Before I was diverted by a very lame attempt at humour, not up to the normal standards of the member for Girrawheen, I was making the point that this minority Liberal government is holding the purse strings for capital school improvements. It is not handing the money over; therefore, why does it need Treasurer's advance funding to pay for something it is not going to be doing? If the government is doing it after the proper budget, over the four years of forward estimates, let us save it until then. Let us ask for the money that is included in the advance to be carried over until then. These are very, very important issues that have not been adequately addressed by the Treasurer or by the Treasurer's stand-in during his absence on Tuesday evening.

During consideration in detail I raised discussions regarding the \$1.4 million that is earmarked for the Fire and Emergency Services Authority. The Minister for Emergency Services still has not sent me the invite to the new fire station in my electorate.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** It is not open, that is why.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** I know it is not open but he is the sort of person who will turn up at midnight and open it without alerting the local member of Parliament.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You know that is not true. Did the member not hear the comment from the member for North West? He knows that I am a very approachable minister and there is no way that I would open the new fire station without inviting you, as the local member, and the shadow minister. Do not ever accuse me of not using the right protocols. I would always do that.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** With respect, I did raise this and the minister said—I assume jokingly, from the tenor of the comment—that he would definitely invite the shadow Minister for Police but that I would not get a guernsey. I am delighted to know that he was only joking.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You show me where I said that!

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** I will, in *Hansard*, at some stage.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Please do because he makes these assertions and they are totally untrue. The member knows that and I know that. Do not mislead the house, my friend. I expect a bit of honesty.

**Mr J.N. HYDE:** Total honesty. The important issue is that he will invite the local member. Whether the budget advance that we are looking at here has to be increased for the extra focaccia or whatever it is that he is putting on there, the \$1.4 million does relate to the firefighters' agreement and the GA4 wage increase, and I support that very strongly.

**MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta)** [11.02 am]: Clearly in this debate there has been a bit of levity, but I think the matters contained in the Treasurer's advance are actually very serious issues. It is a great shame that we had consideration in detail truncated by the use of the gag.

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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I will make comments about the general approach of the government, which are clearly reflected in this bill and also in the debate we have had, particularly during the consideration in detail stage. I will follow up on some of the things that were raised and the statements made by the minister handling the bill. Clearly, as has already been said, I am not going to go over and over it—the \$1.2 billion being authorised by the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill is a record and way above anything ever done before. This government is really being quite profligate in its spending. It is not that we are opposed to increased spending. If there is a well thought out policy that will deliver public benefit, a case could be made, and a Labor government would make that case at the appropriate time to extend our expenditure. But that is not the approach of this government with the Treasurer’s advance authorisation. This is really authorising expenditure that is largely profligate. Some of it is unavoidable as it was unforeseen—increases in wages et cetera—but a lot of it is purely profligate. The government is throwing money around, which it had to do to buy itself into government, and in that way I believe it really amounts to bribery. It amounts to buying government and it does not have anything to do with financial rectitude or the proper control of finances. We are therefore seeing this major issue with the blow-out in expenditure and therefore a reduction in what has been a very substantial surplus over recent years.

The approach of the government is to talk about the global financial crisis as if somehow the expenditure being authorised through this bill is needed because of it. That is absolutely untrue. The global financial crisis is a major issue. It is going to impact on us—it has already started to impact on us—but it is not currently having a major impact on the revenue streams of this government. It will, and we need to be conscious of that, but the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill before us is to do with the blow-out in expenditure, not a reduction of revenue, which we know will come because of the global financial crisis. The Premier has a track record of being profligate. We saw the Premier, when he was the Minister for Education, blow the education budget by \$100 million in one year. He was the deputy leader of the Liberal Party when, in eight budgets, it had five deficits. In his last year in office, the state’s economy went backwards. That is shown in the Liberal Party’s own figures, which it put out in December. In 2000-01, this state had negative growth. That was what the Labor government inherited in 2001. We turned that around and we have had very substantial surpluses ever since. For the Treasurer to claim, as he has, that he has inherited a budget full of problems is simply untrue.

The government is trying to paint a picture that is not based on the facts. We see a government that simply reacts quickly. It says, “Let’s do something” and then the flow-through consequences are picked up in a piece of legislation such as we now have in the form of the Treasurer’s advance, because someone has to pay for it. It is not the expenditure of itself that is an issue for the Labor opposition; it is how it is put together and the detail of it. I am not saying that we should not have a Treasurer’s advance. I am not even saying that we should not have one as large as this, if it is properly justified, but my argument is that the government has not justified it. That is why we have seen the gag brought in; it does not want that scrutiny. If the government had made the case, perhaps through a mini-budget, to say, “Given the new circumstances, given that it is a new government that has new priorities, we are reorientating it and here is the game plan. Here is what we are seeking to do and that is why we need the extra \$1.2 billion”, there would be a case that could be argued. The government does not have a case to argue because it is about being profligate. It is about splurging money and not having a long-term vision of how it will contribute to the betterment of the people of this state and to the development of this state.

It is really very much like we saw from the now Premier during the 2005 election when he promised a canal to bring water from the Kimberley, not knowing the cost, and said, “We’ll do it anyway. We don’t know how many billions it is going to cost.” It was an absolute nonsense of an idea not just because of the construction cost, but also because of the amount of energy and because the pumping costs of bringing water from the Kimberley is considerably greater than the cost of running a desalination plant. Things are not thought through. It is not appropriate that I go through all the examples because we are at the third reading stage. I use that one example of many to illustrate how the government just makes a call and does not think it through, and then we have to deal with legislation, such as the Treasurer’s advance bill, to pay the bill for decisions that are not properly planned.

This is also reflected in the Premier’s contribution to the debate during consideration in detail. The Treasurer was, I believe, trying to answer the questions. A few times perhaps he did not know the answer and he fluffed it a bit, but he was, in a quite genuine way, trying to give us answers to the questions we were asking. It is absolutely right and proper that we should have on the record the details for why this expenditure is being incurred and what will be the outcomes of this expenditure. For the Premier to suggest that it can be done when the budget comes down is utter nonsense. It is appropriate at this time, when the house is going to authorise this—because clearly we are not going to stand in the way of it; we believe the Treasurer’s advance has to go through. Our issue is justification for the quantity, and expansion on the details which really lie within this total aggregate expenditure of \$1.2 billion. Therefore, the Premier’s attitude of “You don’t have to deal with it; you can wait until later” is an absolute nonsense. For the Premier to come into this place in the cavalier way he did

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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does nothing to engender respect for the office of the Premier of Western Australia. He actually said at one stage that he had a meeting at 5.00 am, if I have got it right, and that he was happy to stay through. That is what the Premier said; he was absolutely cavalier in dismissing the real questions. And then what did he do? He brought the gag down to stop debate.

The point I am trying to make is that we want to support the requirements of the Treasurer's advance authorisation, but we want the justification for it. The little example I am using is that we have in the Premier someone who says something, and then it turns out he does not mean it. He says, "I'm happy to stay all night. I'm happy to stay right through until a five o'clock meeting", and then he brings the gag down. The issue is that we need to have confidence that people are telling the truth so that we know that the expenditure we are going to authorise through the Treasurer's advance will actually go to that purpose. The Premier was right when he said this is a global allocation. It is not a line-by-line allocation; he is right about that. It is a global allocation that the government can spend in a range of ways. The four-page schedule that we were presented was to give some justification for the full \$1.2 billion, but it is not tied down to being spent specifically in those areas. A lot of it is captured by other legislative provisions, which means that the government must have that money or those areas of government will simply stop working. The buck stops at the fact that some of that money has to go to those purposes, which is what the schedule sets out. But there is also a large amount of \$149.3 million for contingencies, and there is the potential in some of the other areas perhaps to allocate it differently. Therefore, it is absolutely appropriate that we try to find out where that money will be used and hear the full justification for it.

The Premier simply wanted to attack the Labor opposition, really berate us, but do it in a very false way. That is what I really take umbrage with; that the Premier loses credibility, and therefore all the good arguments that need to be made to explain why the Treasurer's advance authorisation is needed are undermined by the Premier's lack of honesty and being up-front.

I can give another simple example: the Premier actually said that the bill did not appropriate money! Members should get their heads around this: the Premier steps in, pushes the Treasurer aside so that he can deal with the bill in consideration in detail, and then says that it does not appropriate money!

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Can I just make a good point? In the strictest sense, there will be two appropriation bills that follow the Treasurer's advance, which will be the bills that appropriate the money. This bill is not an appropriation bill. The mechanism by which this money will be appropriated will be two appropriation bills—I think 5 and 6 or 3 and 4, or some such thing. That is my understanding of the process. Some appropriation bills that follow the Treasurer's advance will bring to account that detail.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I realise the Treasurer is trying to stick up for the Premier, but really that is sophistry. That is absolute nonsense! It is an appropriation bill. I will just grab the standing orders because I want to look at the speaking times, as that is one area in which there is actually recognition of the major appropriation bill. There are different speaking times when the major appropriation bill is reached. A range of bills appropriate money, and they are rightly considered appropriation bills. The Treasurer is correct; they are not the major appropriation bills that go with the budget. Appropriation bills 1 and 2 are recognised in the standing orders—I cannot find the section—with respect to speaking times and arrangements. But the Treasurer is simply tying himself in knots if he is going to try to make the case that this is not an appropriation bill —

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** No, I'm not. I'm presenting the same facts that the former Treasurer presented to the house last year. That is the process.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I am not disagreeing with that —

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** If you're not disagreeing, then the Premier was right!

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** —I am saying that perhaps the Premier was a bit sleepy late at night when he came into this place to take over carriage of the bill and claimed it was not an appropriation bill—it clearly is! I am pointing out that we really want to see that integrity and leadership, so that when we actually vote to commit the \$1.2 billion, we will have some confidence that it will actually be expended in an appropriate way and that there will be transparency. That is not what we have.

Another simple example of the Premier again taking over from the Treasurer, whom he had really kept out of the seat for a little while—I am not sure why, because I think the Treasurer has more competence in this area than the Premier —

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** My eyes were watering!

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** It got that emotional, did it? The Treasurer was getting tired and emotional, was he?

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I was getting emotional; I can tell you right now!

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** People say that this debate took too long, but in some cases the Treasurer did not give straightforward, direct answers to the questions. We were seeking answers about where the money was for the teachers' enterprise bargaining agreement—it was an election commitment; the government promised that. It is great that the teachers got that extra money, but it is not accounted for in the Treasurer's advance authorisation, so we were asking numerous questions to have the Treasurer elucidate where the money was coming from to pay the teachers' salaries. The Treasurer acknowledged that it was not required as additional funding in the Treasurer's advance because it will be met out of the three per cent efficiency dividend. That is listed in the government's midyear financial predictions, because in the Department of Education and Training section there was a \$45.6 million efficiency dividend, and the additional money required for the teachers' EBA was \$35 million. They may not actually get that three per cent efficiency dividend—that is a different question—but that was the explanation quite clearly given by the Treasurer and accepted by the people who were asking the question.

Then the Premier came in and said that it was absolute nonsense. He said things to the effect that the EBA for teachers is not funded out of the three per cent efficiency dividend. He was adamant! He said, "It is not!" Again, we had the Premier saying things as the leader, with carriage of the bill for that short time, that are not true! What does that do for confidence in all the other answers we got when the Premier, when handling the bill, said things that are absolutely false? Then the gag was brought down so that we could not actually go on and try to elicit information on a range of other things about where this money is going to be spent after the passage of the Treasurer's advance authorisation.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Are you opposed to the gag, member?

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I used the gag myself when I sat in the member's place, but I do not think I used it —

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Do you know how many times?

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** But never on a Treasurer's advance! Did I ever use it on a Treasurer's advance?

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Do you know how many times you've used the gag?

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I never used it on the Treasurer's advance authorisation —

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You were the serial offender, my friend!

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You moved the gag more than anybody!

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** The Leader of the House has done the figures, as I expected he would. In fact, I know who has done them for him; he would not have done them, because he has some very good officers who also supported me when I was in that position.

I never used the gag on a major piece of legislation to authorise \$1.2 billion when a whole lot of questions were being asked. Of course, it is subjective to make a determination on the quality of the debate, but I think that any objective observer would say that the quality of the debate on this side that went to the substantive issues was of a very high standard. We did not have people dribbling on, as happened when the Liberal Party was in opposition —

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Your debate was rubbish! Can I just say something to the member?

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I will take the interjection from the leader.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** This is a bill that the Labor Party will support—God help us when we get a bill that it is not going to support, because it has spent over 20 hours dribbling on, or else half of them went home.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** The interjection does not add —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order, members!

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** — to the debate, because I explained earlier that we want to support it. Our concern is that there has been no justification for the quantum requested by the Treasurer's advance.

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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I will now move to another matter that was debated at some length during consideration in detail—the funding for royalties for regions. A lot of very good things will be funded through royalties for regions. In fact, it was on the election of the Labor government in 2001 that we saw a lot more money directed to being used productively in regional Western Australia.

It is only necessary to look at Geraldton.

*Point of Order*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I would like to actually hear the member for Balcatta, but all I hear is interjections from members opposite.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis):** I ask the house to keep the level of interjection down. I also remind the member for West Swan that if she wishes to participate in conversation across the chamber, she should do so from her own seat.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** In brief, what happened on the election of a Labor government in 2001 can be exemplified by what happened in Geraldton. An extra \$100 million was committed to deepening the port, which helped our farmers by reducing the levies they paid and opened up iron ore exports in the mid-west in a substantial way that could not have happened without the project. The southern access corridor was also opened at a cost of another \$100 million or so. Across regional Western Australia, the Labor government initiated projects to bring development into the regions, and put up the money. If royalties for regions is putting in more money, that is great, but it is a false statement to say that the previous government was not very active in putting money into the regions. We were very active.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Some of the money was taken away.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** That is right—the government has shifted money out of the regions in some cases because it wants to be able to rebadge the money and claim it as its own. The government should be upfront about its plans and objectives, but the case put by the government for this Treasurer’s advance is very light on in justification of all the items.

Accountability is a major issue in different aspects of the royalties for regions project. I want to touch on the country local government fund, which involves \$100 million each year. In this Treasurer’s advance authorisation we are told that one element of that is \$100 million already handed out to local governments under the country local government fund. The real concern is that there are no clear guidelines by which it can be readily seen where the money is spent. The accountability is really lacking, and that is a huge concern to the opposition. In answering questions on this issue during consideration in detail, the Treasurer said something to the effect that he was comfortable with the processes that the minister and his department had established for royalties for regions. I am particularly looking at the money that has already been spent in the country local government fund. The Treasurer went on to say that the Auditor General had the capacity to examine these issues. That is not necessarily right. The Auditor General does quite rightly have the capacity to audit the activities of government agencies, but local government authorities are not government agencies. Therefore, there are some limitations on what the Auditor General can consider. I bring to the attention of the house a 2006 report by the Public Accounts Committee entitled “Local Government Accountability in Western Australia”. Finding 14 of the report states —

Although the Office of the Auditor General performs the annual attest audit of the Department of Local Government and Regional Development, it has no power to examine the performance of local governments in delivering services in an equitable and effective manner and is unable to address issues specifically related to local government.

The confidence that the Treasurer has that the Auditor General can check that this money is simply not splashed up against the wall in some council areas is misplaced. Many local governments have excellent projects and real needs, and they need the money. I am not arguing against the money; I am arguing against the way in which it is being dispersed to local government authorities without clear and adequate guidelines that can be used to measure the accountability and effectiveness of the money. For the Treasurer to say that the Auditor General will be able to look into it and audit the process reveals a big hole. As I have already indicated, that finding from the Public Accounts Committee in 2006 states that the Auditor General does not have that power. It is a legal issue, because the Auditor General did have this power until 1983, when it was removed, and it may be that he can do some of the work, but there are real restrictions on what he can do. Even if the Auditor General had full legal power to go in and check out how that money is spent, the issue then is whether his office is adequately

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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resourced to take on that extra load—it clearly is not. Auditing how 139 local governments spend this money each year would require a great deal of resources, even if it is only attest auditing of some of the local government authorities. There is a real question about what the Auditor General can actually look at. He can look at the department, and when that money actually hits the ground in local governments, he can see whether it has been accounted for and signed off on, but the advice of the Public Accounts Committee is that he does not have the power to actually investigate whether it has been used in an efficient way to deliver services in an equitable and effective manner.

Some of the questions that I thought we should have been able to ask, but were not, include the Fire and Emergency Services Authority wages agreement, both for the firefighters and resulting from the GA4. That was listed in the schedule as \$1.4 million. However, when I tried to get some information from the Treasurer, I gathered from his response that he did not understand that a large part of the funding for FESA comes from the emergency services levy. The consolidated fund contributes less than half of the money that FESA uses to run its services. My question was: what is the basis for the three per cent efficiency dividend? Is it across the whole of the budget, or only that which comes from the consolidated fund? As yet, I have not received a reply from the Treasurer. Because the gag was used we could not continue to pursue that line of questioning, so I was not able to find out the basis. Does the Minister for Police know?

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** That will be revealed in the fullness of time when all the consultations on the three per cent efficiency dividend are made public and finalised.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I thank the minister for putting that on the record, because it completely supports what I said: the government is rudderless. It cannot actually achieve what it is about. My question was not about the outcome, which the government does not know and, given its lack of energy and drive, one understands why it would not know what the outcome of the three per cent efficiency dividend would be. My question was a simple upfront one; that is, the government already has an actual number in its documents, such as the *2008-09 Government Mid-year Financial Projection Statement*, which brings in all these changes including the three per cent efficiency dividend. That number must have been based on the money that is being allocated to FESA. It has already been done; the minister simply does not know the answer. It is no good waffling around and saying “in the fullness of time”. The minister’s interjection shows that he does not understand his own agency. He does not understand how the three per cent efficiency dividend is supposed to be applied. Whether it is effectively applied is another question.

Another question I wanted to ask was about the funding for sport and recreation through the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund. The government gave a commitment to an extra \$10 million a year, I think, for the CSRFF. I may not be clear on the actual amount but I certainly support that. As Minister for Sport and Recreation in the previous government I was arguing for more money for the CSRFF. However, I was not allowed to ask how the \$2.7 million was to be expended in the current year. The way the CSRFF has run for some years is that applications close off around October. They are assessed in the ensuing months, and in February or March an independent panel makes recommendations to the minister. The full amount allocated would have depended on when the applications were called. I was not given time, as a result of the gag, to find out from the Treasurer what the actual amount was. Yesterday, the Minister for Sport and Recreation made a brief ministerial statement, for which I am glad, on the fact that he has now made the allocations. However, we are dealing with a Treasurer’s advance that includes \$2.7 million allocated to that fund, but we did not get the opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding of how that amount would be applied in the current financial year.

Another area of great interest to me is the new central Perth police station and watch-house. This project had grown to about \$90 million when it was ticked off, and another \$20 million was potentially required when exact costings began to be worked out. That might have reduced a bit now, with the cost of construction having dropped a little. There is an item in the schedule for Western Australia Police for capital expenditure. It simply lists \$7.6 million for a new police station upgrade as part of its election commitment. Therefore, if the government is proceeding, as it said it is, and I hope it is, with the central Perth police station and watch-house, where is that money coming from? Will some of that \$7.6 million be used? It really comes back to transparency; namely, letting the public of Western Australia know what money has been allocated and where it is being spent, as then we can judge whether it is being well spent. We have grave fears about this matter. Although most of the money will clearly be well spent because it is required for additional costs such as wage increases, we still have the right and the obligation as members of Parliament to interrogate the ministers responsible to ensure that the money is being well spent. Certainly, we were denied the opportunity to get detailed answers about all the money in this Treasurer’s advance authorisation.

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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Quickly returning to some of the figures that the Treasurer gave me, perhaps the Treasurer can confirm these figures because I wrote them down and I may have them wrong. However, in answering questions, the Treasurer indicated that the authorisation for recurrent spending was \$18.9 billion—that is what I wrote down—and the Treasurer’s advance will move the approved expenditure to \$19.1 billion. There was only another \$200 million for recurrent spending. Capital expenditure went from \$6.7 billion to \$7.7 billion, which is \$1 billion in round figures. Therefore, most of the money in this bill is actually down —

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I will have to check *Hansard*. I am just trying to remember the exact nature of the question. I think I was giving the member figures that were taken from the midyear review in terms of capital and recurrent spending. The point I made, I think, at the time was that there was already a \$1 billion drawdown on the Treasurer’s advance rolled into the midyear review, and that this bill will add another \$200 million, effectively, to those bottom-line figures. That was my recollection of the question, but I will —

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** These things get technical because we measure them at different times. I have taken what the Treasurer has said, and he might formally later correct me on that, and I do know how much we are dealing with. However, the Treasurer indicated that the total expenditure across both recurrent and capital expenditure after the Treasurer’s advance goes through will be \$26.8 billion. Clearly, that is a substantial amount of expenditure in the current year, and the Treasurer’s advance will have \$1.2 billion going into that figure.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** If the member looked at that aggregate from the handing down of the budget in May last year to the midyear review, loosely there was a \$1 billion adjustment because there was a \$1 billion allocation to the Treasurer’s advance then and another \$200 million now. Therefore, that is \$1.2 billion across those —

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I thank the Treasurer for that, but the issue, of course, is that we would have had more time to get all that on the record if the debate had not been gagged.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** It may be on the record.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** I trust that the government will not again force the gag on us as it has threatened.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [11.32 am]: I rise to make some brief comments on the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill 2009. I contributed to earlier debate on this bill right into the wee hours of Wednesday morning. Obviously, many of us were, I guess, somewhat tired and emotional, except, of course, the member for Esperance because he was having a really good kip at the time, if I remember correctly.

**Dr G.G. Jacobs:** It’s not Esperance, member.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The member for Roe—my apologies.

**Dr G.G. Jacobs:** No, it’s not that either. I am the member for Eyre.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Member for Eyre—my apologies.

The scrutiny of the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill is an important process. I accept that I come to this process with some freshness and without a great deal of experience, but it is important that we take a close look at this bill. We on the side of the chamber are charged with the responsibility of performing two major tasks. Our first task is to ensure that the government is honest with the people of Western Australia and that it commits to and implements the election commitments it made. The other task is to ensure that how expenditure is undertaken and the efficiency with which it is undertaken is done so in a manner that provides the greatest possible value to the people of Western Australia.

The Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill deals with two forms of expenditure as such. One involves current capital and recurrent programs, expenditure on which is unforeseen in the course of the financial year. As a number of members observed, it is usual practice to have the Treasurer’s advance bill to ensure that the government can continue to provide services to the community and can continue to pay its employees, particularly those with whom it has entered into wage negotiations during the financial year. It is acceptable that in any particular financial year there will be a range of unforeseen expenses that need to be provided for. However, this bill in this stage of the political cycle also does another very important thing; that is, it implements some new expenditure for the election commitments the government made in the lead-up to the election in September last year. It is important that we undertake a level of analysis of this expenditure to ensure that the programs the government committed to are in fact committed to and implemented and that they are done so in an accountable and appropriate manner. I guess it is unfortunate that we have this resistance to scrutiny, this resistance to analysis, which seems to come from people on the other side of the chamber. They make

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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observations about previous years and in particular last year's Treasurer's advance, but, of course, that was in a very different political context. There was no new spend in there —

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** We were in opposition; you were in government!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** There was that very different political context!

However, of course there was not this new expenditure and these new programs that need to have a level of scrutiny so that the community can have confidence that they are conducted in an appropriate manner. As was observed by the Treasurer and, indeed, the Premier on a number of occasions on Tuesday night, this is not an estimates hearing. However, debate on this bill represents our only chance to examine and scrutinise the new expenditure that is a result of the government's election commitments. Members on the government benches might take some delight in pointing out that we are being particularly picky, fussy and overzealous in our scrutiny of the bill, but as representatives of the Western Australian public, this is the only opportunity we have before the government gets to spend this money. This is the only opportunity the public has to properly scrutinise the bill, and it is for this reason that we need to take the opportunity to put it to the closest level of examination that we can. This process is not perfect but it is all that we have. We accept that it is not an estimates hearing and that there is not the full range of details available to us; however, we expect to have a level of information available so that we can provide the community with a level of confidence that these accounts have been scrutinised properly. The Treasurer went to some lengths to provide detail on the questions that we had. Indeed, we had many more questions. The Treasurer provided a lot of detail, as much detail as he could, given the level of information that he had obviously been provided. It is unfortunate that the whole process went off the rails considerably when the Premier stepped in to provide some relief to the Treasurer during the period of questioning.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Substantial relief!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** It was substantial relief, and we could see the relief on the Treasurer's face when he came back into the chamber.

Therefore, we need to look at what is proposed. This is \$1.2 billion worth of expenditure. This is the largest Treasurer's advance in history. It is at least half a billion dollars more than what was asked for in the 2007-08 Treasurer's advance. For this reason, it is particularly important that we have the opportunity to properly question the Treasurer as to the purpose and the way in which this money will be spent. There were some significant items, such as \$337 million alone for royalties for regions. We do not deny that there is a political mandate for the government to implement the royalties for regions program. However, it is also incumbent upon the opposition to scrutinise the way in which that money will be spent. It is incumbent upon the government to provide information to us and to the people of Western Australia to ensure that there is a level of confidence. The bill provides \$150 million for contingencies alone. By the government's own admission, that is significantly more than was asked for previously. The government gave us absolutely no information, other than to say, "This is the information that we have been provided with by the department", as to why that contingency amount was required.

I will go into some detail about some of the contingency expenditure. The Department of Education and Training alone will be given \$48.4 million for the school capital improvement programs, and the government wants to spend that \$48.4 million between now and 30 June 2009, which is a matter of just months. It is not outrageous for the opposition to ask where that money will be spent. If it is to be spent in a matter of months, the department should have a very good idea about exactly where this money is to be spent in the coming months. It is not outrageous for opposition members to be curious on behalf of their electorates and of the taxpayers of Western Australia about how this money is to be spent. If the Minister for Education cannot provide the Treasurer with details about that, it should set off alarm bells and sound a warning to the government and all members on the government benches that the government does not have a proper handle on how this money will be spent. Opposition members have a very real concern that the government does not know how the money will be spent. There is no detail and there is no information. To be perfectly frank, there is no minister when it comes to education because all we get when we ask the Minister for Education about these matters is rehearsed obfuscation, generalisation and very little detail.

I turn now to the Department of Health. A request was made for \$35.1 million. It is true to say that there are very real and strong demands on the health services. The Minister for Health should have the support of his government to ensure that the department can meet the demands in that area.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I missed the start of your speech.

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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**Mr R.H. COOK:** I am saying that the government is seeking \$35.1 million in the area of health. It is true to say that a lot of ongoing demand costs are driving the health budget. There are costs for staffing, and the escalation of staffing costs was very real in 2008-09, particularly during the time of the boom, and there are some very real costs for equipment and medical expenses. However, this bill asks us to provide extra funding to meet election commitments about which we have very little detail. We are also being asked to provide funding in the expectation that the Department of Health will meet its three per cent efficiency dividend. Under questioning last week, the Director General of Health accepted that the department would find expenditure cuts of just \$33.1 million, whereas in this financial year it is expected to find cuts of \$59.9 million. The department will fall significantly short of its savings. We have a very real and legitimate question to ask the government about how it will fund the election commitments it promised the Western Australian people.

**Dr K.D. Hames** interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** No, we are expecting \$60 million this financial year. That is the figure on which the Treasurer said these figures were based. In addition to the fact that the Department of Health will not meet its expenditure cuts, the Director General of Health admitted that there will be a blow-out of between \$180 and \$230 million. These are legitimate questions to ask the Treasurer in the context of the Treasurer's advance. The Treasurer, with absolute honesty, and I suspect with a good deal of integrity, provided the only answer he could under the circumstances, which was essentially the political equivalent of saying, "Watch this space." He said that it was a work in progress, that the government was still trying and that he would get back to us. In the context of the Treasurer's advance of \$1.2 billion, this is a very significant concern.

We also saw in the area of health an increase in funding for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Again, that was an election commitment made prior to the election and subsequently fulfilled. A number of members opposite are nodding in agreement about how good that is. However, a quick glance at the midyear review shows that the \$5.7 million in funding is to be paid for out of the royalties for regions program. Why the \$5.7 million is under the health portfolio in this part of the bill when it is to be paid for out of the \$337 million royalties for regions scheme is a complete mystery, yet we are at the third reading stage of the bill and the government wants us to sign off on it. It is a complete mystery. The Treasurer could not provide that information when we asked him. Although he undertook to do so, we are still waiting for that information.

I will touch upon another area that we did not get an opportunity to discuss during consideration in detail, along with a number of other areas. The previous government had set aside \$4 million in the midyear review in 2008-09 for the refurbishment of the Busselton jetty. However, that figure has jumped to \$12 million under this bill. One assumes, therefore, that the government has brought forward the refurbishment costs of the Busselton jetty. I have fond childhood memories of the jetty and think the extra money is probably a very good idea. The Busselton jetty is a very important piece of tourism infrastructure and is an iconic piece of Western Australia's heritage. Why were we not allowed the opportunity to scrutinise this expenditure in detail? Why were we not allowed the opportunity to get some answers to these very legitimate questions about what is happening in this important level of expenditure in the Treasurer's own electorate? This is an important question to ask from the point of view of the scrutiny of government expenditure and it is also a very legitimate political question to ask.

We understand that we will experience a similar treatment of our questions today as we received on Tuesday night—that is, a callous disregard for our natural and legitimate political curiosity and of our right to ask questions of the government and to closely examine this expenditure. As I have pointed out, some of the expenditure is new expenditure by virtue of the election commitments. Our inquiries during the consideration in detail stage were callously cut off by the government when it gagged the debate. It would not surprise me if we receive similar treatment now. Let us put it on the record today that areas of this bill remain unexamined and questions remain unanswered. We will make every effort and leave no stone unturned to ensure that we come back time and again to hold this government to account.

*Question to be Put*

**MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth)** [11.48 am]: I move —

That the question be now put.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis):** Order! This question is put without debate, as members know.

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

**Extract from *Hansard***  
[ASSEMBLY - Thursday, 2 April 2009]  
p2602b-2619a

Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Mike Nahan; Deputy Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Roger Cook; Mr John McGrath

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Ayes (29)

Mr P. Abetz  
Mr F.A. Alban  
Mr C.J. Barnett  
Mr I.C. Blayney  
Mr I.M. Britza  
Mr T.R. Buswell  
Mr G.M. Castrilli  
Dr E. Constable

Mr M.J. Cowper  
Mr J.H.D. Day  
Mr J.M. Francis  
Mr B.J. Grylls  
Dr K.D. Hames  
Mrs L.M. Harvey  
Mr A.P. Jacob  
Dr G.G. Jacobs

Mr R.F. Johnson  
Mr A. Krsticevic  
Mr W.R. Marmion  
Mr P.T. Miles  
Ms A.R. Mitchell  
Dr M.D. Nahan  
Mr C.C. Porter  
Mr D.T. Redman

Mr A.J. Simpson  
Mr M.W. Sutherland  
Mr T.K. Waldron  
Dr J.M. Woollard  
Mr J.E. McGrath (*Teller*)

Noes (28)

Ms L.L. Baker  
Mr A.J. Carpenter  
Mr V.A. Catania  
Mr R.H. Cook  
Ms J.M. Freeman  
Mr J.N. Hyde  
Mr W.J. Johnston

Mr J.C. Kobelke  
Mr F.M. Logan  
Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan  
Mr J.A. McGinty  
Mr M. McGowan  
Mrs C.A. Martin  
Mr M.P. Murray

Mr A.P. O’Gorman  
Mr P. Papalia  
Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Mr E.S. Ripper  
Mrs M.H. Roberts  
Ms R. Saffioti

Mr T.G. Stephens  
Mr C.J. Tallentire  
Mr A.J. Waddell  
Mr P.B. Watson  
Mr M.P. Whitely  
Mr B.S. Wyatt  
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Question thus passed.

*Third Reading Resumed*

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.